





Wit and Will

"... our erected wit maketh us to know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it" (Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*).

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

QUINTESSENCE OF DUST

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

(*Hamlet* 2.2.256-59)

DELIGHT: Moved to Virtue

- DELIGHT, according to Sidney, is
 - the pleasure derived when one is **“moved”** by art to **virtuous action**—the synthesis of *gnosis* (knowledge) and *praxis* (action)
- What does this idea tell us about the relationship between the soul and the body?

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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.”

(*Defense of Poesy*)

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Donne: "Meditation 17"

WHAT: What metaphors does Donne use to describe MORTALITY in the selected passage?

SO WHAT: What is the significance of these metaphors regarding the relationship between the body and the soul?

- Do they posit
 - a necessary separation of body and soul?
 - a necessary HIERARCHY of body and soul?
 - a necessary interdependence of body and soul?
 - another relationship entirely?

Donne: "Meditation 17"

WHAT: What is the role of the senses in Donne's "Meditation?"

- Consider:
 - "Who bends not his ear to any bell..." (1421)

SO WHAT: What is the significance of the way that Donne connects the ear/eye to islands, neighbours, congregations, and books in a library?

What does this relationship tell us about the concepts of SEPARATION and CONNECTION that appear in the poem, "Ecstasy?"

Donne: Ecstasy The Occasion of the Drama

WHAT: Describe the "action" of the poem.
What is the OCCASION of the poem?

If we were to watch the two lovers lying together on the bank of the river among the violets, what would we SEE?

Donne: Ecstasy: Knowledge

WHAT: Identify the pattern of diction that relates to KNOWLEDGE in the poem.

Does this pattern change as the poem progresses?

What knowledge is important in the poem?

Where does it come from?

SO WHAT: What is the relationship between KNOWLEDGE and the poem's attitude toward the soul and the body?

Donne: Ecstasy: Action

WHAT: What is the active agent in the poem? Is it the soul? The body? Something else?

Consider:

- References to alchemy (33-48; 53-56) and astrology (49-52);
- The agent that goes with the active verbs such as "grown" (23), "makes" (36), "transplant" (37), "Interanimates" (42), "knit" (63)
- Sidney's definition of "delight."

SO WHAT: What is the relationship among knowledge, action, soul and body?

Donne: Ecstasy Love

Reconsider the earlier question: What do we see?

If this is a love poem, how is love defined? How do we SEE LOVE? What do we *need* in order to see or to feel love?

Consider the "But" (49) that reorients the emphasis of the poem.
