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An Exposition and Analysis of Kant's Account of Sublimity

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An Exposition and Analysis of Kant's Account of Sublimity

by

Paulina Simone Calistru

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

An Exposition and Analysis of Kant's Account of Sublimity

by

Paulina Simone Calistru

Advisor: Noël Carroll:

I begin by providing an exposition of Kant's cognitive and phenomenological trajectory during experiences of mathematical and dynamical sublimity. I use this moment of elucidation to highlight certain implications of Kant's account which reveal a necessary crutch on sublimity's self-preservationist motivations, concluding realization of the judging subjects as superior to the power intuited and emphasis on the feeling and apprehension of infinity. This skeletal view of Kant's argument allows for the argument of my three main criticisms: (i) the incoherence of his sublime feeling with other recounted phenomenologies of the experience, (ii) the fallibility of his key premise which states that judgments of sublimity are necessarily based on sensorial, non-determinate apprehensions of power and domination in objects of nature and (iii) how the reality that humans can and have subjugated nature in our own ways complicates the sublime's persistently affective nature. I conclude the essay with an attempt to briefly present my own theory of sublimity. I write that sublime experiences are, essentially, the discoveries of supersensible truths or ideas which fundamentally alter one's sense of being in the world. Among the objects conducive to these types of emotional understanding are pieces of art (painting, sculpture, cinema, etc.), literature and objects of experience whose intuition carries with it ideas of supersensible associations or origin, properties of intrigue, and obscurity.

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I. Introduction

Interest in deconstructing the sometimes called anti-theoretical feeling of sublimity has seen a resurgence in recent years and one need not look far to see why. The topic is notoriously abstract, as it deals with the phenomenology accompanying a specific, particularly affecting mode of perceiving objects of experience. Studies of sublimity, therefore, outline this unique manner of looking at and comprehending an object- what it preliminary calls for, what cognitions, modality of digestion, dynamics and emotionality it consists of and incites- and how that experience can persistently affect one psychologically and emotionally with such vigor. The beginning of empiricist accounts of sublimity are most attributed to Longinus' *On the Sublime*, Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, and Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. In this essay I will focus solely on the latter of the three eighteenth century theories, as it is the one whose explanation is most interesting to me and one whose perplexing non-subjective yet exclusively imaginative, reactionary and self-reflective based theory of pure mathematical and dynamical sublimity- sublimity emerging from the perceived size or power of a natural object- continually appear in rehashed interpretations of the sublime feeling.

What I aim to accomplish with my addition to the plethora of Kantian critics is support for the stance that sublime experiences are indeed innately human, reflexive and contemplatively enjoyable, but also cognitive and purposefully intellectual. I set forth doing this by preliminarily providing my construal of Kant's text via a detailed exposition of the mental and phenomenological involvement in his rendition of sublimity. What this does is elucidate Kant's complex argument for readers who are not familiar with his theory while simultaneously revealing my take on certain elements of his account for readers who are. Following this, I

discuss my main evidential pillars for combating Kant's concept-less, self preserving sublime heroism: (i) its jarring difference from the commonly recounted phenomenology of sublime experiences, (ii) the fallibility of its solely sensorial, indeterminate basis and (iii) the possibility of nullifying the sublime's necessarily persistently enjoyable and affecting emotional trajectory. I argue for my first criticism by citing three philosophical accounts of sublimity and highlighting their convergence in the sublime's termination in an other-directed *respect* for the power recognized and a conclusion of its power over one's being. I further this by also providing a literary, judging subject oriented account of the sublime experience and highlighting its divergence from the same terminating step. I conclude this argument by illustrating a questionable phenomenological jump Kant assumes in order to account for the legitimacy of his sublime's conclusory moment and addressing the significant similarities present between Kant's aesthetic ideas and ubiquitous accounts of the sublime experience. I support my second criticism by arguing for the stance that the reality of apprehending objects of nature reveal the ever-present apprehension of, and comprehension of, objects of nature's indeterminate origin and, thus, are necessarily accompanied by determinate ideas of mystery, ever present existence, antiquity, inaccessible superiority or "other" existence. I also address Kant's determination's allowing for the possibility of sublime experiences emerging from powerful objects mistaken as natural objects. Finally, I bring forth a filmic example to aid my third premise, which engages in a thought experiment consisting of athletes who have dominated, or matched, nature's overwhelming physical power and yet still apprehend nature as being infinitely superior to them and, thus, sublime. In the essay's last section I briefly outline my theory of the sublime- focusing less on its psychological appearance but more on its phenomenologically far-reaching properties.

II. The Sublime

I. Kant's definition of sublimity and the feeling of the sublime.

Kant introduces the sublime as something “*in comparison with which everything else is small*” (105)ⁱ. This absolute power does not lay in the seemingly incomparable significance or size any external object, however, but rather in the supersensible vocation of our mind, i.e., in our moral feeling, emanating from a pure intellectual moral law, which acts as our highest principal and the substratum of every judging subject (and, hence, every external appearance). The *feeling* of the sublime, at its culmination, is a “respect for our own vocation” (115) arising from “the amenability of a sensible representation to the ‘faculty of concepts’- where this is specified as the faculty of concepts of reason, or *ideas* of the supersensible” (Merritt, 32). In Kant’s own words: “The *sublime* consists merely in a *relation*, for here we judge the sensible [element] in the presentation of nature to be suitable for a possible supersensible use,” i.e. the realization and exercise of our moral feeling as “a law that *obligates absolutely*” (126).

Kant splits this “unlimited ability” to think of the infinite and the supersensible into two modes (differing in their accessing of and interacting with the truly sublime); the mathematical and dynamical sublime (116). Briefly, the phenomenology of mathematical sublimity terminates in an awareness of “an intellectual comprehension [in comparison] to which aesthetic comprehension is small” (117). This is achieved by encountering an object of great magnitude that is unable to be apprehended in *one* intuition and, consequently, an object which pushes the imagination beyond the boundaries of experience because of reason’s desire to reach the unachievable totality of the perceived. The modality of dynamical sublimity differs in that it concludes in not only an awareness of, but also a respect for, this realized supersensible vocation. This is prompted by an encounter with a natural object which figures as having unparalleled

might, which effects an internal reflection yielding the reality that human nature, and all judging subjects, contain a mightier moral principal superior to any external power.

The two modalities help distinguish the respective groups' slightly differing phenomenology, cognitive processes and concluding encounters with the sublime. My goal for the following outline of the components of mathematical and dynamical sublimity is to lay down the bare bones of Kant's argument, focusing less on the sublime's relation to Kant's overarching theory of morality and teleology, and more on Kant's phenomenological, cognitive and aesthetic claims about judgments of sublimity, as well as the inconsistencies which reveal themselves within each.

