

# LESSON 3

# FUNCTIONS AND

# PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

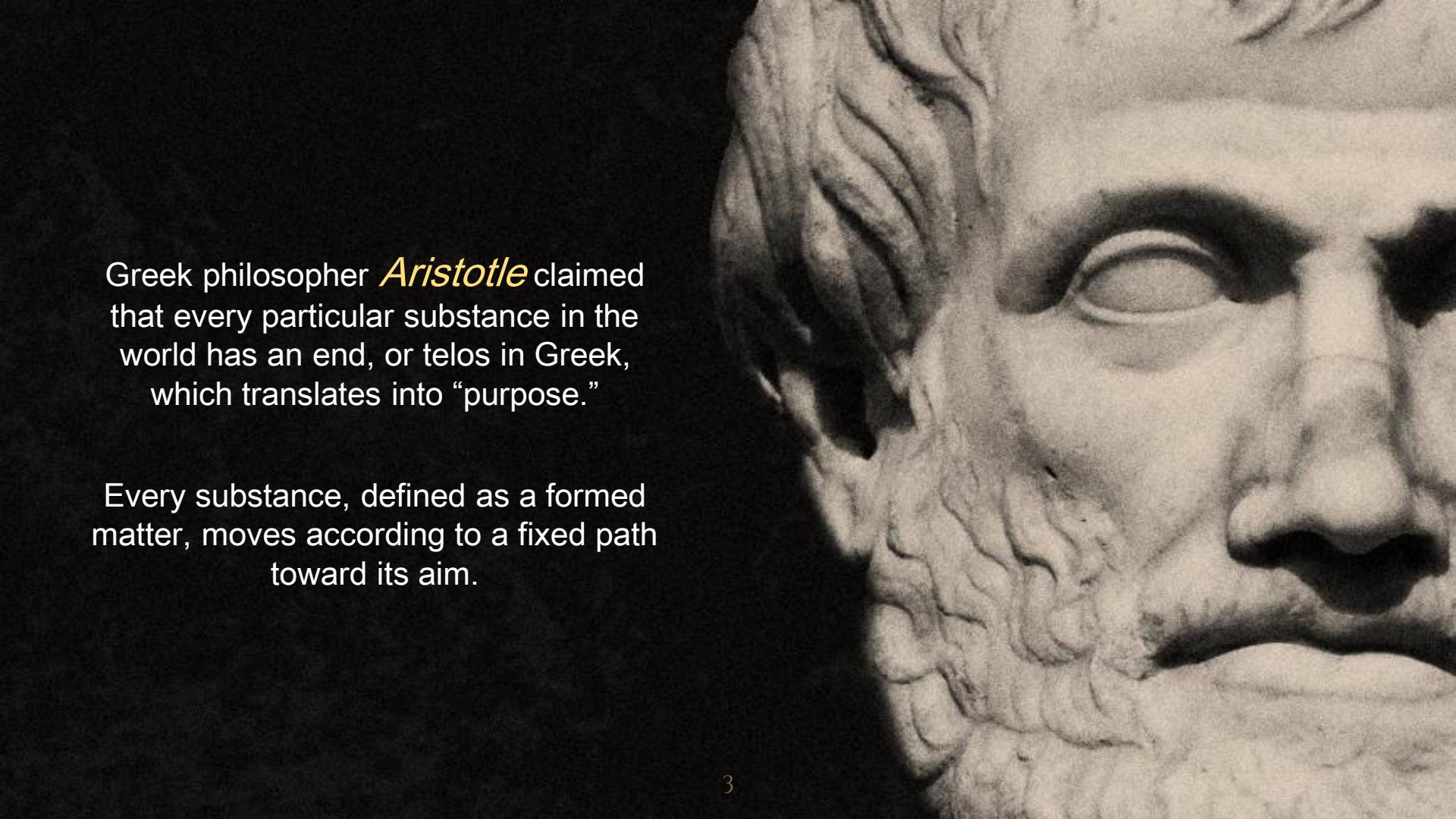
# ON ART

# LEARNING OUTCOMES

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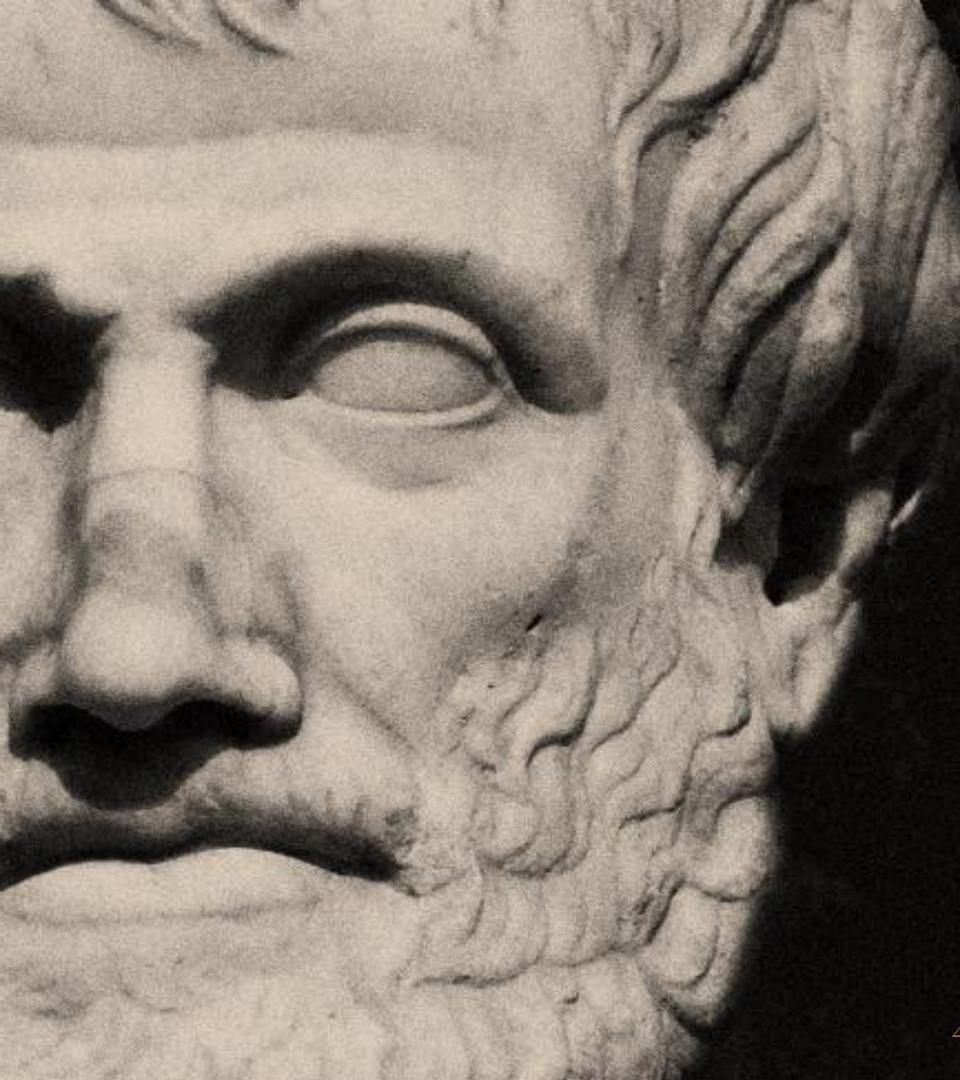
By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Distinguish between directly functional and indirectly functional art;
2. Explain and discuss the basic philosophical perspectives on the art;
3. Realize the function of some art forms in daily life; and
4. Apply concepts and theories on beauty and aesthetics in real life scenarios.



Greek philosopher *Aristotle* claimed that every particular substance in the world has an end, or *telos* in Greek, which translates into “purpose.”

Every substance, defined as a formed matter, moves according to a fixed path toward its aim.

