Renaissance Thought

(14th Century — 17th Century: aprox. 300 years)

Art and Humanism

- conscious effort toward realistic portrayals
- looked to Classical art for inspiration: realistic portrayals of pereceived reality
- Classical myth inspired artistic portrayals of beauty
- art should exalt the human experience
- human being centric, rather than God-centric
- autonomy and dignity of the human spirit (not spirituality)
- the importance of individuality, human uniqueness
- celebration of visual mimesis
- Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592, French): in the preface to his *Essays*, argued that he would perfer the freedom of having himself painted "tout entier, et tout nu" ("totally complete, and toally nude").
- Symbol and structure of form (color and light) were used to express the natural and real being of humanity.
- Emphasis on authenticity and direct contact with sources (our perception of reality is REAL TRUTH—Plato's "Block B" is also "Block D" and thus "Block A" is mimetic of "Block D" and that is okay)

Renaissance Thought

(14th Century — 17th Century: aprox. 300 years)

The Renaissance Humanist Perspective

TRAGEDY	COMEDY
• reveals the great Truth through pity and fear • characters are kings and hero (great people) • high, elevated style • subject: historical • deals with exile and bloodshed • focused upon the upper class	• about the familiar and domestic • characters are humble • low style • subject: invented • deals with love and seduction

Renaissance Thought

(14th Century — 17th Century: aprox. 300 years)

Questions Raised

- whether or not literature has been created in its full and finished form
- two genres that are argued over:
  - romance vs. the epic (which is better?)
  - the tragic-comedy—could/should it exist? (later known as the melodrama or problem play)
- whether or not there is a clear distinction of definition between tragedy and comedy and which has the higher value
  - comedy imitates goodness
  - tragedy imitates badness
- the issue of unities: how long should a play last? How much time should a plot cover? (3 hours vs. 3 years)
- questions regarding language use: stylistic distinctions and rhetoric: high poetic vs. colloquial vs. in-between

Renaissance Thought

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)

Renaissance Thought

(14th Century — 17th Century: aprox. 300 years)

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)

- Responds to Plato's question of why consider pure fictions when facts are superior:
  - his answer is it much more pleasurable to discover facts/truth from within fiction (as opposed to being preached at)
  - fictions are better than facts: fictions can reveal the true causes of effects in things because the writer can idealize situations, which is always better illustrated than "true life" situations (ideal vs. "true")
  - the pleasures of fictions seduce us *to* the truth (not from it)
  - the story is delightful and thus the moral is better received

- Inspiration from God produces a longing for poetry + (1) a knowledge of grammar, rhetoric and logic and (2) all the literal and fine arts.

Renaissance Thought

(14th Century — 17th Century: aprox. 300 years)

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375)

- Types of Fiction
  - fantasy literature that deals with characters, places, and events that obviously have no surface truth (facts), but certainly have underlying Truth
  - a mingling of the realistic and the fanatical (back and forth)
  - idealized history (historical fiction; his personal favorite)

- Poetry doesn't pretend to tell the truth; therefore, poetry's fictions are not lies (not attempts at deception).
- Pagan poets didn't lie deliberately; they just didn't know the whole truth.
- Poets ARE philosophers.
- Because poets are philosophers, the ideas underlying fictions are the same as the ideas contained within philosophical and theological texts; therefore, a critic (reader) is needed to complete the text.
- Literature is better than history because it idealizes history.

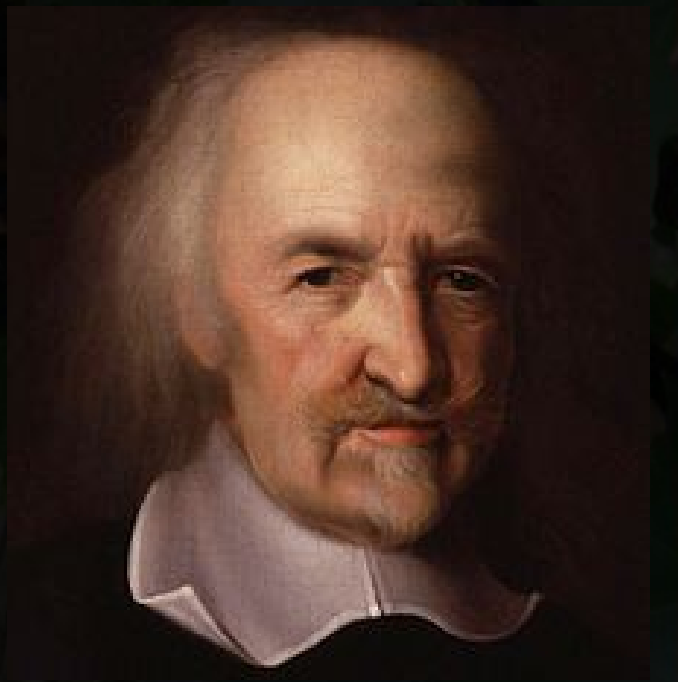
17th Century

- a growing distrust of any figurative language
- a growing insistence upon "pure" factual writing

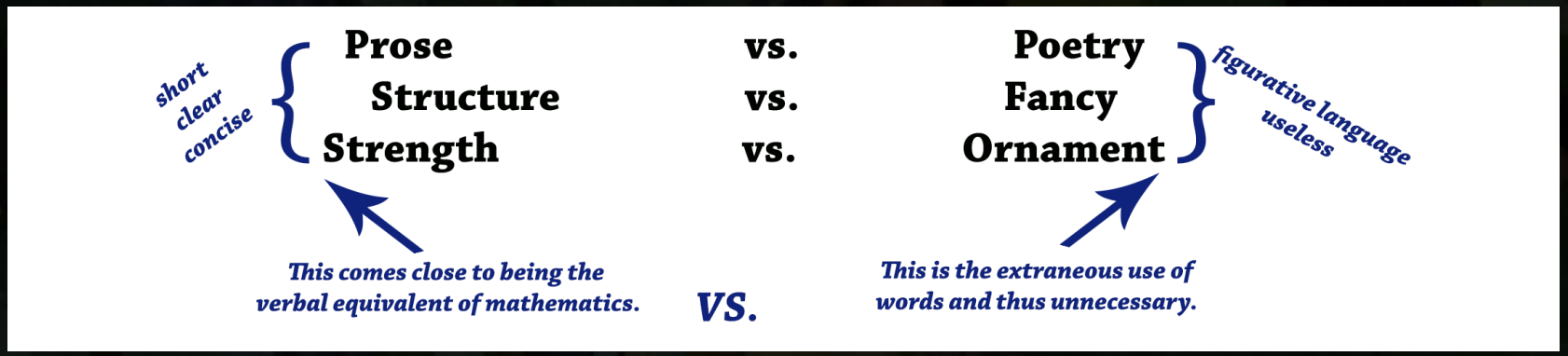
- **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626)
  - mathematics is the true and precise language
  - you cannot mathematically prove the existence of a soul; therefore, *soul* is an empty word that has fictional substance
  - figurative language is suspect for producing empty words

