

# Retinal Art and the Ruins of Representation: Revisiting Plato's Cave and the Notion of Rasa in the Natyashastra

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“Something in the world forces us to think. This something is not an object of recognition, but a fundamental encounter.”  
(Gilles Deleuze – Difference and repetition p. 139)

“Minds exist only in relation to other minds.” (Mihai Nadin)

“even those elements designated as "basic" or "proto-elements" are not primitive but are, on the contrary, of a complex nature.”  
(Kandinsky, point... p.31)

“Kunst gibt nicht das Sichtbare wieder, sondern macht sichtbar”  
(Paul Klee)

“the objective is that which has no virtuality”  
(Deleuze, Bergsionism p.41)

“the eye thinks even more than it listens” (D+G Philosophy p. 195)

“This is the dark thought I have had about representation for so long: we are immersed in it and it has become inseparable from our condition. It has created a world, a cosmos even, of false problems such that we have lost our true freedom: that of invention.” (Dorothea Olkowski, p.91)

Marcel Duchamp and A. Coomaraswamy criticized the West for producing 'only' retinal art. When we look at an object, an image is produced on the retina, which connects to the brain and sensations.

That image can be represented through art and its transformative power. While Western art gradually moved toward abstraction and a disconnection from the object, in the Natyashastra, the notion of rasa (taste) always referred to the expression of the inner world and a connectivity based on shared inner sensation of rasa. This contrast can be illuminated through Plato's cave allegory.

# Bowerbird - (re/de)- territorialization

Aesthetics as attraction and mating  
strategy in animal kingdom







## Albrecht Dürer's "Melancholia I" 1515

Think about the world, while suffering from it and going into introspection with a feeling of sadness, inspiration and creativity.

Analysing and representing world and connecting with deep inner sensations at the same time

The Lion Man is a masterpiece. Sculpted from mammoth ivory, this 40,000-year-old image is 31 centimetres tall.