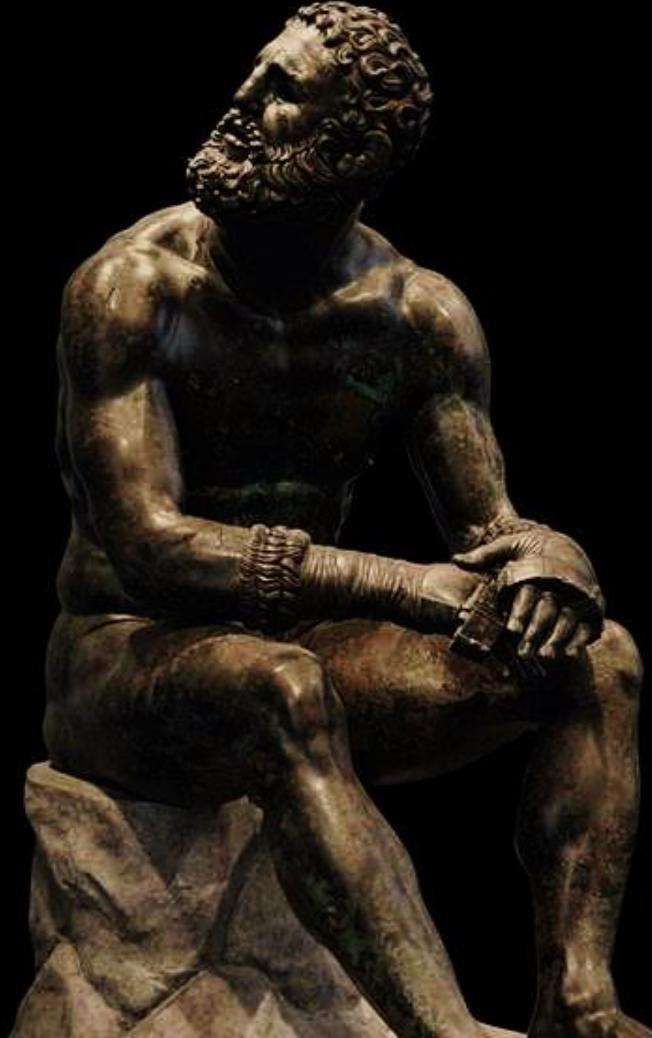


This *telos*, according to Aristotle, is intricately linked with function. For a thing to reach its purpose, it also has to fulfill its function. Man, in Aristotle's view of reality, is bound to achieve a life of fulfillment and happiness, or in Greek, *Eudaimonia*. All men move toward this final end.

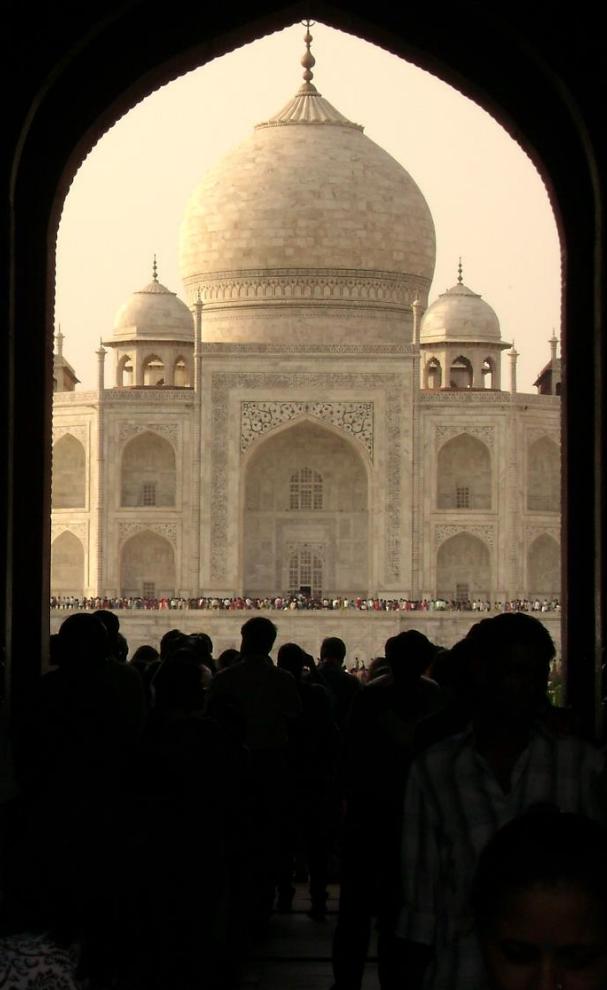
One can only be happy when he is rational. This means that to Aristotle, plants can never be happy because they are not rational, as well as tables and chairs. Man's natural end, *telos*, is connected with his function, which is his rationality.

Moreover, the telos and function of a thing are both related to a thing's identity. What makes a table a table is the fact that it does perform its function and thereby, reaching its telos. If a table does not have a surface on which we can put on our books or our plates and glasses, then it ceases to be a table. The same goes for the human being.

What makes a human being a human being, according to some schools of thought, is his capability for thinking, his supposed function. Without this function, the human being ceases to be a human being. The *telos*, the *function*, and the "*whatness*" of a thing are all interconnected.



# FUNCTIONS OF ART



When it comes to function, different art forms come with distinctive functions. Some art forms are more functional than others. Architecture, for example, as an art is highly functional just like most applied arts. A building as a work of art is obviously made for a specific purpose. ***The Taj Mahal***, a massive mausoleum of white marble built in Agra was constructed in memory of the favorite wife of the then emperor, Shah Jahan.

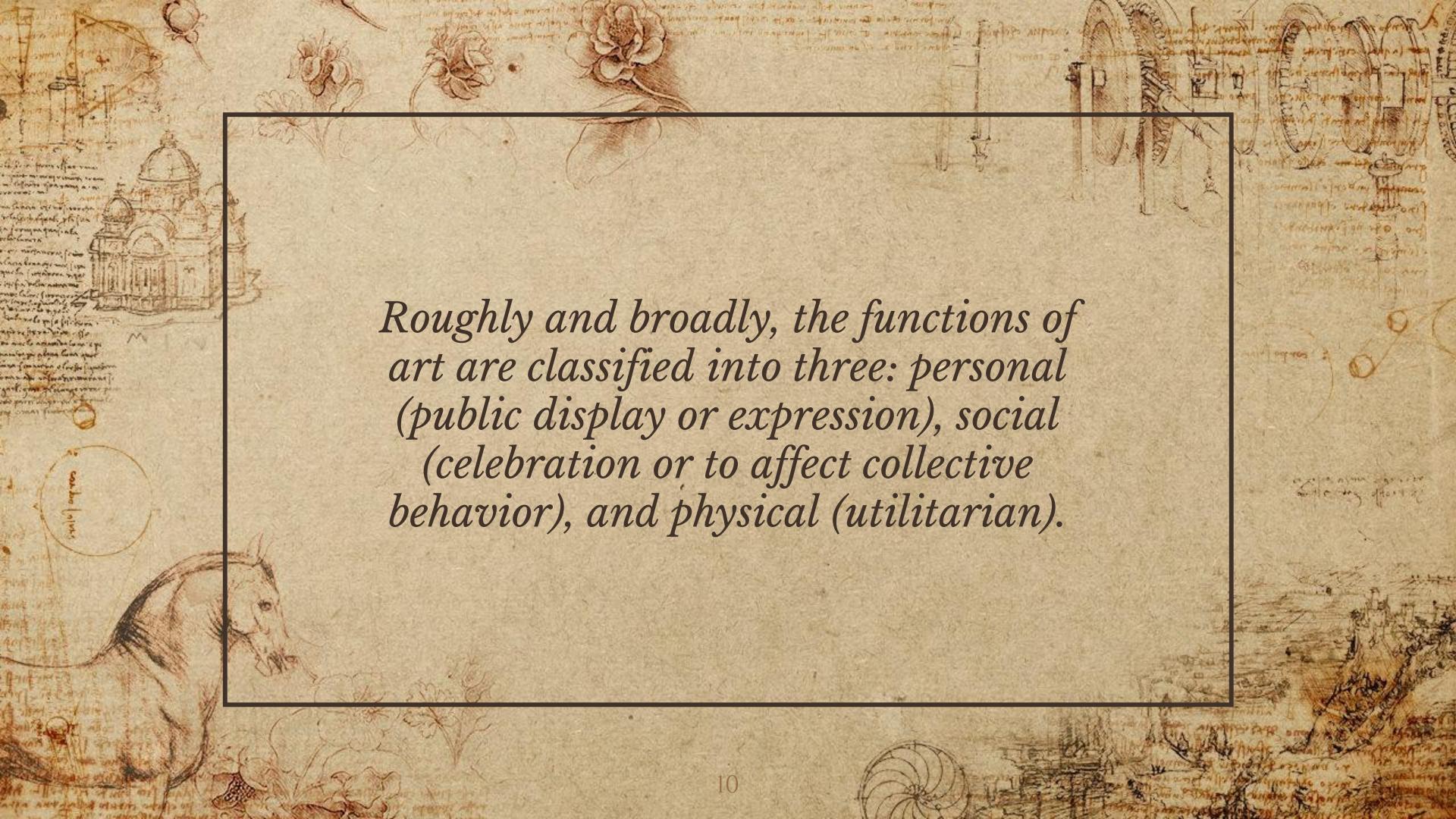
“...Function is so important that it has usurped the name of the art on the identification of individual works” (Dudley et al., 1960). Other examples are paintings, poems, and statues. The name of the art basically points toward the direction of the product or its function.

Unlike practical arts where the value of the art (in pottery, jewelry-making, architecture, among others) in question lies in the practical benefits one gains from it (a pot, a jewelry, or a house or building), with painting and literature, one can only look at the value of the product of art in and for itself. A poem is beautiful regardless of its possible ramifications in the society.

A black and white portrait of Joyce Kilmer, a young man with dark hair and a serious expression, looking slightly to the right of the camera. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie.

