

WRITING AND ANALYSIS II

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DIVERGENT CONCEPTS OF AESTHETICS

RUSSOLO/FUTURISM

- counter-romanticist ethos
- tech, war, speed
- future > tradition



BRETON/SURREALISM

- countering instrumental reason
- new creativity of the unconscious
- Dada/Cubism



LEVINSON: PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS

3 FOCI

1. Practice/activity/object
[Art: art practice & artworks]
2. Property/feature/aspect of things
[aesthetic qualities]
3. Attitude/perception/experience
[aesthetic experience]



1. ART

TRADITIONAL EMPHASES

1. Form / ex. Kant; Dewey
2. Expression (of emotion) / ex. Croce, Tolstoy
3. Mimesis (representation) / ex. Plato, Aristotle; Langer

2. AESTHETIC PROPERTY

“PROPERTIES RELEVANT TO AESTHETIC VALUE OF OBJECTS”

“Some of the earmarks of aesthetic property status that have been proposed are: having gestalt character; requiring taste for discernment; having an evaluative aspect; affording pleasure or displeasure in mere contemplation; being non-condition governed; being emergent on lower-level perceptual properties; requiring imagination for attribution; requiring metaphorical thought for attribution; being notably a focus of aesthetic experience; being notably present in works of art.”
(Levinson 6)

3. AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

“AESTHETIC STATES OF MIND” OR PERCEPTION

“Among the marks that have been proposed as distinguishing aesthetic states of mind from others are: disinterestedness, or detachment from desires, needs and practical concerns; non-instrumentality, or being undertaken or sustained for their own sake; contemplative or absorbed character, with consequent effacement of the subject; focus on an object's form; focus on the relation between an object's form and its content or character; focus on the aesthetic features of an object; and figuring centrally in the appreciation of works of art.” (Levinson 6-7)

“GENRE”



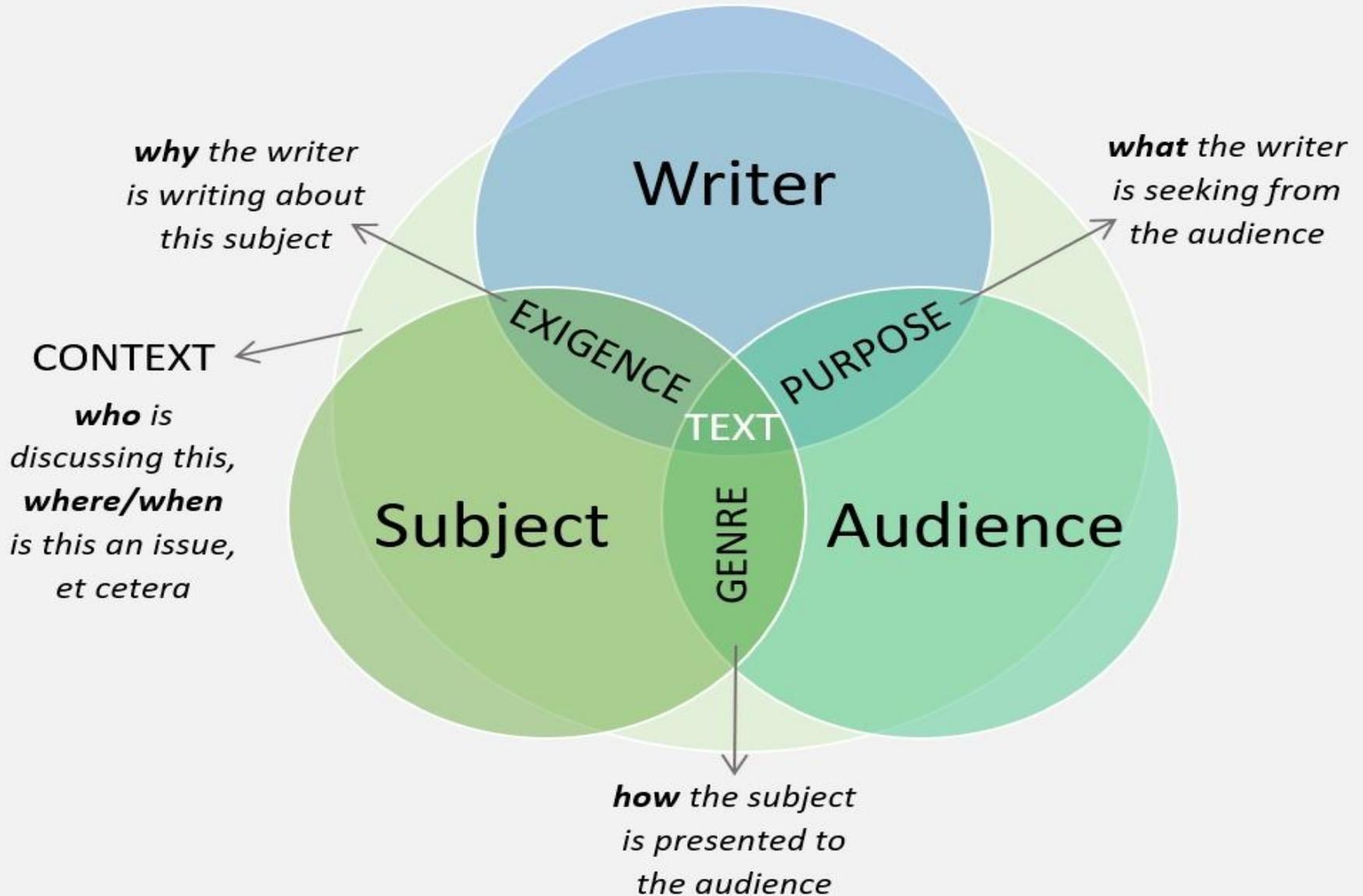
What is a genre? What textual genres can you think of?

