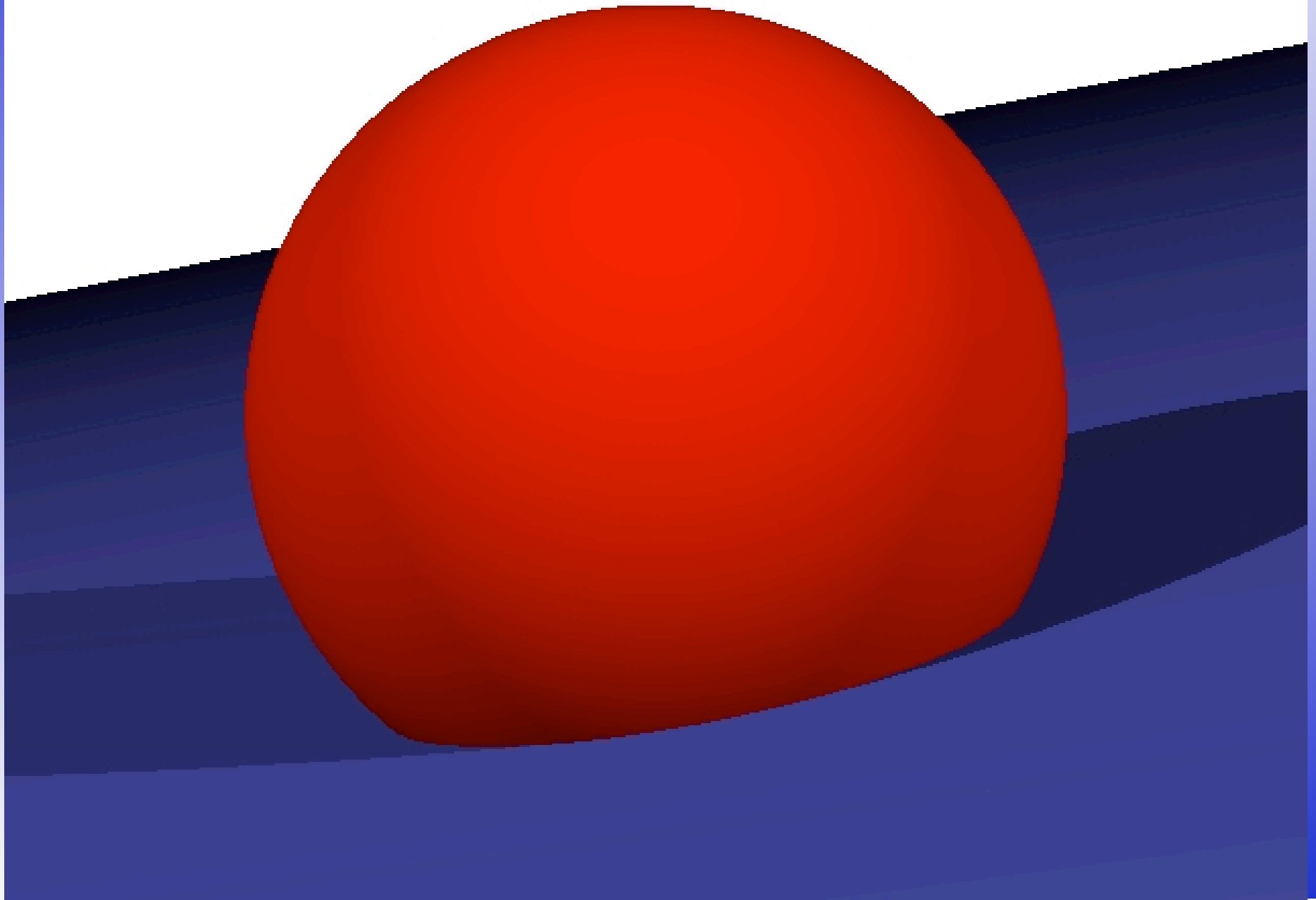


Flatland and the *Republic*



The Republic

One prisoner is freed from his shackles. He is compelled to stand up ... turn around, walk, and look toward the light. He suffers pain and distress from the glare of the light. So dazzled is he that he cannot even discern the very objects whose shadows he used to be able to see.

The Republic

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Flatland

There was a darkness; then a dizzy, sickening sensation of sight that was not like seeing ... Either this is madness or it is Hell.' 'It is neither,' calmly replied the voice of the Sphere, 'it is Knowledge...'.