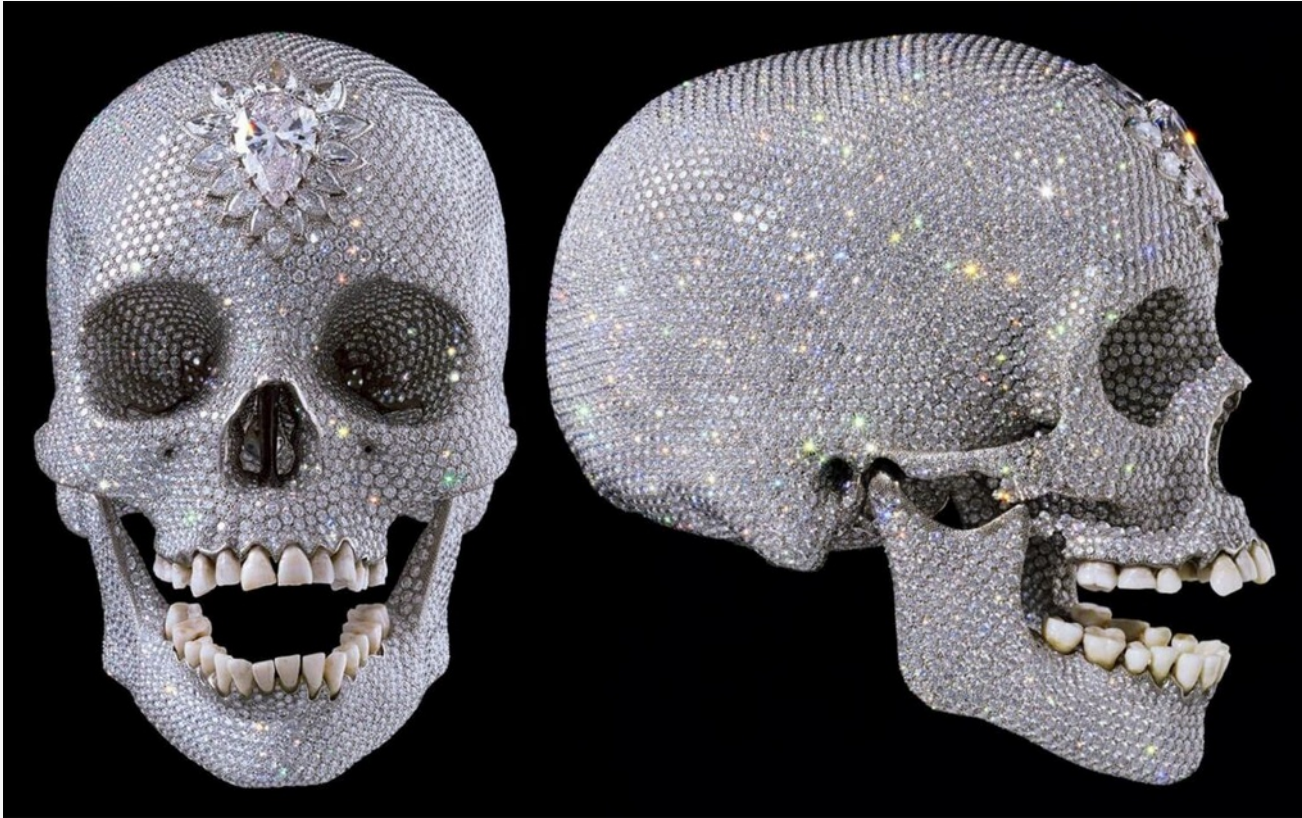


Venus of Willendorf (Austria): About 28,000-25,000 years old

Two views of the Venus of Hohle Fels figurine, which may have been worn as an amulet, and is the earliest known, undisputed example of a depiction of a human being 40,000