II. Judgments of beauty vs. judgments of sublimity.

Pure judgments of sublimity are, as with pure judgments of beauty, disinterested, demanding of universal assent, based on indeterminate concepts and felt to be subjectively purposeful. These qualities relieve "sublime judgments" from having contingent, empirical bases and transcendently put the conditions of existence of such judgments in the cognitive powers (imagination, reason and manners of apprehending the world) of the judging subject. What is interesting about feelings of Kantian sublimity is the pillar that these judgments are not based on determinate concepts of the perceived object, do not arise from digested purposes nor give way to determinate cognitionsⁱⁱ. Rather, they are based on the perceived sensory cues of the object in question. In turn, a feeling of sublimity can only be prompted by the indeterminate apprehension of an object which eschews the object's objective purpose and focuses on its sensorial existence. In other words, it is a judgment based on the form *or formlessness* of a perceived object *of nature* "insofar as we present *unboundedness*, either [as] in the object or because the object prompts us to present it" (98), this unboundedness being intuitions of infinity or supersensible,

incomprehensible power. The sublime greatly differs from the beautiful in the transcendental deduction of its claim to universality. In the sublime, the *moving emotionality* for both judgments of sublimity is transcendently accredited to the predisposition of all humans to moral feeling. A person needs to have preliminarily “filled one’s mind with all sorts of ideas, if such an intuition is to attune it to a feeling that is itself sublime, inasmuch as the mind is induced to abandon sensibility and occupy itself with ideas containing a higher purposiveness” (99). Ideas involving our freedom to pursue the moral, an apprehension of ourselves as rational, not just animalistic beings, with an inner life outside of that which nature has prescribed us are such mentalities that allow not just for the *explicit, conscious recognition* of the principals and ideas brought into awareness by the process of the sublime, but also prepare us to “be *moved* by one’s recognition of what morality requires of one” (Merritt, 42).

Judgments of sublimity, unlike those of beauty, arise from the relation of the imagination to indeterminate, supersensible ideas of reason, rather than from a relation to our understanding. In addition, the pleasure of the sublime is not based in the direct apprehension of the form, or formlessness, of the object but arises indirectly from one’s initial displeasure of our imagination’s inability to completely apprehend or dominate the perceived object. This displeasure is based in the felt contra-purposiveness of the object for our power of aesthetic judgment. What this difference also implies is that the pleasure and allure of the sublime must lay in a subjective purposiveness unlike that of the beautiful (where the beautiful object seems to be specially made for your power of judgment). The subjective purposiveness of a judgment of the sublime is that it seems to have been made for the goal of realizing an obligation within ourselves that leaves us more powerful than we primarily believed we were. One could also say this subjective purposiveness arises from the felt amenability of the perceived object to the

pursuit of reason's vocation. Pluhar summarizes this neatly in a section of his introduction to his translation of CPJ:

“On the other hand this very failure [of apprehension or domination] makes the sublime (subjectively) purposive at the same time. For, ‘finding that every standard of sensibility [i.e., imagination] is inadequate to the ideas of reason is [subjectively] purposive and hence pleasurable’ (Ak. 258), because this discovery ‘arouses in us the feeling of our supersensible [moral] vocation’ (Ak. 258) and of a ‘supersensible power’ we have (viz., freedom as causality) for pursuing it (Ak. 250), in other words, the feeling of our ‘superiority over nature’ (Ak. 261), our ability to cross (with a moral aim) ‘the barriers of sensibility’ (AK. 255).” (lxx, my own words added in first line,).

Lastly, pure judgments of sublimity, like pure judgments of beauty, are only provoked by objects of nature, as these phenomena are the only objects of experience that can be looked at indeterminately, without the invading concept of a purpose figured into its intuition. Objects such as “bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightening and thunderclaps, volcanoes with their destructive power” and so on are among the qualifiers (120). The pure intuitions of these objects trigger an almost reflexive awareness of their objective physical and existential power and domination over one, solely via apprehended sensory cues. With beauty the judgment is based on form, while with sublimity the judgment is based on sensory qualities

III. The cognitive process and transcendental deduction of the mathematically sublime.

The veneration and enjoyment felt in a judgment of mathematical sublimity begins with the encounter of a natural object which is so great in size that it is unable to be measured or apprehended by the imagination in one singular intuition. There are two possible routes one can assume in the measurement of an object- a mathematical and an aesthetic route. In a mathematical measurement the size of the object is determined numerically by figuring its base measure and considering how many iterations of this base measure the object in question has. Since this measurement is based in numbers, it can go onto infinity and can, in theory, finalize

the measurement of any object of study. However, aesthetic measurement consists of the determination of an object's measure via comparison and comprehension gained from "the immediate grasp of magnitude 'in an intuition' (CJ 5:251) - in effect, how great something strikes you as being, as you take it in by eye" (Merritt, 35)ⁱⁱⁱ. This form of measurement, unlike the mathematical, cannot apprehend every object of experience, as certain things "will prove too large to take in at a single glance" and, as such, our aesthetic estimation has a maximum threshold for understanding (Merritt, 35). Aesthetic estimation follows the form and transcendental limits of coming to know an object outlined in the *Critique of Pure Reason*-apprehension and comprehension. Namely, when confronting an object of great magnitude one of two things happen: one can either stand far away from it and both apprehend the form and comprehend its concept, but suffer from a lack of discernible detail and render its contemplation aesthetically ineffective. Or, one can stand close to said object and apprehend parts of the total form of the object but not comprehend it due to the sheer size of it, as the ability to timely combine those apprehended parts into one determinate cognition surpasses our cognitive capacity. The latter route phenomenally seems as if "the partial presentations of sensible intuition that were first apprehended are already beginning to be extinguished in the imagination, as it proceeds to apprehend further ones, the imagination then loses as much on the one side as it gains on the other; and so there is a maximum in comprehension that it cannot exceed" (108). This maximum threshold is universal, as it follows from our pure ability to intuit the world and objects of experience, and is Kant's transcendental justification of the ubiquity of the trajectory of mathematical sublimity.

One of the motivations behind continuing to pursue the displeasurable activity of gazing at an incomprehensible object, like a semi circle of rolling mountains, the ocean's endless

horizon etc., lies with reason's demand to obtain the totality of the apprehended and the comprehensible- a demand which asks even for the totality of the world's infinite space and past time^{iv}. The natural, yet misleading, desire of reason to achieve the totality of the world and its constituents is outlined in the Antinomies of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he argues that the logical use of reason can be seen as attempting to "bring the greatest manifold of cognition of the understanding to the smallest number of principals (universal conditions), and thereby to effect the highest unity of that manifold," which almost always surpasses the boundaries of experience (B361). Therefore, in our initial attempt at apprehension in the mathematically sublime "the mind listens to the voice of reason within itself, which demands totality for all given magnitudes, even for those that we can never apprehend in their entirety but do (in presentation of sense) judge as given in their entirety" (111). Cognitively, it is in pursuit of this vocation that we gladly continue the contemplation of such a frustrating sight.