“RHETORICAL SITUATION”

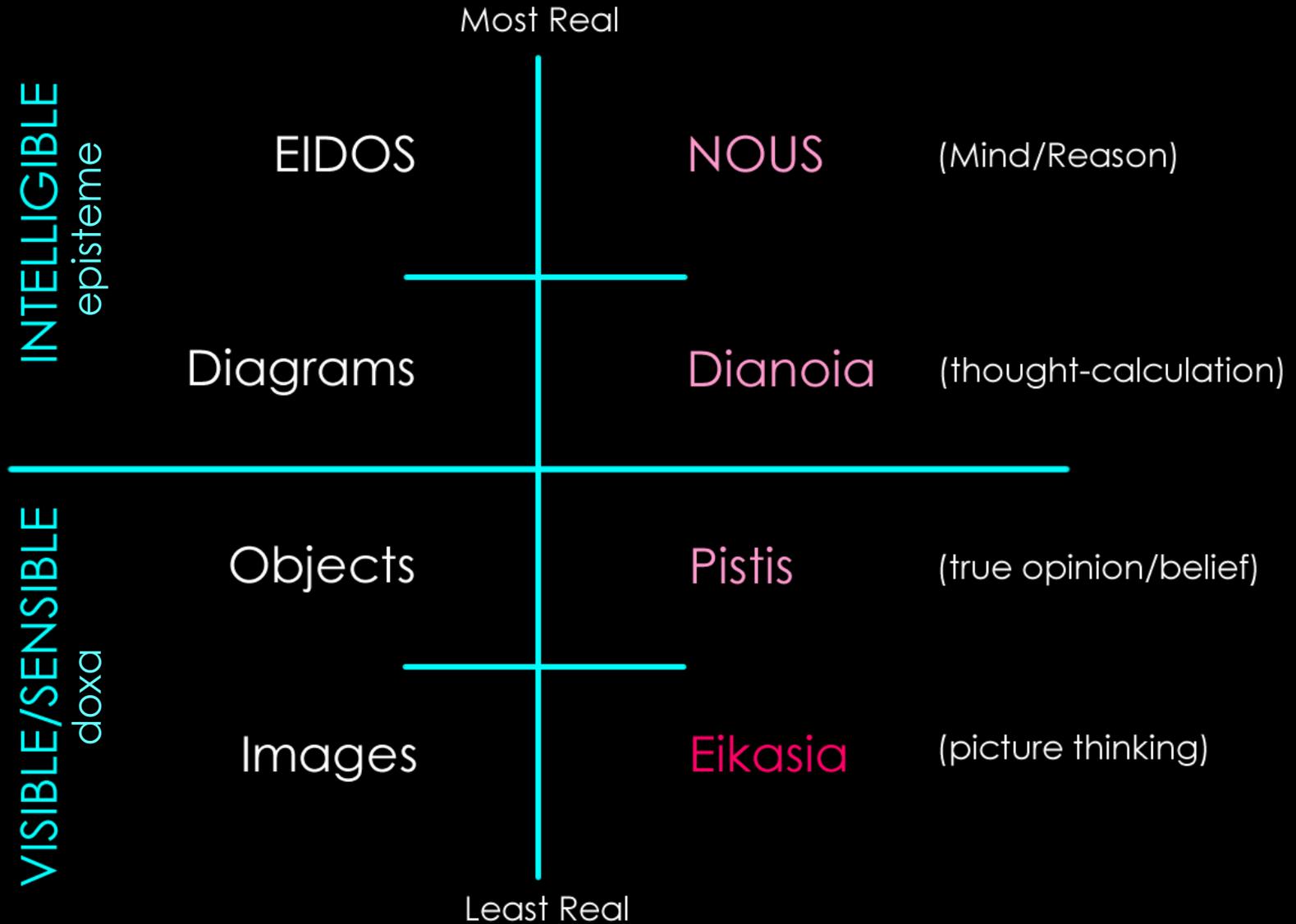


What do you understand by this phrase, and the term “rhetoric” in general?