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# Damine Hirst "For the love of God" £50 million

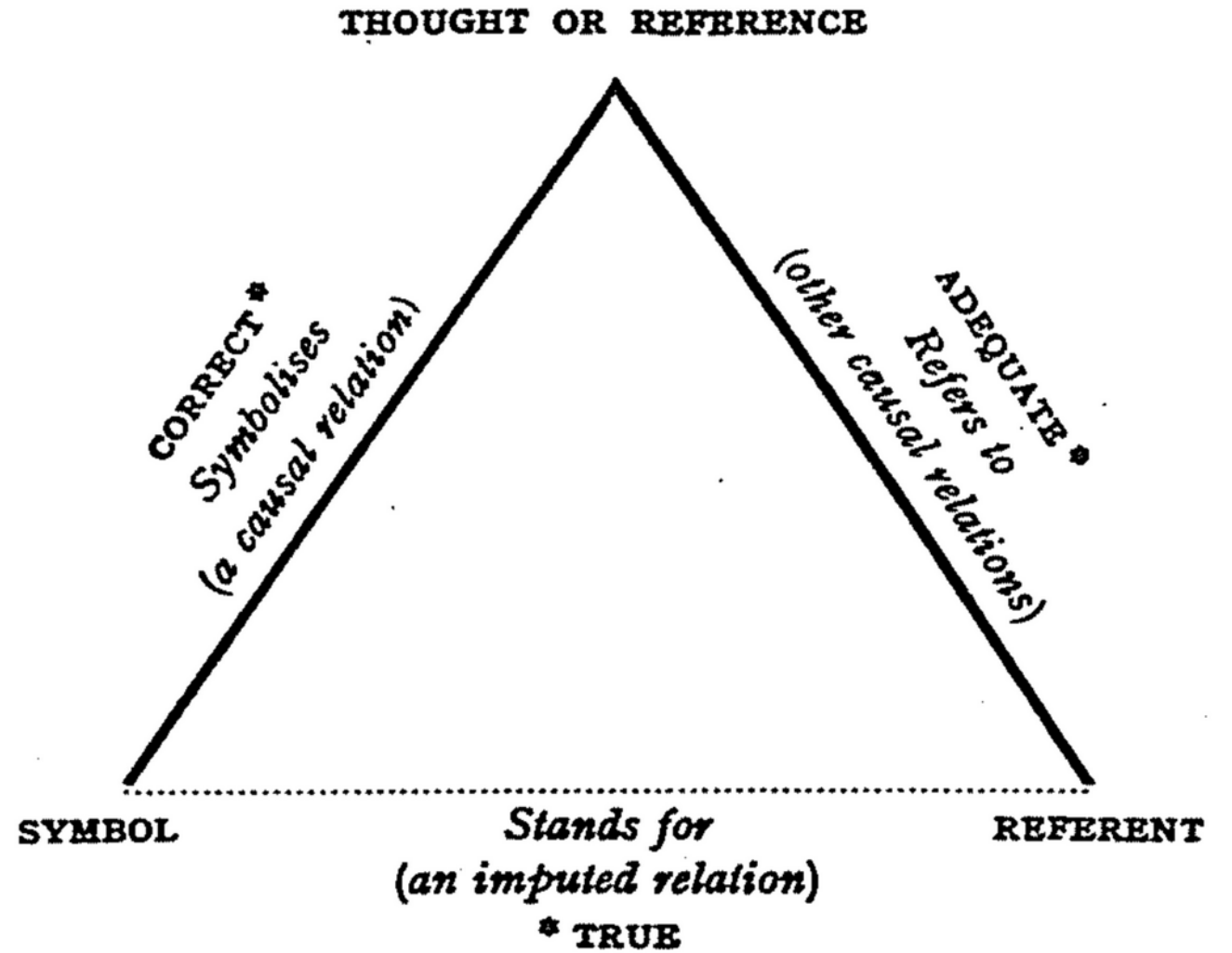
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Daniel Spoerri, 'Tableau-piège: Restaurant de la City-Galerie', 1965, 82x82cm, Collection Helga Hahn, Cologne.





