Disposition

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Spaces are rarely considered to possess disposition. A building, landscape or an interior might be described in terms of its appearance, geometrical composition or visual pattern. Spaces are considered to be objects or volumes, not actors with agency or temperament that might even be evaluated for, for instance, a quotient of aggression, submission, or exclusivity immanent in their arrangement.

Disposition is a familiar but nuanced word best understood by using it. Acquiring that understanding is similar to the way that disposition itself operates. Consequently, the word flourishes in common parlance and usually describes an unfolding understanding of temperament, relative position, or tendency in either beings or objects. Francois Jullien has given the example of a round ball and an inclined plane as a situation possessing disposition – the potentials of a situation as they are associated with factors including geometry and position among many other things. Sugar is soluble in water. A student is recalcitrant. A barbiturate induces rest. A subatomic particle spins in a particular way. A dog is aggressive. All of these are dispositions, tendencies, propensities, or properties that are interacting with other factors. The latent potential is expressed as a quotient of action that exists without the need for the actual movement or event. Disposition locates activity, not in movement, but in relationship or relative position. The physical objects in spatial arrangements and infrastructure, static as they may seem to be, possess agency. While from some perspectives this verges on the oxymoronic or supernatural, some of the most familiar practical encounters with physical material and organization are typically handled with dispositional expressions. Disposition, as the unfolding relationship between potentials, resists science and codification in favor of art or practice.

A discourse on disposition from several different disciplines, including philosophy, theater, organization, art, aesthetics, and sociotechnical networks, may contribute faculties and techniques useful in shaping the noosphere. This volume treats the noosphere as a mental as well as an urban space, or as a domain of reciprocating influences between the two. It posits that neurophysiological architecture and urban architecture project and make each other interdependently. The means to alter noopolitics can be found in interior virtual territory as well as exterior physical territory. For instance, ideation and habit of mind project scripts onto the urban sphere, and the interactions between these scripts and urban infrastructures gradually author the city. Altering perceptions, attentions, and habits of mind in this relationship may be as powerful as altering the geometric and volumetric space of the city. Any of these adjustments can re-center attentions, unseat powers, or redistribute economies. The discourse on disposition is bound up in this mode of change, and it is helpful because it tracks not only the stated content or intention of an urban design but also its spin – the English on the persuasion that causes the design to travel through culture. Yet, going further, the interplay between mental and urban strata of the noosphere is also a reflection of

organizational character that remains unexpressed or undeclared but *immanent* in the organization. Here, a discourse on disposition lends an essential understanding of, not only the affect of persuasion, but also the activity and potential latent in relative positions and arrangements (for example, the shape of the ball and its position on the plane). Neurophysiological structures of the brain or organizations of infrastructure networks possess latent activities, protocols, and time-released powers – propensities that also reciprocally influence one another.

In conceptions of form that are limited to outline, volume, geometry, or some other direct form of declaration, these powerful dispositional strata remain invisible and underexploited. They are verbs and tendencies that escape nominative designations or documented events. A contemplation on disposition stretches disciplinary habits of mind to consider a common art for shaping the object as well as the way it plays – an art with enhanced faculties for *conditioning* material and immaterial parameters with active forms, aesthetic practices, and political trajectories, which may even be located at a remove in space and time. Further tutoring an expanded political repertoire, these *active forms* are capable of embodying discrepancies and slippery, undeclared forms of power.[1]

Knowing How and Knowing That

For many disciplines, form is object, name, fixed signification, vessel, or template. Yet form is commonly used as both a noun and a verb to describe not only the shape, structure, outline, or appearance, but also the act of creating these attributes. Social forms describe those activities by which a cultural practice takes shape, becomes formalized or recognizable. For the poet or artist, similarly, form may refer to shape or arrangement or a reusable vessel of creative output as well as a process of formalizing. For designers, authorship of form as an object reliant on profile, shape, and geometry is a crucial, fundamental skill. If asked to create something called active form, designers would naturally rely on what they are best trained to create – formal objects themed, choreographed, or dressed to represent action. For instance, geometry is used to name or fix an arrangement or to create a placeholder for a process that cannot be named or fixed. A single enclosure is meant to represent, for example, relativity or embryology. An architect embracing Deleuze and Guattari might make an homage to *Le Pli* with a folded building or represent the *diagram* (something that cannot be represented because it is evolving) with choreographed, serialized geometric patterns. In grasping for apprehension of an evolving spatial field with changing components, the architect designs the *field* in its entirety with a fixed architectural pattern. The more complex or agitated these tracings, the more 'active' the form is meant to be. A more simple-minded confusion (made more powerful by being simple-minded) arises when action or activity is confused with movement or kineticism as in a building that appears to be moving or a space composed of or populated by moving objects.