The second moment in a judgment of mathematical sublimity is realization of the object's subjective purposiveness for our power of reason, brought to our attention only by our felt inadequacy to completely comprehend the object at hand. It is reason's vocation that allows this realization to occur, but it is the explicit conscious awareness of this amenability that characterizes this step. This subjective purposiveness is the object's being perfectly suited for allowing our imagination to pursue reason's vocation and bringing about our awareness of such a will and this superior ability of our imagination to strive for the infinite. On this Kant writes "that we have a pure and independent reason, or a power for estimating magnitude, whose superiority cannot be made intuitable by anything other than the inadequacy of that power which in exhibiting magnitudes (of sensible objects) is itself unbounded" (116). Once this subjective purposiveness is solidified the negative pleasure of the object's contemplation settles in and its

initial fright, which was prompted by the intuited abyss of magnitude “in which the imagination [was] afraid to lose itself,” is “now attractive to the same degree to which [formerly] it was repulsive to mere sensibility” (115).

In the mathematically sublime the imagination, in its attempt to comprehend and exhibit the aesthetically incomprehensible and inapprehensible in one intuition, is pushed beyond the reality of sense and, essentially, reveals the human mind’s *ability to think of such things*, or our underlying vocation of reason. What is uncovered is an imaginative ability reaching beyond experience that is unlimited, untouched by nature, and thus superior to it. As such, the object of initial displeasure becomes one of pleasure because of its realized amenability to the awareness of imagination’s ability to strive for reason’s ideas – its goal of a totality of conditions. In all, it reveals a purely human cognitive will that surpasses the physical, intimidating magnitude of the object in question- “an intellectual comprehension [compared] to which all aesthetic comprehension is small” (117).

IV. *The phenomenology of the mathematically sublime.*

The initial encounter of an object of great magnitude is met, at its inception, with an agitation resulting from the object’s felt contra-purposiveness for our power of aesthetic judgment and a feeling that the object, because of its size, can physically dominate us. This contra-purposeiveness has footing in the felt inadequacy of our imagination to find the totality of the perception, and of nature in general, and, thus, also reason’s futility. However, this agitation is almost immediately accompanied by a pleasure arising from an indeterminate realization of what this agitation implies for our cognitive powers, i.e. that our reason has a vocation to grasp the totality of conditions. In this way the perception, and the agitation caused, feels subjectively purposeful for an indeterminate inner will that, via the imagination’s fruitless pursuit for reason’s

pull, is touched upon and semi-sated. Kant compares this coexistent displeasure and pleasure to a vibration, i.e., “a rapid alternation of repulsion from, and attraction to, one and the same object” (115). Kant writes that this is phenomenally so because, although our imagination is failing to comprehend the object, this very failure transforms the object into “an abyss in which the imagination is afraid to lose itself”- but a supersensible abyss which “conforms to reason’s law to give rise to such striving by the imagination” and, as such, an abyss in which it is fun to ruminate in and continually attempt to climb and explore (115). As a result, the mathematically sublime’s pleasure also has foundations in our simple contemplation of the infinite or unknown, which is enjoyable because it allows for both imagination and reason’s free play in the endlessness of the infinite and, as stated before, because it hints at a previously unknown, absolutely large intellectual ability- digested in our awareness that it is notable to even think or feel the concept of infinity. This is why the more massive an object of nature the more sublime, the more terrifying and pleasurable we feel it to be, as it provides us with more material into which the imagination can dive itself into and a larger material to feel superior too and freed from.

Also figuring into this initial encounter, which Kant does not discuss too much in regards to the mathematical sublime but which he states figures for all judgments of the sublime, is our accompanying intuition of the idea or feeling of the infinite. This intuition does not arise from any conceptual understanding of the object, but rather arises from the sensed inaccessible magnitude of the object. This must be so as Kant insists that the sublime does not have a determinate, conceptual basis on which the feeling is grounded, which in turn necessarily makes the intuition of infinity one prompted by the natural cues of an object (in this case the immense size which figures as reaching beyond possible experience) rather than its conceptual

associations (nature as being the first being, for example). In a nod to this Kant writes that all “nature is sublime in those of its appearances whose intuition carries with it the idea of their infinity” (112). Here the question arises as to how one gets the feeling or indeterminate idea of infinity from such a sensory basis. Kant defines the specific infinite of this context as something that is absolutely large (totality of conditions for the object or nature in general) which we intuit as being presented within the object, as our expanding imagination makes us confront this, but which we cannot apprehend. As such, when we intuit a large object of nature we eventually become aware and *feel* that there is an indeterminate supersensible element to be accessed because our completion of its comprehension fails to be achieved. As Kant states, “-the proper unchangeable basic measure of nature is the absolute whole of nature, which, in the case of appearance, is infinity comprehended” (112). However, how does this awareness and apprehension of infinity feel? This indeterminate idea of the infinite is what accompanies our imagination’s free play and the pleasurable experience of the imagination’s unboundedness. To be allowed to gaze at an object, and have your imagination fruitlessly attempt to subsume it under One allows the imagination the unique opportunity to continue rumination in an intellectual space void of grounding concepts or purposes. Namely, to be free. As such, being that the contemplation of the infinite is beyond sensory, lawless, intellectually demanding yet endlessly expansive, pleasurable in its amenability to a rarely sated indeterminate inner pull to access the totality of nature, one can describe its contemplation as pseudo-other worldly. The pursuit of this domain of the infinite then gives rise to a feeling of subjective purpose and goal accomplishment- that the perceived object, and its immensity, although horrifying, is purposeful to a very enjoyable activity of our imagination that makes one aware of a venerated intellectual capacity and, as such, desirable to look at and consider. The recounted way in which the object’s

subjective purposeiveness comes across phenomenally is important to highlight as it is the transitioning moment between displeasure and pleasure in this mode of sublimity. This makes our contemplation of the infinite one of the defining aspects of the experience of mathematical sublimity.

