

Transfixation: Transfixtures and Transfictions: Focalizing Meaning in a Periproxological 'Pataphysics: A Brief Essay

Always and everywhere, one can divine from impressions and sensations the structures and ideas which have been used to make sense(s) of our world and to hold things in place around them. Accidentally, we are constantly collaborating in the continuous creation of these points of orientation, the origin's [(0,0,0)] in our life. In Periproxology, these events and structures are known as Transfixtures [and other times as Transfictions]. The single word oxymoron *transfix* combines the prefix *trans-* {which is about movement across, a going beyond, or a changing thoroughly} with the root *fix* {which means to make stable, to settle definitely, and define rigidly}. The word itself prescribes a solving of motion by stability; when one becomes transfixed, there is a displacement but not erasure of the *trans-* by the *fix*, deferring it into a stable system. Also implied is a continuity of motion by stability; when one becomes transfixed, there is a movement on a higher order that the *trans-* implies the *fix* into, an arrival at fixity and context moved through to become fixed in. A process of Transfixing occurs in the activity of making meaning: when we need to understand something, it must be in relation to something else. This 'something else' must remain stable in order(ing) to understand the first something, and become demarcated specifically as a *something* and not merely as some *stuff*. So that this procession of somethings doesn't go on forever, we must transfix some Thing as the center of our Cartesian Coordinate System that all of the universe can be organized around. Such things, in the form of, say, ideas or sites are termed Transfixtures, pinned to the board with red yarn spinning out in every direction, or the rules of a game to be played. These thoughts and places are also termed Transfictions, denoting the way in which transfixing is a narrativizing act creating a reality which transgresses the functions of fictional and nonfictional considerations. While a transfiction is always a transfixture [and the other way around], there are generally different times when these terms are uniquely deployed, which is outside the scope of this work. For now, I would like to explore and illustrate Transfixation through the following Transfixtures and their Situations of Transfixation: by the Juxtapositioning of Stonehenge, the Chronologies of Heliocentrism, and the Indexicality of the photographic image. Each of these examples acts as a standard for their field - Stonehenge as the ultimate centrality of Space, Heliocentrism as the perfect organizer of Time, and the photographic image as the ideal bearer of Quality.

Each of these examples can only act as such a paragon of its field by in turn stabilizing another field. The Juxtapositioning central to Stonehenge's function as a transfixture, that is its spatial prepositionality, benefits from the persistence of Stonehenge throughout time. Stonehenge has existed as the structure familiar to some humans in some form for over 5000 years, but was already a site of activity for roughly 3000 year before that. It has existed in a way which

stretches back near infinitely, persisting so far back in language and society it can be felt to totally precede history. But even while the site has existed for so long, there is evidence of the continual construction and alteration of it. The people who utilized Stonehenge as a transfixure not only took it at face value, but continually constructed it as a focal point of their lives, and as a vacuum of historicity. In its first iteration, Stonehenge was a burial site. The bones found there, however, were older than the graves, meaning that they were special objects with importance beyond the regular and immediate burial practices. The act of moving these bodies to a location where they could be gathered together was an act of creating a repository dense with history and meaning, canonizing the site to a higher degree. The next major phase of construction saw the addition of wooden structures as the recently deceased began to be buried along with the important figures who had been imported into place. This introduction of structures is a critical moment in the history of Stonehenge -- although the site had been established for at least a century, physically marking the location began the expansion into space which would come to define it as indeed a 'Henge' (and a while later, as 'Stone'). First using wooden posts driven into the ground, there were now tangible objects by which one could orient themselves. Constantly flattening time by persisting into the past and future, Stonehenge used that flat ground to place itself in the center of a physical plane that somebody could judge themselves from in distance or location. Centuries later, the wooden posts were changed out for stones in a plinth and lintel structure. This far more durable material enhanced the structures permanence, and the placement of the stones now corresponded to movement of the planets and sun, allowing for Juxtapositioning to stonehenge to extend beyond the human and into a cosmic arena. In the last major phases of development, more stones were added using the technology of joinery which made them even more stable, and were carved as to give them perspective which made their width constant to somebody looking at it from the ground. This visual relational constancy can be seen as a wonderful metaphor for the more than one thousand year history which had preceded these latest additions.