For architecture and urbanism as for many schools of thought, the distinction between understanding form as object and form as action is something like the philosopher Gilbert Ryle's distinction between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how.' Ryle was keen to point out the 'ghosts in the machine' or the phantoms harboring in false logics of Cartesian dualism that would separate mind and body. He relished the outlying or nonconforming evidence that challenged familiar constructs and quite frequently found it by coaxing meaning from everyday speech. Ryle's work within ordinary language philosophy harvested these non-conforming phenomena and made them available as meta-critical tools for renovating other logical tangles and fallacies in thinking. For Ryle, 'knowing that' versus 'knowing how' – training the mind to know the answer over training the mind to rehearse actions – was essential to a critique of the mind-body split. Intelligence is often measured in terms of the amount of knowledge that can be acquired, identified or named. If one *knows how* to tell a joke or do gymnastics one can only satisfy the 'intellectualist myth' that knowing how is intelligent only if one knows the proper way to do it and in doing it is doing it right. Yet, as Ryle points out, a skill is not a logical proof that can be correctly or incorrectly reasoned. He argues for an intelligence or way of knowing in *knowing how*. He writes, 'A soldier does not become a shrewd general merely by endorsing the strategic principles of Clausewitz; he must also be competent to apply them. Knowing how to apply maxims cannot be reduced to or derived from, the acceptance of those or any other maxims.' 'Knowing how' is, for Ryle, 'dispositional.'[2]

For instance, Ryle dwells on the performance of a clown as an unfolding encounter. The clown's antics are not mirroring or manifesting as an event that represents a thought process about being funny. 'The clown's skills represent '… a disposition, or a complex of dispositions, and a disposition is a factor of the wrong logical type to be seen or unseen, recorded or unrecorded.'[3] The clown does not possess the correct answer to the question: 'What is funny?' His knowledge and experience unfold in relation to the situation, from encounter to encounter, circumstance to circumstance. He modulates his fluid, plastic expressions in relation to the reactions of the audience. He has well-rehearsed knowledge of how to do a pratfall, exaggerate his facial expressions, modulate his voice, or introduce any other gag in his bag of tricks in improvisation according to the audience's reaction. What is funny is contingent on a set of possible pathways and choices. 'We can now come back to consider dispositional statements, namely statements to the effect that a mentioned thing, beast or person, has a certain capacity, tendency or propensity, or is subject to a certain liability.'[4]

Ryle emphasizes the latency of dispositional action, and significantly considers dispositional qualities in both human and non-human subjects. Disposition remains as a potential or tendency until activated, but it is present even in the absence of an event. Sometimes such an action cannot be recorded, not because it is a 'ghostly happening, but because it is not a happening at all.' He used

1 Dispositions and Causal Powers, eds. Max Kistler and Bruno Gnassounou (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).
2 Gilbert Ryle, **The Concept of Mind** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 27-32.
3 Ibid., 33.
4 Ibid., 123.

the example of a glass that was brittle, an attribute that was not in evidence unless the glass was shattered. He writes that to 'possess a dispositional property is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change, when a particular condition is realized.'[5] It is a 'hypothetical proposition' about the glass different from an event or 'episode.'[6] The disposition cannot be proven as a definite 'occurrence' or what we might consider to be a definitive and singular piece of evidence. A person has the capacity or tendency to sing or smoke. The dog can swim. Rubber has a tendency to lose its elasticity. 'My being a habitual smoker does not entail that I am at this or that moment smoking; it is my permanent proneness to smoke when I am not eating, sleeping, lecturing or attending funerals, and have not quite recently been smoking.'[7]