In summation, the emotionality of mathematical sublimity begins with an agitation as the imagination begins to exert fruitless energy on attempting to apprehend/comprehend a natural object. This displeasure is soon accompanied by a pleasure, which is based in both the feeling of the imagination touching upon the infinite and the conformation of this imaginative expansion to an awareness of an innate calling of our human nature, i.e., reason's law to always attempt to reach the indeterminate *whole* or *first cause* of nature. The object of initial displeasure, at this point, is transformed into an object of desire, as the feelings of agitation and unboundedness it inspires comes across as subjectively purposeful for a self-salvaging realization and feeling that one has accomplished something superior. This feeling of sublimity culminates in a respect for this supersensible vocation, a realization that this desire of reason is law for us and a relief that this result alleviates us from all earthly concerns, as this vocation is bigger than any sensible object. As summated by Kant: "Our imagination, even in its greatest effort to do what is demanded of it and comprehend a given object in a whole of intuition (and hence to exhibit the idea of reason), proves its own limits and inadequacy, and yet at the same time proves its own vocation to [obey] a law, namely, to make itself adequate to that idea. Or, in other words, "the feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own vocation" (114).

However, why, phenomenally speaking, not cease contemplation at the pleasurable unboundedness of imagination's play (our succumbing to reason's calling and interaction with the infinite) or at our final realization of reason's vocation? What is the reason for the jump from

the realization of reason's ideas, a simple enjoyment, to the Kantian sublime's characterizing respect for our intellect's dominion over nature and the sensible world? It is conceivable, as with the beautiful, that one could find poignant enjoyment in an engaging rumination in one's imagination surpassing the sensible world and that the subjective purposiveness be that the object is conducive to the extended free play of the imagination with reason. Or, that the engagement could be concluded by encountering human nature's vocation, rather than a decided veneration for this vocation, recognition of its role as the substratum of every judging creature and, as such, every appearance. What occupies this intermediary step is a moment of self-introspection- a reflection on this felt subjective purposiveness that prompts us to respect this higher principal of the mind. Kant admits this of the mathematically, as well as dynamically, sublime: "Indeed, who would want to call sublime such things as shapeless mountain masses piled on one another in wild disarray, with their pyramids of ice, or the gloomy raging sea? But the mind feels elevated in its own judgment of itself when it contemplates these without concern for their form and abandons itself to the imagination and to a reason that has come to be connected with it" (113). In other words, one feels good about oneself and one's stance in relation to this thing (and ultimately everything) following an encounter with an ability which is large enough to think of the infinite and as "dominating nature" available to be considered as all connected. This reflective, self-salvaging step, which is absolutely necessary in Kant's account, injects the first moment of an experience of sublimity with a sizable sense of inferiority and helplessness. So much so that our psyche, it could be argued, must be *searching* for a resolution to escape from this crushing feeling (or else it is a very happy, convenient coincidence). To state my point again, the jump from the pleasure of our imagination's bouncing around the infinite to a respect for our superior, untouchable vocation of reason must have its basis in a motivation for

self-preservation, to combat the lingering feelings of inferiority and domination left over from the first moment. A full account of this stance is outlined in Part *III* section *I*.

V. *The cognitive process of the dynamically sublime.*

The more popular (or perhaps the more relatable) of Kant's two modalities is the dynamically sublime- a judgment of sublimity based on the felt physical power, and thus value, of an object of nature. This intuited might is, as with all pure judgments of sublimity, not based on the determined purpose of the object. Rather, it is the non-conceptual, purely sensory and formal interaction with said object which "must *figure as* absolutely great" (Merritt, 39). As such, Kant contends that the first moment of a judgment of dynamical sublimity, our confrontation with the object, is characterized by a recognition of the physical power an object possesses, as well as a judgment of the object as being more powerful than you, the judging subject. Figuring into this initial apprehension as well is our intuition of the infinite emanating from the power of the object, which affects both our sensorial and imaginative capacities. Empirically, we become aware of the infinite in the object by becoming aware of its *absolute* power, communicated by its fierce sensorial qualities- such as "vast vault[s] encompassing everything", large materials "bounded only by the sky" or "abyss['s] threatening to engulf everything" (130, my additions). Imaginatively, the infinite is encountered when this capacity begins to follow reason's vocation and attempts to summate the entirety of what is being perceived, the power being intuited, in order to make the presentation adequate to reason's desire to create an unconditioned totality of powers and natural workings. In Kant's words, "For though the imagination finds nothing beyond the sensible that could support it, this very removal of its barriers also makes it feel unbounded, so that its separation [from the sensible] is an exhibition of the infinite" (135). As a result, one's first moment of sublimity consists of one looking at the sensory qualities of a

natural object and recognizing the object's natural domination and unparalleled power.

Accompanying this is an encounter with the infinite, realized through the awareness of the sight's absolute power and, by nature of the absolute, its connection to a set of conditions and beings which surpass our empirical comprehension and, thus, seem to lay somewhere in an abyss of ungraspable intuitions.

The terror and displeasure of the first moment (more on this in section VI) arises from fear rather than comprehensional inadequacy. Kant characterizes this fear not as a fear of the object based in a judgment of it being an imminent threat but as a fear based in the comprehension of the object as impartially terrifying- for if we truly feared the object we would try and escape it,. "We can," Kant writes, "consider an object *fearful* without being afraid *of* it, namely, if we judge it in such a way that we merely *think* of the case where we might possibly want to put up resistance against it, and that any resistance would in that case be utterly futile" (120). The consideration of this might prompts the next moment in the temporal process of the experience of dynamical sublimity: an acute awareness of both our physical and worldly insignificance. Our realized safety allows for the continued deep consideration of the apprehended power of the sensory qualities and its inaccessible, infinite associations, which inevitably yield the visceral conclusion of our "physical impotence" and the absolute power of these attributes in comparison to our fulfillment of those categories. This intense realization of impotence, and confrontation with such immense, unlimited power then, via the natural push of reason's ideas and the sheer pleasure of the act, prompt the imagination's rumination in the intuited supersensible, infinite, substratum of the presentation. This activity of the imagination is pleasurable because satiating reason's pull is always enjoyable and also because the object is felt to be perfectly suited for this (and hence subjectively purposeful). It is also enjoyable as what this contemplation implies is

that we have a vocation within ourselves whose domain is non-sensory, supersensible and *obligatory*. Namely, that we contain in our nature a vocation for the fulfillment of our moral law and feeling^v.

What the realization of our innate intellectual vocation does is trigger, like the mathematically sublime, a reflexive, self-preservationist conclusion whose motivation is to preserve one's humanity and dignity in the face of adversity. On this Kant writes,

“In the same way, though the irresistibility of nature's might makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical impotence, it reveals in us at the same time an ability to judge ourselves independent of nature, and reveals in us a superiority over nature that is the basis of a self-preservation quite different in kind from the one that can be assailed and endangered by nature outside us. This keeps the humanity in our person from being degraded, even though a human being would have to succumb to that dominance [of nature]. Hence if in judging nature aesthetically we call it sublime, we do so not because nature arouses fear, but because it calls forth our strength (which does not belong to nature [within us])—” (121).