By being constructed as stable throughout time, Stonehenge is opened for the task of being our exemplary transfixure of Juxtaposition. It is a structure seeming to exist permanently that one can be prepositional to, and can even connect bodies via preposition. Because of the various placements and positions of the stones, one can be (and potentially can *always have been*) above, around, amidst, among, at, between, behind, below, from, near, on, under... etc Stonehenge. It is transfixed as a site of reference for the body, transfixing that body by creating an externality to be placed according to. Because it is not mobile, multiple persons or other objects can exist in reference to it, creating an intermediate point by which to model a path to a moving object, and thereby allowing the possibility of motion. This juxtaposition is possibly at its grandest scale when we look at how it interacts between humans and the stars. The structure uses celestial placement which predicts and approximates events such as solstices and eclipses based on the positions of heavenly bodies as they relate to stonehenge, and certain stones in it. The Heel Stone, for instance, will stand exactly between the center and the sun at the summer

solstice. Here we have a relationship to time through regular events, but only as it relates to movement in space and the visual field, and which is once again entirely judged off the centrality of Stonehenge.

Stonehenge becomes a fulcrum for various social structures as well, a crossroads of the material and spiritual worlds which holds a physical and metaphysical solidity. The dual astronomical and religious functions bring both the natural and supernatural into place transfixed by the site. Ancestor worship linked the present moment with past, and created a stability of self via the family and lineage through the ritual and action performed at Stonehenge and with the physical remnants of the material bodies of families there. Many of the bodies buried at Stonehenge were outsiders from places across Europe far from Amesbury, where it is located. This positioned Stonehenge as a gravitational center of meaning and culture, centering it in the worldview of those who transfix it. In a more local sense, too, it was a fixed center, which we can see when we compare it to the nearby Durrington Walls Henge. This establishes Stonehenge further as an inert site, one of death, as Durrington was a living community existing and changing alongside Stonehenges constancy. The site does not remain in a monumental way as it was repeatedly created by the traces of those actively living there, who would move their dead to Stonehenge and do the ceremonies at this more theoretically and physically durable site from which they drew fixed meaning in their transitory lives at Durrington.

While Stonehenge stabilizes itself throughout time to become the paragon of space, Heliocentrism emerged as a representative of time through a securing of Quality. This flattening of Indexicality by mathesis allows for the Sun as a universal centrality, delineating the movements about it to heliocentrically develop a reference for a Chronologic. Without appraising the actual claim of the Sun as center of either earthly life or the universe, we can see the emergence of this thought as a ideological ubiquity through a overtaking of religious thinking by scientific thinking. The idea of Heliocentrism emerged in the West as early as the 3rd Century BCE, as we can see in references to the astronomy of Aristarchus of Samos, but remained in the background of natural philosophy until it was brought to the fore by Nicolaus Copernicus nearly two millenniums later. There had always been a shaky relationship between physical science with it's noetic understanding of the world and metaphysical religion with it's gnostic understanding, but the propositions of Copernicus decentering the Earth as the lynchpin of a holy anthropocentric universe caused a shift in the fault line cleaving the two worlds. Rivaling astronomers, theologians, inquisitors and rabbis called out against the heliocentric claim on scriptural grounds. Supporters of the Copernican model, most notably it's champion Galileo Galilei, became censured and attacked by the Catholic Church who were attempting to retain their religious claim of a Biblical transfixion on the world. While the departure point of this model was an Earth based Geocentrism mathematically proposed by Ptolmey in the 2nd Century BCE, the two models had a different relation to reality. Ptolmey's Geocentrism aligned with a poetic doctrine of the church, but still used math to create an aperture to see this

non-mathematical reality though. In the *Almagest* he explicitly creates a disjunction between the math and the real, instead proposing his Geocentrism as a model which acts towards a reality which can most likely not truly be known. The era of Enlightenment that accompanies Heliocentrism conflates logos to reality, denying a poetic nature beyond the math of the real. By upholding a dominance of a universal mathesis, the transfixure of Heliocentrism can transform the qualitative into a mode of the quantitative, and portion things out around it as a center of an atomized Chronologies.

