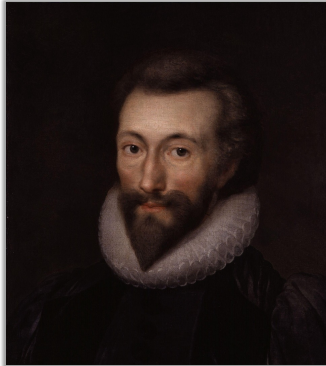
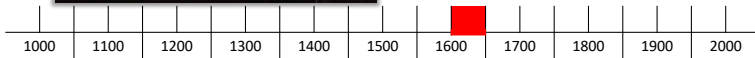


 **John Donne (1572-1631)**



- born to a prosperous Catholic family at a time when Catholics were held in suspicion
- studied at Oxford and Cambridge but took no degree, owing to religious disagreements
- converted to Anglicanism and was eventually appointed Dean of St Paul's Cathedral
- his *Poems* (1633) was not published until two years after his death (NAEL B882-85)



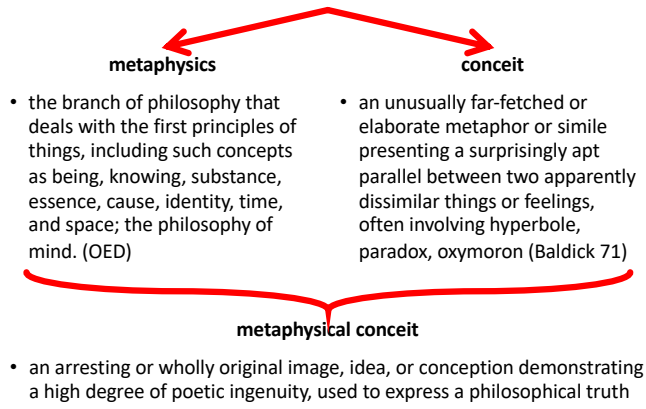
metaphysical poets

[The metaphysical poets'] thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found... Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Abraham Cowley," *Lives of the Poets* (1779)

- name given to a diverse group of early 17th C English poets, including Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, and others
- work is notable for its ingenious use of intellectual and theological concepts in surprising conceits, strange paradoxes, and far-fetched imagery
- leading poet is Donne, whose colloquial, abrupt style breaks from preceding Elizabethan love poetry (Baldick 222)

metaphysical conceit



geometric compass



- an instrument of calculation composed of two arms, converging at an opening pivot
 - designed by Galileo Galilei in Padua in 1597 and built by Marcantonio Mazzoleni
 - exploits the theory of proportions to allow its users to make more than forty different types of complex geometric and arithmetic calculations
- <https://artidecorative.milanocastello.it/en/content/galileo-galilei's-geometric-and-military-compass>

📖 Donne, “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” (1633)

If they be two, they are two so

As stiff twin compasses are two,

Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show

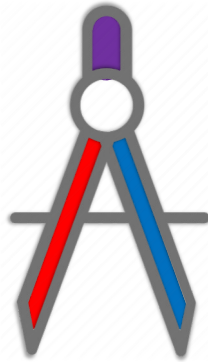
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,

Yet when the other far doth roam,

It leans, and hearkens after it,

And grows erect, as that comes home.
(25-32)



gold leaf



- sometimes called *gold foil*, gold that has been beaten into a very thin sheet about 0.12 microns thick (copier paper is about 130 microns thick)
- a decorative material that has been used for thousands of years, in architecture, statuary, furniture, illuminated manuscripts, religious icons, etc.
- one ounce of 24-karat gold can be beaten into gold leaf covering an area of 150 square feet

<https://www.goldenleafproducts.com/info-what-is-gold-leaf.html>

the Ptolemaic universe



- conception of the universe advanced by Roman astronomer Ptolemy (ca. 100-170)
- posits Earth as the centre of the universe, with sun, planets, and stars set in transparent “spheres” orbiting it
- accepted as standard model of universe for almost 1,500 years
- Copernicus later advanced the alternative view that the Earth orbits the sun (NAEL BA55)

📖 Donne, “Holy Sonnets” (1633)

x / x / x / x / x / x /

a Batter my heart, three-personed God, for you

b As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;

b That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend

a Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.

a I, like an usurped town, to another due,

b Labour to admit you, but O, to no end;

b Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,

a But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.

c Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,

d But am betrothed unto your enemy;

d Divorce me, untie or break that knot again;

d Take me to you, imprison me, for I,

e Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,

e Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me. (14;

NAEL B913-14)

- juxtaposition of gentle actions (“knock”) with violent actions (“break”) speaks to persona’s powerful desire to be redeemed
- simile and extended metaphor: persona tries to live by “Reason” but is too “weak” to do so
- volta, marked by transitional conjunction “Yet,” shifts focus away from god to persona
- paradoxes (“imprison” vs “free,” “chaste” vs “ravish”) speak to god’s redemption as transcending “reason”

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