As seen here, our musing in the feeling of one's physical inferiority at the conception of an experience of sublimity is not overridden by the pleasure of subjective purposeiveness. On the other hand, it maintains influence and relevancy even in our reflection on our own pure nature in comparison to our current sublime, altered mental state (which yields the reality of the object's subjective purpose and of the innateness of our ability). This quote demonstrates that in the conclusion of our faculties as superior to the perceived power of nature we have, in fact, found a solution to the degrading, moment killing recognition of the reality that in all its “booming sounds, sensations of impact, visual cues of swiftness, blinding light, and impenetrable dark” nature could still, inevitably, seamlessly eliminate our entire existence (Merritt, 40). What brings me to believe that this conclusion of superiority, this veneration, is purposeful and exclusively self salvaging is that were it not for this culminating savoir Kant's sublime would not have any self-reverential, self-redeeming features. In other words, there is nothing in Kant's theory, except for this last step, which seems to act as a cause for this determination. Or, that the determination

has no other necessary purpose[s] other than to, perhaps, imbue this great feeling with a moral inflection or prevent the experience from collapsing into a masochistic mess (as the experience still needs to be pleasurable somehow).

Disregarding this inconsistency for a moment, what this self-salvaging self-reflection on imagination's activity and confrontation with absolute might illuminates is a uniquely human intellectual standard against which everything else, even nature, is small. I.e., a higher principle, with its roots in human nature, to follow an intellectual law which allows us to regard as small material concerns such as "property, health, and life," and which allows us to eschew nature's significance and power over us. The awareness of this law of reason is based on the "feeling that the mind has a vocation that wholly transcends the domain of nature (namely, moral feeling)" (128), this vocation being a pull emanating from an untouchable, unmatched, self-created source which transcends nature in importance and power. However, as stated before, the conclusion of this vocation as superior in all ways to the powers of nature and the external world has its roots in a self-preservation which has, coincidentally, found an untouchable, continual source of dignity and maintained humanity.

VI. *The phenomenology of the dynamically sublime.*

An account of the phenomenology, and their bases, of the dynamically sublime is daunting, as Kant seems to insert a new emotionality into his complex rendering of the judgment every couple of pages or so. Generally the experience is characterized by pseudo fear, impotence, self-effacement, embarrassment, displeasure, unboundedness, self-preservation, pleasure, subjection, superiority, strength, and reverence. In the following I will re-summarize the temporal process of the dynamically sublime in order to render more comprehensible the feeling each moment prompts and why.

The first moment of dynamical sublimity begins with the perception of a natural object which figures as being absolutely powerful and, as a result, objectively fearsome. This encounter is at its inception displeasurable, as our realized safety from the object's terror allows for our unimpeded contemplation of the object and for the viscerally felt awareness of its totally destructive power to take effect. Because this absolute power touches upon conceptions of ourselves, our material possessions and being in the world, feelings of disbelief, surprise, intensely felt inferiority and helplessness must be figured into this displeasure as well. Almost simultaneously this displeasure is met with a pleasure based in the same source- its visual, absolute destructive force, as this absolute force makes the perception amenable to imagination's pursuit of reason's demand for supersensible totality and its rumination in the intuited infinite. Therefore, the more fearsome and dominating a sublime object figures to be the more sublime it is felt as being. As extrapolated by Kant,

“-the sight of them becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place. And we like to call these objects sublime because they raise the soul's fortitude above its usual middle range and allows us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of a quite different kind, and which gives us courage [to believe] that we could be a match for nature's seeming omnipotence” (120).

Before moving forward, I must note that the phenomenology described here has several implications. Firstly, and in continuation with what was being said, it demonstrates the correlation between an object's fearfulness and attractiveness and places that relation in its conductivity to a realization of our superior strength and the elevation of our soul's fortitude. This is demonstrated in Kant's determination that the marking phenomenology of the sublime is the awareness of an inner power and the reflection conducted to discover this moral substrate, which can be magnified, intensified and thus made more sublime only by the presence of more material, more power, and more fear to overcome. Secondly, the fact that this excerpt places the

climax of the sublime's phenomenology in the elevation of our soul's fortitude is worth going into a bit more, as this allocation of the pinnacle of the sublime experience places great importance on the perception of ourselves as superior, self-sufficient and morally and existentially powerful. The sublime experience, as such, is *not* determined by our encounter with the other-worldly infinite or by imagination and reason's free play. I point this out simply to highlight how important of an aspect this is in Kant's theory and emphasize how much weight readers of the theory must place on this concluding moment when interpreting Kant's sublimity.

The second moment in a judgment of dynamical sublimity is the felt subjective purposiveness of the object for our power of reason. It is here that the object's pleasure begins to take a determinate shape as the enjoyment emanating and phenomenally felt from (i) reason's pursuit of its vocation, (ii) imagination and reason's free play in the unlimited infinite and (iii) the two point's amenability to the realization of a powerful, natural human ability.

Phenomenally, (i) comes across as the pleasure of semi-accomplishing an indeterminate, conceptually evasive goal (the familiar enjoyment that accompanies the sating of any pull or desire). (ii) appears as the enjoyment of letting one's imagination and thoughts be itself; run wild, free, unbounded, onwards towards the infinite, yet towards an indeterminate goal (as without a goal the imaginative contemplation might be anxiety inducing and weirdly aimless). Lastly (iii) feels like the pleasure found in achieving any piece of knowledge, i.e. a happiness in the discovery that this object allows one to find out more about oneself (with the added enjoyment of that information's being a claim to unparallel power). Kant summarizes this amenability and content subjective purposeiveness by stating that

“-when intuiting nature we expand our empirical power of presentation (mathematically or dynamically), then reason, the ability to [think] an independent and absolute totality, never fails to step in and arouse the mind to an effort, although futile one, to make the presentation of the senses adequate to this [idea of] totality. This effort, as well as the feeling that the imagination

[as it synthesizes empirical nature] is unable to attain to that idea, is itself an exhibition of the subjective purposiveness of our mind, in the use of our imagination, for the mind's supersensible vocation." (128).^{vi}