The Republic

Their souls will ever feel the pull from above and yearn to sojourn there...By the same token, would you think it strange if someone returning from divine contemplation to the miseries of men should appear ridiculous?

What if he were still blinking his eyes and not yet readjusted to the surrounding darkness before being compelled to testify in court about the shadows of justice or about the images casting the shadows? What if he had to enter into debate about the notions of such matters held fast by people who had never seen justice itself?

The Republic

Habituation, then, is evidently required in order to see things higher up. In the beginning he would most easily see shadows; next, reflections in the water of men and other objects. Then he would see the objects themselves. From there he would go on to behold the heavens and the heavenly phenomena--more easily the moon and stars by night than the sun by day...Finally, I suppose, he would be able to look on the sun itself, not in reflections in the water or in fleeting images in some alien setting. He would look at the sun as it is, in its own domain, and so be able to see what it is really like.



Flatland

[L]ight comes to us alike in our homes and out of them, by day and by night, equally at all times and in all places, whence we know not. ... I --alas, I alone in Flatland-- know now only too well the true solution of this mysterious problem; but my knowledge cannot be made intelligible to a single one of my countrymen; and I am mocked at -- I, the sole possessor the truths of space and of the theory of the introduction of Light from the world of Three Dimensions-- as if I were the maddest of the mad!

The Republic

Now supposing he recalled where he came from.
Supposing he thought of his fellow prisoners and of what passed for wisdom in the place they were inhabiting. Don't you think he would feel pity for all that and rejoice in his own change of circumstance?

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Flatland

I awoke rejoicing, and began to reflect on the glorious career before me. I would go forth, methought, at once and evangelize the whole of Flatland. Even to Women and Soldiers should the Gospel of Three Dimensions be proclaimed.

The Republic

Suppose he should then have to compete once more in shadow watching with those who never left the cave. ... Would he not be laughed at? ... Further, if anyone tried to release the prisoners and lead them up and they could get their hands on him and kill him, would they not kill him? (p 211)

The Republic

Should we then proceed to consider how such men might be produced and led upward to the light in the same way that some men are said to have ascended from Hades to the halls of the gods? (p 215)

counting/reckoning

“So these are the occasions when the soul summons up reason and calculation ... “

“They should persist in their studies until they reach the level of pure thought, where they will be able to contemplate the very nature of number.” p 219.

geometry

“Geometry has to do with unchanging reality ... it would tend to draw the soul upward toward truth.” p 221

astronomy

but before that ...

