

Sidney

An Apology for Poetry

Wit and Will

“... our erected wit maketh us to know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it” (331).

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

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?

The Phenomenal World

- What is Sidney's attitude toward the phenomenal world? Consider the following:
 - "clayey lodgings" relative to the soul (333);
 - Astronomy, philosophy, arithmetic as "serving sciences" (333);
 - his critique of HISTORY (335, 339).

Lies, Lies, Lies, Yeah-ah

- What does Sidney mean when he asserts, *contra* Plato, that the poet “nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth?” (448)
- What does this assertion tell us about the relationship between the “real world” and poetry in Sidney’s model?

Golden: MIMESIS

“Her [nature’s] world is brazen [brass], [but] the poets only deliver a golden” (330).

What is Sidney’s definition of MIMESIS?

What does the poet REPRESENT?

FUNCTION OF POETRY

According to Sidney, what is the function of poetry?

- To teach;
- To “move”;
- To reconcile and synthesize *gnosis* (knowledge) and *praxis* (action).

DELIGHT

- What is the definition of DELIGHT?
- Consider:
 - the contrast between “delight” and “laughter” (358).

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.

Democritus: Are we in on it?

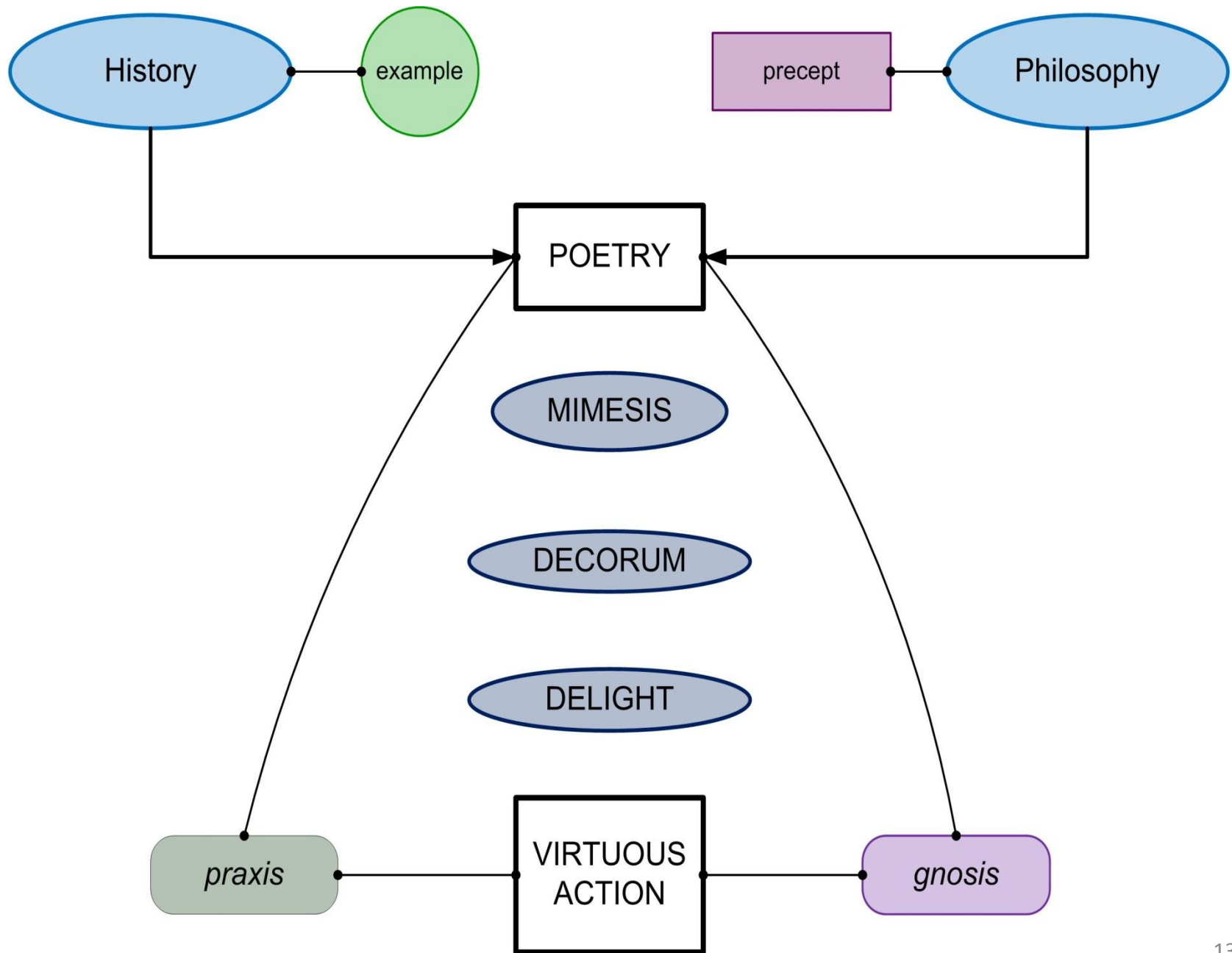


DELIGHT: Nature

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

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)



Stephen Gosson: Critique of the Senses

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

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

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.”

Plato

Sidney