The Rhetorical Situation



Plato, Book VI, *The Republic* ~380 BC



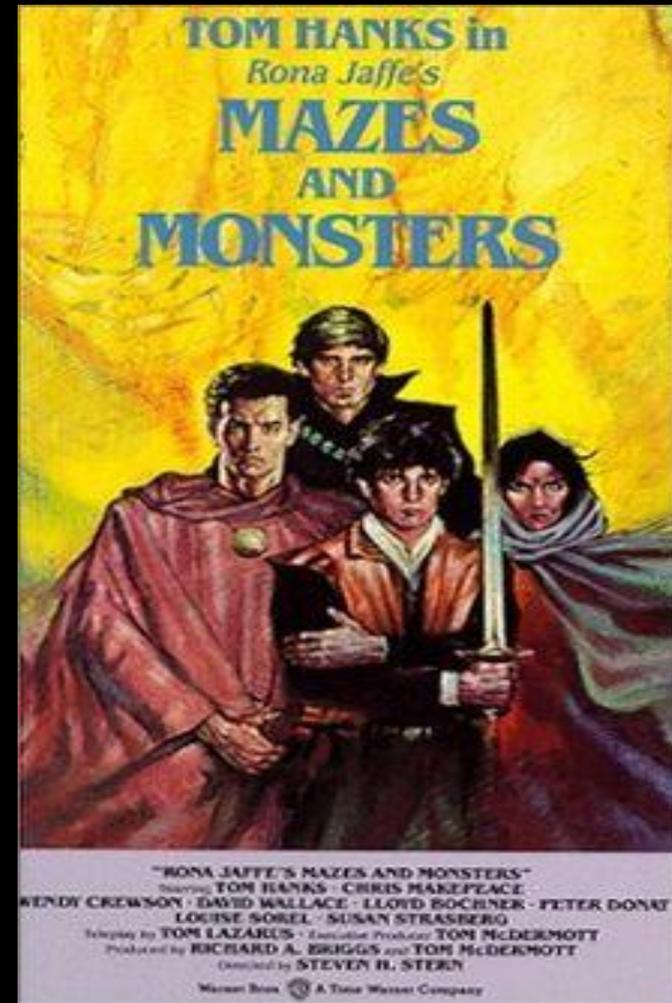
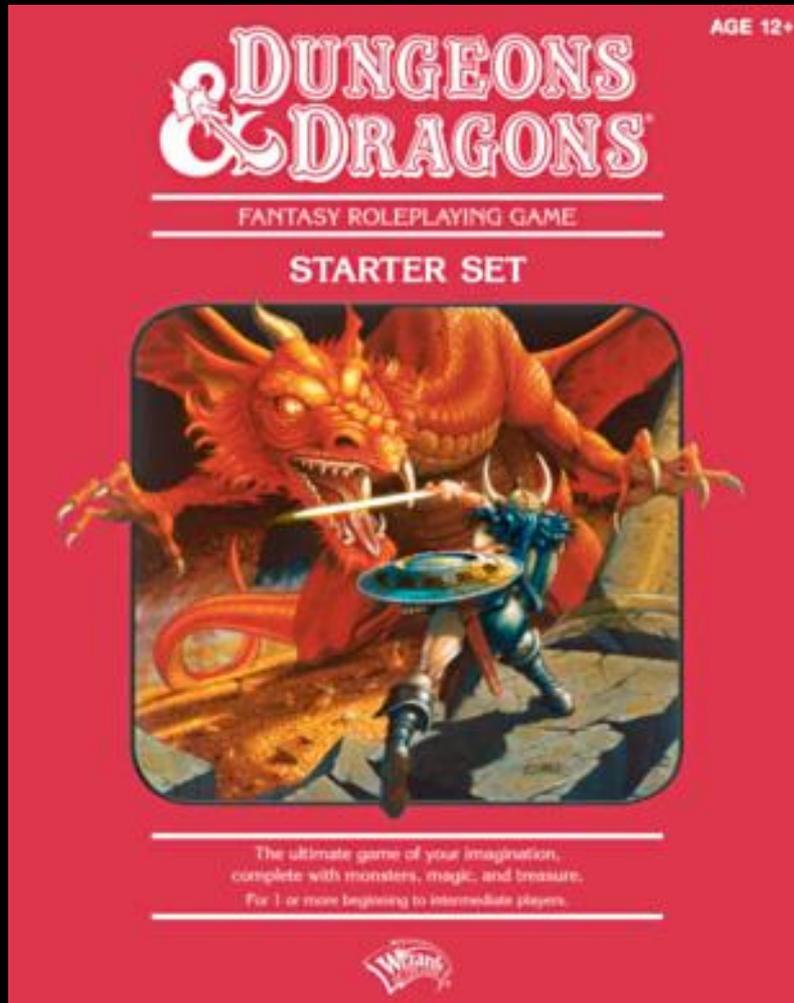
KEARNEY: PLATO'S INDICTMENT OF *POETS/ARTISTS*

5 CHARGES

1. Ignorance / Poets only *imitate* what God/artisans make
2. Uselessness / Poets' works are not useful, they produce no change in society nor do they teach anything useful
3. Irrational / They appeal to the senses/emotions (aesthetic)
4. Immoral / Induces *further* imitation; subjects reason to control of our senses/emotions
5. Idolatry / a "crime against being" (God); it seeks to replace original being with man-made non-being

**these underwrite the "escapist/entertainment model"*

PLATONISM IN THE 20THC?