When viewed as an event, Heliocentrism shifts away from the Earth distinctly, from looking up at the Sun and the Stars to looking through the Sun in order to then look out at the Universe. In this action, the Earth and those on it become transfixed as data by the subjection of Heliocentrism. For most of history before the advent of advanced telescoping, the Sun was the only heavenly body to display celestial parallax, moving relative to other planets and stars. When the Sun was moved to the center of the Universe, it ordered a history in which it was only seen as moving, when really the Earth and everything else was moving relative to it. And because the Sun placement remains constant, it stays stable at a 't=0', ordering the events about it. As an entry into the temporally prepositional mode which is central to the Heliocentric transfixure, we can look at the numerous specific moments which have been brought up just now. The Copernican Revolution, Ptolmey's assertion of Geocentrism in *Almagest*, Galileo's opposition to the Catholic Church -- the Heliocentric view does not stretch indefinitely across time as Stonehenge seems to, but instead is composed of many events. These events, often seen as revolutions, like that of the Earth around the Sun, can only be understood when they have a reference. Heliocentrism is a transfixure which not only places the Sun in a spacial center, but puts the system of the rotation of bodies about it into a regulated system. This model of the universe creates a timeline which can be demarcated by cycles like years and days, and subdivided into the molecular seconds, creating an ultimated way in which to place things in time. Further than just allowing past events to be put into a chronology based on heliocentric motion, this celestial reference point and the math of it allowed Copernicus to immediately use this model (immediate to the moment of his revolution, immediately starting the next cycle) to plot the placement of other planets and stars in accordance with the Sun throughout any point in history or any point in the future which could be generated by a heliocentrically fragmentable Chronologies. By this calculating of time into a series of events, the predictable future becomes an array of eventualities, nodes waiting for action to occupy them.

All of these future instances generated by the Heliocentric system turn back to strengthen it by acting as plot points. This mathetic transfixure is able to produce its own proof and validate its centrality by these surroundings. Surroundings here can be looked at by seeing how the *-roundings*, that which is around the object, gets modified by *sur-*, meaning above or more than, and raises the stakes of that which are around to be an engulfing and defining surround. This calls to mind not the round of a circle, or even the 'hyperound' of a sphere, but a surround which moves even an abstracted step further beyond. An equation is evaluated based on the points on a

graph it defines, with a minimum of information needed and greater ease at knowing when more information is had. By looking a series of points, a center or average can be deduced from the pattern and frequency of information. The events plotted in time become events by accruing a critical mass of acceptance by points surrounding them, these points being pulled towards an event as too make it appear the center just as we are pulled around the Sun. In this atomization of everything to points of data, along with a removal of quality, the transfixure of Heliocentrism accumulates reality around it and orders things from the center in a Chronological manner.

When looking at the Photographic image as the epitome of a qualitative prepositionality through it's Indexicality and reality claim, we must think about how this is made possible by a domination over Juxtaposition by divorcing itself from a meaningful relation through space. The history of photography is full of instances which show the dislocation of a photographic subject that then becomes transfixed to the object of a picture, relinquished to a system of Indexicality. The earliest example of what would go on to become photography was the effect of the Camera Obscura, a pinholed device which would transfer the image of a subject temporarily onto a separated surface, moving it from the real world of space to projection upon this other surface. The Camera Obscura was unable to secure the image after the subject was out of view of the device, but the critical elements of dislocation and indexicality were very much established by it hundreds of years before the transfixure of photography as we are considering it came into being. The fixing of this dislocation and the importance of overcoming Juxtaposition in the transfixation of the photographic image can be seen by the way the technology of photography progressed over its history. Throughout Europe and America, photographers and chemists were continuously attempting to find ways to refine the ability of quickly capturing the image created through a photographic process. The eighteenth century saw the introduction of certain salts and chemicals such as silver which were able to temporarily preserve a photogram to a surface. In the century following, inventors like Joseph Niépce and his student Louis Daguerre in Paris were able to finally secure images permanently on a material physically independent from the subject of the image. At first, Niépce's methods could only produce a negative image, succeeding in the transference onto a portable paper medium, but lacking a transfixtually convincing Indexicality due to the presentation of an effective opposite to the source. Daguerre advanced on Niépce's methods with the Daguerreotype, and was able to render the images in positive, albeit grayscale, taking a huge step in the ability to capture the index of the photographic subject. These various techniques which developed with the cognizant goal of fixing an image and creating a physical artifact separate from its source and the surrounding situation of it's creation deployed materials like paper and pewter combined with chemicals such as silver-bromides and mercury fumes to ultimately create an indexical object with a stable position and point of view. Beyond the methods of forging the artifact of a photograph -- the production of which holds certain limitations and restrictions -- the size of display shows more control over the possibilities of physical proportionality in the photographic image. While not universal, the transfixure of

photography utilizes the standards of sizing and ratios which have consistently been in play during its history. Even as they become more malleable in the specific, certain ratios and sizes generally dominate how we take photographic images, such as the uniform viewfinder, how we display photographic images, such as the standard widescreen format, and how we interact with photographic images, such as the 4:3 ratio of our televisions or the 4x6 of a standard 35mm (and leaking into other forms) photograph.

