

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS

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Outline

- Criticism in Philosophy
- The three Most Famous Classical Philosophers
- Socrates (469–399 BCE)
- Plato (427–347 BCE)
- Aristotle (384–322 BCE)
- Vitruvius (c. 80–15 BCE)
- Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

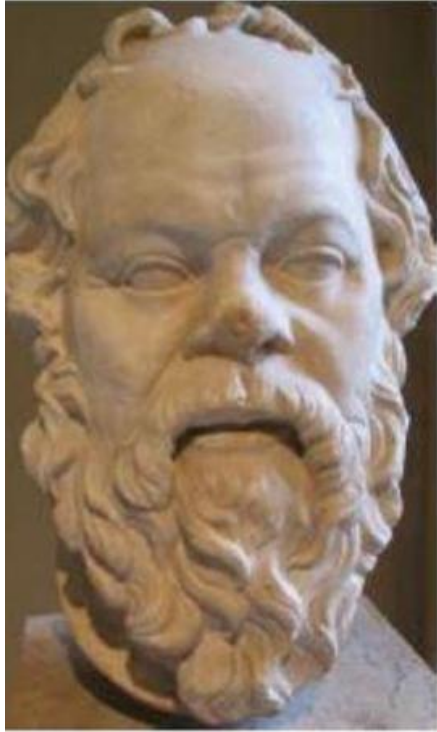
Criticism in Philosophy

Greek civilization focused on **aesthetic governance and produced critical thinking on the Arts.**

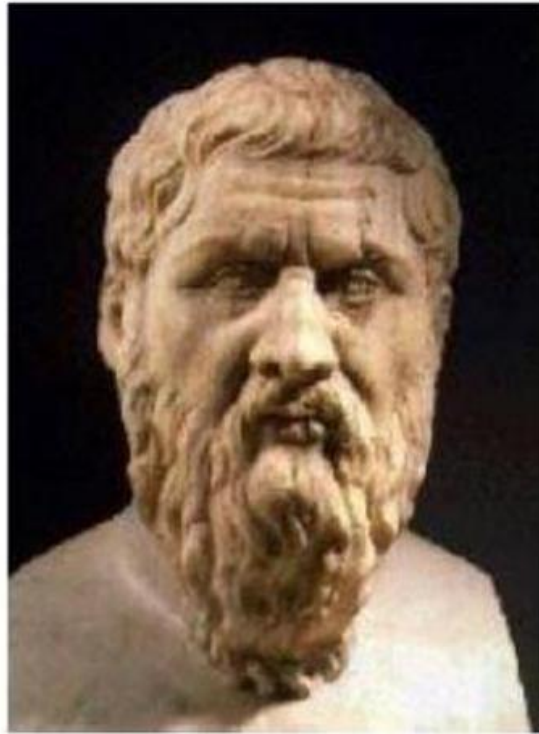
Philosophers: **Socrates, Plato and Aristotle**, have formed the seeds of art criticism theory in the fifth century BC, where these philosophers wrote the first books in the philosophy of Art and beauty.

The ideas that came out of these philosophers about aesthetic judgment and perception of art and artists, was a unique concept for critical vision to express public taste in that era.

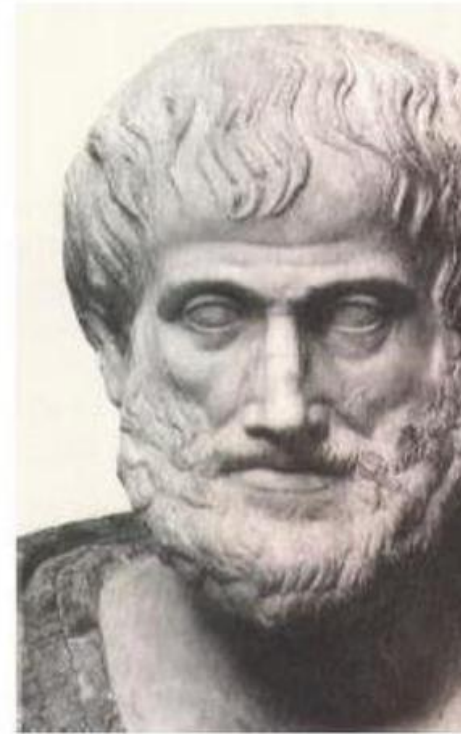
The Three Most Famous Classical Philosophers



Socrates



Plato



Aristotl

Socrates (469–399 BCE)

Socrates is considered one of the founders of Western philosophy, not because of written works—he wrote nothing—but because of his **method of questioning**, known as the **Socratic Method**.

Rather than providing answers, Socrates believed that **truth emerges through dialogue**. Knowledge, for him, was not something to be transmitted from teacher to student, but something to be **revealed through critical questioning**.