Ryle emphasizes that disposition, by its very nature, is not absolute but serial and indeterminate or gleaned from multiple observations of activity. Dispositional attributes, sometimes remain as a fuzzy imponderable within customary logics and epistemes because they do not constitute an event but must rather be observed over time as a potentiality, capacity, ability, or tendency. Ryle refutes those theories that associate disposition with occult agencies or causes, that is, things existing, or processes taking place, in 'a sort of limbo world.'[8] As a continuum of values dispositional expressions cannot be controlled, only inflected, conditioned or tutored. To know about the disposition of a person, for instance, is to know about their likely behaviors and practices in the world. Ryle cites Jane Austen's various vantage points on the pride possessed by one of her characters.[9] There may be rules about how an organization is to behave, but the disposition of the organization is an indication of how that organization dealt with the rules over time – how it absorbed or deflected the active forms moving within it. To know about the disposition of a material may be to know about its tendencies to be elastic or brittle. As it evolves from observing activities, disposition does not describe a constant, but rather a changing set of actions from which to assess agency. A temperamental disposition, for instance, describes, not an absolute, but an inclination toward a particular demeanor. Disposition requires more than a single encounter. For instance, only multiple deformations of a balloon would signal a disposition to plastic behavior in that material. A function in calculus describes the behavior of a number of values, which if mapped tend to form a curve with variable amplitude. The expression describes the disposition of those values to form a curve. Being able to locate one point, one episode, one value would not be sufficient.

To disregard 'knowing how' in favor of 'knowing that' is to discount evidence of dispositional activity as unknowable, simply because it is seen to be indeterminate or impossible to formalize. Disposition is composed of a cocktail of successive

active forms, indeterminate in its totality, but explicitly derived as it emerges. Knowing that – unresponsive to naming and declaration – involves its own explicit techniques for shaping serial activity. It does not answer to, nor is it the result of a reasoned executive intellectual order. To discard these dispositions as occult or to misinterpret them as echoes or a representation would be to discard much of what we practice in everyday life. With highly developed discourses to treat object, content, outline, and nominative, culture remains under-rehearsed in making action, medium, relation, or infinitive as material. Whatever Ryle's particular arguments regarding the concept of mind, the notion of disposition travels and informs other organizations. In pointing out the ways in which some actions elude various quarantines of language and difference between naming and doing, Ryle raises further questions about what constitutes action or latent action and exposes ghosts that haunt the discussion of action and space.

With regard to spatial phenomenon, to limit design to the making of discrete objects on discrete sites that can be named and assessed with geometry is very similar to denying the ability to 'know how' in favor of 'knowing that' – to denying the dispositional phenomenon, or *active forms*, that shape most of the space in the world.

Active forms do not require an event or a movement. They are active even when they are static because that activity may be latent, serial, and indeterminate. Active forms might be manifest in movement, but they might describe agency, practices, or capacities that are not bound by a single event. For instance, active forms describe the way that some alteration performs within a group, multiplies across a field, reconditions a population, or generates a network. Moreover, the forms that alter physical space may not be themselves physical. Often working together with form as object, active forms are conceived as agency or contagion within a spatial field, and the extent of their contact may be out of control. The designer of active forms is designing the delta or the means by which the organization changes – not the field in its entirety but the way it is inflected. The designer of active forms designs not only the shape or profile of the game piece, but rather a repertoire for how the game piece can be played. So while perhaps intensely involved with material and geometry, active forms are inclusive of but not limited to enclosure and may move beyond the conventional architectural site. Active forms are not at odds with, but rather propel and expand the power of form as object. As they may ride larger organizations, they are instrumental to additional modes of authorship with time-released powers and cascading effects.

As Ryle noted in his discussion of a clown's performance, the transposition from the nominative to the active that requires so much ideation and analysis in some schools of thought like design is a completely ordinary or practical matter in some other disciplines like theater. Working up to their elbows in the construction of dispositional action, those in the theater come very close to

5 Ibid., 43.
6 Ibid., 89, 116.
7 Ibid., 43.**8** Ibid., 119-20.
9 Ibid., 42-4.

handling action as an essential raw material while being completely uninterested in its codification. An actor adheres to an explicit script, but the scripted words are considered only to be traces or artifacts that provide hints of an underlying action. An actor constructs a scene as a string of sequenced actions. Often it is that action that is the meaning or information that is conveyed. The script is not merely ossified form, but it has shaded meaning as it is enacted. Actors rarely deal with nominative or descriptive expressions – states of being or mood. One cannot play 'being a mother' for instance. In theater this is usually a bad performance because its self-reflexivity lessens the possibility of listening to and interacting with other performers. It is an expression in the nominative rather than the infinitive – what is known in the theater as 'indicating' – a form of over-articulation that is akin to the 'single track' about which Ryle writes. Theatrical techniques often privilege infinitive expressions. The director asks the actor: 'What are you doing?' It is generally agreed that leading with action or letting a vivid action carry the words rather than the other way around is a relatively durable technique. Again the action that is leading the performance is not necessarily movement, gestures, blocking, or choreography. It is the driving intent expressed as an active verb.[10] An actor knows that stillness and silence are incredibly powerful actions. An actor would play not 'being a mother' but rather 'smothering a child.' Uncertainty, or the inability to fix meaning, does not paralyze but rather catalyzes the process. The words of the textual script together with the movement constitute an action that is the real carrier of information – the consequence, change, or event. The repertoire constructed for a role is explicit while remaining flexible enough to be, again quite practically, reactive and improvisational.

