

The diagrammatic spectator

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abstract

Notions of diagrammatics and the use of diagrams are increasingly visible in both art research and art practice. Yet reflection on diagrams and specifically the activity of diagramming tends to focus on the position of the author. Sher Doruff's concept of what she calls 'diagrammatic praxis' sets out the foundations for this model. It is based on understanding how, through the doing of diagramming, one becomes relational to thought. This article proposes instead that the spectator's diagrammatic praxis be investigated from a position of equality. The intention is to expand Doruff's discourse beyond seeing the spectator as merely a collaborator, and evaluate how spectators become relational to diagrams on their own terms. By re-defining diagrammatic praxis around the spectator, the article suggests a re-organisation of the prevailing paradigm of informational consumption and communication. The diagrammatic spectator therefore offers a new perspective on how doing, seeing and thinking through diagrams forms an important position of critical enquiry independent of the author.

Introduction

This paper concerns diagrams and diagrammatic praxis. Diagrams are visual information devices that broadly comprise a range of technical genres including graphs, technical drawings and charts. These can be characterised further as visual displays or symbolic representations of qualitative information, often employing shapes connected by lines, arrows, or other visual links to present or communicate relations and ideas. In our daily lives we encounter diagrams in the form of maps, line graphs, bar charts, engineering blueprints, and architects' sketches. Diagrams are also prolific in a variety of academic disciplines and creative fields where they serve different functions from graphically representing algebraic or geometric relationships in mathematical practices (for example the

use of Venn diagrams to illustrate simple set relationships in probability, logic, statistics, and computer science), modelling structures of Multinational Corporations (for instance the Stopford and Wells model of MNC organisations), to the use of schemas and mathemes to illustrate theories of psychology and subjectivity (such as Sigmund Freud's diagram 'Dissection of the Psychic Personality'). Whether a diagram is intended for professional use (in pedagogy or publication) or an ephemeral doodle on a scrap of paper, it represents an experiment in thinking. The experimentation of thought that we engage with in diagrams is what makes the medium so interesting and peculiar. Rather than give a literal representation of information, such as we find in tables, diagrams operate primarily as discursive machines that show abstract relationships. How we consequently think with and through diagrams is the subject of diagrammatic praxis. The study of diagrammatic praxis, following Sher Doruff's concept of the term, focuses predominantly on the 'doing of diagramming' (Doruff, 2011c: 3). That is to say how one not only thinks and perceives in diagrammatic forms, but also how one re-thinks and alters perceptions in diagrams. As Doruff proposes, diagramming is a process of 'becoming-relational' to thought and 'the relational taking form' (Doruff, 2011c: 3). It is this element of diagrams that warrants further investigation, especially as a medium of information handling that brings into question less how each person relays information, and more how one relates to it directly.

The problem with the majority of research on diagrams though, including Doruff's concept of diagrammatic praxis, is that it tends to follow an author-centric model. In contrast, the present enquiry offers some speculative discussion about the diagrammatic spectator. Extant research commonly positions the spectator's entrance into diagrammatics only by way of collaborative production with the author, or as a process of social networking mediated by diagrammatic mediums. The alternative, I posit, is to progress from a position of intellectual equality. Following Jacques Rancière's description of the term, equality here means that the spectator's position is not analysed according to what knowledge is disseminated by diagrams, or what is shared through co-production or co-habitation with the artist/author. Instead, equality is achieved by way of the spectator's own 'venture into the forest of things and signs' (Rancière, 2009: 11). By addressing diagrammatics according to a model of intellectual equality this current paper aims to evaluate the different potentialities of doing, seeing, and thinking as they are manifest in the spectator's own relation to the world of information. Learning ceases to be about learning from the artist's position or through the consumption and communication of information. Instead it is about what one sees and thinks for oneself and, crucially, how that constitutes a radical position in our current informational paradigm.

Over the course of the next few pages I will navigate diagrammatic processes in the labour of spectators in order to draw out two main issues. Firstly, how the spectator (as the addressee of diagrammatic systems) enters into diagramming in their own right. Secondly, I am interested in the repercussions that arise from the spectator's diagrammatic praxis. This argument is set against a backdrop of informatisation and immaterial labour, notably drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato's idea of the consumer/communicator (Lazzarato, 1996) to define how the spectator consumes and communicates information diagrammatically. By addressing these two issues this paper intends, as does Doruff, to extend a concept of diagramming into a living space of art (Doruff, 2009: 121). In contrast to Doruff's investigation though, this article will focus on the spectator's (rather than the artist's) becoming-relational to diagrams and also posit how that relation takes form in the living space of informational society. The reason why I will focus this investigation on an aesthetic terrain of diagrams is because Doruff, Rancière and Lazzarato develop their arguments in relation to the figure of the artist. Doruff draws her argument on diagrammatic praxis from reflection on art research practices, Rancière characterises the dissensual figure that underpins his discourse on intellectual equality through the aesthetic regime of art and specifically the figure of the artist (Rancière, 2010: 173), and Lazzarato builds his model of immaterial labour around an aesthetic model of author, reproduction and reception (Lazzarato, 1996). However, while the context of this debate is founded in art, I encourage the reader to consider the wider potential of diagrammatics to re-think human/information relations in the organisation of aesthetics, the politics of organisation and as a practical methodology for organising new distributions of thought.

The 'active' subject

In order to bring out the relationship between spectators and diagrams and make it meaningful, it is necessary to first detail the network of presuppositions that place the spectator at the heart of information relations in the paradigm of immaterial production. The dynamic social field of art's spectator can largely be defined today in relation to the mechanisms of information production, reception and communication that arise with immaterial labour practices since the late 1960s and early 1970s. We are talking about a paradigm that increases the activation of information in every aspect of social production. The general model of immaterial labour against whose background we have become used to judging the political implications of this system comes from the socio-political work of Maurizio Lazzarato. In 'Immaterial labour' Lazzarato details a synthesis of immaterial labour between empirical research into the new forms of work and modes of labour organisation that have developed since the 1970s. The concept

progresses from a domain of work that has arisen around tertiary industries, computerisation and informatisation – for which Lazzarato uses the term ‘mass intellectuality’ – and corresponds to concurrent theoretical reflection at that time on biopolitics¹. Specific to Lazzarato’s analysis is how he understands the process of valorisation as a process of self-valorisation. Instead of seeing labour practices as divisive, splitting conception and execution, means and ends, he sees immateriality as a force that ‘transcends’ labour divisions from ‘within the labour process’ (Lazzarato, 1996). Key to this internalisation of control is the re-imposition of the process of command (over reproduction and reception) into the individuals’ process of labour. As Lazzarato states: ‘In this phase, workers are expected to become “active subjects” in the coordination of the various functions of production, instead of being subjected to it as simple command’ (Lazzarato, 1996).