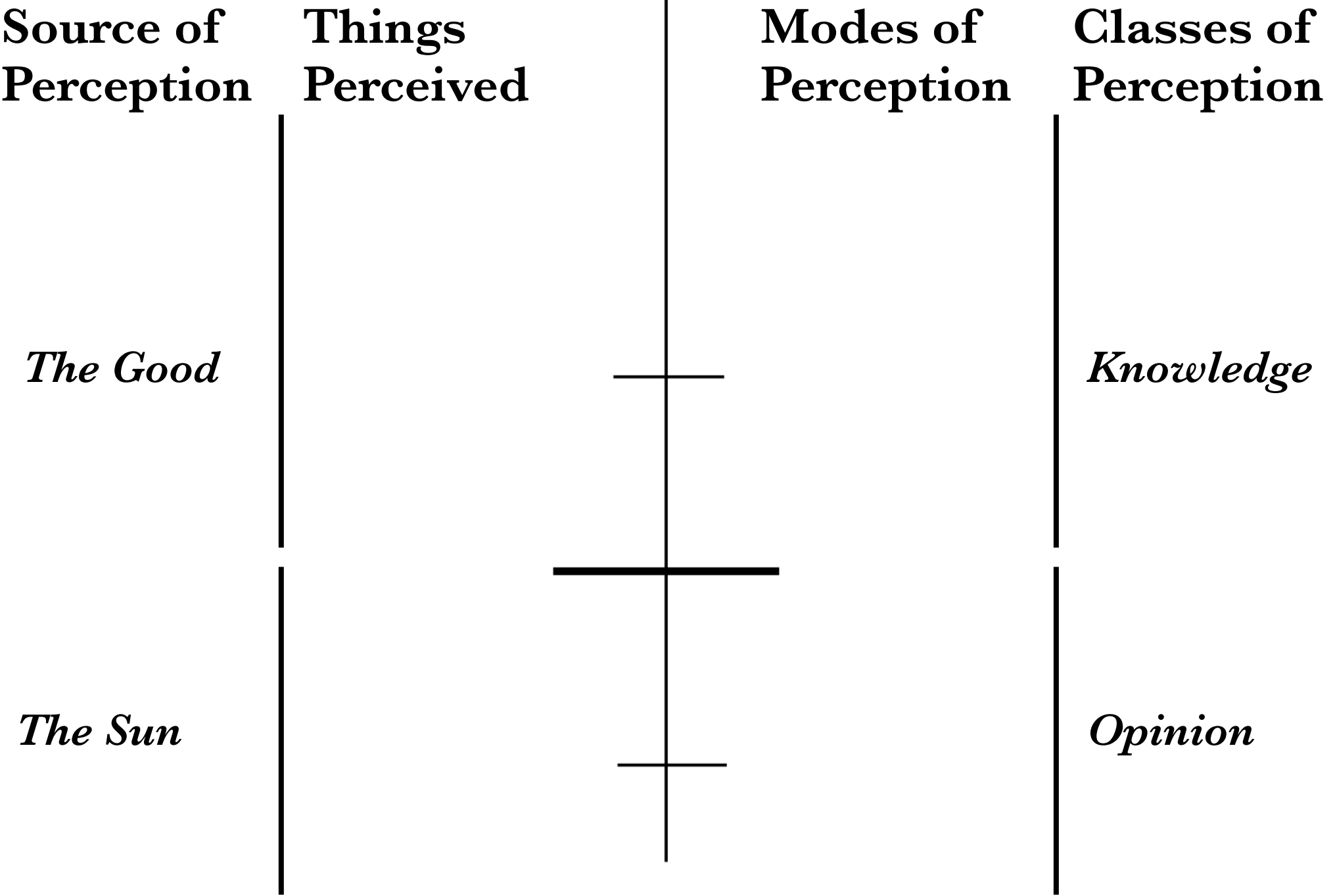
solid geometry

“The proper course would have been to proceed from the second dimension to the third, where we would have to consider cubes ...” p 222

“He then introduced me to the Cube, and I found that this marvellous Being was indeed no Plane, but a Solid” *Flatland* p 86.

[I]t is a difficult subject, and since it has nowhere found favor, there is little incentive to study it. Second, students need someone to direct them.

“Dialectic belongs wholly to the intelligible order, but we also find its counterpart in the visible order, in that decisive moment when the eyes are able to see real creatures, then stars, and finally the sun itself. So it is when a man enters into the dialectic, shunning reliance on sense perceptions and seeking understanding solely by means of rational discourse. He strives to know each thing in its essence and does not desist until he is led by pure intelligence to know goodness itself. Then he will have arrived at the limits of the intelligible, just as the man of our allegory reached the limits of the visible. ... And is this not the journey we call the dialectic?” p 226



Source of Perception	Things Perceived	Modes of Perception	Classes of Perception
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The Good