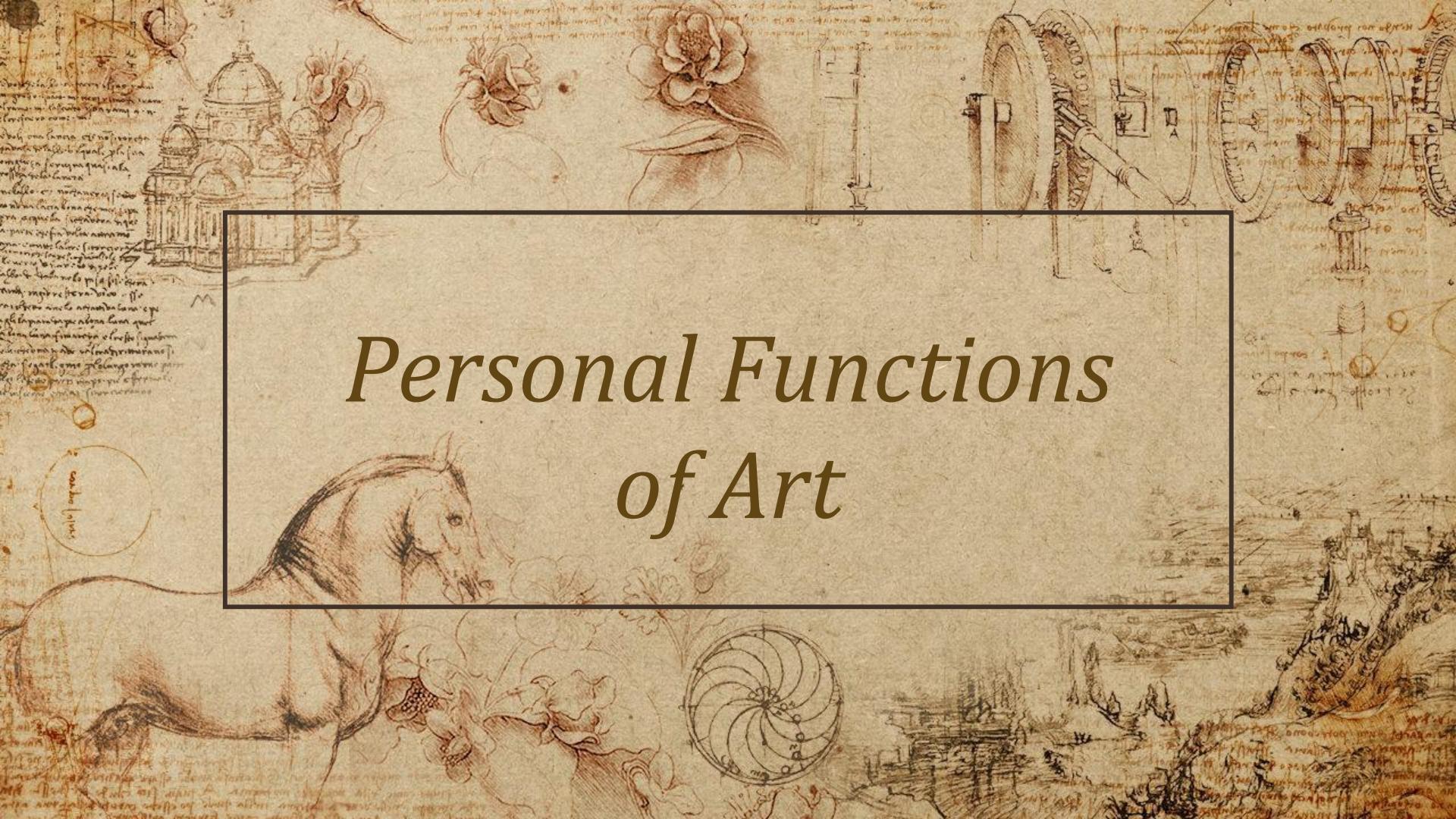
Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" has maintained its popularity through the years regardless of its application or practical benefit. This definitely is not to say that paintings and literary works can never have any function.

The two masterpieces of Dr. Jose P. Rizal, the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* served as a catechist for Filipino revolutionaries to gather strength in rejecting the oppressive forces of the Spaniards in the Philippines in the nineteenth century. The novels accrued value and as a consequence, function.



*Roughly and broadly, the functions of art are classified into three: personal (public display or expression), social (celebration or to affect collective behavior), and physical (utilitarian).*

# *Personal Functions of Art*





The personal functions of art are varied and highly subjective. This means that its functions depend on the person – the artist who created the art. An artist may create an art out of the need for self-expression. This is the case for an artist who needs to communicate an idea to his audience. It can also be mere entertainment for his intended audience. Often, the artist may not even intend to mean anything with his work.

An art may also be therapeutic. In some orphanages and home for abandoned elders, art is used to help residents process their emotions or while away their time. Recently, the use of adult coloring books to de-stress has been apparent too, now with a lot of designs being sold in bookstores nationwide. These all fall under personal functions of art.





# *Social Functions of Art*



Art is considered to have a social function if and when it addresses a particular collective interest as opposed to a personal interest. Political art is a very common example of an art with a social function. Art may convey message of protest, contestation, or whatever message the artist intends his work to carry.

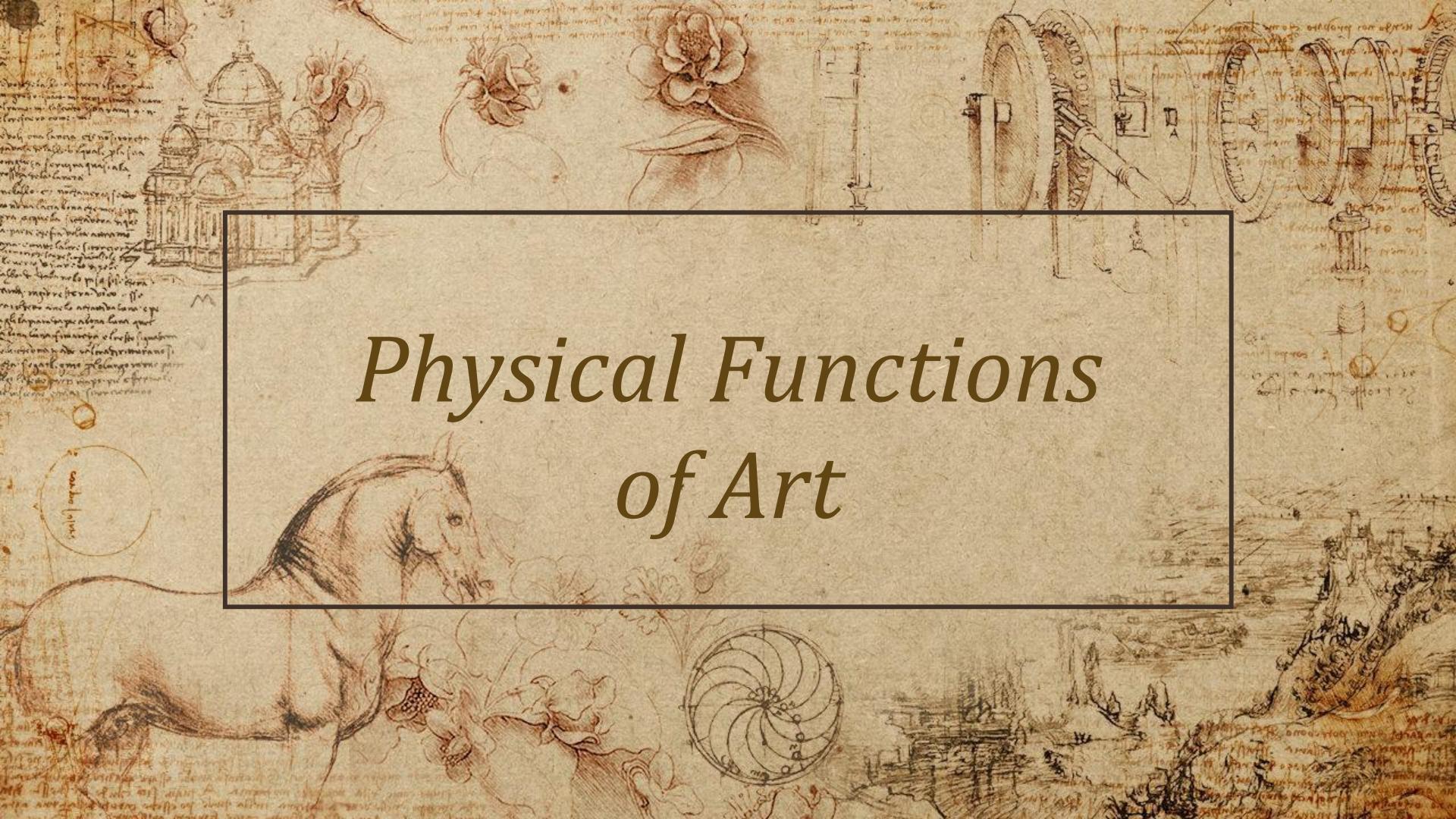
Often, art can also depict social conditions. Photography, as an art form, delivers this kind of function by taking photos of subjects in conditions that people do not normally take a look at or given attention to. Pictures of poverty may carry emotional overtones that may solicit action or awareness from their audience. Moreover, performance art like plays or satires can also rouse emotions and rally people toward a particular end. In these and more, the social function of art is apparent.