17th Century

- **Thomas Hobbes** (1588-1679)
  - How Poetry and Prose Operate
    - Time and Education => Experience
    - Experience => Memory
    - Memory => Judgement and Fancy (figurative language)
      - Judgement => Strength and Structure
      - Fancy (figurative language) => ornament (extra, extraneous)



17th Century: Hobbes



17th Century

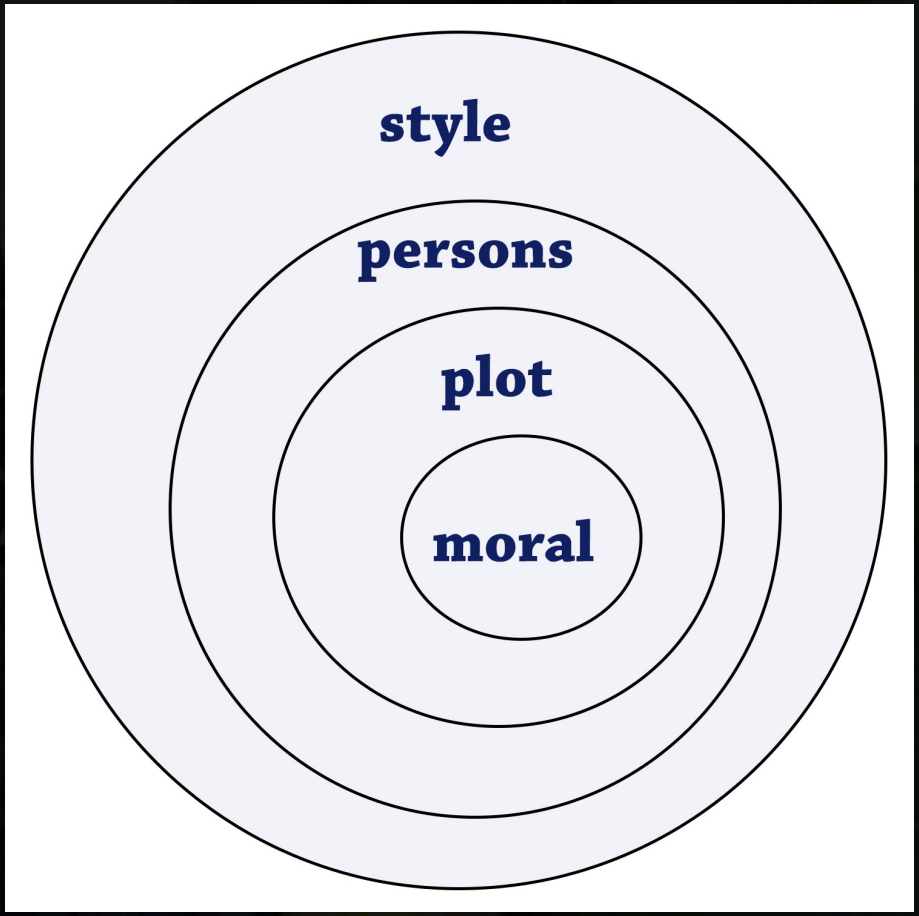
John Dryden (1631-1700)

17th Century

John Dryden (1631-1700)

- England's first Poet Laureate (1668)
- Starts, anticipates, clarifies a literary criticism that we still use today
- first to use these words:
  - *criticism:* what makes poetry *poetry* is its imagistic writing
  - poetic license: the liberty of poets taking verse and going "beyond"
- poetry: fictional and figurative
- prose: factual and dull, plain (can't be fictional)
- Draws a lot from Longinus
- promoted "cheering up" Shakespeare's tragedies—rewrote several of his plays

17th Century: Dryden



17th Century: Dryden

- character: that which distinguishes one man from another and has the composition of traits that agree with one ruling virtue
  - the fewer the manners or traits, the flatter (more minor) the person (character)
  - character manners should be neither too good nor too bad; don't make a villain more than he has logical sense to be
  - Iago was logically too villainous; his motives aren't clear enough
  - Richard III is logically villainous: he explains himself in soliloquies and so his motives are clear
- Four Properties of Manners
  - manners arise from many causes (sex, age, bodily image, ethics, traits)
  - must have apparent character (motivation) in order to avoid confusion (assumes that there is a logical connection between the cause and effect of human behavior)
  - resemblance
  - consistency

17th Century: Dryden

first critic to compare writers:

the writer we should like	vs.	the writer we actually like
Ben Jonson	vs.	William Shakespeare
orderliness	vs.	creativity

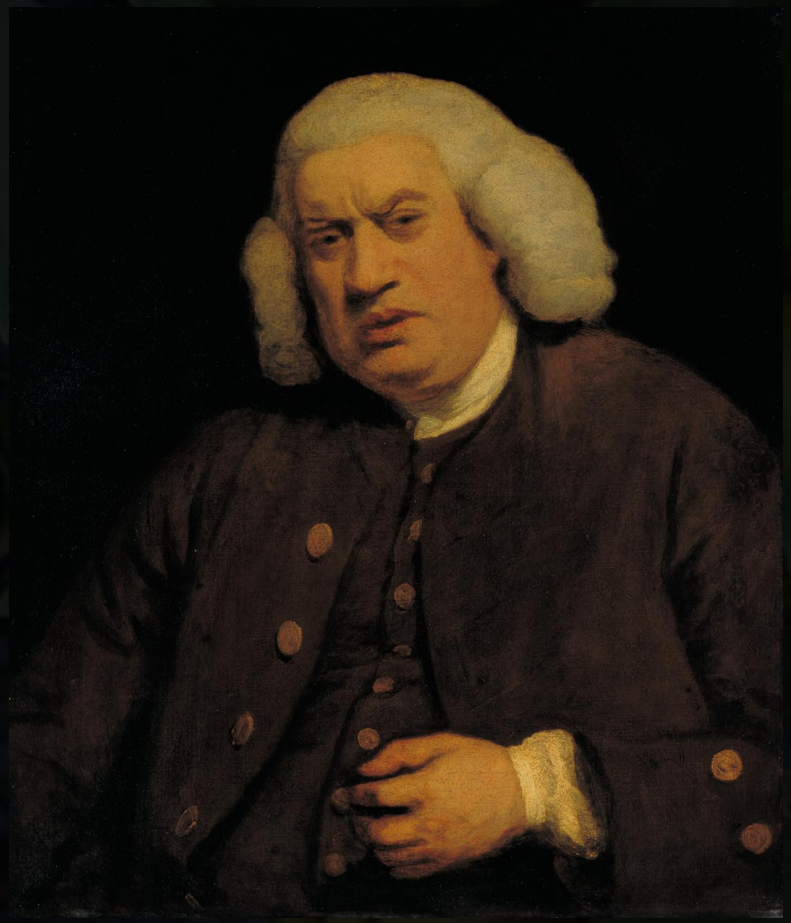
challenges Classical Theory for the first time

Ultimate Judgements:

What is the quality of the morality of the piece?
Is the unity centered on the moral?