The diagnosis Lazzarato advances follows Foucault’s idea that the biopolitical turn aims at ‘the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production’ (Foucault, 1998: 141). However, Lazzarato employs an aesthetic model in order to organise production around three key points of intersection that the material model would otherwise obscure: author, reproduction, and reception. Through the aesthetic model he is then able to reformulate these points of intersection for his model of immaterial labour in the following way: (a) the author loses his ‘individual dimension’ in order to be ‘transformed into an industrially organized production process’, (b) reproduction becomes mass reproduction, (c) the audience is recognised as the consumer/communicator (Lazzarato, 1996). The consumer/communicator operates according to the double function of both the addressee of the author’s commodity (the ideological product) and simultaneously as a productive site with the role of integrating the ideological product into social communication (literally activating the product by placing it in the context of life)². This model is important because through it we can identify how immaterial production entails a shift from a mode of consumption

1 Lazzarato places his idea of ‘mass intellectuality’ as a “great transformation” that began at the start of the 1970s’, whereby ‘[m]annual labour is increasingly coming to involve procedures that could be defined as “intellectual”, and the new communications technologies increasingly require subjectivities that are rich in knowledge’ (Lazzarato, 1996). Rather than simply meaning that intellectual labour has become subjected to the norms of capitalist production, what Lazzarato states has happened is that ‘a new “mass intellectuality” has come into being, created out of a combination of the demands of capitalist production and the forms of “self-valorisation that the struggle against work has produced’ (Lazzarato, 1996).

2 The use of the term ‘ideological product’ here designates how products (in the immaterial paradigm) are capable of producing new intersections between human power, knowledge and action: what Lazzarato calls ‘new stratifications of reality’ rather than mere reflections thereof (Lazzarato, 1996).

that traditionally would be defined by the consumer destroying the consumable object, to a model of consumption that consumes by communicating and re-communicating social products. Because of this double role we could even say that information handling by the consumer/communicator has become a complicit ‘labour of control’ (Lazzarato, 1996). The audience is not related to the information they consume and communicate as living experience. Instead, according to today’s management mandates, ‘the subject becomes a simple relayer of codification and decodification’ (Lazzarato, 1996).

Diagrammatic praxis

Diagrammatic praxis, I will argue, presents us with a model of production capable of countering the bleak diagnosis of immaterial production, whereby one does not relate to information outside of relaying it. In the launch issue of *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR) Doruff published ‘Diagrammatic praxis’ (2011a). Contained within this online canvas of hyper-linked texts and images are two documents of note: ‘Diagrammatics: Portals of entry’ (2011b) and her keynote speech at the Digital Resources in the Humanities and Arts (DRHA) conference in 2008, titled ‘Hacking the re-markable relation’ (2011c). Collectively these documents outline the concept of diagrammatic praxis, which Doruff formulates within the social field that situates practice-led art research today³. Her specific definition of diagram comes from Kenneth J. Knoespel’s essay ‘Diagrams as piloting devices in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze’, in which Knoespel situates the origin of the word as coming from the original Greek *diagramma* (Knoespel, 2001). ‘The root verb of *diagramma*’, Knoespel tells us, ‘does not simply mean something which is marked out by lines, a figure, form, or plan, but also carries a secondary connotation of marking or crossing out’ (Knoespel, 2001: 147). From the ancient practice of writing on a wax tablet to the computer screen, the term *diagramma* gives us an understanding of diagram as a writable and re-writable medium. As with the wax tablet, for Doruff diagrams are ‘remarkable’ (Doruff, 2011c). To be remarkable plays on the double meaning of the word ‘remarkable’, both to mean ‘outstanding’, insofar as we think of something that is ‘drawn into clarity’, and also as a re-markable surface on which ideas can be ‘drawn and re-drawn’ (Doruff, 2011c: 4). The re-markability of diagrams therefore provides a framework where thought, text and illustration are dynamic. As Knoespel states, ‘[w]hile a diagram may have been used visually to

3 Doruff’s work on diagrammatics extends from her doctoral thesis *The translocal event and the polyrhythmic diagram*, completed at Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London) in conjunction with SMARTlab (2002-2006). This work focuses on diagrammatic praxis as performative and emphasises the conditions of real time collaborative image and/or sound improvisation in distributed networks.

reinforce an idea one moment, the next it may provide a means of seeing something never seen before' (Knoespel, 2001: 147). Similarly, Doruff's concept of diagrammatic praxis is intended to provide the expanding set of artist practitioners who struggle to articulate a process of thought and practice with a 'toolbox of applicable concepts and techniques' that 'affords a tangible approach to the movement of ideas and the emergence of form' (Doruff, 2011b: 2).

The problem with the extant formulation of diagrammatic praxis though is that it partitions productivity between the author and the spectator. The later only fits into diagrammatics as a collaborator. As Doruff states about her vision for diagrammatic praxis, diagrams facilitate 'parallel encounters between practitioners and publics' (Doruff, 2011b: 2) through collaborative production or 'social networking' (Doruff, 2011c: 1). Diagramming, for her, is a tool that enables speculation on our current collaborative ecology. On this point her work follows Deleuze's understanding of 'a different kind of diagram, a different machine, closer to theatre than to the factory' (Deleuze, 2006: 30). The issue raised here about the theatricality of diagrams concerns how they operate, or more specifically perform, as an information conduit between the author and the addressee – much in the same way that a stage or auditorium operates to distinguish between an actor and spectator. By aligning diagramming with theatre Doruff asks us to consider the 'formalizing and visualizing of co-authorship processes' (Doruff, 2011c: 2). Namely she questions how diagrams merge the stage of performance and the spectator. Generally speaking there are two common methods by which the divisiveness of the stage – divided between the actor and spectator as well positions of activity and passivity – can be contested. The first method involves mobilising the 'passive' spectator into the 'active' participator. Antonin Artaud's manifesto for a 'Theatre of cruelty' (in *The theatre and its double*, 1938) notably advocates this stance, whereby he proposes the spectator should be forced to abdicate any position and distance of the viewer. The second method aims at removing the distinctive physical boundaries of the stage and the auditorium, between performance and life, by taking theatre out into life. The Situationists typically exemplify this standpoint, especially their subversive political pranks that take art onto the streets.