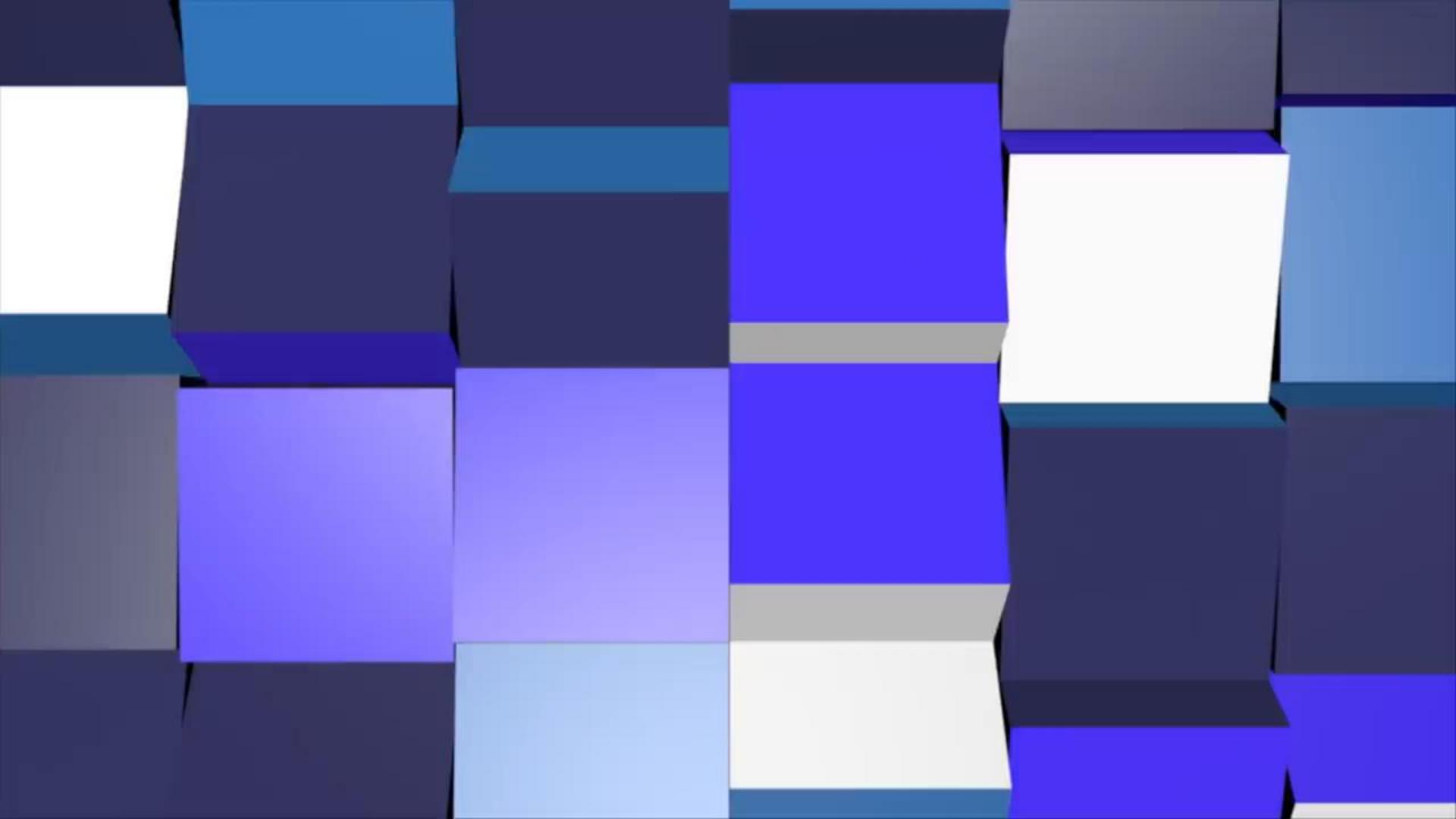
# *Physical Functions of Art*





The physical functions of art are the easiest to spot and understand. The physical functions of art can be found in artworks that are crafted in order to serve some physical purpose. A Japanese raku bowl that serves a physical function in a tea ceremony is an example. Architecture, jewelry-making, and even interior design are all forms of arts that have physical function.





1. It makes us hopeful.
2. It makes us less lonely.
3. It balances us.
4. It helps us to appreciate stuff.
5. It is a propaganda for what truly matters.

# OTHER FUNCTIONS OF ART



Music as an art is also interesting to talk about in relation to function.

Music in its original form was principally functional. Music was used for dance and religion. The ancient world saw music only as an instrument to facilitate worship and invocation to gods. It was also essential to dance because music assures synchronicity among dancers. Moreover, music also guarantees that marches, in the case of warriors, were simultaneous.

Today, music has expanded its function and coverage. Music is listened to and made by people for reasons that were foreign to early civilizations. There is now a lot of music that has no connection whatsoever to dance or religion. Serenade is one example. People compose hymns of love to express feelings and emotions. Music is also used as a wonderful accompaniment to stage plays and motion pictures.





Just like music, from the early days of humanity, sculptures have been made by man most particularly for religion. People erect statues for the divine. In the Roman Catholic world, the employment of sculptures for religious purposes has remained symbolic.

Sculptures were also made in order to commemorate important figures in history. Jose Rizal's monument in Rizal Park and Andres Bonifacio's *Monumento* in Caloocan are common examples. In the University of the Philippines, the iconic statue *Oblation* by Guillermo E. Tolentino has remained a pillar of the university and constant reminder of the need to offer oneself up selflessly for the country.



Coins are also manifestations of sculpting's function. Every coin in the Philippines features a relief of a famous hero or personality.

Recently, the Central Bank of the Philippines produced special, commemorative coins for certain personalities.







Another art form that readily lends itself to multiple functions is architecture. In fact, architecture might be the most prominent functional art form. Buildings are huge, expensive, and are not easily constructed and replaced. Unlike other forms of art like pots, furniture, poetry, or even paintings, buildings take so much time to erect and destroy.









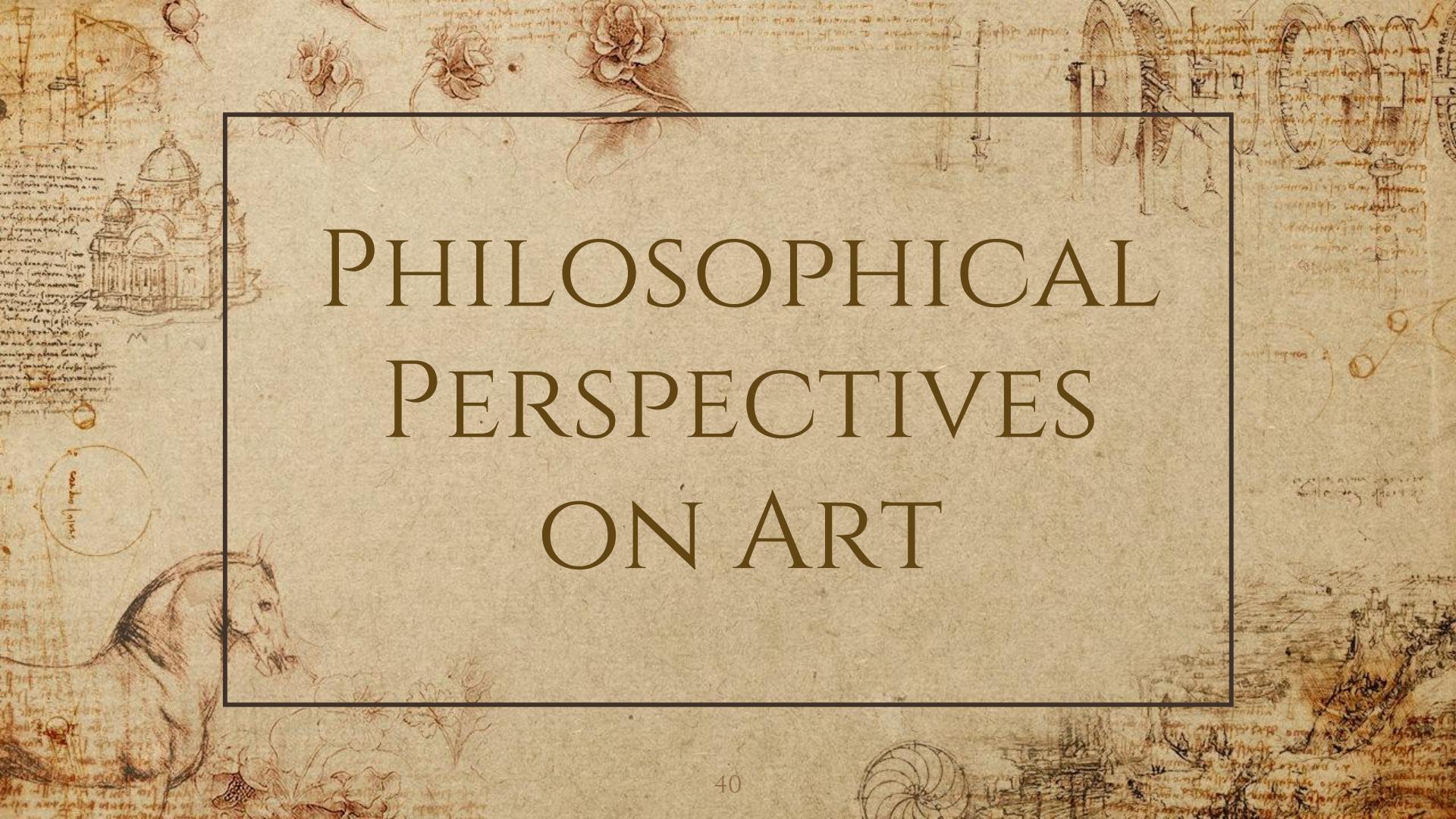
In planning out an architectural structure, one has to seriously consider the natural conditions like topography and climate of the place of erection and the social conditions such as the purpose of the building itself. Spanish colonial houses were designed to allow for air to circulate inside the house. Large windows were staples then. Capiz shells were also utilized to allow for light to enter the house even if the windows were closed.