Enlightenment Thought (18th Century)

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)



Enlightenment Thought (18th Century)

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

- literature's function is to teach and delight
  - pleasure is universal truth + novelty (knowledge *is* pleasure)
  - literature must be universal
  - literature must be moral
  - literature must teach/demonstrate correctness (language, grammar, vocabulary, manners,...)
  - literature must have *poetic justice*: distribution of earthly rewards and punishments at the close of a literary work in proportion to the virtues or vices of various characters [NOTE: this, of course, destroys tragic suffering]
  - Complained that Shakespeare lacked much poetic justice and often sacrificed virtue for convenience of plot development
  - Sees Shakespeare as succeeding because both writer and reader observe human nature (going back to Dryden)
  - seems to think that there is a universal way to perceive humankind
  - tries to find an agreement among the Classical Theories about what these universal traits/passions might be

Enlightenment Thought (18th Century)

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

German philosopher who argued that the human mind creates the structure of human experience, that reason is the source of morality, that aesthetics arises from a faculty of disinterested judgment, that space and time are forms of human sensibility, and that the world as it is "in-itself" is independent of humanity's concepts of it.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

OBJECT

everything but us (unkmowable sets of stimuli)

SUBJECT

each of us is the subject

MANIFOLD OF SENSATION

—pleasant centers here
—senses in random blobs

→

IMAGINATION

which shapes sensation into apriori:
1) time
2) space

→

UNDERSTANDING

which can be divided into twelvefold tables of categories of an achitectonic structure of conceiving the world
perceiving
receiving

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Table of Categories

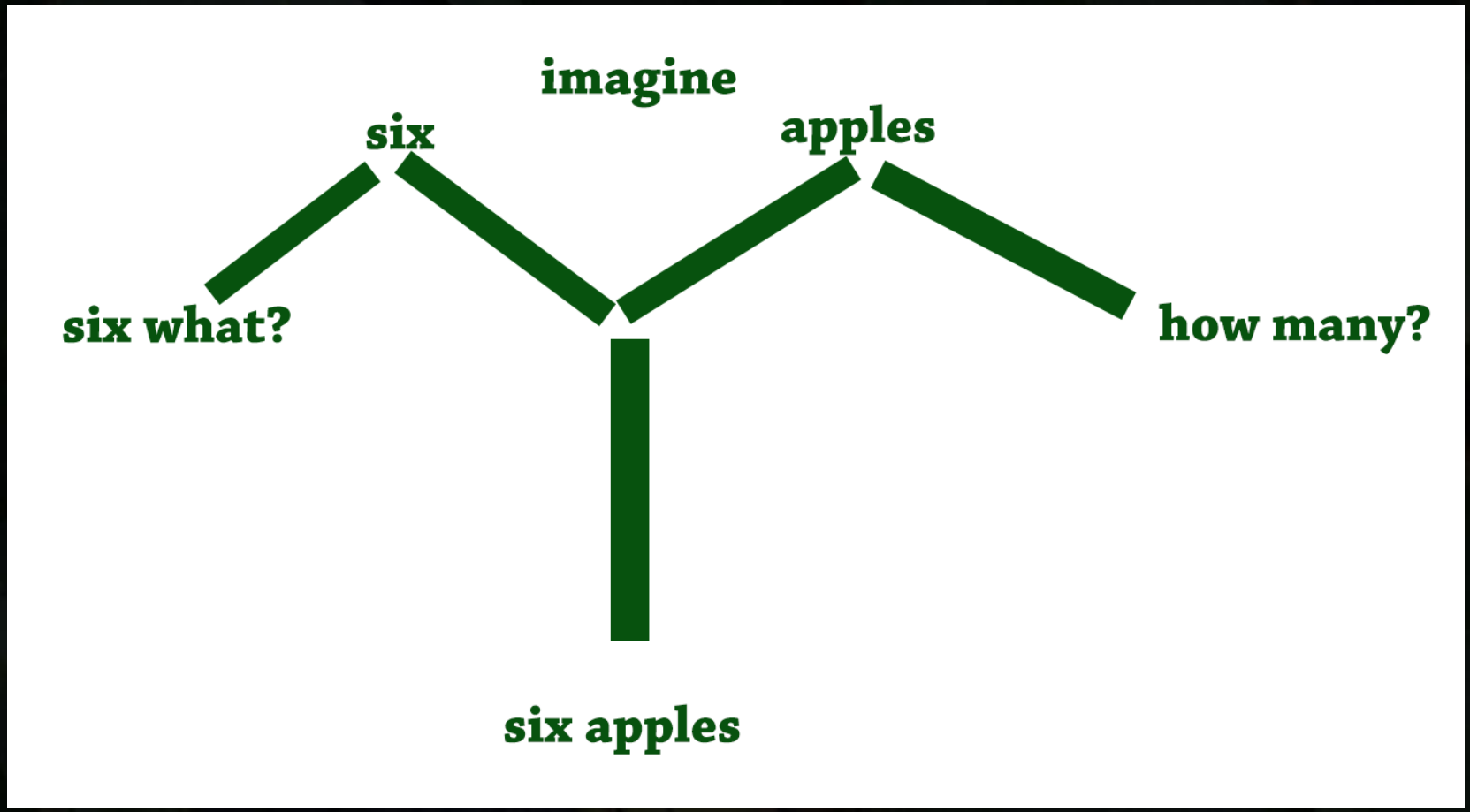
Category	Categories		
Quantity	Unity	Plurality	Totality
Quality	Reality	Negation	Limitation
Relation	Inherence and Subsistence (substance and accident)	Causality and Dependence (cause and effect)	Community (reciprocity)
Modality	Possibility / Impossibility	Existence / Non-existence	Necessity / Contingency

