

An Apology for Poetry  
**Sidney**

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**Wit and Will**

"... our erected wit maketh us to know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it" (258/266).

As Hamlet might say: humanity crawls "between earth and Heaven."

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**Sidney and Plato**

- The "Apology" was written in response to Stephen Gosson's Platonist condemnation of theatre.
- What is Sidney's response to Gosson, and through him, to Plato? (281)

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## The Phenomenal World

- What is Sidney's attitude toward the phenomenal world? Consider the following:
  - "clayey lodgings" relative to the soul (260/268);
  - Astronomy, philosophy, arithmetic as "serving sciences" (261/268);
  - his critique of HISTORY (261-2/269).

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## Lies, Lies, Lies, Yeah-ah

- What does Sidney mean when he asserts, *contra* Plato, that the poet "nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth?" (271/279)
- What does this assertion tell us about the relationship between the "real world" and poetry in Sidney's model?

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## Golden: MIMESIS

"Her [nature's] world is brazen [brass], [but] the poets only deliver a golden" (257/265).

What is Sidney's definition of MIMESIS? (258/265)

What does the poet REPRESENT? (259/267)

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## FUNCTION OF POETRY

According to Sidney, what is the function of poetry?

- To teach (260-61/266/);
- To delight (261, 279/287);
- To "move" I.e. to reconcile and synthesize *gnosis* (knowledge) and *praxis* (action) (261, 265, 268/267, 272).

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## DELIGHT

- What is the definition of DELIGHT?
- Consider:
  - the contrast between "delight" and "laughter" (279/286-87).

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## Laughter

- ANCIENT LAUGHTER: grounded in scorn for the low or revulsion at the deformed in human form, action and nature:

Democritus, the "Laughing Philosopher," found the world laughable, and advocated "tranquility," or equanimity in the face of the world's absurdity.

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## Democritus: Are we in on it?



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## DELIGHT: Nature

- DELIGHT:
  - the pleasure derived when one recognizes in the organizing and synthesizing character of art the reflection of a HIGHER ORDER of value (286-87);
  - that is: poetry is the mechanism for the revelation of the operation of Nature in nature.

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## DELIGHT: Moved to Virtue

- DELIGHT
  - the pleasure derived when one is "moved" by art to **virtuous action**—the synthesis of *gnosis* (knowledge) and *praxis* (action) (272)

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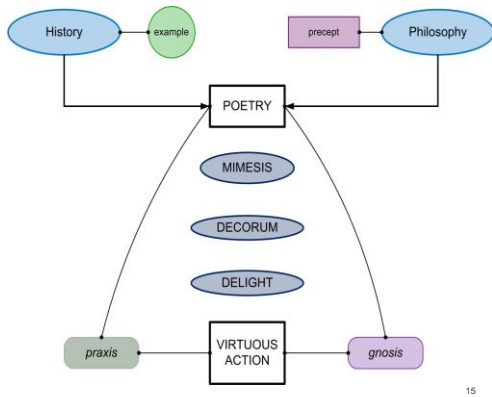
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**Stephen Gosson:  
Critique of the Senses**

There [in the theatre] set they abroche  
 straunge consortes of melody, to tickle the  
 eare; costly apparell, to flatter the sight;  
 effeminate gesture, to ravish the sence; and  
 wanton speache, to whet desire too  
 inordinate lust.

(Stephen Gosson, from *The School of Abuse*, 1579)

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**Sidney: SENSUALITY**

For he doth not only show the way, but giveth  
 so sweet a prospect into the way, as will  
 entice any man to enter into it. Nay he doth  
 as if your journey should lie through a fair  
 vineyard, at the first give you a cluster of  
 grapes, that full of that taste, you may long  
 to pass further.

(273)

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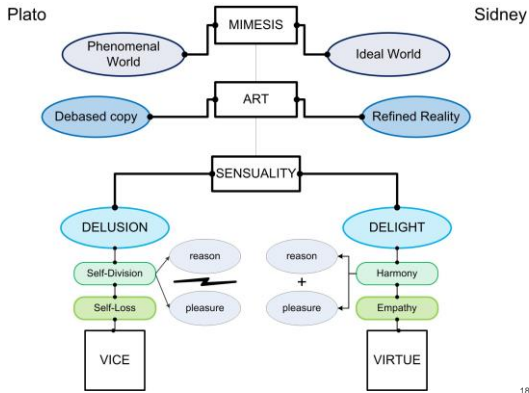
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