Moreover, social conditions, such as purpose, play a huge role in architecture. To Christians, a church is primarily a place of worship and assembly. Regular ceremonies, where members of the church are expected to come regularly, are held inside the church. Indeed, whenever art serves a particular function, the form has to be determined by the function.



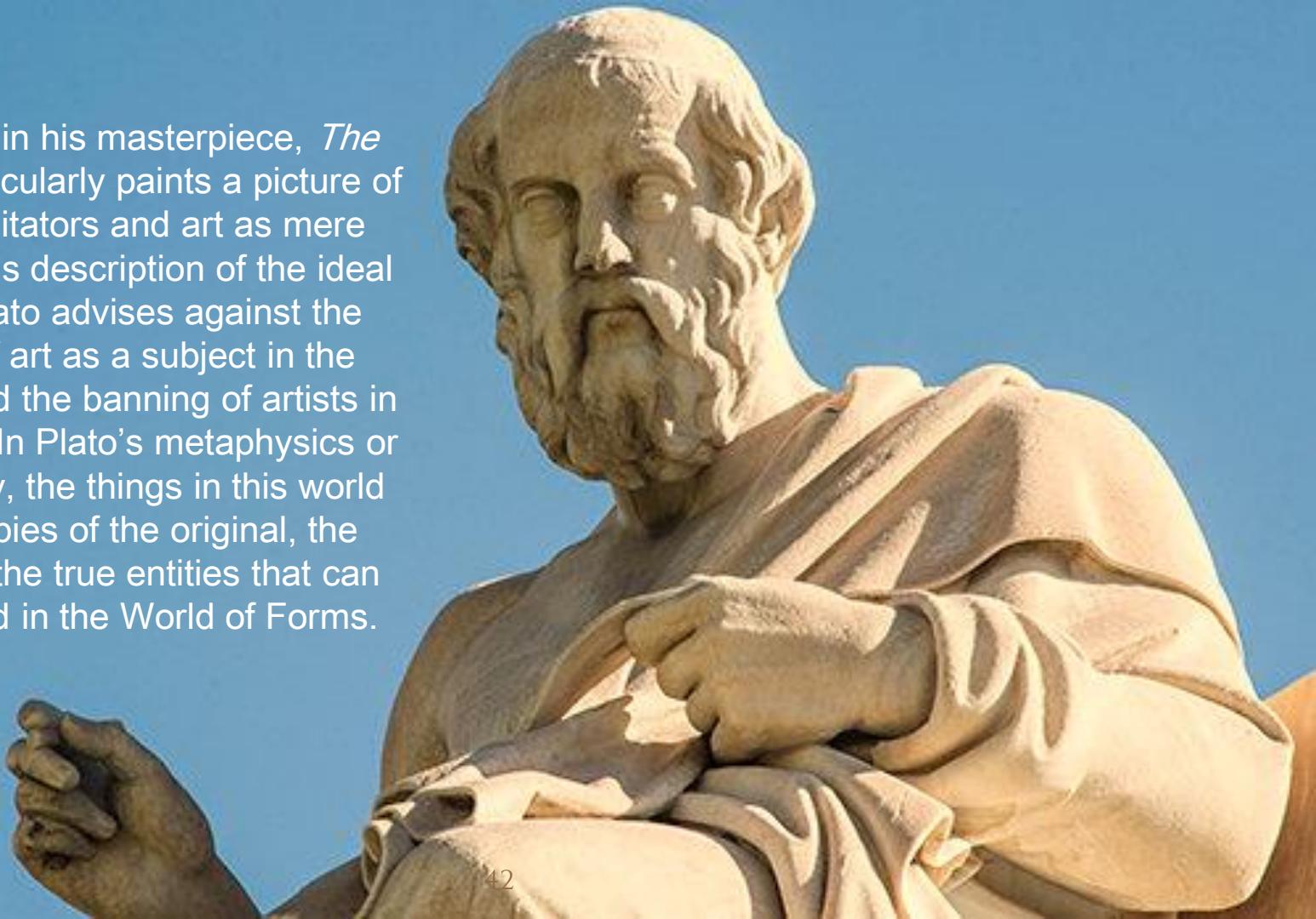


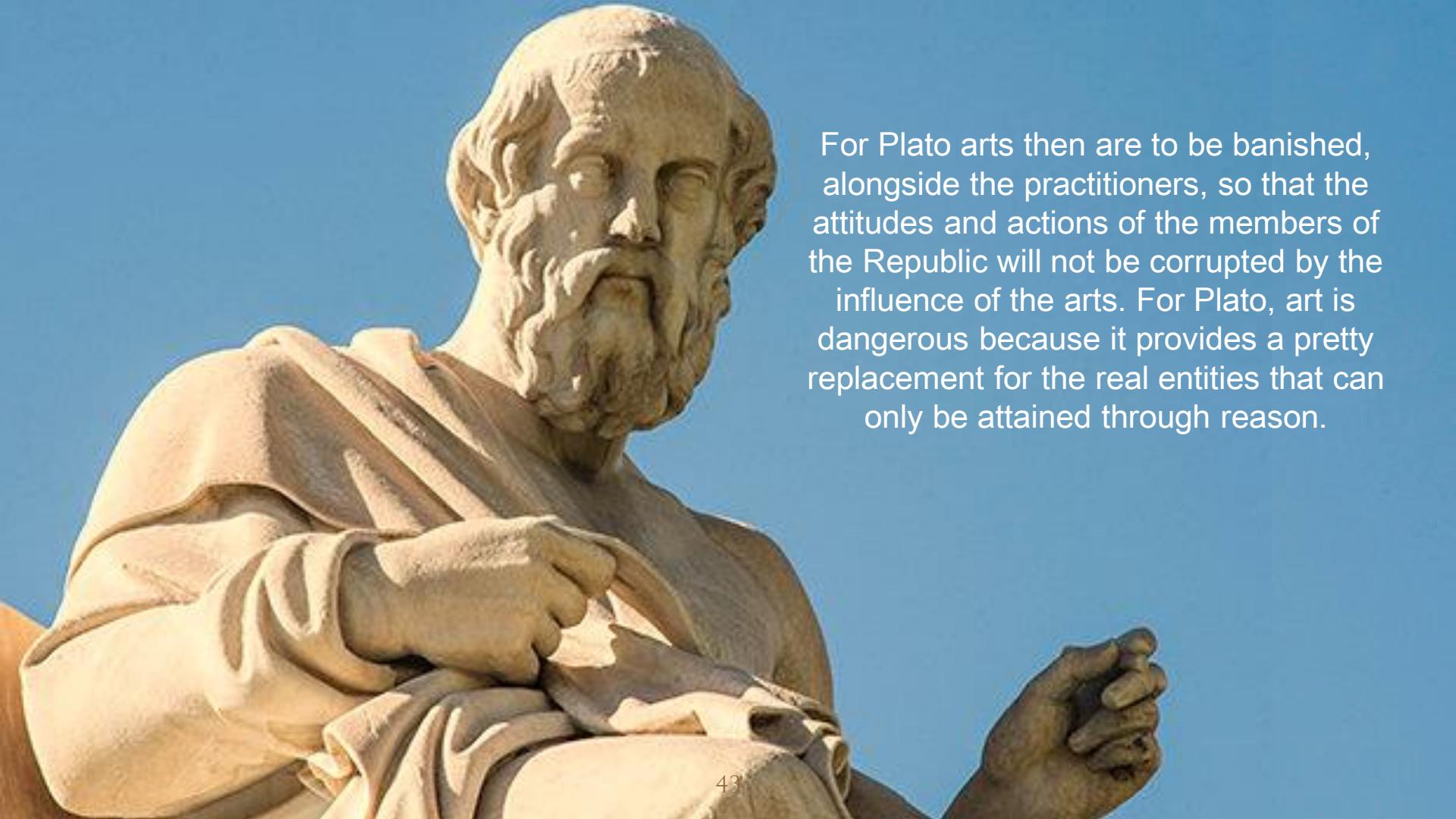
# PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ART

# *Art as an Imitation*



Plato (2000) in his masterpiece, *The Republic*, particularly paints a picture of artists as imitators and art as mere imitation. In his description of the ideal republic, Plato advises against the inclusion of art as a subject in the curriculum and the banning of artists in the Republic. In Plato's metaphysics or view of reality, the things in this world are only copies of the original, the eternal, and the true entities that can only be found in the World of Forms.