The pleasure of the imagination's activity, in relation to its unboundedness, is an interesting phenomenology of the dynamically sublime. It would seem that while looking dejectedly at the deadly qualities of the rolling mountains, the trajectory of Kant's sublime- with its everlasting feeling that nature is superior to me in every way but with the intuition that "there must be something more, something beyond this," i.e., the infinite- would eventually have one looking more intently at the sharp rocks, raging waters and begin to inquire into, *or imagine*, the nature of this intuited supersensible association. In other words, I postulate that the phenomenology of imaginative accessing the domain of the infinite has accessible content, ranging from investigations into the possible connections the perceived dominating power has to the rest of the workings of the world, what the absolute totality of this perceived power is or how do the conditions or principals this power follow appear? My assessment that the intuited infinite seen as being represented in the sensory qualities of the "sublime natural object" and our imaginative access to the domain of the infinite must have accessible determinate or indeterminate content in Kant's sublime arises from my question of what Kant meant when he wrote that we imagine the infinite, *and then become aware of our ability to do so*. What one feels, or exactly how one becomes aware of our capacity to consider the infinite, is never fully elaborated in the third critique, but is important for a complete phenomenological breakdown of the experience. A consideration of this bridge along with Kant's premise that our imagination's rumination in the infinite is accompanied by an awareness of the nature of activity and a consequential conclusion of its power pushes me to believe that it must itself be an experience. I.e., an occurrence with either determinate or indeterminate content upon which one can reflect, consider, categorize, and

ultimately conclude as being a touch upon the domain of the infinite. The nature and exact make up of the infinite is never touched upon, yes, however, the things it might contain and consist of, what it could feel like, how it possibly exists, could (and I argue that in the sublime they are) imaginatively touched upon. For, how can an awareness of a domain occur if it is void of apprehensible content? As such, I contend that the imagination's ruminations seem to us as postulations or fabrications reaching to the supersensible ultimate initially intuited in the object's sensory qualities. As such, these investigations or postulations will always have these qualities as their starting basis, and be categorized as touching upon the infinite via their reaching beyond the realm of possible experience.

As such, during this moment of reason and imagination's free play in the infinite my imagination leaves the empirical world and begins to pleurably, enthusiastically yet futilely investigate these questions which culminate in no determinate answer. In this moment one feels unbounded, unrestricted, perhaps intoxicatingly free and light as one imagination's is no longer limited by the barriers of sensibility (perhaps one also feels this physically, like the oceanic feeling so often associated with sublime cases). One also feels good in oneself for being able to ask these far reaching questions and satisfied in its amenability to our achieving our calling of trying to reach the totality of conditions for the world (i.e., reason's ideas). As Kant's sublime is non-cognitive and strictly sensory, it could be said that as one looks at the mountain and imagination not only brings me to become aware of the infinite, but also to *feel* the expanse as my mind leaves the sensory world and is thrust into an indeterminate void filled with ideas of the unconditioned. Overall, ultimately, this loss of the imagination into an indeterminate, investigative abyss is pleasurable instead of stressful (for we still are simply being forced to confront another inadequacy- that we cannot access the unconditioned, or the world not as

appearance) because of its sating of reason's pull and because of its felt subjective purposeivness. However, as is my point, it is not until after all this feeling, hinting, and postulating that one not only becomes aware of reason's supersensible vocation and its ultimate source, but also that one takes the further step of deeming it superior to nature and the whole world of appearance in general.

The third moment in a judgment of dynamical sublimity is the realization that all judging beings contain within themselves a supersensible vocation of the mind to reach beyond the empirical world and access the unconditioned. This realization quickly becomes a determination that this vocation is a potent "might of the mind" which allows us to "rise above *certain* obstacles of sensibility by means of moral principles" (132). Or, more generally, we determine that our vocation is superior to the perceived might of the rolling mountains because it imparts on us a "supremacy over sensibility" (135). The realization of this vocation, and the concluding feelings of superiority and detachment from the sensible world and nature's power, I argue, are necessarily provoked by a desire to preserve our humanity and dignity in the face of an omnipotent force which aggressively animates our true impotence. This self-preservationist twinge with which the sublime experience is imbued is alluded to by Kant throughout his extrapolation but, as said before, is never really focused on, despite its importance. In one such moment Kant asserts that our powerless reaction to the "sublime object" reflexively calls upon us to lift our spirits from this adversity and, as such, the object "raise[s] our soul's fortitude above its usual middle range" to realize a vocation within ourselves that revitalizes our strength (120). As such, in this moment of self-reflection on our felt inadequacy we, coincidentally, find our way out of domination and feel the light of the good, metaphorically speaking, emanating from our confused, indeterminate center, i.e., the pull.

The level of emotionality necessarily attached to this moment and to this realization is worth fleshing out in more detail. Here, essentially, one has come to more determinately know a new world^{vii}. A world in which the highest principals, the source of most strength and rule, and the materials of worth and most concern are inverted. A world where whatever is encountered, of whatever power or size, is never as strong or important as the human, moral law residing within oneself. In other words, a world in which nothing is needed aside from oneself. This discovery is comparable to a pseudo religious moment- a determination that one must commit to a life that disregards the external and elevates the perfection of the internal. Along with this realization, necessarily, is a sizeable amount of relief, exaltation and self-inflation (accompanying the realized superiority of our vocation over nature). An account of this self centered concluding phenomenology is demonstrated in Kant's use of a man who has purposefully placed himself in isolation as an observation conducive of sublimity. He writes: "-yet we also regard *isolation from all society* as something sublime, if it rests on ideas that look beyond all sensible interest. To be sufficient to oneself and hence have no need of society, yet without being unsociable, i.e. without shunning society, is something approaching the sublime" (136). This intense self-veneration sufficiency can also be noted in his declaration of moral war as sublime. In all, necessarily accompanying the last moment of sublimity is overpowering, other-worldly self-veneration, awareness of self-sufficiency and eschewing of the influence or importance of the empirical, sensory world.

VII. *Summating determinations of the sublime in general.*

The two modalities outline different methodologies of achieving the same sublime mentality and, as such, an overarching account of Kant's outlined requirements for a sublime judgment is achievable. In the following I will rehash the characteristics of the sublime that I have

determined are essential to Kant's account and which present themselves in both the mathematical and the dynamical sublime.

The object of true sublimity, that which is truly absolutely great, is the vocation of the mind (i.e., moral feeling) to reach beyond the realm of experience into the supersensible substrate of all that exists. The *feeling* of sublimity, therefore, is our coming to know this object of true greatness or, more sweepingly, coming to know our ability to surpass the sensible and follow our rational ideas. This pseudo-religious, self-lifting feeling, based in a respect for and awareness of the superiority of our intellectual will to discover what lies in the unconditioned totality of appearances is a negative pleasure, i.e., a pleasure that only is capable of arising via the recognition of our physical impotence and imaginative inadequacy to completely comprehend either an object's measurement or might. As such, this interaction with and awareness of our might over nature (i.e., the experience of sublimity) arises from the expansion of our imagination beyond the appearance concerned, our feeling of having access, or of having possible access to, the infinite, negative pleasure, a visceral initial feeling of inadequacy and physical/valoric domination and an *awareness* of this unique ability to subsume the infinite under one's domain of measurement and thought. The necessary phenomenology accompanying these moments of the sublime are inferiority, agitation and inadequacy in our initial interaction with the "sublime object," a simultaneous feeling of freedom, intellectual and spiritual elevation and pleasure based in this freedom as well as based in its amenability to sating an inner pull (reason's ideas).