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

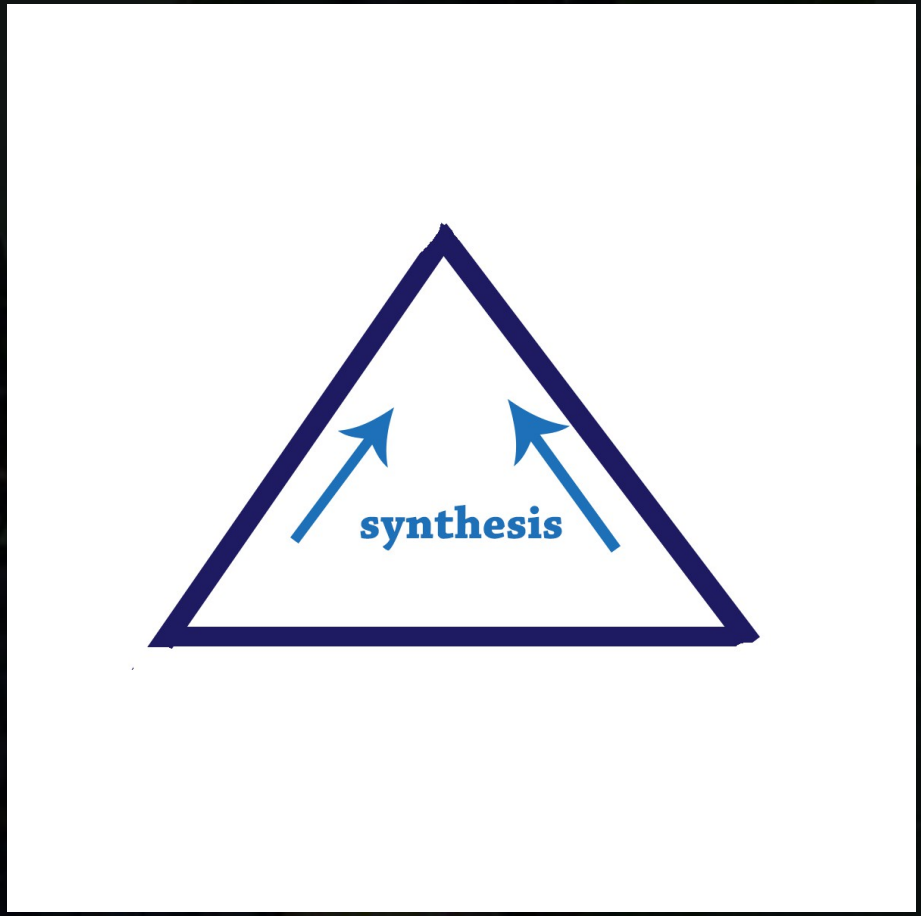
Table of Judgements

Category	Judgements		
Quantity	Universal	Particular	Singular
Quality	Affirmative	Negative	Infinite
Relation	Categorical	Hypothetical	Disjunctive
Modality	Problematical	Assertoric	Apodictic

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)



George Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel (1770-1831)



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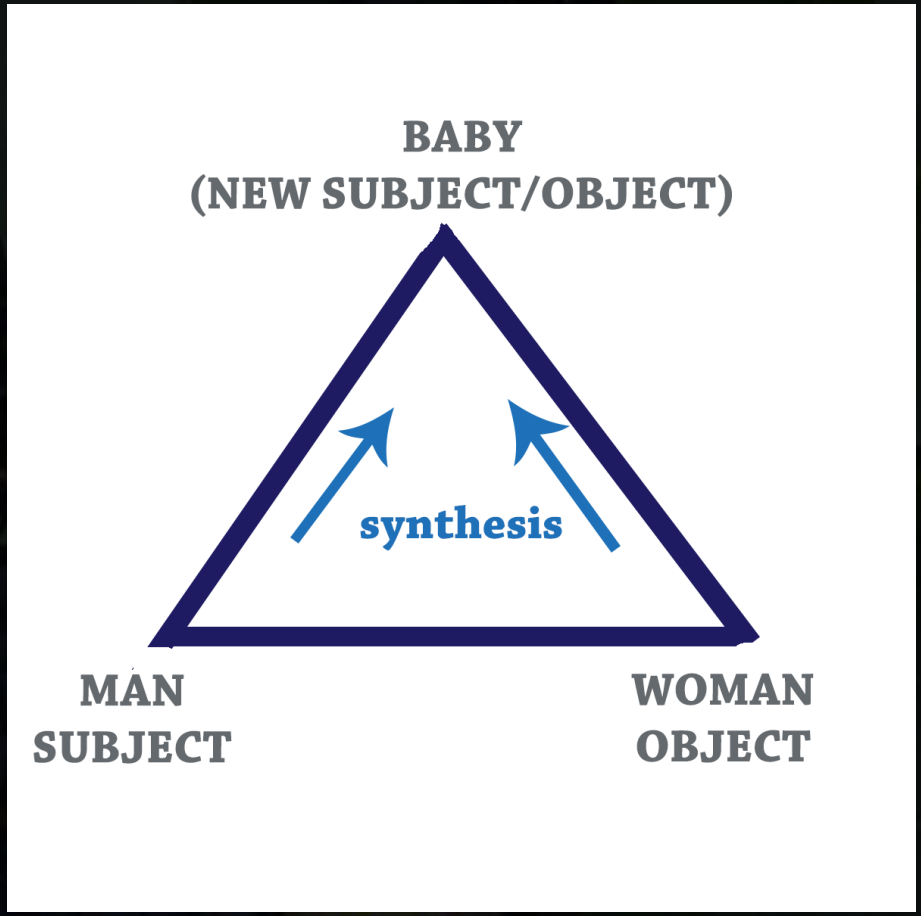

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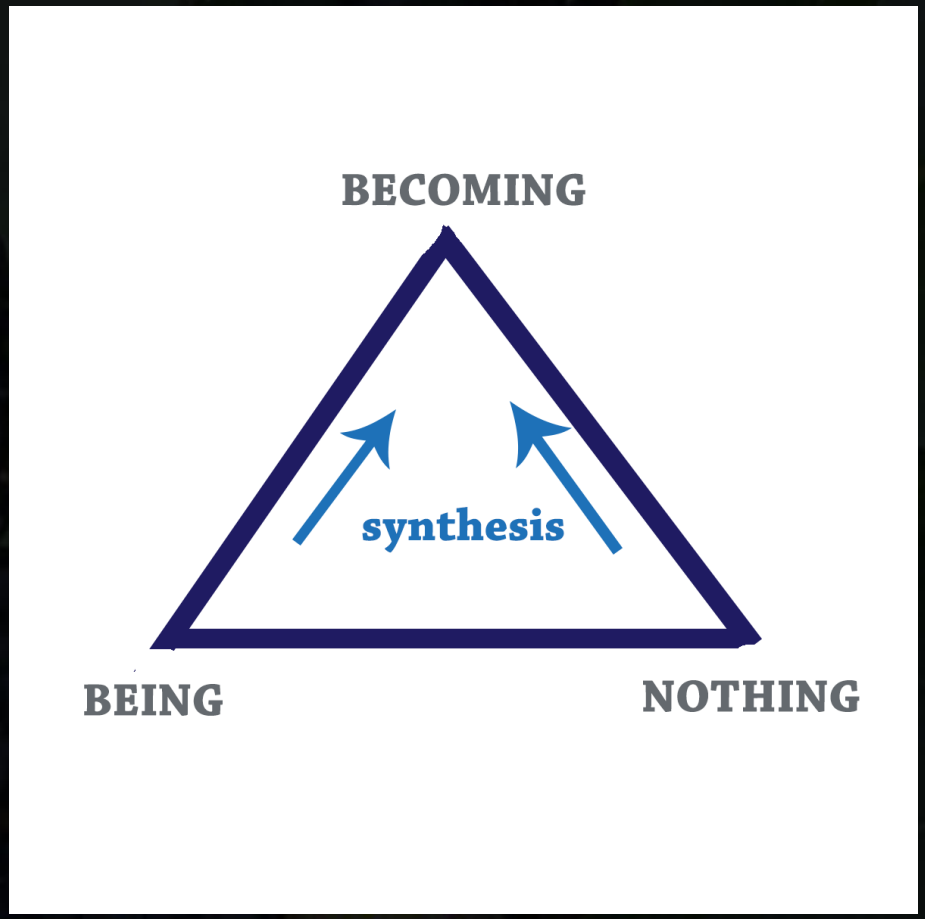