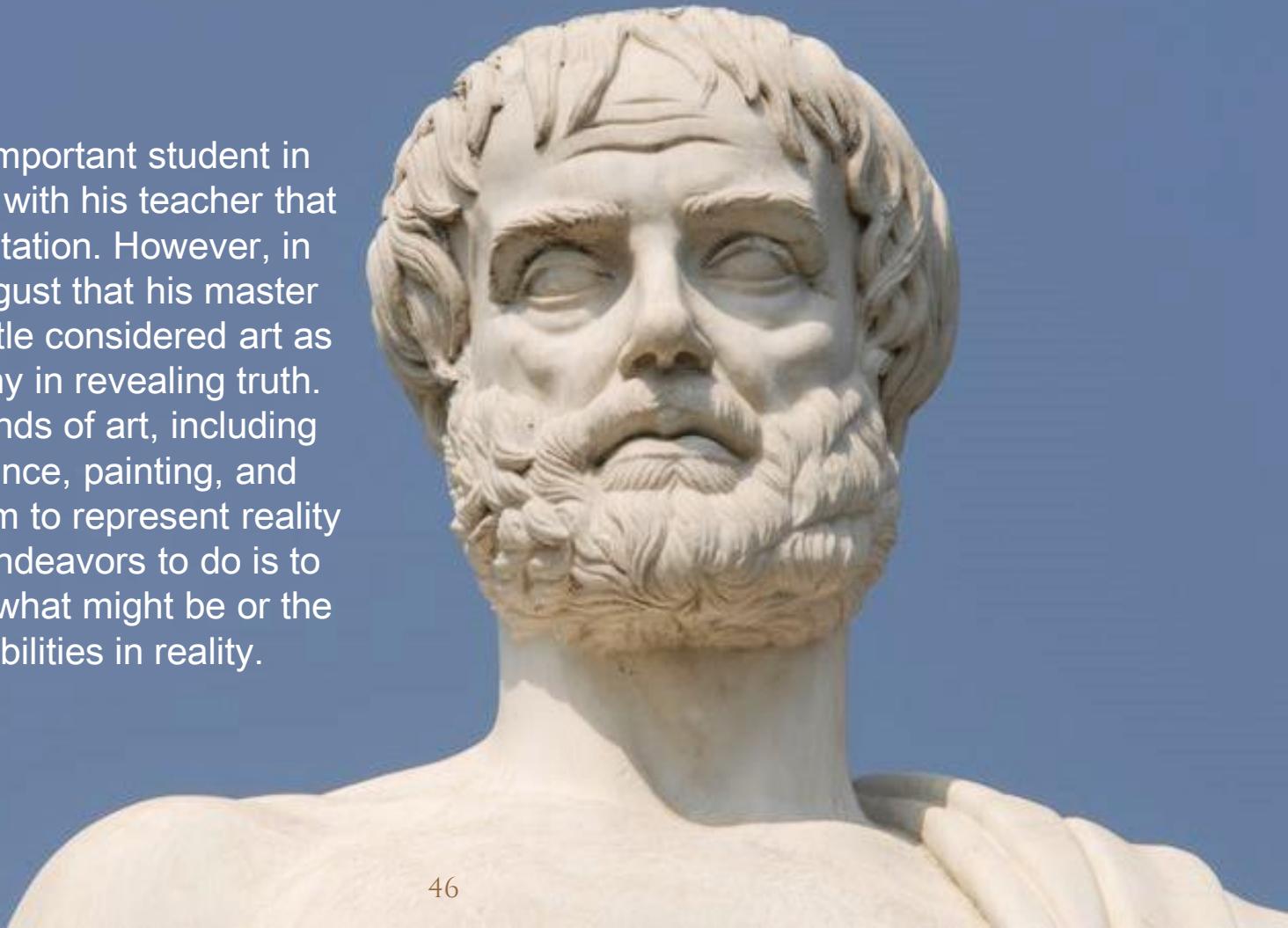


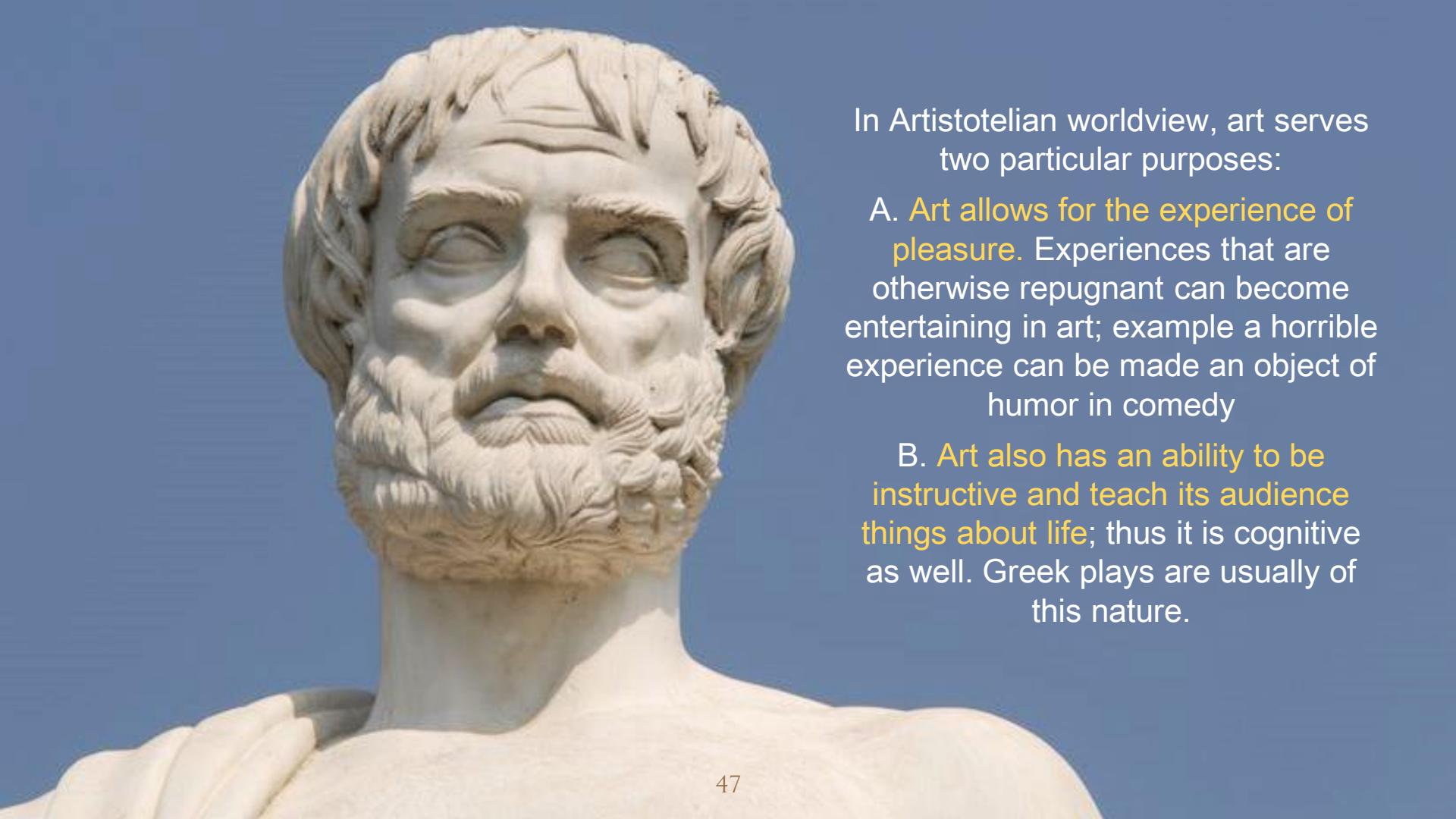
For Plato arts then are to be banished, alongside the practitioners, so that the attitudes and actions of the members of the Republic will not be corrupted by the influence of the arts. For Plato, art is dangerous because it provides a pretty replacement for the real entities that can only be attained through reason.