PLATO'S AESTHETIC EDUCATION

System of Paideia in Plato's *Laws*

paizō	dance-play: <i>choreia</i> or choral dance, ritual dramas of singing and dancing	pre-rational	PAIDEIA
paidia	child's play: organized <i>games</i> , children ages 6 and up		
autophues	spontaneous play; self-organized play; children ages 3-6		

SCHILLER'S CONTEXT: REVOLUTIONARY TIDES

AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR
1775-1783

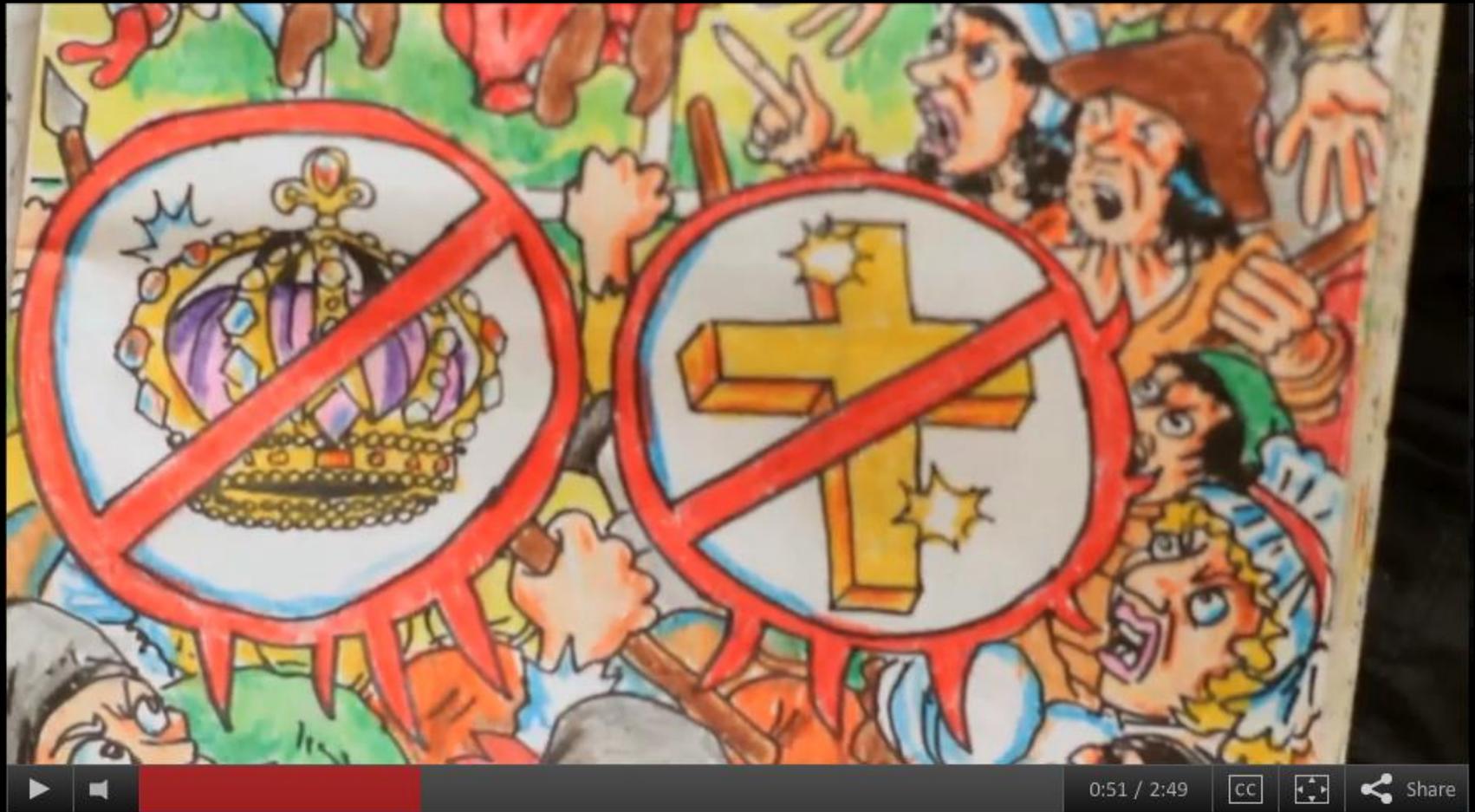
FRENCH REVOLUTION
1789-1799

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS
18th & 19th centuries



1. Revolt against political and religious institutions, dogmas, conventions, traditions, hierarchies
2. Assertion of Enlightenment values and humanistic concerns
3. Radical change of socio-technical environment, labor conditions, communication