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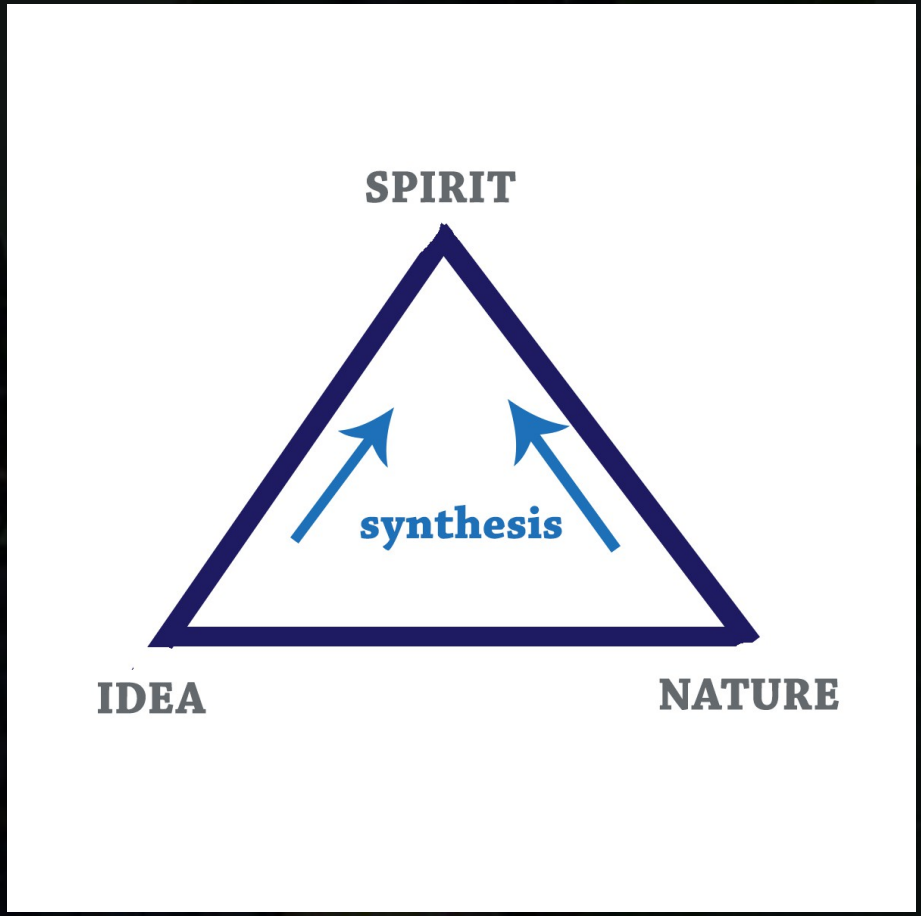

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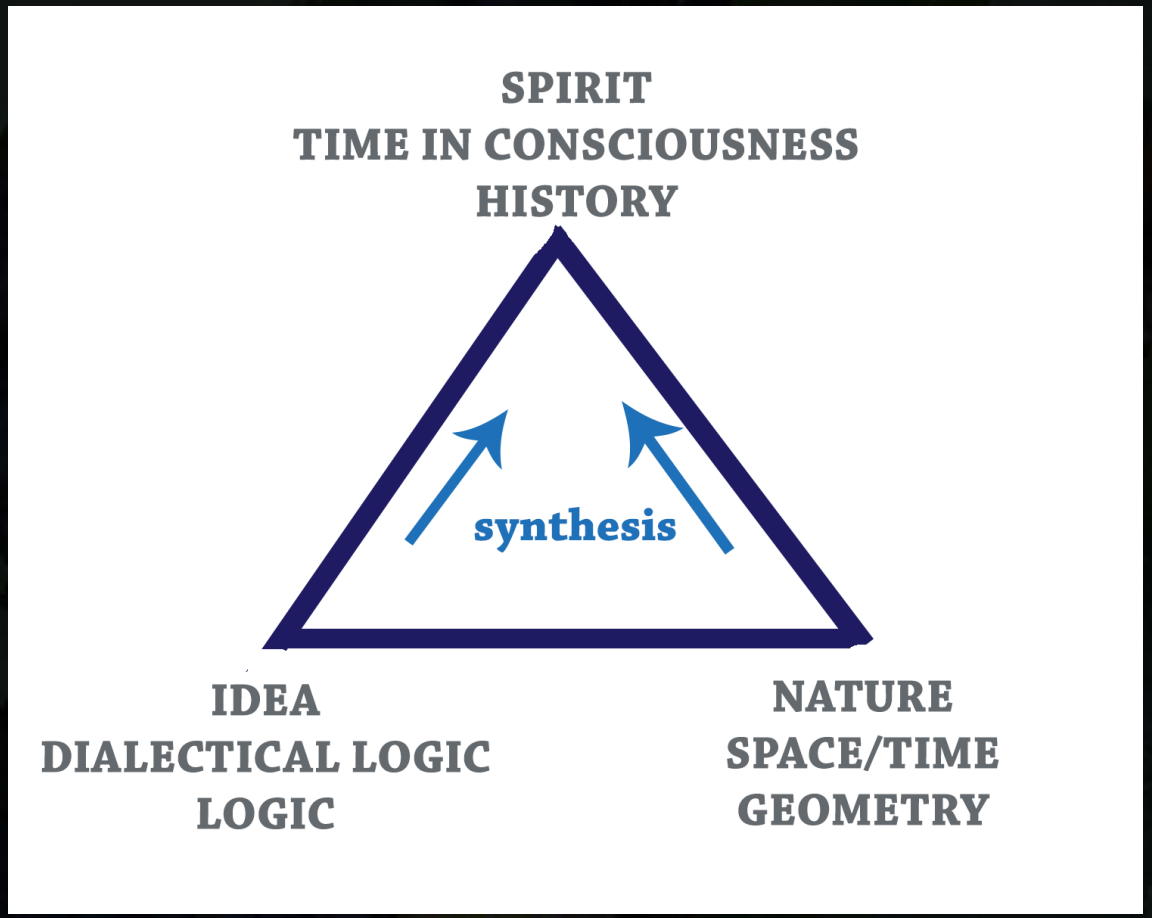