# *Art as a Representation*

Aristotle, Plato's important student in philosophy, agreed with his teacher that art is a form of imitation. However, in contrast to the disgust that his master holds for art, Aristotle considered art as an aid to philosophy in revealing truth. For Aristotle, all kinds of art, including poetry, music, dance, painting, and sculpture, do not aim to represent reality as it is. What art endeavors to do is to provide a vision of what might be or the myriad of possibilities in reality.





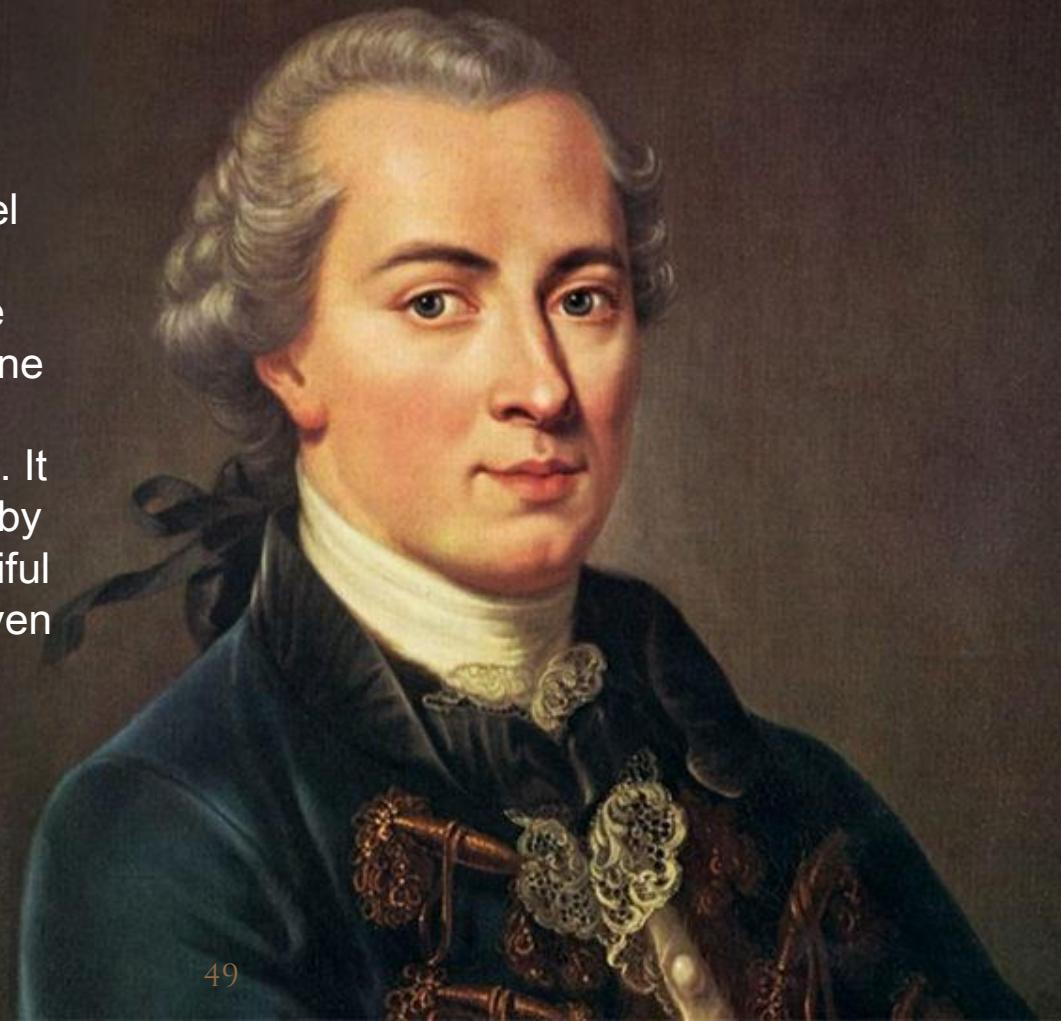
In Aristotelian worldview, art serves two particular purposes:

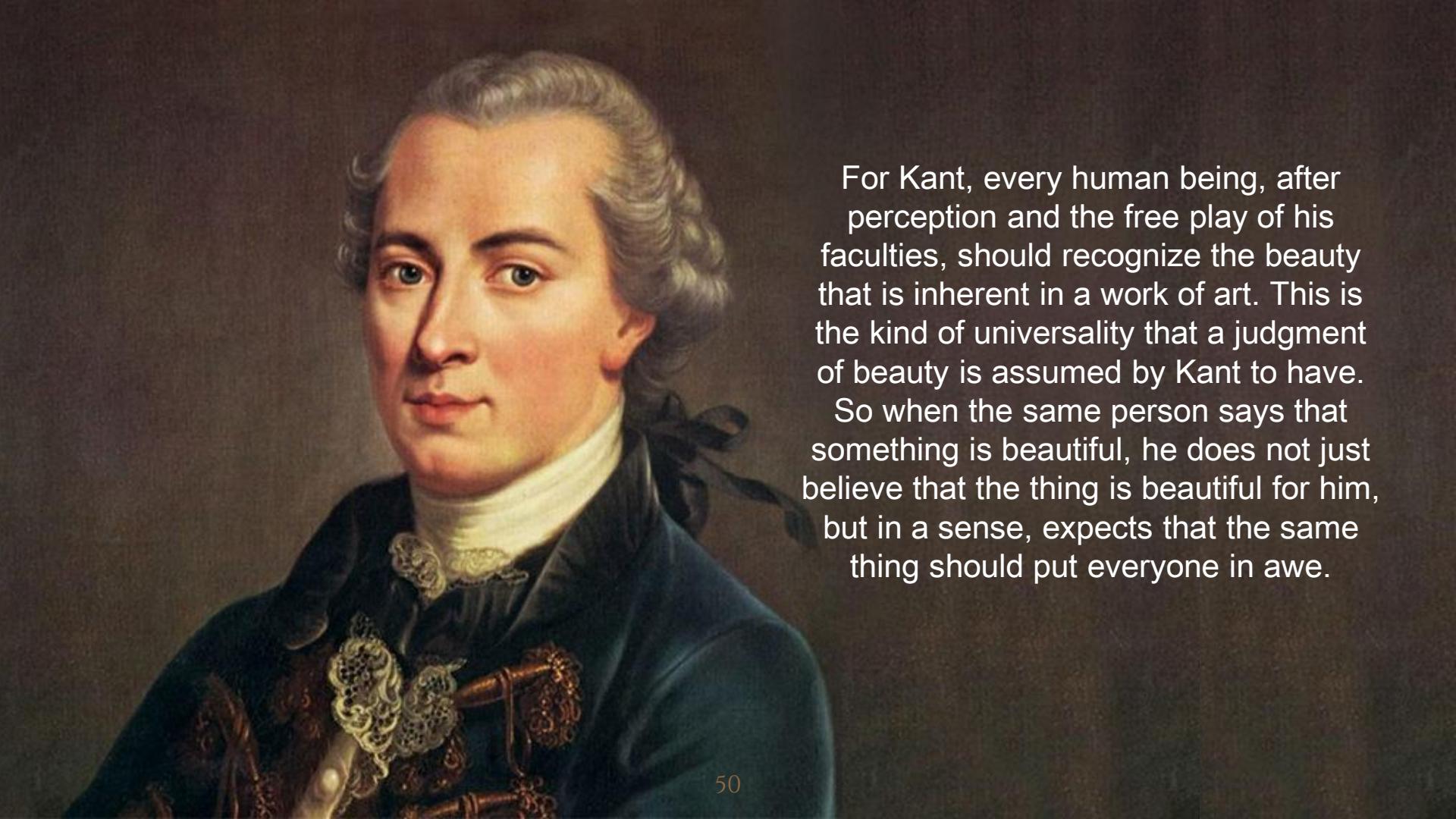
- A. Art allows for the experience of pleasure. Experiences that are otherwise repugnant can become entertaining in art; example a horrible experience can be made an object of humor in comedy
- B. Art also has an ability to be instructive and teach its audience things about life; thus it is cognitive as well. Greek plays are usually of this nature.

# *Art as a Disinterested Judgment*



In the third critique that Immanuel Kant wrote, the “Critique of Judgment,” Kant considered the judgment of beauty, the cornerstone of art, as something that can be universal despite of its subjectivity. It is the form of art that is adjudged by one who perceives art to be beautiful or more so, sublime. Therefore, even aesthetic judgment for Kant is a cognitive activity.



