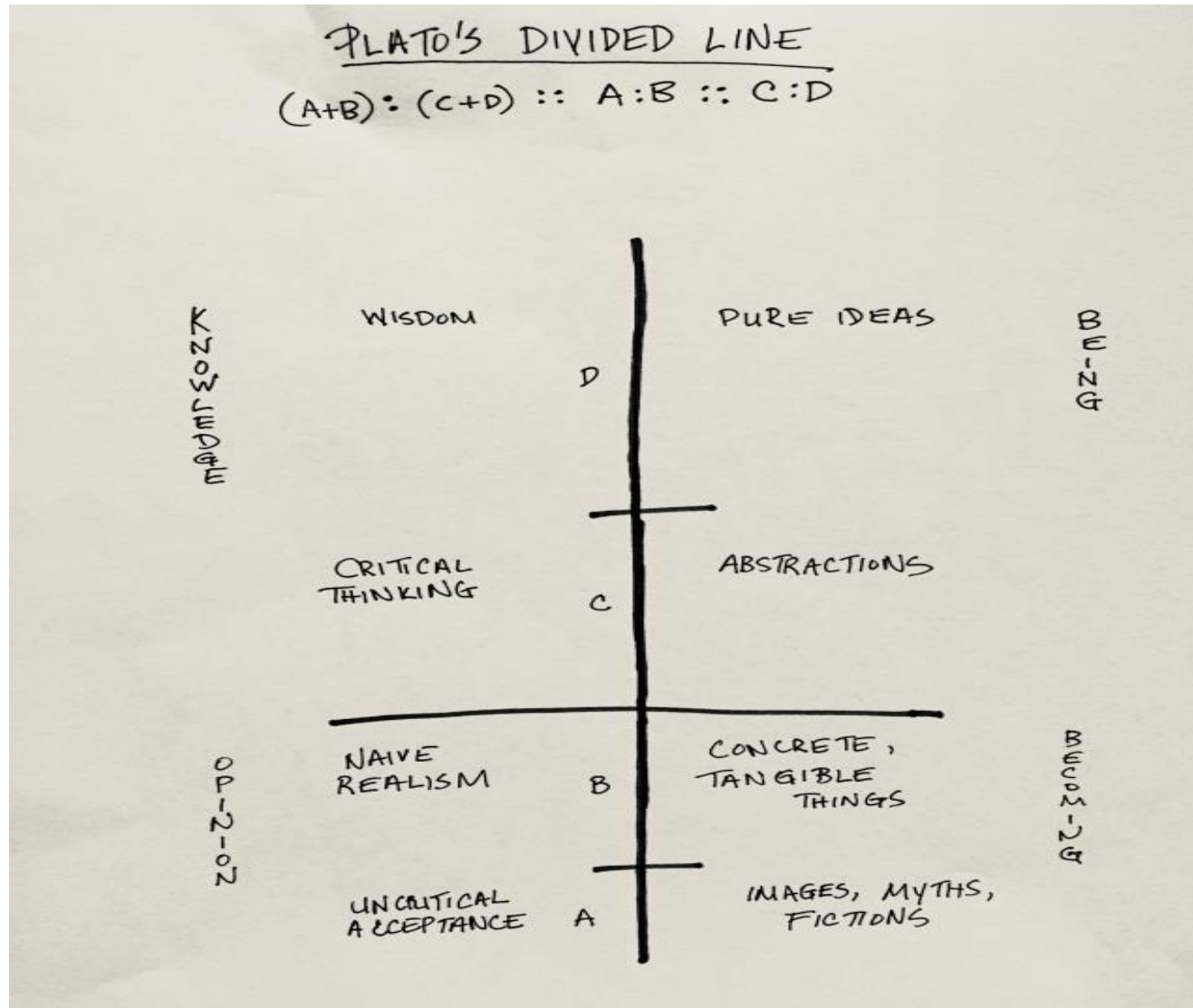


Danto: what art is

- Plato is of two minds about the value of Art. In the Republic, he defines art as imitation: it looks like the real thing, but it isn't.
- The highest things are ideas, and appearances drop to the lowest rung of his archetypal schema.
- While Plato recognized beauty as an archetypal value in the symposium, in the Republic he says the arts and poetry do not add enough practical value to build an ideal society.
- The World of Appearances, Plato's term for the superficial, creates a conflict between art and philosophy. So, what is art's value?
- Danto says that some art is imitation, and some is not. Either definition is not adequate for art.