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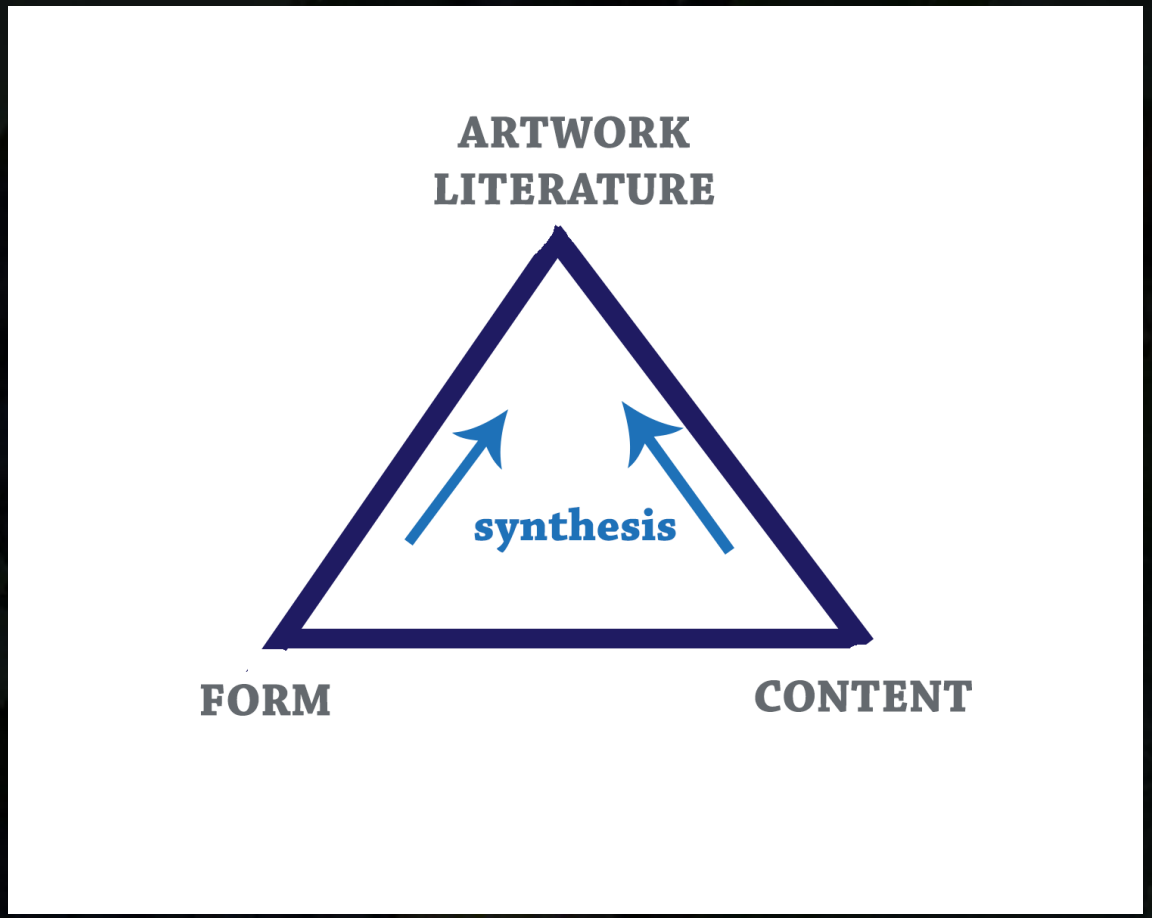

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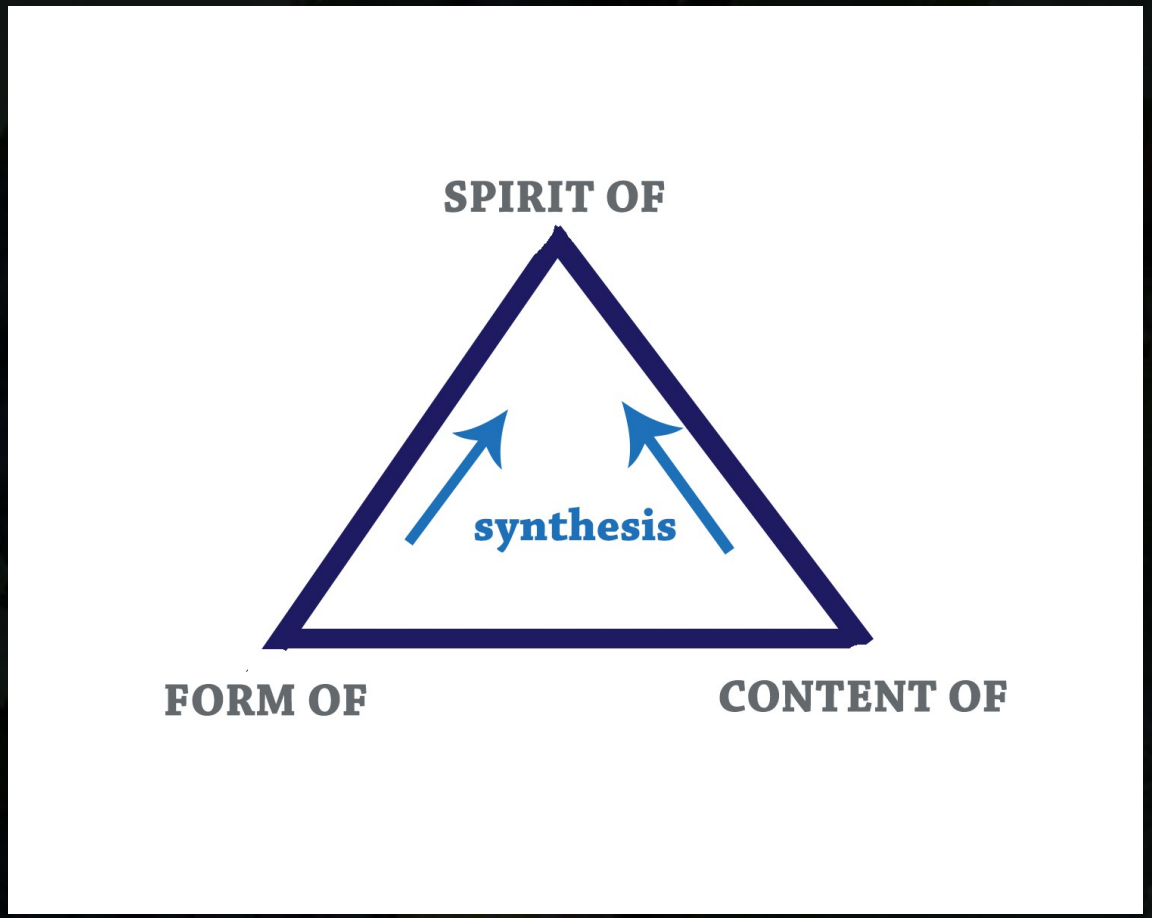