The Socratic Method

The Socratic Method is based on:

- Asking precise and often uncomfortable questions
- Exposing hidden assumptions
- Revealing contradictions in commonly accepted beliefs

The Socratic Method

Typical Socratic questions include:

- *What do you mean by this?*
- *Why do you think this is true?*
- *Could it be otherwise?*
- *What are the consequences of this idea?*

Socrates' Relevance Today

Socrates remains relevant because:

- He teaches **how to think**, not what to think
- His method supports critical, reflective, and ethical design practice
- He transforms criticism from judgment into **collective inquiry**



Key Takeaway for Architecture Students

- Architectural criticism is not about defending a project, but about questioning the ideas that produced it.

Plato (427–347 BCE)

Ideas, Ideal Forms, and Architectural Criticism

- Plato was one of the most influential philosophers of Ancient Greece and a student of Socrates. Unlike his teacher, Plato expressed his ideas through **written dialogues**, many of which explore the nature of **truth, beauty, and knowledge**—all central themes in architecture.
- First Western philosopher, whose writings have survived
- Most of what we know about Socrates comes from Plato's writings

Plato (427–347 BCE)

- Plato has talked about ideals, and art with him was a simulation of nature, and to transfer an image from reality (Transferred picture from reality is false).
- Theory of ideas: there is a higher reality than experience a perfect form of everything exists.
- The beauty in his view is relative, more deficient in our world.
- Full beauty can be achieved only in a perfect world. o Beauty was divided into two types: voluptuous beauty is the lowest degrees of beauty, the beauty of the soul or mental beauty, a top-class beauty.

Plato (427–347 BCE)

He was the first ancient philosopher who had given a systematic shape to criticism.

At the core of Plato's philosophy is the **Theory of Forms**.

Plato argues that:

- The physical world is **imperfect and temporary**
- True reality exists in the realm of **Forms** (or Ideas)
- Forms are **eternal, unchanging, and perfect**

For example:

- A physical building is only an **imperfect copy**
- The *Form* of architecture represents **perfect order, harmony, and beauty**

Plato (427–347 BCE)

Although Plato did not write specifically about architecture, his philosophy strongly influenced how architecture has been **evaluated and criticized**.

From a Platonic perspective:

- Geometry is superior to material expression
- Symmetry, proportion, and clarity reflect higher truths
- Architecture should aspire to **ideal order**, not personal expression

Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

Purpose, Function, and Architectural Criticism

- Aristotle was a student of Plato, but he strongly disagreed with his teacher's abstract idealism. While Plato focused on ideal Forms, Aristotle focused on the **real, observable world**. This shift makes Aristotle especially important for architecture and architectural criticism.
- Most famous teacher of **Alexander the Great**.
- His writings cover many subjects including physics, biology, metaphysics, logic, ethics.

Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

- Aristotle divided Arts into the Benefit arts, and fine arts, also he laid the foundations and rules of some of the arts.
- Aristotle believed that the beauty is what show coherence and harmony and clarity, which varies with Plato, he proves the existence of beauty in our world.
- Aristotle was the founder of the Lyceum, the first scientific institute, based in Athens, Greece

Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

Telos: Purpose and Function

Aristotle believed that everything has a **telos**—a purpose or end.

Applied to architecture:

- Buildings exist **for a reason**
- A good building fulfills its purpose well
- Beauty is connected to **function and performance**

Key critical question:

What is this building for, and how well does it achieve that goal?

Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

The Four Causes

Aristotle explained things through **four causes**, all of which are useful for architectural criticism:

- **Material Cause** – What is it made of?
- **Formal Cause** – What is its form or organization?
- **Efficient Cause** – Who or what produced it?
- **Final Cause** – What is its purpose?

Architectural criticism becomes an **analytical process**, not a personal opinion.

Vitruvius (c. 80–15 BCE)

- **Principles, Rules, and Architectural Criticism**
- Vitruvius was a Roman architect, engineer, and theorist whose work ***De Architectura* (Ten Books on Architecture)** is the earliest surviving treatise on architecture. His ideas formed the foundation of architectural theory for over two thousand years.

Vitruvius (c. 80–15 BCE)

- Vitruvius believed that architecture is not only an art, but also a **science** grounded in:
- Geometry
- Proportion
- Construction knowledge
- Human physiology
- Architecture, for Vitruvius, requires both **theory and practice**.

Vitruvius (c. 80–15 BCE)

The Vitruvian Triad

Vitruvius famously defined architecture through three fundamental principles:

- **Firmitas** – Structural stability and durability
- **Utilitas** – Functional usefulness and suitability
- **Venustas** – Beauty and visual pleasure

A successful building must satisfy **all three**.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

Aesthetic Judgment and Architectural Criticism

- Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher whose work ***Critique of Judgment (1790)*** fundamentally shaped modern aesthetic theory. His ideas are especially important for understanding how **beauty is judged**, rather than what beauty is.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

Aesthetic Judgment

Kant argues that judgments of beauty are:

- **Subjective** – based on individual experience
- **Universal** – expected to be shared by others

This apparent contradiction is central to Kant's theory.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

Free Beauty and Dependent Beauty

Kant distinguishes between two types of beauty:

Free Beauty

- Appreciated without knowing its purpose
- Pure aesthetic experience
- Rare in architecture

Dependent Beauty

- Related to function and concept
- Most architecture belongs here
- We judge beauty **in relation to what the building is for**



- Thank you