Of the two strategies Doruff aligns diagramming to the latter. In previous writings she draws from the concept of drifting or *dérive* of Situationists' practice to evoke a 'perception and performance of place' that 'elicits a topology of the in-between' (Doruff, 2007: 1)⁴. We can see this topology of the in-between emerge

4 Guy Debord defines *dérive* as: 'A mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances' (Debord, 1958).

in her thinking on diagramming as a re-imagining of how to perform the ‘place’ of thought through what can be described as ‘purposeful disorientation’ in an aesthetic sphere (Doruff, 2007: 5). The examples given in her writing on diagrammatic praxis include Web 2.0 infrastructure and projects such as FLOSS (Free/Libre and Open Source Software) and the Bricolabs initiative. These projects represent open, collaborative, internationally distributed production and development regimes that demonstrate a certain ethical distribution of know-how. The spectator operates in these systems through coinciding with actors, whereby the subjective positions of each are made to collide and break apart through a kind of *dérive*. By thinking through diagramming as an open process – which in modern art means that the relationship between the artist and the public is founded on a much greater degree of collaboration – Doruff sees the medium as a visible collaborative performance of ‘place’. The place in question results from the artist and spectator’s co-habitation and joint passage through creative production. The community that diagrams both mediate and map can therefore be said to echo something of Nicholas Bourriaud’s concept of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002). The community of production arises by placing the tools of artistic production in the hands of spectators, and thereby activate them by forming a specific context of participation. The open aesthetic space of diagrams can consequently be summarised as a ‘collective belonging-together through the integration and differentiation of diagrammatic strategies’ (Doruff, 2011: 7).

Diagrammatic equality

The issue I have with the collaborative position of Doruff’s diagrammatic praxis is that it ends up merely reproducing the spectator within a master plot, whether in the form of artist/spectator or producer/consumer. As Stephen Wright points out in his critique of relational aesthetics in his essay ‘The delicate essence of artistic collaboration’, these interactions never actually alter the established class-based power relations, but sustain the division between ‘those who hold the symbolic capital’ (the artists) and ‘those whose labour (such as it is) are used to foster the accumulation of more capital’ (Wright, 2004: 535). An alternative spectator/actor dynamic can be achieved if we approach the issue from Rancière’s viewpoint of intellectual emancipation. In his essay ‘The emancipated spectator’ Rancière reforms the relationship between actor and spectator by first questioning the *a priori* association between spectatorship and passivity. The spectator/actor divide is founded on the basic principle that the stage is the proper place of activity, while viewing is a passive state traditionally aligned with not-knowing (Rancière, 2009: 2). Invariably theatrical discourse becomes embroiled around this point and is concerned with critique of the spectacle. This

debate encompasses whether or not theatre is ‘bad’ because it invites passivity, as Plato originally proposed in *Republic*, or whether it is positive, such as when conceived of as activating the audience as a kind of ‘drama’ in which ‘living bodies ... are to be mobilised’ (Rancière, 2009: 3). The idea of intellectual emancipation offers a third perspective because it is built on the equality of intelligences. This means knowing that all humans learn the same way, through the comparison and reading of signs. Rancière calls this the ‘poetic labour of translating’ (Rancière, 2009: 10), whereby the opposition between the labour of the audience and author, between viewing and acting, breaks down because equal activity is present on both sides of the equation.

Rancière’s initial research into intellectual equality comes from his investigation into the peculiar story of Joseph Jacotot developed in *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation* (1991). The investigation follows the theory of a schoolteacher who, in the early nineteenth century, claimed that illiterate parents could themselves teach their children how to read based on understanding an equality of intelligence. Jacotot’s demonstration of the ability of one ‘ignoramus’ to teach another what they themselves do not know was revived by Rancière in the 1980s as an entrance into the debates of that time on public education. Intellectual equality is referred to as a process of intellectual emancipation because it is counter-posed to the stultification of the pedagogical model, which asserts that the difference between the one who knows and the ignoramus is really dependent on one’s ‘knowledge of ignorance’ (Rancière, 2009: 9). Knowledge of ignorance means that while the task of the schoolmaster is to reduce the gap of knowledge between their position and the pupil’s, it begins by teaching the one who is ignorant their own inability. As such what is established is a hierarchy of knowledge that asserts a specific ordering or collection of knowledge, from what is simple to what is complex, on which trajectory the ignoramus’ position of knowing is asserted as always below the schoolmaster’s. Intelligence is therefore unequal. This division is overcome when learning is prefigured by an intellectual regime fore-grounded by a ‘labour of translation’. Whereas the distances between the poles of knowledge in the pedagogical model were vast and almost ungraspable, here the distance, although not abolished, is assumed as simply ‘the normal condition of any communication’ (Rancière, 2009: 10). Learning is therefore simply a matter of practicing one’s own ability to translate the sensible world.

In ‘The emancipated spectator’ intellectual equality is revived specifically as an entrance into the debate on the aesthetic spectacle. Following the logic of intellectual equality, the division between the artist and the spectator is negated because we approach each position from the base understanding that all humans learn in the same way. Each person learns by venturing, as Rancière puts it, ‘into

the forest of things and signs', and 'by observing and comparing one thing with another, a sign with a fact, a sign with another sign' (Rancière, 2009: 10). The defining difference between the co-authorship of Doruff's diagrammatic praxis compared to intellectual equality can be identified by how each formulates an idea of the spectator's labour. For Doruff the spectator diagrams through being included in a collaborative labour. For Rancière the spectator first and foremost engages with the practice of their own labour, which is in every way equal to that of the artist. I do not propose that Doruff purports to situate the spectator in diagrammatic praxis based on a pedagogical model. Nevertheless, her placing of the spectator in a role of co-authorship does mean that the spectator's position is always already asserted in relation to the other (the artist). If instead we pursue Rancière's model of intellectual equality, then we seek only to express a dialogue of translation and counter-translation of sensible stimuli as it is encountered for each individual regardless of whether they are the artist or spectator. The capacity for the spectator to engage with diagrammatic praxis therefore need not be supplemented by an artificial pairing with the author. Furthermore, the goal of emancipating the spectator is not to transform ignoramuses into scholars, as Rancière puts it, nor even spectators into actors. On the contrary the goal is to understanding the specificity of the knowledge and the activity already at work in the spectator and the artist alike. In fact, as Rancière insists, we are all spectators. Moreover, '[b]eing a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity', rather, '[i]t is our normal situation' (Rancière, 2009: 17).

Arrows into diagrams

By interrogating diagrams from the perspective of intellectual emancipation I intend to offer an alternative model by which to judge the organisation of spectators in the prevailing system of information reception and production. Re-thinking the participatory bond between author and spectator according to their equality will also demonstrate how the spectator is not merely activated in the circulation of information, but rather how spectators produce authentic and autonomous experiences of their own. The next step in this intellectual adventure is to understand how spectators enter into diagramming in the first instance.

