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## Abstract

In my introduction to Gilles Chatelet's book on geometry and phenomenology, *Les enjeux du mobile* (Seuil, 1993),<sup>1</sup> I draw attention to the recent critical interest in phenomenology of diagrams in mathematics, cognitive science, and architectural theory. Just as we were reminded about our logocentric orientation to space several years ago, we are now challenged to ask how our definition and navigation of space can be balanced by a more deliberative inquiry into a phenomenology of shape-writing that includes diagrams. This paper extends my preliminary work on diagrams in geometry to architecture. Drawing on Eisenman and others, I will notice that while architecture is a natural scene for diagram, it continues to be shaped by a history of architecture that coincides with a history of aesthetically defined objects. Another way to say this is to notice how space remains conceptually bifurcated through definitions that either move on historical or cognitive paths. In this study, I want to ask in particular if diagram opens an investigation of syntax in architecture just as metaphor has provoked inquiry into the linguistic function of syntax.

The first part of the discussion will emphasize the iterative, experimental function of diagram within architectural design. The inventive space of diagram is neither lego-like nor a physical play with a priori toy blocks but an effort to create new shape-logics. Here architecture is an extension of experimental geometry. Here diagrams which may initially be framed by narrative provoke renarrativization. In the second part, I consider the iterative application of diagram within architectural practice. The iterative use of diagrams within architectural practice and construction coincide with the iterative use of technological extension. Here diagrams reveal an instrumentality that permits them to move from being agents that negotiate space to be instruments that manipulate space. In the third, I will pose questions about diagrams in the theory and practice of architecture: 1) how are diagrams related to the oral and bodily negotiation of space?; 2) what do diagrammatic operations tell us about our capacity to experience a continuum; 3) in what ways are diagrams mediating devices (spatial logoi) which

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1. See "Diagrammatic Writing and the Configuration of Space," Introduction to Gilles Chatelet, *Figuring Space: Philosophy, Mathematics, and Physics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), ix-xxiii; English translation of, *Les enjeux du mobile: mathématique, physique, philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 1993).

permit one to establish a relationship between two human beings; 4) what relation do diagrams have to technology? How does technology bear vestiges of the diagrammatic process which is part of its genealogy?

I conclude my remarks by showing that the study of diagram within architecture reveals the Janus-like nature of architecture in the sense that diagrams provide sites of experiment and invention just as they may define stages of application and construction. From the vantage point of philosophy, diagrams move from epistemology to ontology. The continuum provided by diagram becomes ruptured, however, when the diagrammatic function is defined by the completed structure (ready-made architecture) rather than an evolving phenomenology of space (architecture in the making).

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