

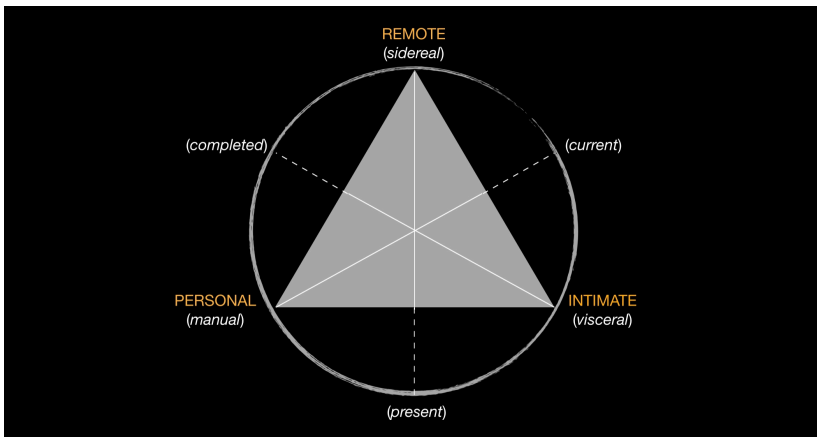


Atlas. Farnèse: Globe with star-catalogue

The closing flyer of the present set is about *reduction* and *augmentation*, in the aim of finding ways of determining—or, at least, discussing—when they go wrong, and when they work. Office procedures are often distinguished by reductions gone bad. While poor augmentation is simply bad taste.

These are stereotypes, of course. In consequence, the question we want to ask is what it takes for reduction and augmentation to work in prototypical ways. This is what distinguishes, in a similarly general fashion, good design. So, we need to determine what makes stereotypes and prototypes different.

There are two general versions of the rebel god—or, Titan—called Atlas. One carrying the heavens on his back. The other the earth. The latter would readily appear to be an aberrance: however, it is likely to have derived from the stereotype of the earth as a globe. But above the heavens are the globe.



Triolectics model (cf. Asger Jørn) of the proxemics of agency

The depiction of the mythological creature Atlas, the Titan, carrying the heavens in the shape of a globe on his shoulders, is the epitome of a *prototype*. That is, a reduction: the observable curvature of the horizon at sea, and the trajectories of the heavenly bodies at night, indicate a sphere.

From our terrestrial position, the curvature of the heavens indeed appears before the curvature of the earth. And at sea, understanding the stellar constellations—at different times of the year, and at different hours—allowed ships to navigate from early on. But from there to Atlas *shoulders*?

In the Farnese Atlas sculpture, something else comes into the equation: the toil and labour of Atlas' enormous and powerful body. The burden adds the *visceral* (relating to the gut of an human-like body) to the *sidereal* (relating to the stars and heavenly bodies). Two determinations of a 'body' meet.

The heavenly body and human body connect, in the body of *making*: the making of the ordered universe, or cosmos. Here, the prototype features an artistic proposition, made up of elements that normally do not come together. For exactly this reason it is *not* a stereotype. Indeed, a *prototype*.

It is a prototype because—once learned—it can be reproduced, at will: for as many times as is useful, desirable or necessary. In this, it is similar to written types. Arguably, typography brings together elements that are manufactured, remote and intimate at the same time. And *readably* so.

A good type does not seek invisibility, but a *specific*—desired and precise—form of visibility. That one that readily is transposed unto an active repertoire, in a different setting. One that can be considered as a domain in its own right. And one that can be assumed in a wide range activities.

That is, it is good enough to be relied upon. And then can prove its worth in salt, in the wake of this bond. A *stereotype*, by contrast, develops by the urge to make expressions and observations more familiar than they are. This excess of familiarity arguably lacks what Kenya Hara calls [exformation](#).

Seeing the communicative potential of making the familiar *less* known, could lead both to augmentation as to reduction. In China, the tea ceremony is augmented. While in Japan it is [reduced](#). But they are both prototypical. It stops reducing/augmenting before it loses its readable outline.

Readability, in one setting, transposes to appropriation in a *different* setting: indeed, what is read from the sidereal globe on Atlas' shoulders, in one setting, can be appropriated in a different setting: the visceral success at navigating at sea, and reaching a harbour. The maker understands this.

The stereotype is a child from a specific kind of failure. The stereotype is the “waterproof” counterpart to the prototype. If the QUAD is seen as a *modus operandi*, the prototype is the corresponding *opus operatum*. When a QUAD falls into pieces, it will readily be receptive and productive of stereotypes.