Following the logic of intellectual equality, we can say that spectators enter into the 'concrete assemblage' of diagrams through the same 'line of passage' that Doruff reserves for artistic practice (Doruff, 2011b: 6). Lines of diagrammatic passage in creative practices, be it studio, research or writing based, occur when one's activity is 'interleaved' with the processes it attempts to map. Fragments of thoughts, relations and non-relations are embedded in the content and expression of diagrams and, consequently, demark points of passage or entry to

the possibilities contained within its process. In product design and quality defect prevention this is literally the case when cause-and-effect diagrams (Ishikawa diagrams) are implemented to identify potential factors that cause an overall effect on the whole process. These diagrams were pioneered by Kaoru Ishikawa in the 1960s as a way to map quality management processes in the Kawasaki shipyards and disclose new possibilities for re-imaging production processes. The spectator's entry point into diagrams occurs through a similar passage between trying to map processes of thought and identifying new possibilities of doing so. In this case, though, the line of passage marks where the spectator intersects the diagrammatic form and, from that intersection, connects to all other points of the diagram and its content. As Doruff says, it is what moves us 'outside the stratified zone of the audiovisual' (Doruff, 2011b: 6).

To visualise this movement she suggests we think of the portal of diagrammatic entry through the analogy of an archway. Archways offer a bifurcating passage because the form can be considered as both the difference and similarity of concavity and convexity (see Fig.1). The point at which this doubling of perception takes place, highlighted on the illustration in Fig.1 with a dashed line, is the point at which our perception of the arch can be twisted and rendered anew. This marks the point of inflection, meaning that the steps we have already taken in forming perceptions can be re-traced, re-considered and potentially re-drawn.

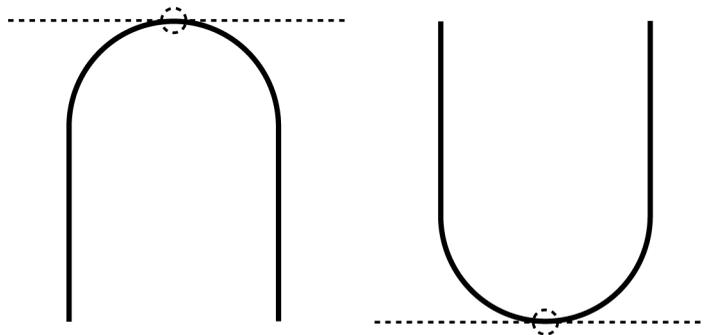


Fig.1: The point of inflection in an archway

So how does the spectator enter into inflection via diagrams? Let us consider the artwork *Arrows* by Alan Brooks (Fig.2). This work was shown as part of the exhibition *Diagrammatic form* at Banner Repeater in London (2012) and at Brooks' solo show *City* at MOT International's London gallery (2013). *Arrows* is one of a hundred elaborately detailed renderings in pencil crayon on paper that are collectively titled *The city* (2010-2013) and based on Frans Masereel's 1920 book *The city: A vision in woodcuts*. In Brooks' work diagrams are prolific. On the broader scale, he invokes the visual qualities of a diagram by organising *The city's*

one hundred drawings across a single black-painted wall. Arrayed against the surface of the wall, the informational cacophony of content that he has pulled from gossip magazines, newspapers, the internet, personal photographs, architectural drawings, and literary fragments act like visual links communicating possible relations, frictions and movements. In their totality this has the effect of turning individual pictorial fictions into a diagram of the artist's thinking through what it means to be a metropolitan citizen.

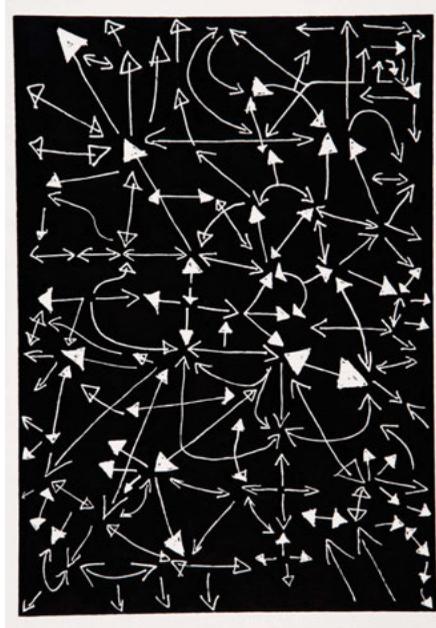


Fig.2: Alan Brooks, *Arrows*, pencil crayon on paper (2010-2013). Image courtesy of MOT International Gallery.

There are also individual drawings in the collection that are clearly diagrammatic in their own right, with *Arrows* being a clear example. *Arrows* presents the spectator with drawings of a common diagrammatic device, the arrow. I would like to be clear at this point that by referring to this artwork, or indeed *City* as a whole, as a diagram I am not questioning its status as art. Indeed, diagrams and art need not be counterposed to each other. The artist simply uses diagrammatic tropes in order to map his private and sensual relation to the subject matter. Moreover, the diagrammatic form compliments the artist's attempt to articulate his abstract relationship to the infinite narratives of the urban environment and what it means to live in a city, and furthermore express his process of thought without falling into literal representations. The sensual element of the artwork, rather than being diminished by my focus on *Arrows'* diagrammatic qualities, is part of the reason why I have chosen to illustrate the current argument with an example from art. The aesthetic space of a gallery encourages one to be aware of

the act of viewing and responding to visual stimulus in a way that is not so evident when viewing a diagram in a textbook. That is not to say that the viewer of a diagram in a textbook is not drawn into diagramming in the same way. Simply that the aesthetic model lends itself more readily to analysis.

Taking *Arrows* aside from *The city*, Brooks presents us with a diagrammatic narrative where the normal registers of reference are missing. Just as Masereel created stories without words, here the images of arrows remain quasi-directive pointers where the coherence of their direction, association, intelligibility and logic has been either erased, never existed or is yet unknown to us. On first encountering *Arrows* the spectator is therefore presented with a problematic informational device. It is problematic because it does not tell us everything. Yet precisely because of this failure the diagram also operates to encourage diagramming. To understand how by not telling us everything *Arrows* promotes diagrammatic praxis we need to consider how it conflicts the informational paradigm of immaterial labour. *Arrows* is problematic for the spectator because it brings the two roles of consuming and communicating into conflict. On one hand, we have a subject whom biopolitical production valorises as a 'relayer' of information. On the other hand, diagrammatic praxis encourages the spectator to experience information by becoming-relational to it. Walter Benjamin, in his 1933 essay 'The storyteller', says that the difference between information and the experience of lived experience is that information is 'shot through with explanation' (Benjamin, 1999: 89) and, because of this, leaves no room for one to live in it. Information is what is immediately plausible, instantly verifiable and digestible (Benjamin, 1999: 88). In contrast to the immediacy of information Benjamin asks us to consider the story. The story is what comes from afar, borrows from the miraculous, and does not entirely expend itself at the telling. In a similar manner, diagrams stand apart from other forms of information because they disseminate knowledge only partially. In Doruff's words, diagrams produce 'objects of partial capture' (Doruff, 2011b: 2). For instance, the degree of openness that Doruff highlights as an important aspect of diagramming corresponds to a degree of information that is left open in the work, which designates an ambiguity that allows for interpretation. We can see this methodology evidenced in *Arrows* by the way that it strips instruction of its functionality and removes it from prompt verifiability. Indeed, as with the act of storytelling, merely half the art is to be found in the action of telling a story. The other half occurs in what 'is left up to [the listener] to interpret things the way he understands them' (Benjamin, 1999: 89). Rancière makes a similar claim regarding the role of artists in relation to intellectual equality:

Like researchers, artists construct the stages where the manifestation and effect of their skills are exhibited, rendered uncertain in the terms of the new idiom that

conveys a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story. (Rancière, 2009: 22)

Brooks, like the artist of Rancière's description, has more in common with Benjamin's storyteller than he does with today's informational producer. This is because his work relies on input from outside of the diagrammatic frame. It requires spectators to develop their own story from their encounter with *Arrows* (and also *The city*) based on personal interpretation. Rather than presenting us with structured systems of feedback loops mastered by inputs and outputs, *Arrows* in this respect is what we would call machinic. Namely, diagrams are machines 'shaped by a desire for abolition', whereby its 'emergence is doubled with breakdown' (Guattari, 1995: 37). Insofar as diagrams are machinic, they are not resolved or self-maintaining operations, but subject to failure. The subject of *Arrows* clearly plays on this breakdown by pointing the spectator nowhere and purposely failing to convey meaning or information. Brooks' diagram consequently requires human interaction. This necessity for humans to diagram with *Arrows* (and diagrams in general), to venture into its field of signs for themselves, is what makes the medium so problematic to the consumer/communicator schema. The bifurcating portal, in this respect, refers not merely to a specific point, trigger or sign in a diagram that causes reflection. The diagram itself is the point of passage.

In the terminology of intellectual emancipation, diagrams would be instances of a minimum common link between the artist and spectator. This is what Rancière calls the 'third thing'. The 'third thing' is what stands between the artistic performance and the spectator as an autonomous meaning in signification (Rancière, 2009: 15) and forms a crucial element in intellectual emancipation. For Joseph Jacotot (in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*) this 'third thing' was a bilingual book (a copy of *Télémaque*) that formed the minimal link of the thing in common and made transmission possible. In order for diagrams to stand between the artist and the spectator as a common link, a diagram must be an independent and autonomous medium. This means that there must first be a withdrawal of authority. Diagrammatic praxis is capable of achieving this withdrawal where other performative mediums that attempt to resolve the artist/spectator divide fail. Activities aimed at exploding the constraints of theatre by taking possession of the street, for instance, only allow us to go so far in breaking down the barriers of stage and auditorium by enforcing active participation. But an enforced participation is not enough. To achieve a sensible redistribution of information a dislocation of the ordering of places and peoples needs to be complimented by a dislocation of knowledge. The dynamic and re-writable framework of diagrams achieves this by effectively alienating the artist's production from the artist

(because it remains open) and, conversely, the artist from their production (because, as Knoespel has said, 'it may provide a means of seeing something never seen before'). This introduces two important distances: the first between the artist and the spectator, the second instigated by the diagram itself. In Rancière's logic of emancipation this culminates in the introduction of the 'third thing', which is always interposed between the two other points of distance (the teacher and the *ignotus*, or the artist and the spectator) through which they can verify a common ground of learning. The 'third thing' is necessarily alien to both parties, otherwise it would give preference to one or the other, but also must stand as something to which they can both refer to as a common point of verification. As a result of the transmission of the 'third thing' the spectator enters into creative relation with information. They do not merely relay codification and de-codification, because what they have been presented with (a diagram) does not come to them from a position of authority.

Lines of inflection

I have said that diagrams are problematic because they bring into conflict the conjunction of consumption and communication. This conflict is not something that is added to the equation consumption/communication, but rather is already inherent within it. The persistence of this struggle is what the spectator becomes implicit with beyond the bifurcating portal, where 'lines of resistance or lines of flight' (Doruff, 2011b: 6) converge and break apart. On the level of signs and information, by diagramming with diagrams the spectator encounters a process of re-tracing and re-drawing into clarity one's stratified perception of signs. This makes diagrams invaluable to pedagogical practices. For instance, the artist, writer and University lecturer John Cussans has reflected candidly on a career spent using diagrams as teaching tools in his text 'Diagram as thinking machine: Art as metapractice' (2012). In particular he points to how diagrams can be applied in lectures, as tutorial aids and in student notebooks to compliment other teaching methods. The benefit of diagrams, he notes, is that they practically help students see and understand relationships across disciplines. Diagrams help the subject disclose their own relation between philosophical concepts, art theory, art making, thinking and writing from an entirely personal perspective, which might otherwise have been obscured in traditional pedagogical models. This is because rather than simply reflect established relations of perception, diagramming gives the pupil a space and time to consider alternative possibilities of perception. On one hand, traditional pedagogical formats that are based on a teacher/student formation pursue a mode of authority in which information communicates itself, for instance in the tone that relates to a historicity of knowledge as one does to a lecture. On the other hand, by following a mode of intellectual adventurism the

spectator/student is able to play with knowledge without making of it a lesson, but allowing a space for one's own disturbances to exist.

To represent the event of entering into diagrammatics Doruff suggests we think of a fold (Fig.3)⁵. The fold defines a mixed up state of 'agitation, modulation and mutation' (Doruff, 2011b: 7). It occurs when external diagrams move to an internal diagramming. For the spectator this occurs when contemplation of their own drawing and re-drawing of perception takes place (either in real or virtual space). Rather than approach a field of enquiry by simply attempting to draw a clear line across it to demarcate its substances, we should think of the fold as opening up like a crevasse. Whereas the surface of a line defines the barrier between an inside and outside space – much in the same way as the line or barrier stands between the two constituents in the signification algorithm S/s (Signifier/signified) – the fold is where 'words and things are opened up by the environment without ever coinciding' (Doruff, 2011b: 7). Because Doruff draws much of her inspiration here from Deleuze, I propose we should also understand her conception of the fold in the context of his use of the term in *The fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. For Deleuze the fold is a layering of relationships, twisted to fold one upon another, whose function it is to interpret how we amass and organise actions (Deleuze, 1993).