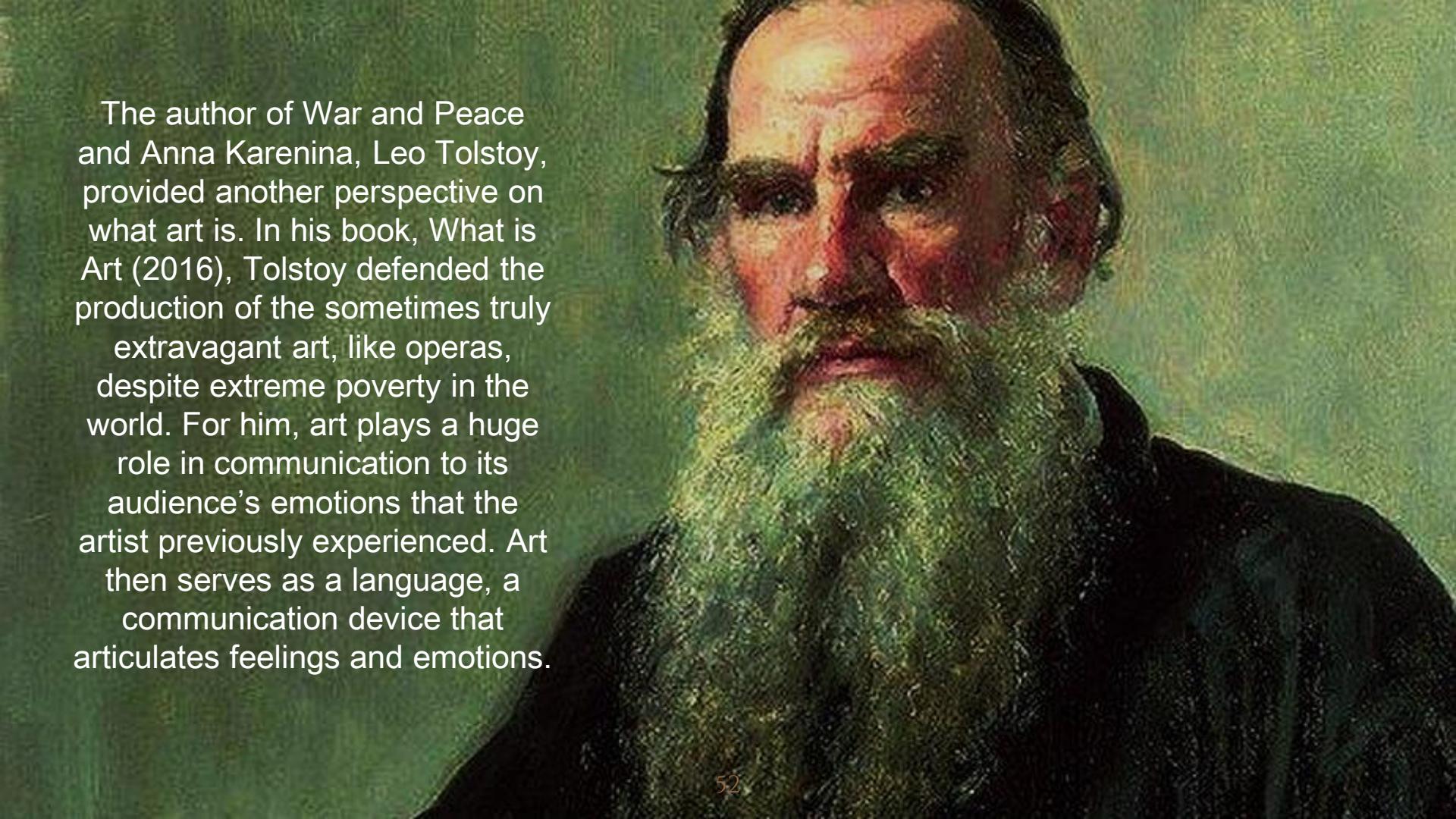
A portrait painting of Immanuel Kant, a German Enlightenment philosopher. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark green velvet jacket over a white cravat and a white waistcoat. His hair is powdered and powdered grey. He has a serious, thoughtful expression, looking slightly to the right of the viewer. The background is a mottled grey.

For Kant, every human being, after perception and the free play of his faculties, should recognize the beauty that is inherent in a work of art. This is the kind of universality that a judgment of beauty is assumed by Kant to have.

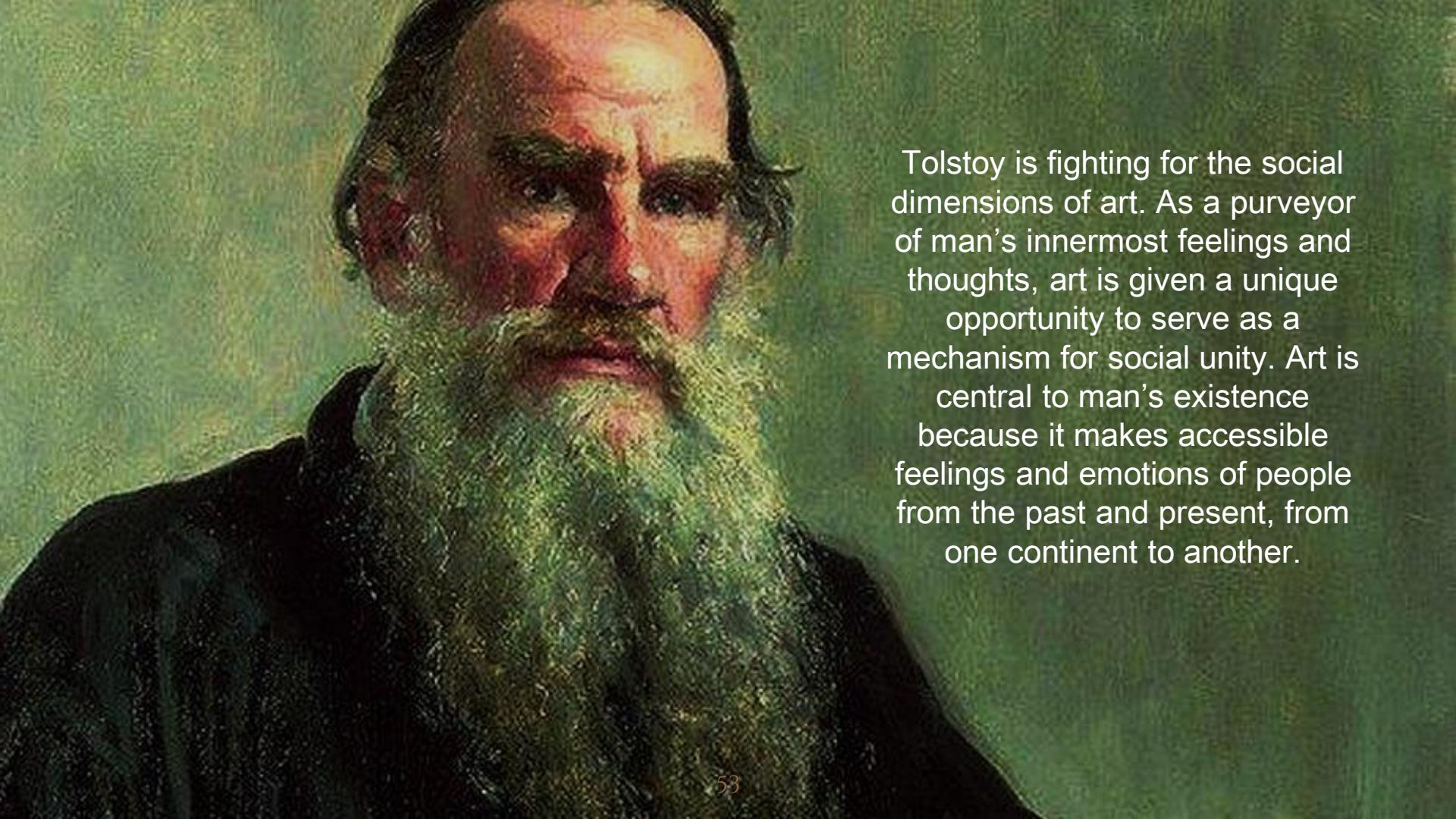
So when the same person says that something is beautiful, he does not just believe that the thing is beautiful for him, but in a sense, expects that the same thing should put everyone in awe.



# *Art as a Communication of Emotion*

A portrait painting of Leo Tolstoy, showing him from the chest up. He has a full, dark beard and mustache, and is wearing a dark, high-collared coat. The background is a soft, greenish-yellow wash.

The author of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy, provided another perspective on what art is. In his book, *What is Art* (2016), Tolstoy defended the production of the sometimes truly extravagant art, like operas, despite extreme poverty in the world. For him, art plays a huge role in communication to its audience's emotions that the artist previously experienced. Art then serves as a language, a communication device that articulates feelings and emotions.



Tolstoy is fighting for the social dimensions of art. As a purveyor of man's innermost feelings and thoughts, art is given a unique opportunity to serve as a mechanism for social unity. Art is central to man's existence because it makes accessible feelings and emotions of people from the past and present, from one continent to another.



## TASK:

Print out a photo of a product of art around your house. In your Art App notebook, paste the picture, and below it is the written function that the artwork played in history (e.g. a painting of the Last Supper in your dining room or a spoon). Make your output creative.

Content - 15

Design – 10

Photography – 5