

# Introduction to Philosophy

---

## Art and Aesthetic Judgment: Art and Society

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

### Reading

- Plato, *Republic*.

### Background

See the reading for a fine introduction to this material.

### Questions

1. How does Socrates justify the claim that artists are imitators? Is this convincing? Does modern art stand as a counterexample to this position? If so, can Socrates' position be modified to handle modern art?
2. What concept of virtue does Socrates claim that artists like Homer promote? Why argument does Socrates give to show that Homer is wrong about virtue? What does this reveal about the conception of virtue that Socrates would endorse?
3. Ultimately, Socrates maintains that government must control public access to art (this is still an issue: in 1999, Rudy Giuliani, then the Mayor of New York City, advocated withdrawing public funds for the Brooklyn Museum of Art because of a display he accused of being "anti-Catholic"). What is Socrates argument for this position and is it convincing?