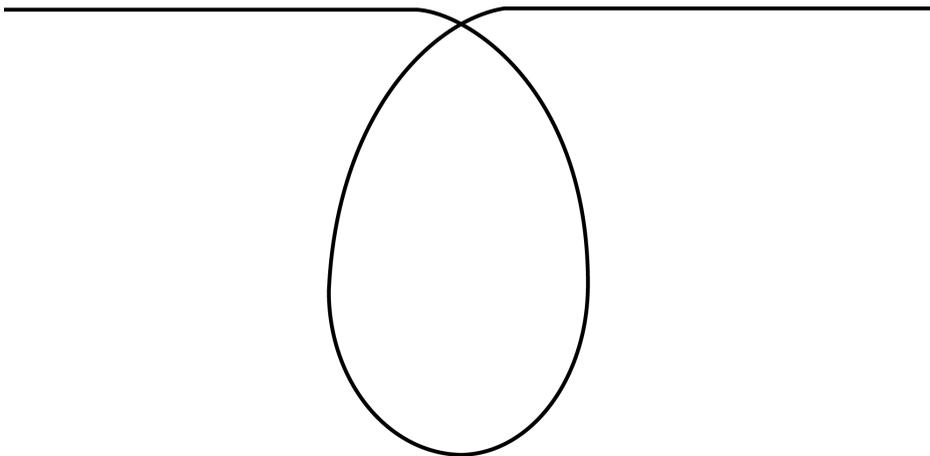


Fig.3: Illustration of a fold

The fold, or encounter between the spectator and the illogical directional instruction of *Arrows* does not, however, only open up reflection on a particular sign. The encounter in this instance also opens up the general schema of

⁵ Here Doruff is referencing Deleuze's diagram of the Foucaultian diagram found in the book *Foucault*, specifically the chapter 'Foldings, or the inside of thought (subjectivation)' (Deleuze, 2006: 78-101).

informational handling. Using the idea of the fold we can map this process on Fig.4. On the surface of the interaction (Fig.4) an encounter happens between the spectator's two positions of subjectivity: as the active subject and the inflective subject. The former position defines the spectator according to Lazzarato's conception of how subjectivities are activated in the production process of immaterial labour. Here the spectator is activated in consuming and communicating information. The latter position arises because of the partial discord of diagrams, which hinders the spectator's relating to information in the usual way. As a result, the inflection point marked on Fig.4 defines where the spectator is drawn into diagrammatic praxis and an inflective relation with the informational product occurs. From this point information ceases to be a fixed form. It is like a lecturer drawing a diagram on a chalkboard and then passing the chalk and a cloth to the pupils. A shift takes place from the spectator engaging with information as a linear or causal relation, to suddenly being able to plot on it their own informal lines of relation.

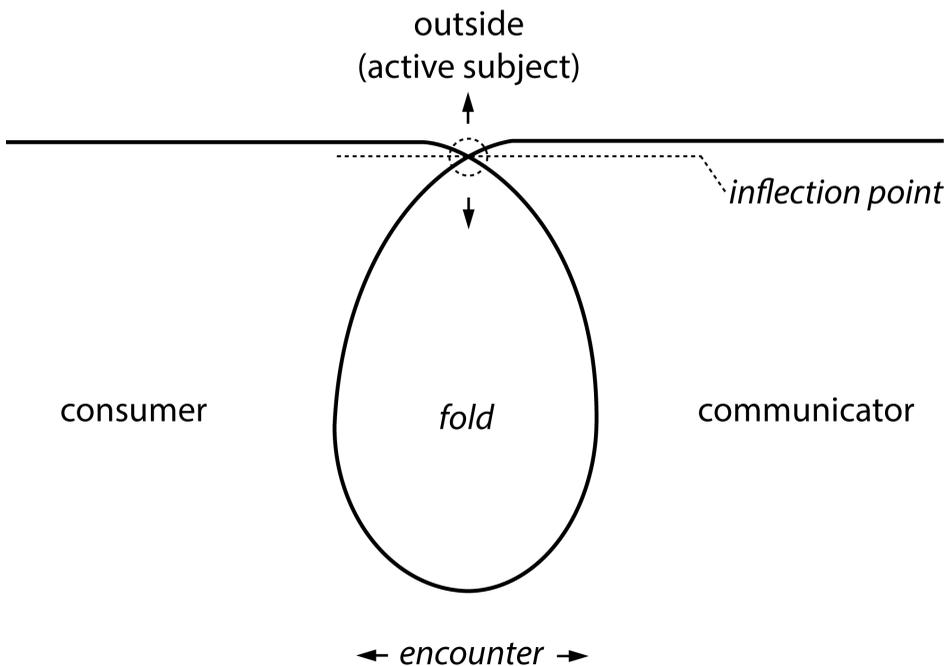


Fig.4: The spectator's encounter with inflection shown as a fold

The spectator's relationship with information at play here is more than a simple discourse between positions of interior and exterior. Firstly, the interrelation between outside and inside defines subjective positions of activity: between, on one side, the external activity of the 'active subject' who relates to information as a fixed form, and on the other side, one's internal inflective praxis. Secondly, as the informational content is inflected (made re-markable) the spectator also

becomes relational to their personal mediation of consumption and communication (marked in Fig.4 by the internal ‘encounter’ between them). This second relation takes place within the fold. It occurs because the spectator’s diagramming with diagrams, such as *Arrows*, brings into question one’s relation to an informational event as its inherent double and conjoined activity of external and internal contemplation. The interior and exterior do not simply reference the other, but fundamentally express a state of interrelatedness where distinctions between inside and outside, un-thought and thought are re-drawn.

Re-ordering one’s exterior and interior sense of perception is a dissensual praxis. Following Rancière’s development of the term dissensus – which underpins his overarching project on the distribution of the sensible and intellectual emancipation – the dissensual is what structures disconnection by assuming the stage of a conflict between two regimes of sense and questions their obviousness (Rancière, 2009: 48-49). Diagrams achieve this crucial dissensual constituent of intellectual emancipation by giving a stage to the conflict between senses of information and the apparent obviousness of our connection/confinement within the established order of sense (as dictated by immaterial production). Based on a process of dissociation, the dissensus of diagrammatic praxis dis-identifies the way signs correspond to this or that perception and opens them to a space of free association. Dissensus then forms the kernel of the relationship between diagrams, art and politics by re-distributing the sensible according to ‘forms of creation that are irreducible to the spatio-temporal horizons of a given factual community’ (Rancière, 2010: 2).