# Semiotic triangle





La Monte Yung \*1935





- Free Curve to the Point -  
Accompanying Sound of Geometric  
Curves
- [Vasily Kandinsky](#) French, born  
Russia
- 1925





Anish  
Kapoor  
'Cloud  
gate'  
Chicago  
2006





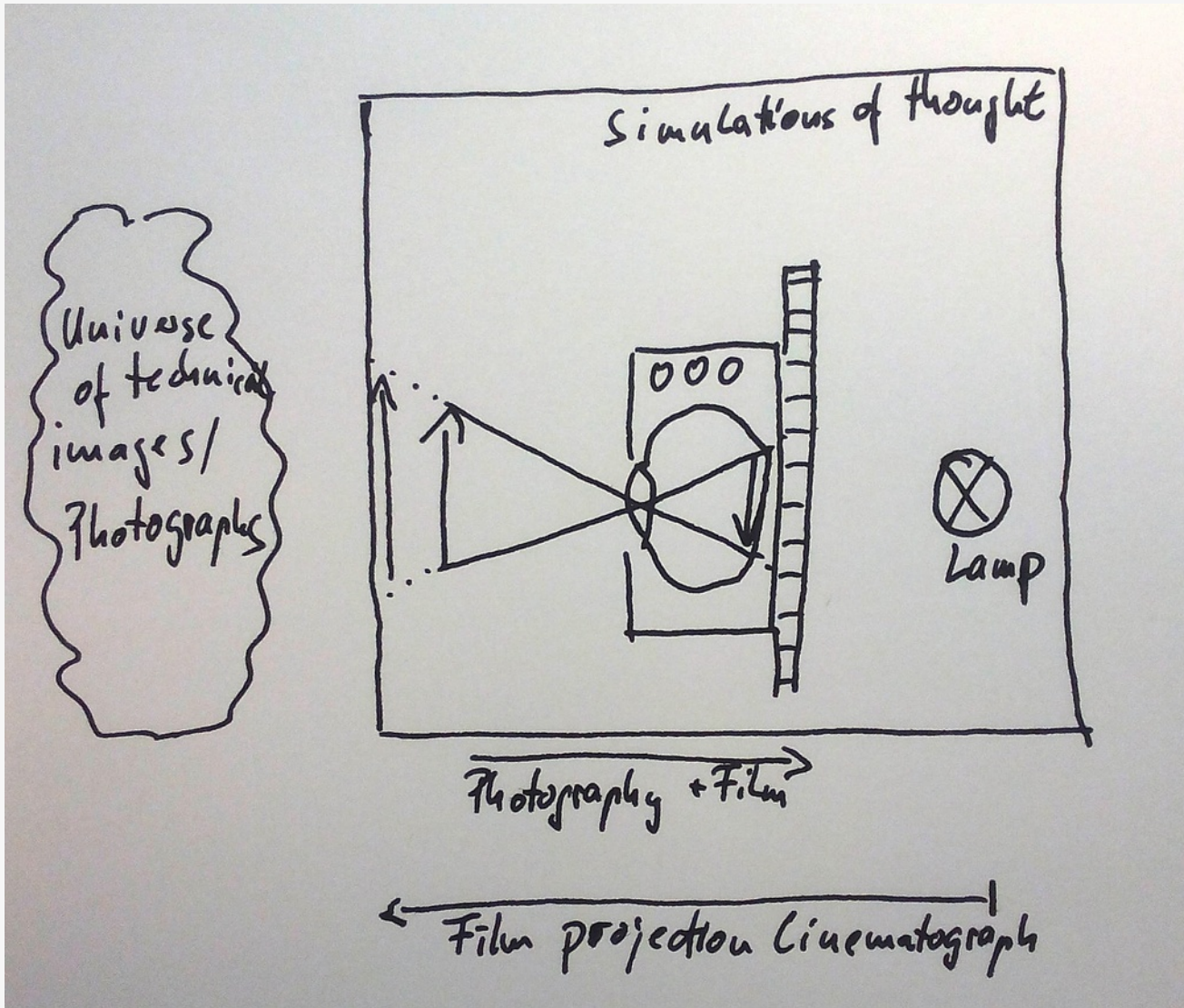
**Chauvet Cave 36 500 years ago**





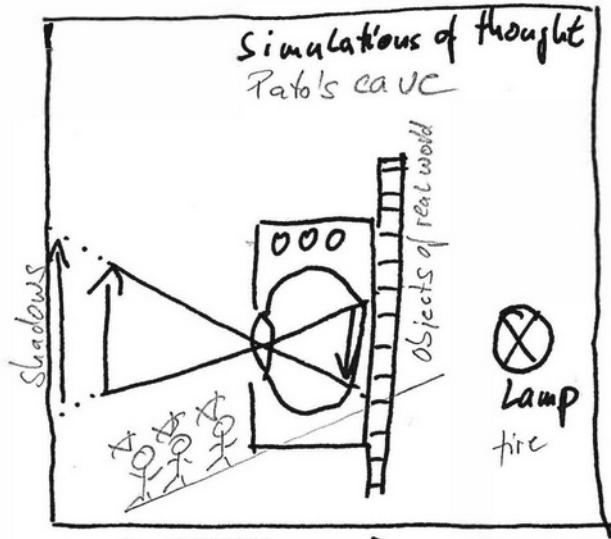
Plato's cave





Baudrillard's  
Simulacrum

Universe  
of technical  
images/  
Photographs



Photography + Film

Film projection Cinematograph  
Bergson

The philosopher  
needs to free the  
people to leave  
the cave







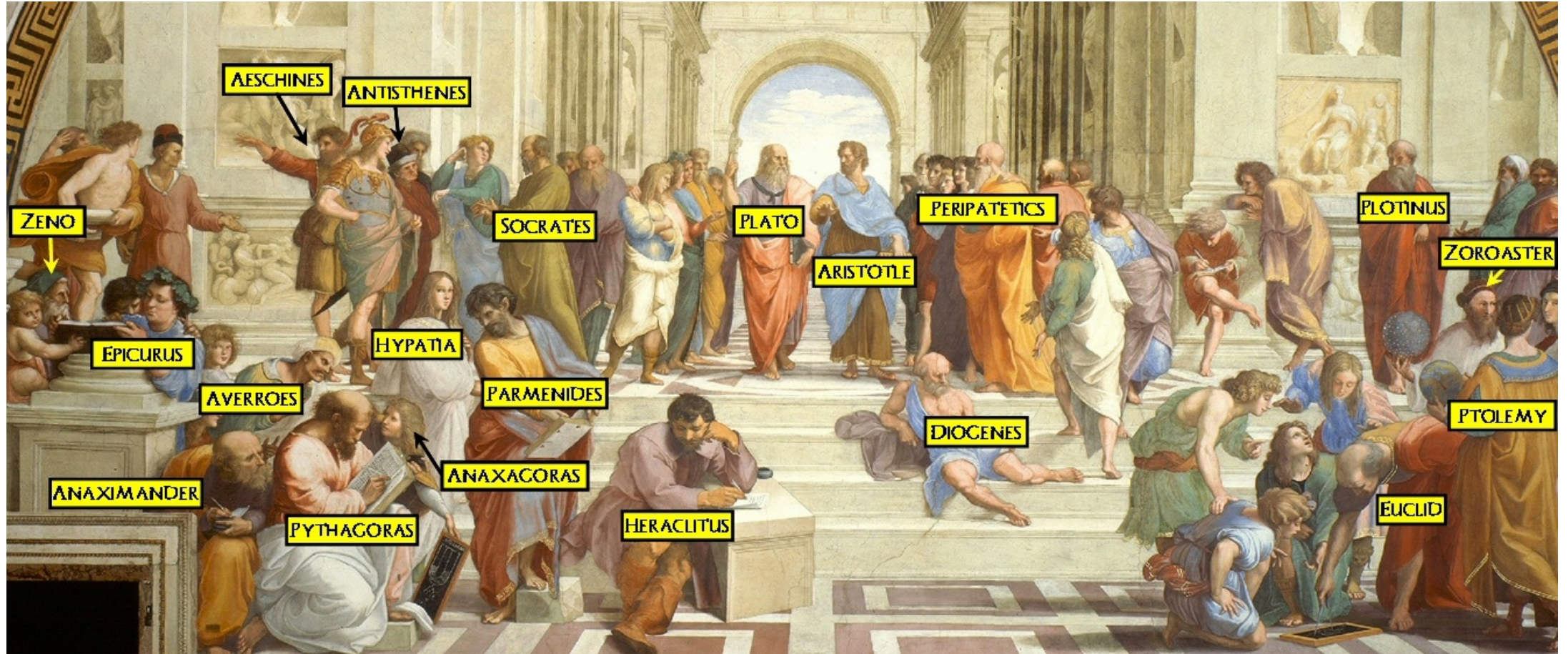