Information   Theater as a discipline for crafting action similarly attracts Bruno Latour in an analysis of those evolving qualities of social and technical networks that are central to noopolitical territory. Latour was among a group of scholars and researchers who theorized interactions between social and technical, or sociotechnical, networks, everything from communications media to electrical networks and other infrastructure. The work has correspondences to not only philosophical and sociological but also spatial and political considerations of disposition. For Ryle, locating dispositional activity in inanimate, static objects as well as animate beings demonstrates the ways that disposition delivers indeterminacy to some of the familiar habits of knowing and logics of reasoning. Like Ryle, Latour works on the shape of action (human and non-human, social and technical), to question some suppositions in studies of social networks.

Action, form, actor, actant, script, and information are words that refract between disciplinary and general usages. Both Latour and Ryle note oscillating glimpses of reciprocal formatting between formal uses and common parlance. For instance, an actor is a participant in a group. In a discussion of urbanism or infrastructure, as in many studies of sociotechnical networks, both the social and technical sides of the networks are considered to be active and intertwined. Similarly, the word script, used in the theater, is also used in social studies to describe the instructions and practices that attend and inflect social networks and their technologies. As in theater, a script has no binding meaning, it is only one layer of many layers of signals.

> It is not by accident that this expression, like that of 'person', comes from the stage…. To use the word 'actor' means that it's never clear who and what is acting when we act since an actor on stage is never alone in acting. Play-acting puts us immediately into a thick imbroglio where the question of who is carrying out the action has become unfathomable.[11]

Latour considers the special attributes of action as a carrier of meaning – the difference between the declaration associated with the nominative and the multiple valences associated with the infinitive. He considers action as a source of uncertainty. While there is 'something social that *carries out* the acting,' that structure that can be named does not substitute for the action that is never 'transparent.' He variously describes action as a 'surprise,' or 'mediation.'[12] Action, he writes is 'dislocated.' It is 'borrowed, distributed, suggested, influence dominated betrayed, translated.'[13] It is an 'under-determination.' Action is not under the full control of consciousness; Latour considers that 'action should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled. It is this venerable source of uncertainty that we wish to render vivid again in the odd expression of actor-network.[14]

For Latour, things, whether they are human or non-human, have agency; they are actively 'doing something.'[15] One of Latour's first speculations about *actants* considered a door and the technology of a hinge and/or door closer. While it might seem an elementary example, the door demonstrates the ways in which there remains a mental obstruction to considering objects as active. The door is not active because it moves. It is technology fashioned by humans and even sometimes imbued with anthropomorphic qualities and while it is not human it is not divorced from the human. Nothing then can be merely an object, according to Latour. It is a thing that not only induces relational action from humans, but also is itself an actant. With dizzying oscillations and complications, more things are actors, and this 'concatenation' of actors and actants reciprocally format each other. This relationship alone renders most technologies active. Similarly, in a discussion of infrastructure, the most static roadways or the cable lying at the bottom of the ocean are actants – members of an active organization.

10 Sharing a sensibility with theater, Ryle, for instance, makes as distinction between active verbs or 'performance verbs' and verbs like 'know,' 'possess' and 'aspire.' One would not say, for instance: 'He is now engaged in possessing a bicycle.' Ryle, **The Concept of Mind**, 116, 130.
11 Bruno Latour, **Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 46.
12 Ibid., 45.
13 Ibid., 46.
14 Ibid., 44.
15 Ibid., 46.

The storing and releasing of crafted action or active forms as crucial to understanding a social network as it is crucial to understanding infrastructure or theater. For Latour, social forms are not something to be taxonomized and fixed, but rather catalyzed in an 'infra-language.' Forms are carriers, something against which to measure differences or societal valences. Form, he writes, is 'simply something which allows something else to be transported from one site to another. Form then becomes one of the most important types of translations. Such a displacement from ideal to material can be extended to *information*. To provide a piece of information is the action of putting something into a form.'[16]