The diagrammatic spectator

Over the following pages I have proposed that the spectator is reconfigured at the level of the consumer/communicator (c/c) schema by the introduction of the spectator’s always already present praxis. In effect this can be thought of as replacing the barrier in the equation c/c with the following: consumer ↔ *praxis* ↔ communicator. Instead of the spectator relaying the process of consumption to communication, they live the encounter between each as a living in the event of mediating information. To conclude this present speculative inquiry I propose that the mediality of one’s living experience in the informational event can be presented with the schema depicted in Fig.5:

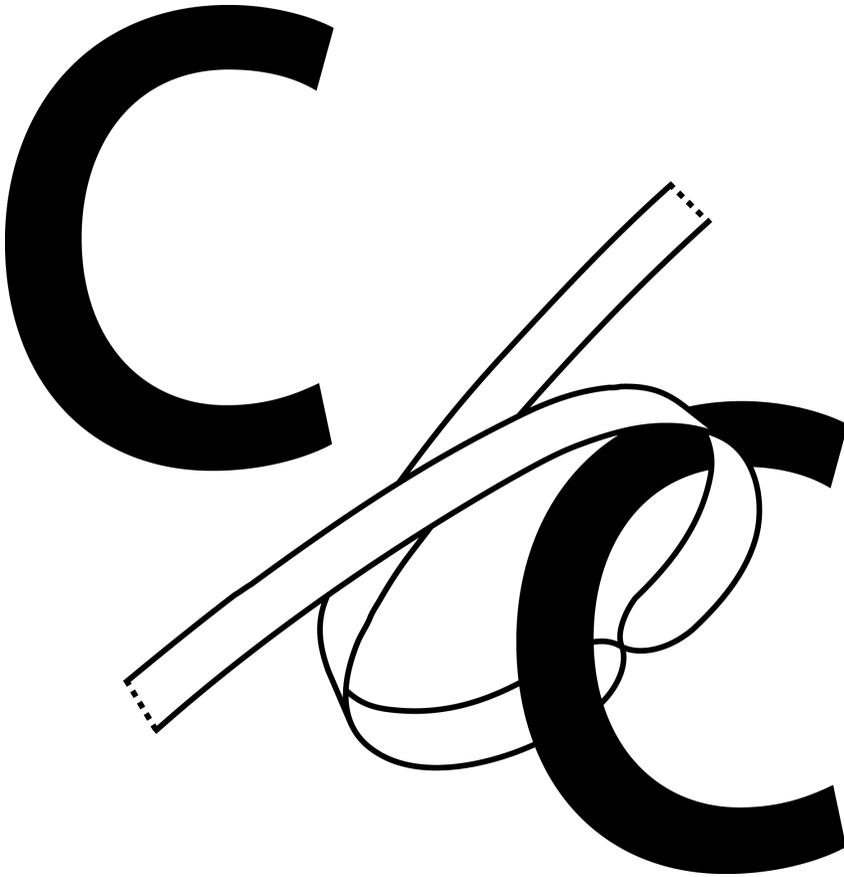


Fig.5: The mediality of consumption/communication expressed as a Möbius folded event

In Fig.5 the folded relation that was previously concealed between the constituents consumption/communication is now expressed as a Möbius folded event. In order to truly express the ‘lived transcoding of the unformed/unthought’ (Doruff, 2009: 122), Doruff argues that the fold (Fig.3) is better illustrated as a Möbius strip. Like a band of paper that has been cut, twisted and then stuck back together, the exterior surface and interior surface now form a single continual plain (Fig.6). Doruff prefers the Möbius fold over the standard fold as a descriptor of diagrammatic praxis because only the Möbius fold expresses how a variety of vectors relate to all other points and not just their polar opposite. The same mechanics apply to the spectator’s inflection across the transverse vectors of active-subject/inflective-subject (outside/inside) and consumer/communicator.

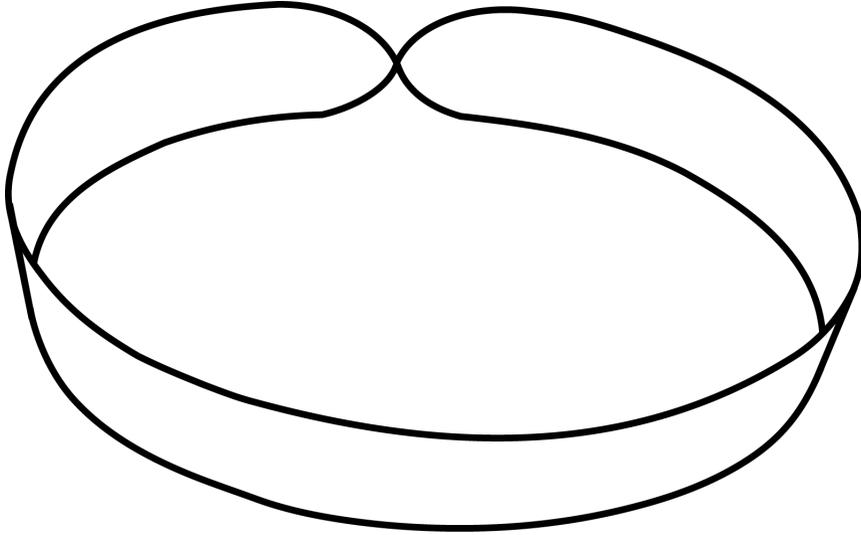


Fig.6: Möbius strip

The spectator's inflection across transverse vectors, as illustrated in Fig. 5, has a number of ramifications for the organisation of information that I wish to draw out in concluding this paper. Firstly, on the level of immaterial labour, the concept of the diagrammatic spectator poses an aesthetic re-organisation of what can be perceived, said and done by re-thinking the notion of 'active' subject and participatory notions of co-production. I propose that diagramming offers a new organisational politics that resists the established order of immaterial labour at the level of how it parcels out activity. Diagrams achieve this by creating a space of praxis that is irreducible to the consumer/communicator schema but gives visibility to the spectator's privative relation with information. As we have seen over the previous pages, the (partial) implementation of information in diagrams works to counter the principle labour of control introduced by immaterial production – which aims to separate subjects from the information they handle by subjugating them to the role of a relay. Diagrams have the potential to contest this control mechanism on three fronts. Firstly, diagrams encourage diagramming, whereby one enters into an inflective relation with information. Secondly, diagrams have the capacity to disavow the sovereignty of authorship and present a space of productive equality. Thirdly, diagrammatic praxis can instigate dissensual activity.

To elaborate, a diagrammatic organisation of aesthetics presents an opportunity to reorganise the artist/spectator relationship by acknowledging respective equalities of praxis. As a result, a viable model of production that includes the artist and spectator within a common field can be achieved without false recourse to participatory notions of co-production beyond the space of exhibition, or by

placing artistic tools and *operandi* at the disposal of the spectator. While the folding and unfolding of knowledge through the diagrammatic event defines a common space of subsistence, it does not result in outputs of co-habitation. Instead, diagrams preserve the autonomous investigation of each constituent. This is because diagrams have the potential to operate in the role of what Rancière calls the 'third thing'. They are necessarily alien to both parties while simultaneously standing as a common point of verification. The diagrammatic investigation of one party is not subsumed to the other, but rather forms a connection and disconnection between them. This can be summarised as a point of dissensual dis-identification that makes visible the delimitations of the author/spectator commonality by showing how their forms of creation are irreducible to a single regime of presentation. At its core, then, the organisational distribution of diagrammatics would be built on an equality of mediation. Furthermore, diagramming brings to life an informational space where the normal conditions of consuming and communicating are subjected to pure mediation. Here the adjective 'pure' is added to mediation to designate a 'pure' force of suspension that takes place when *praxis* becomes a new medium in itself.