III. Remarks

I. *Kant's inability to capture the true phenomenology of the sublime.*

There are four primary features of Kant's sublime which I contend are incompatible with the true phenomenology of the experience: its moral inflection, culminating feelings of self-reverence and boundedness (to the obligation of our moral law), the jump from feeling our imagination access the infinite to our determination that this is indicative of a superior ability, as well as the account's exclusion of art as being a legitimate conductor of the sublime. To support this stance I will appeal to modern philosophical and literary accounts of feelings of sublimity, as well as the phenomenological inconsistencies present in Kant's theory demonstrative of a dissonance between the reality of the sublime's feeling and the imposed necessary qualities of the feeling.

Upon first contemplation of one's own encounter with the sublime there are certain phenomenologies which present themselves as being necessary to the determination of the feeling as such: agitation stemming from one's own felt insignificance, awe, intellectual unboundedness, self-effacement, and the achievement of an awareness of some indeterminate, totalizing concept. These key markers, also present in Kant, seem to be present in any personal communication of how it is to feel the sublime. Consider Tom Cochrane, whose theory of sublimity suggests that the experience is based on a mimetic feeling of the sensory qualities intuited in the sublime object and who suggests that *not only* does the sublime make us *feel* inadequate and puny, but that it prompts, among other things, the final realization that "We *really are* tiny and fragile and insignificant in comparison to the sublime objects" (131)^{viii}. That the sublime characteristically arouses feelings of self-negation "due to a sense of overwhelming impact or reflective consideration of one's vanishingly tiny substance in comparison to the object" is argued throughout Cochrane's piece (132). This phenomenological trait is also present

in Holmes Rolston III's account of what is, and what consists in, the correct aesthetic experience of forests. While addressing the quintessential aesthetic experience elicited when confronted with the impenetrable density of a forest, simultaneously reflecting upon the knowledge that its existence surpasses in antiquity any amount of time our imaginations could fathom and the scientific reality of its independent power, Rolston argues that it is our informed recognition of the forest's power above ours that is one of the grounding features of natural sublimity. His sublimity is akin to Kant's, as they both purport that our consideration of the natural object's appearance prompts recognitions of its dominance and connection to unknown substratums of worldly significance. Rolston writes: "The biological element in the sublime is the beauty of life coupled with struggle," namely, an awareness of the domination of nature, of its strength, and a determination that this is both moving and self-hindering (Rolston, 164)^{ix}. This could also be described as a feeling of existential inadequacy emanating from the felt "vastness, magnitude, antiquity, power, [and] elemental forces austere and fierce, [which are] enormously more beyond our limits" (163). Although Rolston concludes his account by asserting that a improperly called forest sublime concludes in a phenomenology akin to a religious experience, what is of significance here is that the reflexive, settling in of one's insignificance in comparison to the expanse's perceived power is not only what prompts the other key phenomenological traits of unboundedness and the approaching of indeterminate concepts of reason, but also what culminates his sublime. This highlights the irrelevancy of Kant's key emotion of respect, as these renditions achieve these essential phenomenologies without a self-reverential save. Again, just like Cochrane, Rolston includes the common phenomenological trait of self-negation and, of most importance, ends the experience here. Malcolm Budd also occupies this set of philosophers. He contends that the sublime feeling is one of escaping into powerlessness in response to one's

realized and solidified insignificance in relation to the “sublime object.”^x As can be seen, no account illustrates a motivation of self-preservation or salvation and, thus, no concluding feelings of reverence or superiority. Rather, all content that the sublime experience emits a self-negation or humble acceptance of our insignificance and places this determination in the concluding moments in a feeling of sublimity. They all differ merely in their respective ideas of how one arrives and deals with this feeling and realization.

Stepping out of the sublime’s explicitly philosophical renditions for a moment, I believe, will strengthen my claim that Kant’s eye towards morality, self-preservation and self-reverence is incoherent with the normal phenomenology of the sublime. Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* provides an excellent instance of an experience of natural sublimity, retold by the judging subject during an instance of artistic inspiration. While attempting to start her painting of the lighthouse which overlooks her family’s summer home, Lily Briscoe feels a blossoming apprehension as she begins to transfer her surroundings onto her easel.

“Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? Here she was again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers—this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention. She was half unwilling, half reluctant. Why always be drawn out and haled away? Why not left in peace, to talk to Mr. Carmichael on the lawn? It was an exacting form of intercourse anyhow. Other worshipful objects were content with worship; men, women, God, all let one kneel prostrate; but this form, were it only the shape of a white lamp-shade looming on a wicker table, roused one to perpetual combat, challenged one to a fight in which one was bound to be worsted.” (158).

Although the type of emotion expressed in this excerpt is never explicitly categorized, it’s jarring compatibility with Kant’s sublime leads me to believe that it must be so. To begin, Woolf very purposefully captures the initial fearful apprehension of the perceived wave’s dominating power- succinctly captured in her use of “formidable.” The character also, as seen in her

“stepping back to look at it” and continued observation of the sight, recognizes her safety. As such, moving temporally along Kant’s dynamical sublime, she begins to feel the wave’s power eliminating every material interest and significance her life bore, hence “being drawn out of gossip, out of living,” and the totalizing awareness of the wave’s, of nature’s, relentless challenging reality, one which she will never be able to access, demonstrated in the “truth, [the] reality, which suddenly laid hands on her” settles in. As such, Lily is presented with a challenge-to confront this natural object (which proves fruitless for the humans which encounter it) but one that points to an indeterminate, ungraspable truth that lies, almost in Kant’s own words, “at the back of appearances.” The similarities between the two experiences are interesting. Both identify an initial fear of the perceived, outline an internal dialogue which addresses our inferiority to the power encountered as well as what this realization means for one’s position in the natural world. They also share the feeling of negative pleasure, seen in Lily’s only “half reluctance,” and a contemplation of an *indeterminate* concept of reason. Woolf’s account differs only in its omission of the experience’s supposed moral aim and self-preservationist self-reflection. On the other hand, Woolf affirms that the contemplation of this feeling, in connection with its unbounded sight and power, concludes in the simple, persisting question of “What is the meaning of life” (161). Or, in other words, a recognition of our inability to access this truth, to access the truth and infinity figured into the natural object, and a culminating stance that only Nature contains this truth and that we can only indeterminately feel it and ponder its association. This puts Woolf with Cochrane, Holston and Budd, who in their accounts of the sublime do admit the experience forces one to realize the existence of something bigger than oneself, but also conclude the experience in the determination that the gears of power lie in an inaccessible “other” rather than in our human abilities.