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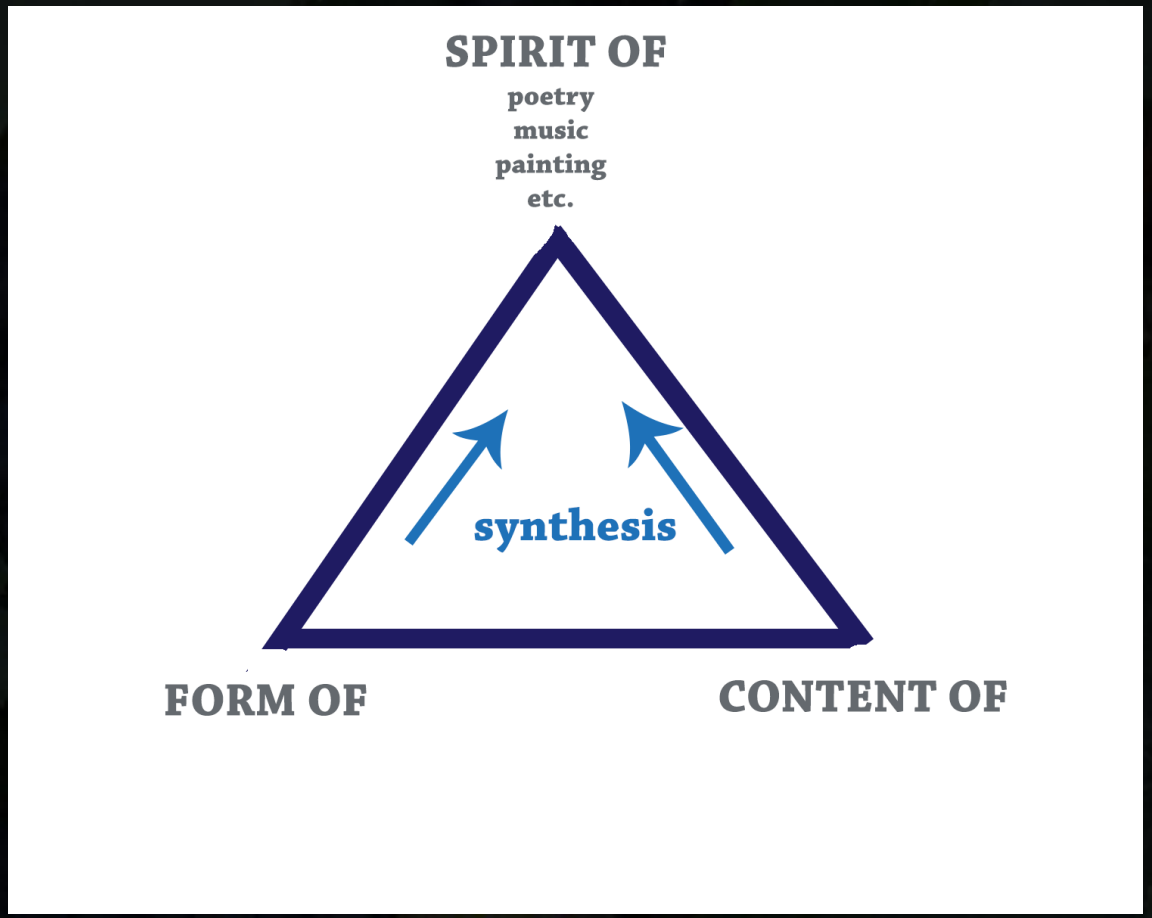

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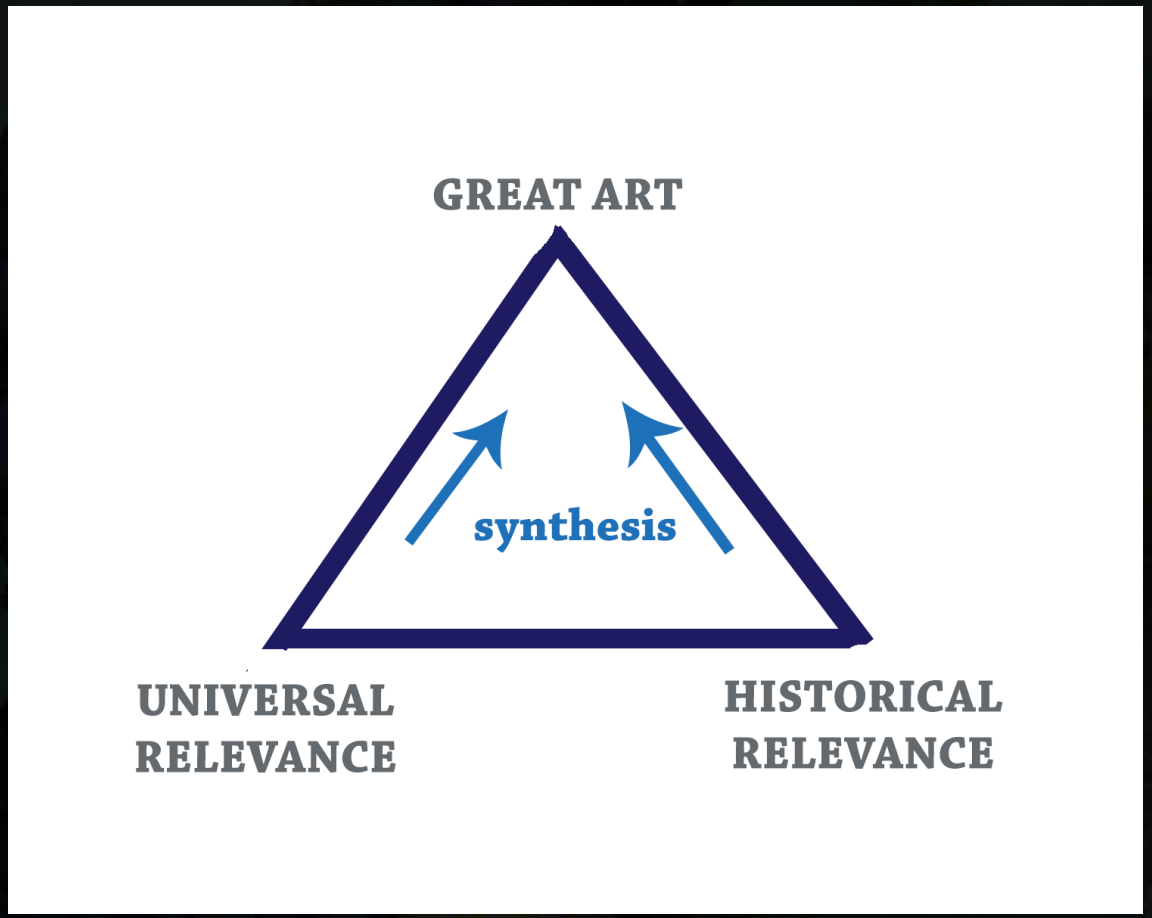