Rather than maintain social science in a 'steady state,' Latour sets about to renovate and '[redefine] sociology not as the "science of the social", but as the tracing of associations.'[17] His recent versions of this actor-network theory (ANT) in *Reassembling the Social,* for instance, constitute his own 'critical sociology.'[18] Concerned that human actors or non-human actants in the study of social networks might simply become 'placeholders' that reinforce existing assumptions, Latour calls attention to an unfolding trajectory of activities that is harder to fix. To study social networks is to continually 'follow the actors.'[19]

Agency   Resonant with both Ryle and Latour, Gregory Bateson's manipulation of active forms is especially insightful at this juncture. Ryle describes disposition as a latent or inherent property of both materials and intentions, Latour retools social science techniques to account for the ever-unfolding dispositional nature of sociotechnical networks. Bateson, perhaps most overtly landing in the noopolitical territory, posited the cybernetic model as a means to create equilibrium amid violent tensions in the mind, the group and the larger political scene. As a cyberneticist his position is sympathetic to that of Latour in that he expresses form as information – not a vessel to fix meaning but rather a flow of meanings. Bateson characterized information as a cybernetic instrument, a universal unit or elementary particle. 'Information is a difference that makes a difference,' Bateson famously wrote.[20] Objects as well as actions are not anthropomorphized as little selves that possess mood and intentionality, but the degree to which they 'make a difference' in the world, they constitute influence, components of intention, *information* for the cybernetician. Setting aside some holistic conclusions and codifications, information shapes morphology and organization in biological or machinic, human or non-human systems. Assessing any group, whether be it electronic circuits, nations, tribes from New Guinea, or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings with this cybernetic epistemology, Bateson could also transpose sociological assessments of tension and violence to organizations of inanimate objects. Where Ryle describes disposition as inherent properties (glass that is brittle, for instance), Batson can naturally extend an understanding of disposition to include behaviors inherent in groups. For the architect of the city, Bateson's simple tools foster an understanding of stability, tension, violence,

aggression, interdependence, or competition that are literally immanent in urban organizations. In this way, Bateson's agile travel through many noopolitical strata assesses something like the political agency, temperament, or disposition of an organization.

For instance, Bateson wrote about a number of binary patterns in behavior whether between individuals or groups as in 'Republican-Democrat, political Right-Left, sex differentiation, god and the devil, and so on.' He noted that people attempt to 'impose a binary pattern upon phenomena which are not dual in nature – youth versus age, labor versus capital, mind versus matter.' So ingrained were these binary habits for formation and group behavior that its proponents could envision no other. Bateson was interested in ternary systems as an alternative to binaries. He suggested that the proponents of binary relationships 'lack the organizational devices for handling triangular systems; the inception of a "third party" is always regarded, for example, as a threat to political organization.' He was especially interested in how and why these binaries generated divisive situations or schismogenesis.[21]

Bateson offered models of three types of binary relationships in groups: symmetrical, complimentary, and reciprocal. In symmetrical relationships both sides of the binary compete for the same dominant position. They mirror each other, and their mimicry may escalate toward 'extreme rivalry and ultimately to hostility and the breakdown of the whole system.'[22] Some of these binaries he characterized as complementary motifs: 'dominance-submission, succoring-dependence and exhibitionism-spectatorship.'[23] In complementary behavior, one party provides the necessary ingredient of the other. While that ingredient might be reinforcing and stabilizing in some instances, it often leads to hostility and schismogenesis if 'submissiveness promotes further assertiveness which in turn will promote further submissiveness.'[24] In reciprocal relationships the various groups that occasionally form binaries oscillate between symmetrical and complementary relationships.

16 Ibid., 39, 223.
17 Ibid., 5, 8-9, 10-11. For instance, Latour departs from colleague Wiebe Bijker's work because 'the social is kept stable all along and accounts for the shape of technological change.' See: Bijker, Wiebe E. **Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change**, Inside Technology. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995; or Bijker, Wiebe E., Thomas Parke Hughes, and T. J. Pinch. **The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology**. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987.
18 Ibid. Latour, however has both critiqued and extended the sociological work. He departs from Durkheimian practices and steps away from, for instance, Irving Goffman's work or Pierre Bourdieu's critical sociology. Goffman and Bourdieu both use the word disposition in a way most pertinent to social studies. Bourdieu, who was also transposing his work to an active realm of practice, used the word disposition to describe a repeatedly structured set of cultural activities or **habitus**. Latour perhaps extends this work by suggesting that sociology might overcome its own **habitus** to further consider practices. He even departs from a branch of sociotechnical studies, arguing that they enshrine social forms as structured patterns or habits or reified some structures of social 'science,' when these were the very constructs he wished to renovate with considerations of both humans and things, actors and non-human actants in networks.
19 Ibid., 39.
20 Gregory Bateson, **Steps to an Ecology of Mind** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 21, 272, 315, 381, 462.
21 Ibid., 95.
22 Ibid., 68.
23 Ibid., 95.
24 Ibid., 68.