# Raffael 'School of Athens' 1511, Vatikan



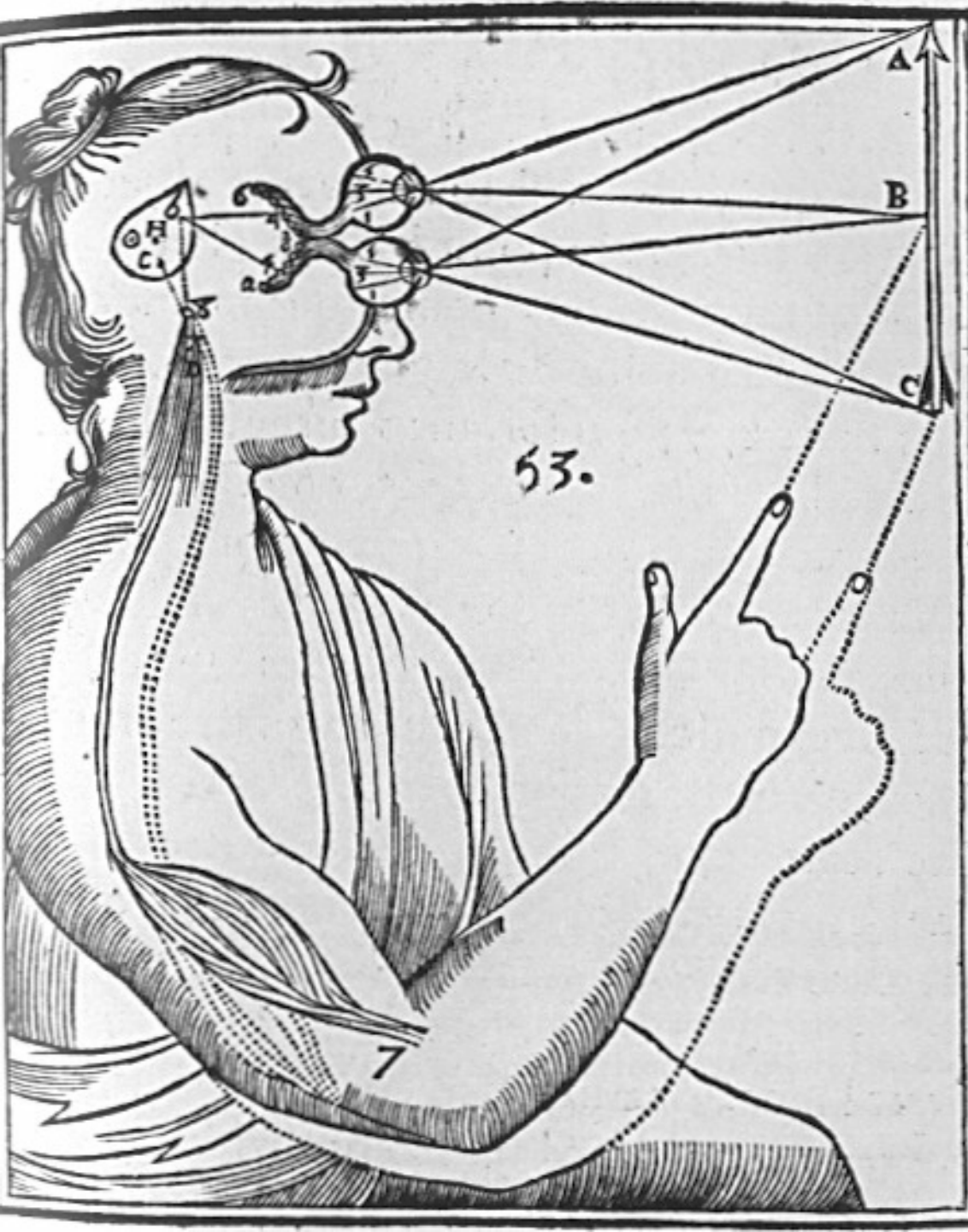


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# Cy Twombly 'School of Athens' 1961







Descartes'  
1644 *Principles of*  
*Philosophy* diagrams





Sringara-Love



Hasya-Comedy



Karuna-Pity



Raudra-Furious



Veeryam-Heroic



Bhayanakam-Fearful



Beebhatsa-Disgust



Atbhutha-Wonder



Santham-Peace

# Natya Shastra & Bhava-Rasa Theory of Bharata

Rasa is the emotional essence or aesthetic flavor experienced by the audience through art. It is the ultimate goal of all artistic expression in the *Natya Shastra*.

**Nine Rasas:** Bharata identifies nine primary Rasas, each corresponding to a specific emotion (*Bhava*) that is evoked in the audience:

- **Śṛṅgāra** (Love, Delight)
- **Hāsyā** (Laughter, Mirth)
- **Karuṇā** (Compassion, Pathos)
- **Raudra** (Anger, Fury)
- **Vīra** (Heroism, Courage)
- **Bhayānaka** (Fear, Terror)
- **Bībhatsa** (Disgust, Aversion)
- **Adbhuta** (Wonder, Amazement)
- **Śānta** (Peace, Tranquility, added later by commentators)

**Bhava and Rasa Relationship:** The actors express specific emotions (*Bhava*), and the audience perceives and enjoys these as Rasa, which transcends ordinary emotional responses into a refined aesthetic experience.