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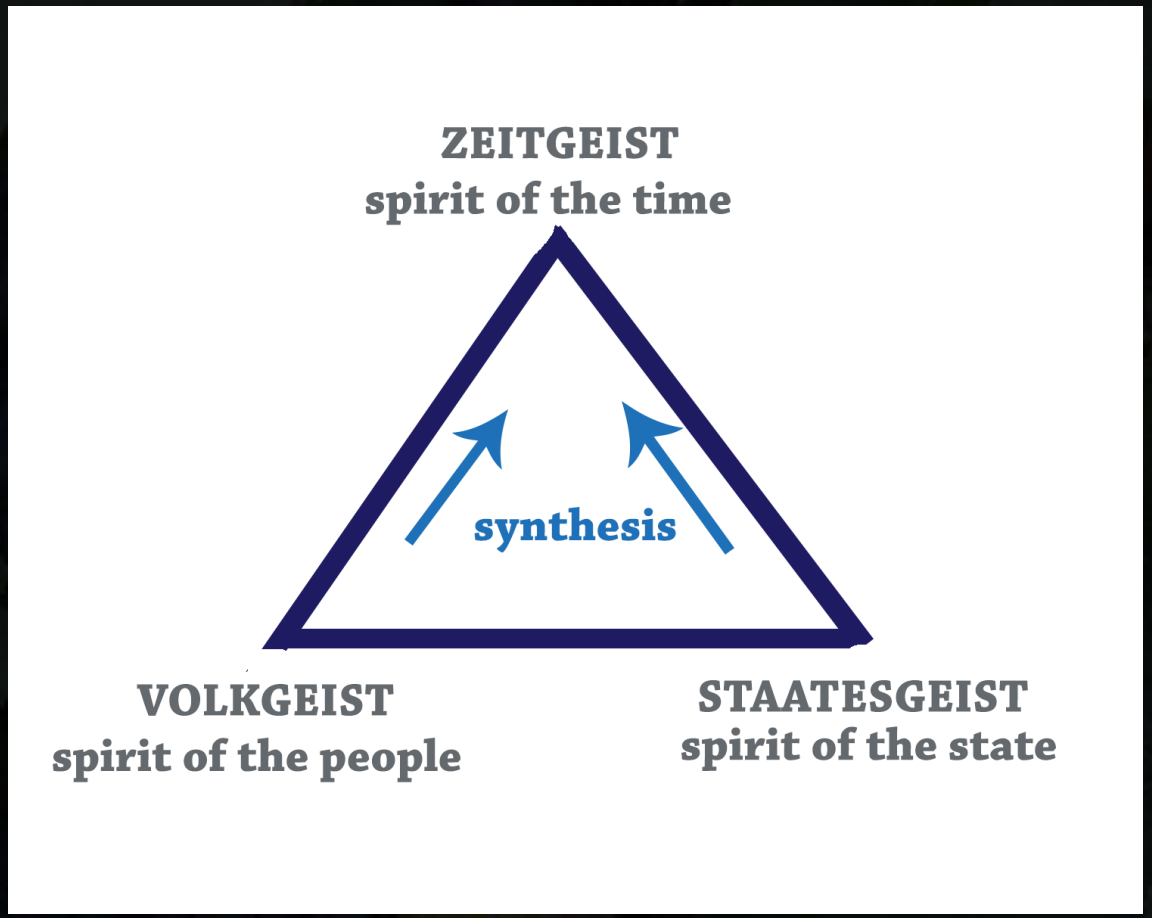
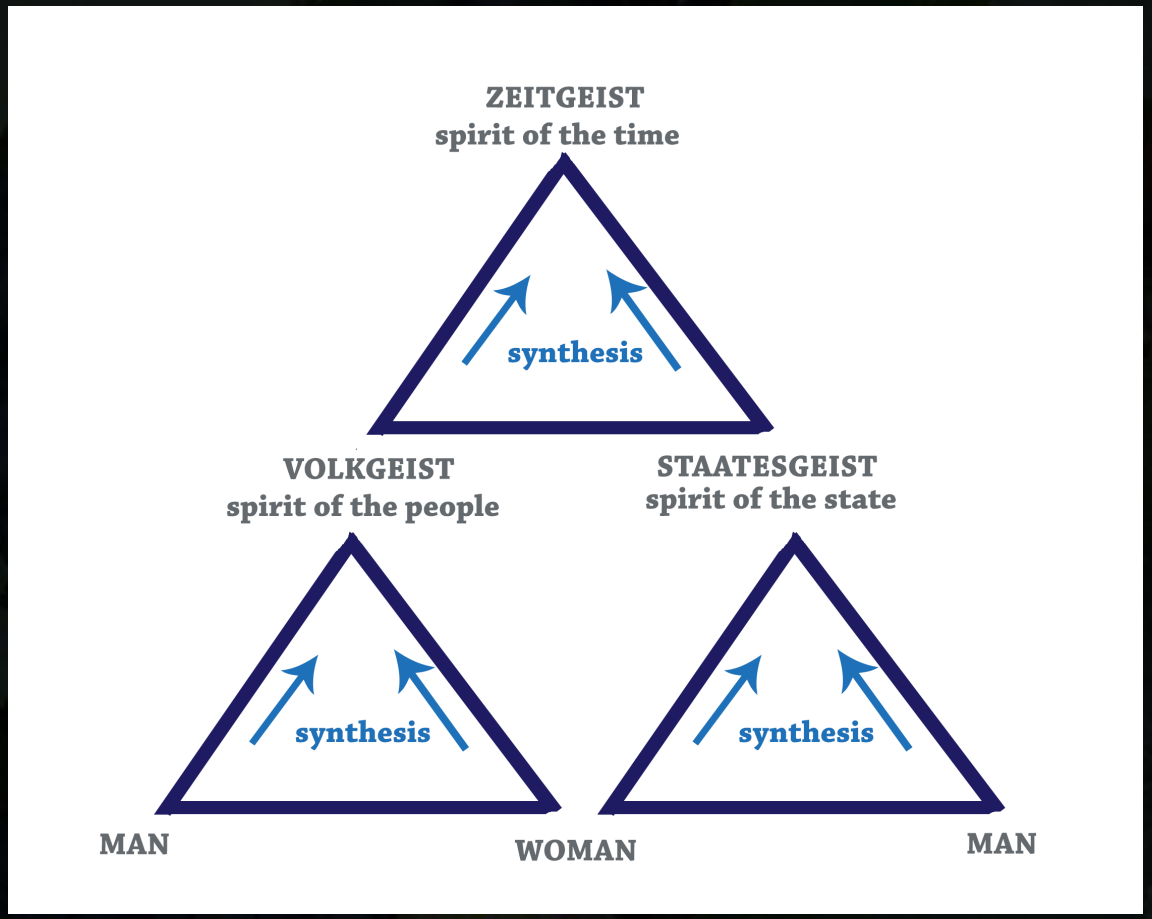
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