These developments in standards of size and method of creation happened not in an event driven and revolutionary way as with the transfixure of Heliocentrism, but instead were a flow of ideas and tactics which interacted with each other marked by a goal. This goal was not the specifics of how one can apply silver gel to a surface in order for it to hold an image, but the teleological ends of a perfect indexicality. This idea of a perfect indexical potential held by a photograph is where the true transfixion we are looking at lies, not the reality of the physical object you see in front of you, but in the scene that it portrays, being created retroactively in its own reality through its presentation flatly in the picture. What is shown here is an aim at reality through the qualitatively prepositional; as opposed to organizing the world by a relativity of time or space, it is judged from a baseline in 'how' the thing is. Just as the site of Stonehenge and the math of Heliocentrism are intangible, the origin indexed by photography becomes sublated by the process of photography and disappears as to become an idealizable referent. Even as early as the Camera Obscura, the temporary image could not be looked at simultaneously as its subject. Further, the mechanism would flip the projection, dissociating the actual prephotographic result from its 'origin' and establishing it not as the subject but directly linked to certain qualities of the subject, and thereby gaining an Indexical claim on something which became dislocated into practical nonexistence when in the transfixation of the photographic image.

Looking at the popularization of photography, we can see a few ways in which the photographic image became a functioning transfixure. Foremost is the recording of quality, taking an imprint of an experience and turning into a document. This was particularly directed in two modes -- the portrait and the landscape -- which served to capture different types of quality in the subject and experience. The portrait emerged in photography through a confluence of social and economic changes in the structure of rapidly modernizing and industrializing society. These factors, the specifics of which are outside of the jurisdiction of this overview, created a demand for a more efficient way to preserve the image of somebody than painting technologies allowed for at the time. This drive for more individuals wanting persisting representation through an image was not only the driving force behind the technical innovation of photography, but the ideological drive of transfixure onto an image that had an indexical claim past a threshold which painting could never reach. So photography was not only a way to expedite the process of image making, but a way to turn it from an 'image making' to an image capturing, or capturing (reality) as image. The Landscape was a record not of people but of places and often occurrences. The photographic landscape started not so much as an Art in the way landscape painting was, but as a way to document travels to other countries -- an updating of

the famous etchings of The Grand Tour. It was a proof of experience and memento to bring certain qualities of an experience one had back with them to another space. This made place transportable by way of a detachable essence catalogued in the indexicality of a photograph, thereby not only updating other forms of souvenir but also creating something which wasn't an artifact of an experience but was the quality of the experience itself pressed into an image. Uniting these was the desire to participate in the real, having a mark of a real experience or journey one had as with landscape, or a sign through portrait of a real person who existed in this transfixing reality pointed to uniquely by photography. The faith people have held in the truth of the photographic image allows for a transfixure to form out of view which is the reality that photographs hold as their index.

These three transfixures each create a unique way in which to define reality, filtering out a certain aspect of the world in order to center another. In the pinning down of reality, there is a factor of eclipsing this reality and being in front of or atop it in order to try and understand what presumably lies behind. In a literal sense, our examples deal with eclipses, each one directing the experience with them. As a stage the universe moves around, Stonehenge predicts the eclipse by placing the heavenly bodies in relation to it in a way which then gains meaning from its vantage point. Correspondingly, humans who transfix meaning through Stonehenge use it as a stage to view and understand these phenomena, looking through its apertures and performing rituals at its site. As a chart the universe is read according to, Heliocentrism plots the eclipse by marking the timing of the events relative to revolutionary movement around the Sun. The event of an eclipse is marked by a regular program and seen as reoccurring intervalation interlocking with other events in a patterned manner. And as an imprint the universe is touched through, Photography observes the eclipse by creating a way to view it, as it is damaging to look directly at it. The Camera Obscura has been used consistently to refract the direct eclipse and be able to safely look at it through a indexical mediation. In the ways these transfixures orient to the eclipse, we can see how they are orientation devices for the world, allowing an understanding of reality while standing in front of the reality they claim to define. The truth that is aimed for by the personal and collective act of transfixation is obscured by the object, within its paradigm, the transfixures truth prevails.