There is an understanding that dominance might be shared or that one group might be submissive in some encounters and dominant in others. Reciprocal relationships distribute power over time and allow for trading roles in a way that stabilizes the relationship.

For the purposes of this discussion, Bateson linked information flow in organizations to dispositions of productivity, stability, violence, and collapse. In the competitive or destructive states, the flow of information collapses, whereas in the more balanced postures information is more easily exchanged. Bateson considered the stabilizing effects of breaking binaries with ternary systems that further increased the possibility of exchange. While it makes little sense to devise a system of codifying disposition merely in terms of numbers (such as monadic, binary, or ternary systems), Bateson offers an understanding of the disposition of an organization in terms of interdependence between an organization and its receptivity to extrinsic information or its ability to juggle multiple logics. Propensities toward aggression or its relief are significant markers in the craft of conditioning political disposition.

While cybernetic preoccupations facilitate an understanding of the interdependence between organization, logic, or morphology and receptivity to information, that understanding extends beyond Bateson's primary analysis to address even more elaborate political dispositions. Again, an understanding of disposition is also frequently rediscovered in the familiar. Many network topologies (for instance linear, hub and spoke, serial, parallel, hierarchical, rhizomic) are implicitly understood to possess disposition (patency, redundancy, hierarchy, recursivity, resilience, aggression, submission, exclusion, collusion, or duplicity). Culture understands the unfolding behaviors and power relationships of these networks in terms of their geometry, logic, and arrangement. The same fluency reverberates between digital, biological and spatial networks. For instance the power relationships between a hierarchical or nonhierarchical structure are familiar, as is an understanding of the resilience of a serial versus a parallel network arrangement.

Discrepancy   As they are stored in the active strata of communication, dispositions can escape the expectations of the nominative, and yet the discrepancy between those expectations lends special powers of discrepancy. The indeterminacy of dispositional expressions that Ryle and Latour identified supported their critique of fixed declarations of language or social 'science.' Attempting to name active form results in the hilarious mismatch between a label that intends to fix meaning and a form capable of eluding that label because it is generated by entirely different means. In the case of a Levittown house, for instance, the active form was not itself physical, but rather a protocol for building. A set of sequenced moves concerning financing, foundation building, framing, plumbing, electrifying, roofing, or cladding were applied sequentially to create a field of homes. The object for sale was identified as a 'colonial-style' house, yet if the buyer or the

architectural reformer identified the form as an objectified enclosure, they were sure to be either disappointed or misdirected. The confusion is not the result of a misrepresentation, but something closer to a more profound miscue on the order of Ryle's 'category mistake.' Indeed, rhetorical labels that did not match the economic and political engines that fueled their dispositional trajectory have accompanied most infrastructures, wars, cities, and other spatial programs. The inadvertent as well as the deliberate divergence of label and active form offer powerful political opportunities.

Erving Goffman's contemplation of disposition explores this power of discrepancy. Like Ryle and Latour, sociologist Goffman was intrigued by both theatrical and social performance. He used the term disposition rather casually to describe the entire performance – the spoken words, gestures, postures, and the facial expression – that constitute an individual's presentation of self. Goffman marveled that while these myriad subtexts outnumbered, often even overwhelmed, the stated text, yet they were often not 'systematically examined.' He simply admitted into evidence not only the language that is decipherable with customary techniques, but also the glyphs and gestures that reside in an active realm of practices. In doing so, his groundbreaking work could step into an enormous field of material that often constitutes a large measure of communication. Goffman, like Ryle, found in the performance of language a trajectory of activities and agencies that cannot be named but rather operate with dispositional logics.

> Everyone knows that when individuals in the presence of others respond to events, their glances, looks and postural shifts carry all kinds of implication and meaning. When in these settings words are spoken, then tone of voice, manner of uptake, restarts, and the variously positioned pauses similarly qualify. As does manner of listening. Every adult is wonderfully accomplished in producing all of these effects, and wonderfully perceptive in catching their significance when performed by accessible others. Everywhere and constantly this gestural resource is employed, yet rarely itself is systematically examined.[25]

Since Goffman observed that meaning and intent coalesce from the multiple, and often contradictory, scripts presented, discrepancy is often the subject and material of his work. For Goffman, it is often the disconnect between the supposed text of an individual's presentation and what they are actually doing or enacting that is the material, and it is unusual material. Despite both expectations of and self-congratulations for sincerity, discrepancy is ironically at the heart of communication. What Goffman has in his hands, the material of his study, is often contradiction, caprice, and disguise. From the active forms he studies, where meaning is quite difficult to determine, it is the fluidity and slippery passage of meaning that is the material.