FRENCH REVOLUTION IN 3 MINUTES



[HTTP://WWW.HISTORY.COM/TOPICS/FRENCH-REVOLUTION](http://www.history.com/topics/french-revolution)

SCHILLER: AESTHETIC EDUCATION, 1794

CONTEXT

French Revolution (1789-1799), “Reign of Terror” (~17k guillotined)
-Dec. of Rights of Man & Citizen (1793), Louis XVI beheaded, etc.

PROBLEM

Forming a free “moral society” *in idea* without succumbing to the violence of “physical society” (e.g. endless revolution, war, political oppression, etc.)?

What is the *GROUND* of a peaceful community or collectivity of free, creative individuals open to change?

SCHILLER'S ANSWER

Aesthetic Education / art & non-coercive development of “Man”

FAILED MODERNITY

MODERNITY: WILD & LETHARGIC

1. “The Masses” (working people) – no opportunity, education; can we blame them for revolting?
2. The “Civilized Classes” (wealthy) – depraved in character; simply use their education to justify selfishness, exploitation (channeling Rousseau here)

“Egotism has founded its system in the very bosom of a refined society...”

“The man of the world has his heart contracted by a proud self-complacency, while that of the man of nature often beats in sympathy; and every man seeks for nothing more than to save his wretched property”

SEARCHING FOR A NEW GROUND

FAILED OPTIONS FOR 'TRUE POLITICAL FREEDOM'

1. philosophers/Science? ...too “cold hearted”
(philosophical argument and technical knowledge)
2. statesman/Politics? ...too “narrow hearted”
(treatises, manifestos, political rhetoric, legislation)
3. form of Government? ...cannot establish morality/humanity
(laws , institutions, protocols)
4. Reason *alone*? ...produces Enlightened barbarians
(individuals reasoning, logical analysis, etc.)

UNMENTIONED OPTIONS

- A. spiritual leaders/Religion?
(revelation, tradition, ritual, sacred texts)
- B. activists/Political Movements?
(practical activism, demonstrations, etc.)

SCHILLER'S INSIGHT: AESTHETIC MEDIATION

Reason/“Moral character”

[Aesthetic Experience]

Senses/“Natural character”

“It is therefore not going far enough to say that the light of the understanding only deserves respect when it reacts on the character; to a certain extent it is from the character that this light proceeds; *for the road that terminates in the head must pass through the heart.*”

TRIADIC CHARACTER OF HUMANITY

NATURAL/PHYSICAL

1. Hobbesian, basically “selfish & violent,” tends to destroy sociality and toward self-interest/preservation
2. law of Nature; necessity, immediate needs and desires, variety

MORAL/RATIONAL

1. based in Reason and ideas, tends to unify, order
(but also mechanize, divide, etc.)
2. law of Freedom; autonomous, not visible

AESTHETIC

Art as a mediating function of our self-development / *Education* of our “sensibility”

ADORNO: "AESTHETIC THEORY," 1970

"[A]esthetics prove to be not so much obsolete as necessary. Art does not stand in need of an aesthetics that will prescribe norms where it finds itself in difficulty, but rather of an aesthetics that will provide the capacity for reflection, which art on its own is hardly able to achieve. Words such as material, form, and formation, which flow all too easily from the pens of contemporary artists, ring trite; to cure contemporary language of this is one of the art-practical functions of aesthetics. Above all, however, aesthetics is demanded by the development of artworks. If they are not timelessly self-same, but rather become what they are because their own meaning is a process of becoming, they summon forth forms of spirit - commentary and critique, for example - through which this process is fulfilled. These forms remain weak, however, so long as they do not reach the truth content of the works. They only become capable of this by being honed to aesthetics. *The truth content of an artwork requires philosophy.*"