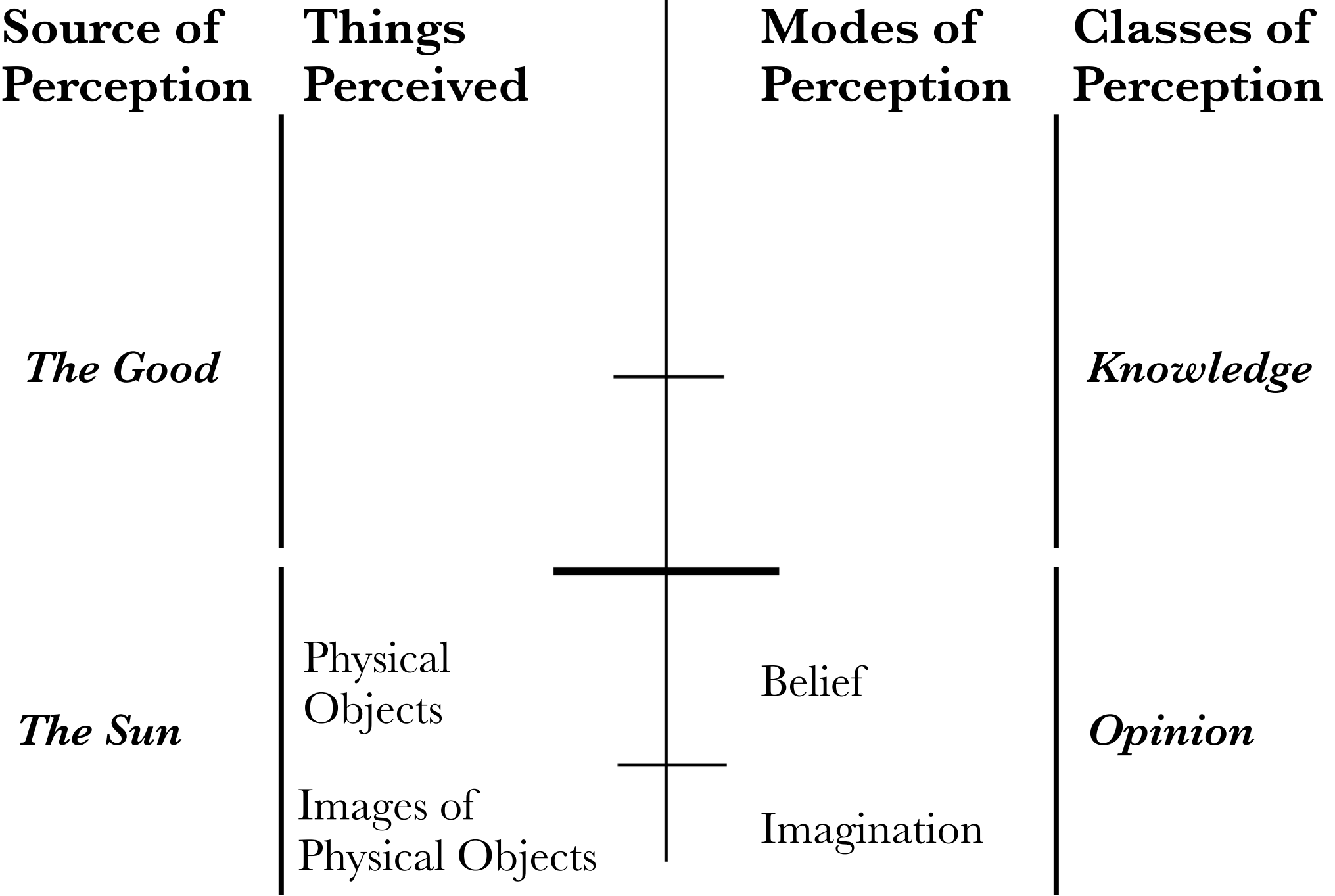
Knowledge

The Sun

Opinion

Images of
Physical Objects

Imagination



Source of Perception	Things Perceived	Modes of Perception	Classes of Perception
<i>The Good</i>	Mathematical Objects	Understanding	<i>Knowledge</i>
<i>The Sun</i>	Physical Objects	Belief	<i>Opinion</i>
	Images of Physical Objects	Imagination	

Source of Perception	Things Perceived	Modes of Perception	Classes of Perception
<i>The Good</i>	Forms	Reason/ Dialectic	<i>Knowledge</i>
	Mathematical Objects	Understanding	
<i>The Sun</i>	Physical Objects	Belief	<i>Opinion</i>
	Images of Physical Objects	Imagination	

“The relation of the sun to vision and its objects in the visible world is the same as the relation of the good to reason and the objects of reason in the world of the intellect ...

The idea of the good, then, imbues the objects of knowledge with truth and confers upon the knower the power to know. Because the idea of the good is the very cause of knowledge and of truth, it is also the chief objective in the pursuit of knowledge. ... [K]nowledge and truth are like the good, but it is wrong to suppose that they are the good. A still greater glory belongs to the good.” p 198

Edwin Abbott. *The Spirit on the Waters.*

Mathematics may help us to measure and weigh the planets, to discover the materials of which they are composed, to extract light and warmth from the motion of water and to dominate the material universe; but even if by these means we could mount up to Mars or hold converse with the inhabitants of Jupiter and Saturn, we should be no nearer to the divine throne, except so far as these new experiences might develop our modesty, respect for facts, a deeper reverence for order and harmony, and a mind more open to new observations and to fresh inferences from old truths.