The notion of the diagrammatic spectator also challenges the bleak diagnoses of immaterial labour in general. The profound changes brought about by immaterial labour have radically altered the organisation of production (in terms of the composition, management, and regulation of the workforce) by modifying the role and function of individuals and their activities. As Lazzarato has stated, the present labour of control means that 'personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organisation and command' (Lazzarato, 1996). However, present diagnoses of immaterial labour do not take into account the aesthetic potential for spectators to reorganise for themselves what can be perceived, said and done. This is the position of critique that can be offered by diagrammatics. Diagrams and diagrammatic praxis would therefore allow spectators to question the forms and mechanisms by which they are constrained to operate in capitalist production, its oppression of personal autonomy and creativity, and the occlusion of the consumer/communicator's own ideological reproduction, from the inside. In diagramming with diagrams the subject confronts their own sense of loss with regard to meaning ('meaning' insofar as we are talking about an ideological product). When spectators experience the potentiality of their own means, for instance by accepting their own authority to diagram, the apparent reality concealed behind the circulation of information is unveiled as false and the exploitative regime of the 'active' subject is no longer able to impose its obviousness on all. Diagrammatic praxis becomes in a sense the kind of radical autonomous space that Lazzarato speculated might possibly exist within the productive synergies of immaterial labour.

The above mentioned re-organisation of the artist/spectator plot and the contestation of the 'active' subject also have various methodological implementations. In general, the benefit of diagrammatic equality lies in the potential to organise research around the practice of those that would otherwise be excluded. In relation to art, spectators are often excluded from creative practice/research because their role is limited to that of the passive viewer or as a collaborator who is merely activated by the artist. In the field of organisation, the excluded might be the workers who comprise the social units of an organisation. Namely those whose interactions are often the subject of mapping exercises that plot the social structures of businesses and bureaucracy, but who otherwise are not involved in the actual creative process of mapping. Artists, researchers and authors would be able to produce instances of dissensual social relations, however, when they do not simply distribute their knowledge to the community – which can generally be called an aesthetic community of sense or a '*sensus communis*' (because what constitutes a common ground is 'sensation' itself) (Rancière, 2009: 56-57) – but invite a re-drawing of knowledge by each participant in the community. Furthermore, diagramming need not function only as two-dimensional objects drawn on a piece of paper, a journal article or in a book. New multi-media tools such as interactive whiteboards and handheld pointing devices (such as those commonly utilised by game consuls to detect movement in three dimensions) can be used to perform diagramming in a public space. These technologies make it entirely practical to envision a transformation of the auditorium, lectures, symposia and presentations around a diagrammatic space. One might envision the result of this kind of interrelation to be a changeable map of a discussion, concept or argument as it is (re)plotted and (re)inferred live by a multitude of spectators. In a similar vein, diagrams can be used as spaces for propositions and hypothesis to be aired without being solidified. For instance, structural diagrams of organisations, corporations, or even the state, could employ interactive tools so as to engage their constituents directly and allow them to think through their own participation in these structures. Such strategies offer researchers new opportunities for disseminating work in a manner that invites not just feedback from its audience, but critical perspectives for further re-drawing.

In the field of pedagogy, diagrams also offer an invaluable toolbox with which to communicate across disciplines, subjects and practices. In the situation of art education in particular, diagrams give lecturers, students and researchers a practical methodology with which to meet head on the demands arising from the recent development of a research culture in the arts. This is primarily the position in which Doruff views diagrammatic praxis. However, by expanding the practice of diagramming to include the practice of spectators, we are able to re-think discourses on how education is communicated and received by introducing

the question of inflection. A more pointed application of diagrammatic praxis would be to use the autonomy and alienation (from the author) of diagrams to expand the toolbox of protest pedagogy. In art and art education a conflict arises between how those representing protest speak, write, or perform and how that work is consumed or returned to the very system of funding, validation, and recognition that it seeks to critique (Rodda, 2012). Pedagogy about protest, conducted through protest and in protest (Cussans, 2011: 1) requires artists, educators and researchers to organise themselves from a critical territory of autonomy. Diagrams and diagramming can achieve this because they can occupy a mode of distribution that cannot be easily fixed within existing value systems. The dominant example in UK Higher Education is the Research Excellence Framework (previously the Research Assessment Exercise) – a five yearly survey of the quality of research being done in Universities. The valorisation of an academic work under the REF is completely subordinated to the circulation of information. Value is judged by the spread or circulation of a paper, book, or artwork through precisely its being consumed and re-communicated in the form of citations by academics (the ‘active’ subjects of universities). By interjecting diagrammatic strategies into research the authority of authorship can be questioned and a multitude of academic and non-academic perceptions given equal footing. Diagrammatic methodologies would therefore operate as mediation for intellectual production in a similar way to open source production. Open source publishing (such as FLOSS and, to some extent the *Journal of Artistic Research’s* open source Research Catalogue) currently offers some tentative examples of how production into presence might occur outside of the fetters of returnable capital. In these instances a program or text is not really published but shared. The product is not distributed as already validated, but instead opened up to an environment that maintains its re-markability. Diagrams similarly operate as open source points of access to information and thought where the spectator’s processes of creation are given an equal position of visibility in an otherwise author-centric sphere of communication. Free or open school initiatives (such as The Free University of Liverpool, the Really Free School, and Free School in a New Dark Age) could use diagramming, then, as a workable medium of production, reception and distribution in order to organise effectively and consistently outside of the fetters of contemporary neoliberal policies in UK education.

The potential applications for diagrammatics I have detailed above are by no means exhaustive. These speculations nevertheless highlight something of the terrain of possibility that arises from rethinking diagrams as forms of intellectual emancipation. The broader ramifications of diagramming are still to be mapped, and constantly re-mapped by being put into practice. What will evidently emerge are various forms of inflection into the underlying power relations of

information, words and images. However this does not mean that diagrammatic praxis merely presents a methodology for mapping the individual by their processes of thought. At its most critical, diagramming is concerned with the very topology of thought, our performance of information and the power relations (whether between individuals or between the individual and production, economy or information) that are woven through these processes. What artists, educators and researchers are able to tap into by using diagrams are new sensory relationships that result from the author's frame of perception meeting and being modified by the spectator's frame of perception. The frames of perceptions are not merged, or one subjected to the other. Each is its own intellectual adventure demarcated in a space without connections. Just as the equality of knowledge means that each person is responsible for approaching their own knowledge in the forest of signs, so too can we say that each author and spectator is responsible for cracking open their own regime of distributing perception. It is a matter, Rancière insists, 'of shaping a new body and a new sensorium for oneself' (Rancière, 2009: 71). This adventure begins when we step beyond the inflection point and into the diagram.

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