25 Erving Goffman, **Forms of Talk** (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 1-2.

Like Latour, Goffman directly refers to the craft of theatrical performance as a model when he writes:

> A character staged in a theater is not in some ways real, nor does it have the same kind of real consequences as does the thoroughly contrived character performed by a confidence man; but the successful staging of either of these types of false figures involves use of real techniques – the same techniques by which everyday persons sustain their real social situations.[26]

The notion of performance is relevant not only because it is similar to the play-acting involved with myriad gestures of self construction and presentation, but also because of the essential 'dislocation' that Latour suggests is involved in the transposition from nominative to infinitive. In theater, actions, intentions, and motives are stored not only in words and voice but in the body, in sound, gesture, attitude. Action is the material that is used to make things and create meaning. The spoken text is not fixed and meaning as expressed in action may be the opposite of the stated meaning. The actor is saying, 'I am pleased to meet you,' while gently placing a teacup in the saucer. Despite the stated meaning, the character may actually be expelling someone from society. Despite the apparent civility, the real event may be quite violent. In the scene where the actor is saying to another character, 'I don't love you' they may be actually tearing away at a wall that separates them from the other character. Indeed, just as actors have recipes and tricks for fooling their body and voice into being another body and voice, they become quite good at creating these cocktails of opposing intentions – playing actions that are entirely different from outward movements, text, and gestures.

While it is no great revelation to note that individuals, organizations, or governments are duplicitous, most disciplines train in techniques of reconciliation and verification of evidence, symptoms, and circumstances using their own disciplinary standards, laws, and tests for what constitutes information. Most business organizations maintain an isomorphism that eschews contradiction of its rules and general principles. A training in literary theory or sociology might involve learning techniques for determining signification or codifying cultural forms, just as a training in design reifies knowledge of a canon of buildings and their geometries. Training in the arts often encourages the discovery of an authentic self. One does not ordinarily train in discrepancy or trickery, because this is treated as another ghost, or as a form of magic. It is the supernatural of forthright communication, the wispy smoke that passes between the supposedly solid field of signifiers. Training to be a hustler or a con man is dispositional. These skills are 'picked up' by those sensitive to active forms and in the process of enacting them. Active form and disposition are handled in craft, and the form of tutelage is itself dispositional.

In *The Politics of Aesthetics,* Jacques Rancière develops an understanding of aesthetics that 'does not refer to a theory of sensibility, taste, and pleasure for art amateurs.' Like all the thinkers considered here, he considers the forms of art in terms of active or dispositional logics. Aesthetics cannot be codified as a set of guides or rules that culture carefully tends and maintains. He focuses on 'aesthetic practices' that both 'depict' and enact, that articulate 'ways of doing and making.' Aesthetics exists not as a form but as a changing regime of forms that are full of meaning but not determinate meaning. Rancière describes the ways in which forms are 'distributed' into various strata of the sensible.[27] Significantly, he does not discuss the aesthetics of politics, but the politics of aesthetics – the politics surrounding the reception of a work of art. He describes, for instance, not the pageant of goose-stepping soldiers in a Zeppelin field, nor the aestheticizing of resistance as fervid disappointment. Rather, he writes about the way art is used to generate political activity. For instance, his early study *The Nights of Labor* delivered eccentric evidence to some enshrined political theory by uncovering the way that workers involved in the revolution of 1830 used the desire for art to fuel their fight. Like the discrepancies and dislocations of active forms, the art itself did not take revolution as its subject or content, but was rather an instrument for enacting politics. Similarly, Flaubert's Madame Bovary, in its reception, relayed to its audience a liberating disposition despite Flaubert's conservative politics. 'When *Madame Bovary* was published, or *Sentimental Education*, these works were immediately perceived as "democracy in literature" despite Flaubert's aristocratic situation and political conformism. His very refusal to entrust literature with any message whatsoever was considered to be evidence of democratic equality.'[28] Rancière is describing the way an aesthetic regime might marshal political power in even more unpredictable ways. He writes: 'At the heart of what I call the aesthetic regime of art is the loss of any determinate relationship between a work and its audience, between its sensible presence and an effect that will be its natural end.'

