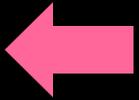
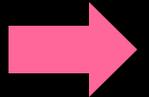


LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD



Whitman: The Democratic Experiment
Democratic Selfhood and “Literature”



Hughes & Stevens: Poetic Perception
McLuhan: The Primacy of Media

PARALLEL PATHS: PERCEPTION & POLITICS



STEVENS

1819-1892

HUGHES



1879-1955

*Let America Be
America Again, 1938*

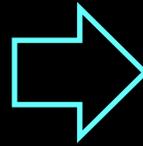
*The Idea of Order
at Key West, 1934*

AMERICAN IMAGINATION



1902-1967

WHITMAN & STEVENS



DEMOCRACY & LITERATURE
"Religious Democracy"

IMAGINATION & REALITY
Poetic Perception

Goal:

dev. democratic selfhood

rethink/value imagination

Criticize our failure to:

create democratic culture

overcome Romanticism

QUIZ 8: WHITMAN

WALLACE STEVENS, 1879-1955

AMERICAN POET OF IMAGINATION

1. Insurance executive, poet
2. Modernism, but against Eliot/Pound
3. Poetry IS philosophy, “religious”
4. Imagination & intelligibility of reality
5. Attending to our basic perceptions is to see the world *poetically*
6. “Truth” is *change* rather than stability (contra Plato, et al.)
7. Topics: Imagination, mind, senses, feeling, change, *human* experience, mortality and finitude



Following Whitman, along with William Carlos Williams:
“rigor of beauty is the quest”

PERCEPTION, IDEAS, POLITICS

AFFECTING CHANGE

1. Whitman: affect “spiritual,” cultural change, politics and policy will follow / *aesthetic experience of ideas (democracy)*
cf. “Occupy Movement,” “Tea Party”
2. Stevens: affect perceptual change, new values and potentials will follow / *imaginative perception of reality (potentiality)*

FUNCTION OF “POETIC VALUE”

1. “Value of knowledge”
a matter of defining and understanding reality, of mastery
2. “Value of faith”
a matter of belief about reality, of attitude
3. “Poetic value” (of imaginative works)
a matter of attention & perception, of apprehending possibilities and relations in yourself, experience, and the world

AESTHETIC EDUCATION, *REVISITED*

CORE EXPERIENCE: *AESTHETIC REASONING*

Recall “aesthetic reasoning” as absolutely *dependent on US*, our active imagination and processes of judgment. We are asked to “see feelingly,” to relinquish our reliance on received concepts, habitual understanding and imaginatively engage the experience and creativity of Reality, as well as its problems.

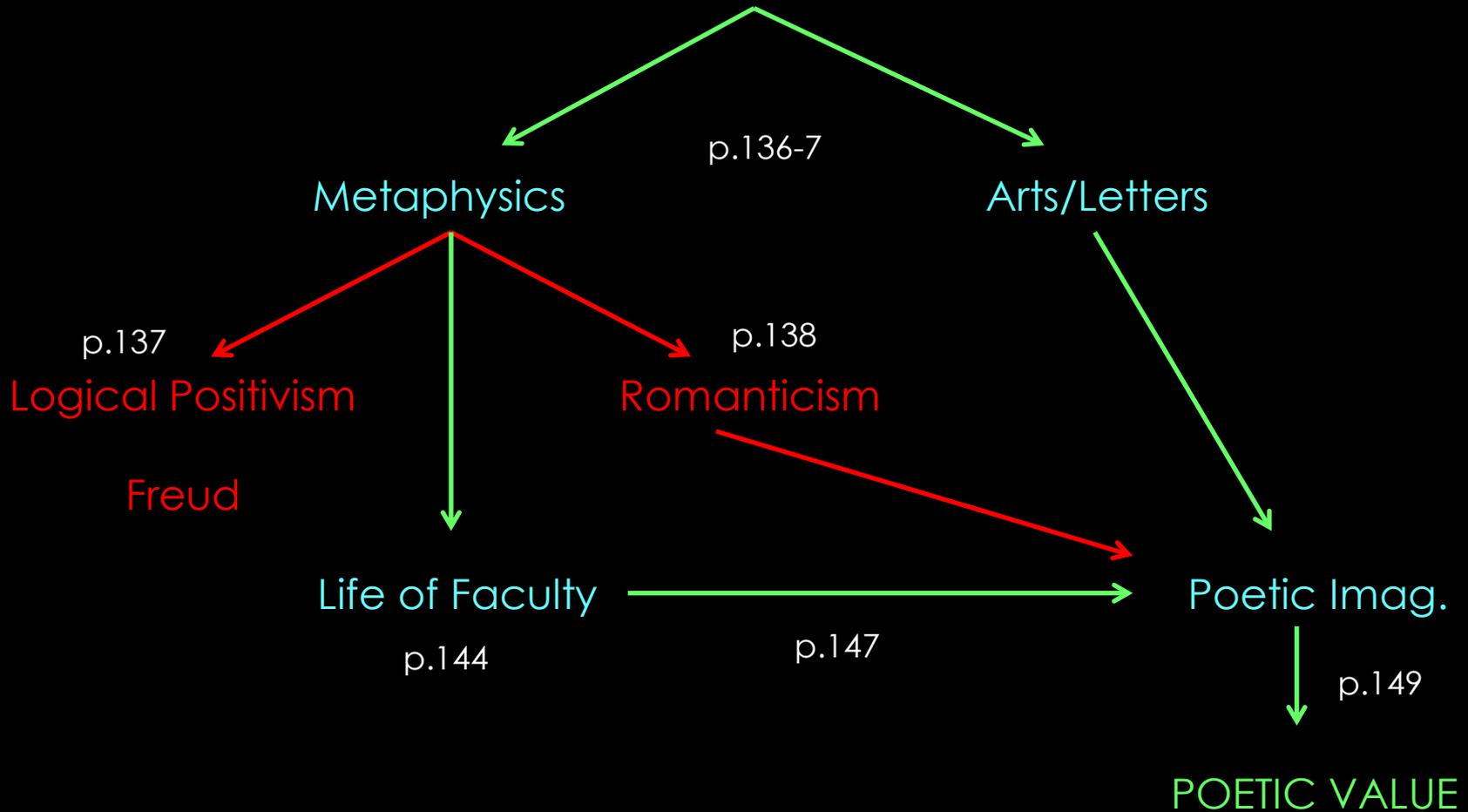
NON-CANONICAL REASONING, *PERCEPTION*

Stevens understood that at the core of the problem of imagination in his time was one of *attention and perception*, of:

1. Reversing the canonical understanding of imagination (as unreal, impractical. Romantic)
2. Establishing the *integral* function of imagination in apprehending reality (and ourselves), its novelty and potentiality

STEVENS'S CRITIQUE OF IMAGINATION

IMAGINATION



THE VALUE OF IMAGINATIVE WORKS

IMAGINATION AS SOURCE OF VALUE

“The imagination is the power of the mind over the possibilities of things; but if this constitutes a certain single characteristic, it is the source not of a certain single value but of as many values as reside in the possibilities of things” (136)

Q: Can Art & Literature teach virtue, morals?

A: No. But this MISSES THE POINT COMPLETELY.

MORAL CAPACITY VS. ETHICAL INSTRUCTION

The cultural value of ART is not in providing ethical codes or paths to the Good, but in developing a moral imagination sensitive to moral problems, capable of empathy, perceptive of the complexity of human experience and the world.

THE IDEA OF ORDER AT KEY WEST