# Tomb of Jean- Jacques Rousseau in Panthéon, Paris.

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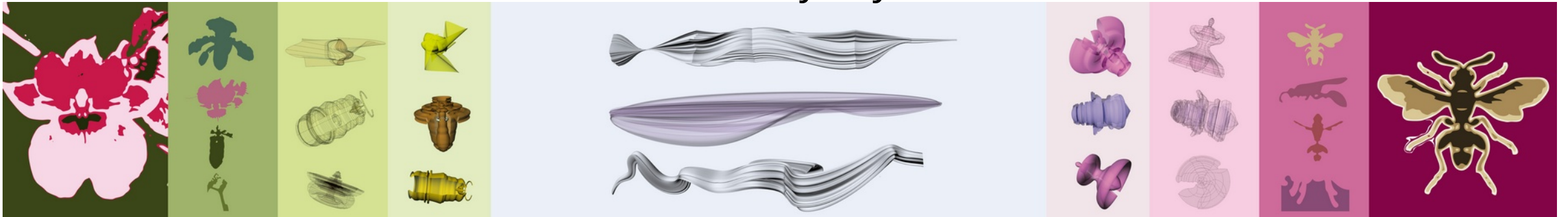




# Who am I?

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- Becoming and encounter
- Body without organs: The BwO is not a literal body but a conceptual space or state of being. It refers to a body or system stripped of its predetermined roles, functions, and hierarchies —an undifferentiated field of potential. It's a way of thinking about becoming, flux, and creativity beyond fixed identities or functions.



# Why to art?

- Contemplation, speculation and enjoyment
- Power and prosperity
- Expression
- Celebration, worship, devotion
- Truth







# Art Historical Methodology – a non- linear narrative

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Western historical sciences are dominated by the idea of a linear history, while in India the idea of a cyclical time is dominant.

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Western thought is strongly influenced by the idea of progress and development, while Indian thought works with the idea of transmitted knowledge.

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In western spirituality the image of the human is the key reference point, while in Indian spirituality the different forms of the divine dominate.





Retinal Reflection-  
Ananda Kentish  
Coomaraswamy  
(1877-1947)

# Aesthetic Theories

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Western Concept	Indian Aesthetic Equivalent	Explanation
Mimesis and Representation	<i>Anukarana</i> (Imitation), <i>Anukriti</i> (Replication)	Art imitates life, emotions, and universal truths, not just physical reality but also mental and emotional states.
Critique of Judgment	<i>Sahridaya</i> (Sensitive Observer), <i>Rasa Nirnaya</i> (Analysis of Rasa)	Aesthetic judgment relies on the ability to perceive and evaluate the success of evoking <i>Rasa</i> (aesthetic flavor).
Morally Uplifting	<i>Dharma</i> (Righteousness), <i>Shreyas</i> (Ethical Goodness), <i>Ārtha</i> (Purpose)	Art serves as a tool for moral and spiritual upliftment, educating and guiding the audience toward virtuous living.
Sublime	<i>Adbhuta Rasa</i> (Wonder), <i>Vismaya</i> (Awe), <i>Ananda</i> (Bliss)	The aesthetic experience of wonder and awe, leading to transcendence, cosmic realization, or spiritual elevation.
Expression of Emotion	<i>Bhava</i> (Emotion), <i>Rasa</i> (Aesthetic Experience)	The emotional states ( <i>Bhava</i> ) expressed in art evoke <i>Rasa</i> (joy, love, anger, etc.) in the audience, creating aesthetic pleasure.
Innovation and Creativity	<i>Pratibha</i> (Creative Genius), <i>Nirmāṇa</i> (Creation), <i>Vakrokti</i> (Artistic Twist)	Emphasizes originality, imaginative expression, and the creative skill of the artist in shaping a unique aesthetic work.