With active, dispositional forms, the ostensible content, text, or objective form is less relevant than the trajectory of that content (since content and disposition may be discrepant). Objective form that presents shape and contour can be attributed to and controlled by an author, and this is at least part of its seduction. Active form, on the other hand, takes pleasure in its ability to create cascading effects and alterations. It does not wish to maintain a particular contour, but rather to maintain a behavior within an organization or a network. Names may be used, designations may be made, but they may not matter. In addition, other scripts and intentions may be loaded into the organization without being identified. The content of rumor and gossip is less relevant than the way it behaves. By way of illustration, during the US presidential election of 2008, the rumor that Obama was Muslim was effective precisely because it was so far from the truth. The rumor could be kept alive even longer and repeated twice as much – first to spread the falsehood and then to

26 Erving Goffman, **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life** (New York: Anchor Book/ Doubleday, 1959), 254-5.
27 Jacques Rancière, **The Politics of Aesthetics** (London: Continuum, 2004), 13-14.
28 Ibid., 14.

refute it. The hoax claiming that climate change was itself a hoax, was effective for similar reasons. The bounce of the rumor or hoax may be instrumental in ways that are dislocated from content. Design is often a kind of hoax. Fiction lubricates many of the most powerful and transformative enterprises in the world – whether the construction of buildings or nations.

Dissensus Expectations of proper forthright techniques and territories for political activism supply some of its most significant constraints. Using proxies and obfuscation for protection, power frequently escapes because it is rarely forthright and survives on fluid intentions. The architecture of global relations is not, of course, arranged as a series of symmetrical face-offs or head-to-head battlegrounds. There is ample evidence of overlapping networks of influence and allegiance. Moreover, it may be a mistake to disregard caprice – the subterfuge, hoax, and hyperbole that actually rules the world. The complex logics of duplicity may be more instructive than the straightforward structure of righteousness. Indeed, the notion that there is a proper forthright realm of political negotiation usually acts as the perfect camouflage for parallel political activity. Finding the loophole to absolute logics or zero sum games, power wanders away from the bulls-eye or wriggles out to take shelter in another ruse. It may even come costumed as resistance. Goliath finds a way to pose as David, or multiple forces, assembling and shape-shifting, replace the fantasy Goliath of monolithic capital or corporate culture with even more insidious moving targets. Dissent is then left shaking its fist at an effigy while power mimics or confounds with some other disguise. Activism that shows up at the barricade, the border crossing, and the battleground with familiar political scripts sometimes finds that the real fight or the stealthier forms of violence are happening elsewhere. The opponent of dissent becomes an even more mystical or vaporous force (for example, Capital, Empire, or Neoliberalism). The attempt to name and defy a dispositional force is all the more misdirected. As Jacques Rancière said, 'I would rather talk about dissensus than resistance …'[29]

The weather-changing, medium-changing, compounding capacities of dispositional activism make it among the most powerful tools of dissensus as distinct from resistance. While some political traditions call for inversions and revolutions or some other annihilation of the preceding system, a lateral dispositional shift might be just as radical, but never permanent. These adjustments can be politically powerful in that they can disappear and be discrepant, but they can also serve as the foundational medium that decides what survives. Active forms are meta-agents that can create a sea change capable of disarming a fight, and they are part of the ongoing reconditioning or revolutionizing of a spatiopolitical climate.

Disposition is a word used in common parlance to condition the declarations and events that supposedly constitute forms of knowledge proper. When the art of creating nominative, objective form is in the foreground, dispositional expressions frequently stand to the side as inadmissible evidence or the means to a nuanced, ineffable shading of affect. Yet dispositional techniques extend form-making into another, central and potent territory. They provide the means by which forms find new time-released capacities, and infrastructural territories that are the medium of power and polity. As Ryle, Latour, Bateson, Goffman, and Rancière explore this active register, they rehearse disposition as expressed in ordinary language, unfolding scripts of social networks, group architecture, discrepant presentations of self, and relational aesthetics. As it is bound up in the reciprocal influence of mind and unfolding activity, their work nourishes a contemplation of noopolitical power by offering some new techniques of adjustment and dissensus. An understanding of dispositional active forms catalyzes knowledge of language, social studies, geometry, organization, or aesthetics and sets it spinning in the world over time. Dispositional techniques help to script not only what the form is, but also what it is doing and how it will play.

29 Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey, 'Art of the possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in conversation with Jacques Rancière,' **Artforum International** 7 (March 2007): 256.