Plato's Divided Line of Knowing



Danto says : Art Contributes Beauty

- Early in the 20th century, a revolution occurred in the visual arts, overturning Leon Battista Alberti's (1400s) standard for painting: there was no visual difference between looking out a window and what a painting showed.
- With the advent of Modernism, art backed away from mirror images.
- Photography and moving pictures set a standard for fidelity that stunted the progress of the visual arts.
- The revolution was viewed at an Art Salon in Paris in 1905.
- Henri Matisse's painting: *Woman with a Hat* sold to Leo Stein.

Woman with a Hat-Henri Matisse

- **Sold!**



- Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)* did get shown at the Exhibit.



Other Reasons for the Revolution

- As many as 500 artistic manifestos, beginning with Cubism and Fauvism, emerged from the Modernist wave.
- Some movements had recognizable names, such as Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Conceptual Art.
- Fuel for these creative adventures arose from political upheaval spawned by WWI and the Bolshevik Revolution.
- Freud's and C.G. Jung's psychoanalytic theories generated deep dives into the psyche to reveal the mind's undercarriage and connection to nature.
- The artist connects to the inner self and abandons self-control.

Danto asks: Is It Art?

- Picasso's cubist masterpiece, whose subject is five prostitutes in a Barcelona bordello, raised a big question: IS IT ART?
- How would you answer the question if you knew it was a significant artwork but did not know the famous painter's name?
- Danto says there is a big difference between "being" art and "knowing" something is art.
- Ontology: what it means to "be" something? Essence?
- Epistemology: connoisseurship, aesthetic judgment?
- "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot discern- an atmosphere of theory, a knowledge of art history: "an artworld."
- Wallace Stevens: a poem: The Man with the Blue Guitar.
- Read from Lecture Notes: page 3.

Danto: Embodied Meaning

- Works of art are about something; they have meaning.
- Meanings are not material.
- We infer or grasp meanings; the artwork embodies the meaning,
- And the kind of relationship that art depends on is internal.
- In other words, the art object embodies the meaning, and that meaning does not rest on logic or semantics.
- Quoting Danto: “What the viewer must do is interpret the meaning-bearing properties to grasp the meaning they embody.”
- Jacques Louis David: Marat Assassine- 1793
- <https://ageofrevolution.org/200-object/the-death-of-marat-by-jacques-louis-david/>

Why is the meaning of embodiment critical to Danto?

- Humanity's embodied condition has historically played a central role in our artistic tradition of the Christian world.
- Artists seeking commissions and patronage accepted the challenge of representing the mystery of the incarnation.
- The Messiah enters the world in the flesh through a birth canal, and he will not leave the world, as Danto says, by dying in his sleep surrounded by his disciples like the Buddha. His exit by extreme torture awakens the mind to recognize inner emotional states that affirm our corporeal mortality.
- Knowledge of the external world presupposes our experience of messiness.
- Full recognition of the mortal coil: Reality-Plato's Euthyphro

“Life without a feeling of bodily organs would be merely a consciousness of existence, without any feeling of well-being or the reverse, i.e., of furthering or checking vital powers. For the mind is by itself in union with the body.”

-Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement.

Piero-Resurrection



Piero della Francesca's Resurrection.

Danto's Definition of Art and Other Thoughts

- Something is a work of art with content and meaning, about something reflecting the artist's creative intent, and that meaning is embodied in the work.
- Thanks to Descartes, I also define art as “wakeful-dreams.”
- There is no internal way of distinguishing dreaming and perceiving.
- As an artwork, Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes cannot be distinguished from the ordinary Brillo box, as they meet the eye, but they have different meanings.
- Good taste is optional today; bad taste is artistically acceptable, and a loathing for beauty is at least respected.
- Art always stands at a distance from reality.

Spirit is a Big Word for Danto

- G.W.F. Hegel, the author of the Phenomenology of Spirit, shaped Danto's thinking as a philosopher and an art critic.
- Hegel's treatise offers a theory on how art influences history.
- Danto pays tribute to Hegel, saying that artists find a way to embody a dynamic idea in a sensory medium and that art is a component of spirit, philosophy, and religion
- Historical development progresses to refine ideas (reason), infusing them with spirit to generate clearer understandings and new realities.
- Zeitgeist is the spirit of the times driving the movement of reason to reveal the inner truth of happenings in a particular era. "The Owl of Minerva flies only at dusk."
- How do we describe the spirit (Geist) of the time we live in now?
- In Danto's estimation, we have reached the end of art in that art no longer adheres to the constraints of imitation theory; there is no special way art needs to be.
- Without stylistic and philosophical constraints, Danto raises a disconcerting question: what distinguishes art from anything else, if everything can be art?
- His answer: "It is not a consoling idea that just because anything can be art, it does not follow that everything is art." page 26-What Art Is.