What I am aiming to extract from an extrapolation of these four separate accounts of sublimity is their similar phenomenology. This, I believe, will suffice to show that there is a trend amongst thinkers, in relation to experiences of sublimity, to deem essential the feelings of self-negation, beyond-experience contemplation, fear and awe at a power detected in the world around us. What this does is, considering only the applicability of the phenomenology to *all* experiences of the sublime, demonstrate that Kant's depiction of our self-preservationist reflective conclusions and moral determinations is either only applicable to a subsection of the populace, perhaps a crowd already versed in the high importance and pervasiveness of morality, forced or simply a subjective recount. Before continuing, we must consider the deduction Kant provides for legitimizing universal assent in judgments of sublimity, i.e., the moral predisposition of humans. One could refute my line of thinking by citing that the moral and self-reverential concluding feelings are valid in Kant's theory because he purports that the experience is not necessarily universally felt. Rather, he states that "it is a fact that what is called sublime by us, having been prepared through culture, comes across as merely repellent to a person who is uncultured and lacking in the development of moral ideas" (124). By this he means that, although the predisposition to moral ideas might be a universal quality of human nature, its practice, nurture and development is not manifested in all and, as such, there are amoral populations who do not have the ability to be moved by sublimity and, therefore, are unable to correctly feel it. As such, one could assume that the critique's explication is at the correct length and, rather, it is that the other accounts are stopping too short in order to include a group of people who have not fully developed the requisite precursors for its *true* feeling. However, the issue with this is that no matter if Kant's determination is that only morally people can be moved by sublimity or not, his phenomenology still does not cohere with those of the masses. In

addition, these recounted experiences of sublimity do attest to being moved by the sublime, but qua the respective realizations of indeterminate ideas characteristic of the theory and without the moral or self-preservative inflection. Kant's concluding feelings of the sublime simply cannot claim universal validity or assent if his emotive aspect does not match those of countless others. What we get from this is the inclination that Kant's account seemingly stretches the experience past the universalizing phenomenology and includes in its set the subjective manner in which one deals with the confrontation of exceptional power and with the infinite.

All three accounts, although differing in how they reached it, all conclude the feeling of the sublime with our felt inadequacy. This, as the next section will show, is the natural point at which to end an account of the sublime whose aim is to capture the valid for all occurrences of sublimity. What Kant seems to be doing with the moral, self-venerating conclusion of the sublime is attempting to delineate how one "manage[s] to reconcile ourselves with the indifference and vastness of the universe", which Cochrane rightly contends is "beyond the scope of [his] essay," or, any universal account of the sublime experience (148). How we attempt and manage, if at all, to conduct ourselves in light of our renewed position in the world is not applicable to every person. In what follows I will provide another line of support for my assertion of Kant's subjectivity by demonstrating how it is inconsistent with normal human emotional action.

Another manner in which one can evidence the claim that Kant's account of the sublime is unjustifiably morally and self-preservationally skewed is by studying the necessary phenomenological jumps one must engage with in order to advance on in the temporal journey of the sublime in order to arrive there, and what these jumps imply. Here I will be focusing on one questionable causal link made by Kant: how one goes from the dual confrontation of an object's

dominion over us and our imagination's desire to obtain the infinite that is figured into the object's apprehension, to having a sense of our moral obligation and its *superior* greatness.

Kant asserts that the pull behind continuing to gaze at an objectively fearful object which forces one to confront one's insignificance is the pleasurable activity of having the imagination marinate in an intellectual space void of empirical barriers. This pleasure is also based in the feeling that the activity of the imagination is subjectively purposeful for an intellectual vocation that raises our strength above that of Nature and appearance in general. However, what I want to focus on now is the reality that the main motivation behind continuing contemplating an object which hinders one's self esteem and placement in the world so penetratingly is the enjoyment of imagination's interaction with the infinite. Whether this pleasure is based in its amenability to reason's ideas, or in the free play of imagination and reason in this unbounded, uncharted territory is of no importance. However, to clear up any future misunderstanding, no one could assert that this pleasure is based in a feeling that preemptively calls up an awareness of an unrecognized strength within ourselves that is known to be greater than any ever encountered thing. This must be so because Kant's theory outlines that it is the *amenability* of the imaginative expansion to the vocation of reason that feels pleasurable, not the direct awareness of its being a source of strength. As stated before, Kant makes explicit that the becoming aware of our strength via our reflecting on the trajectory of the sublime is one of the experience's hallmarks. In one such moment he states, "hence nature is called sublime [*erhaben*] merely because it elevates [*erhebt*] our imagination, [making] it exhibit those cases where the mind can *come to feel* its own sublimity, which lies in its vocation and elevates it even above nature" (121, emphasis me). Pluhar addresses this necessity for awareness via self-reflection as well, writing that an object is "sublime" in so far as it "make[s] us aware of the mind's sublimity" (lxx). It is in this in between

step where the self-reflection portion of an aesthetic judgment occurs. As such, one can validly say that the feeling of the imagination touching the infinite, ruminating in an abyss which is void of empirical and sensible barriers, is itself enjoyable, and the phenomenology which allows us to endure the harm of the natural object's perceived power, not the awareness that this activity indicates a superior vocation.

The recounted question has been why Kant's account of sublimity moves forward past this enjoyment of the imagination's expansion. Namely, if the pleasure of the imagination's interaction with the infinite and sating of reason's pull is enough to allow us to endure our initial displeasure, why would one continue to peer inward and, not only discover a vocation for oneself (this could possibly be explained by our reflection on our felt sated inner vocation), but more importantly, deem this inner moral law as an intellectual ability that is superior to nature. This jump is the self-reflective phase of the aesthetic judgment of sublimity, true. However, this self-reflection is heavily imbued with the motivation of preserving one's dignity in the face of something that is currently destroying one's self worth. Kant admits that our revealed "superiority over nature [is] the basis of a self-preservation...[that] keeps the humanity in our person from being degraded" and that the adjective of 'sublime' arises not so much from a characteristic reaction, but a characteristic strength within ourselves that is evoked by the perceived object (121). However, the big role this motivation plays in the progression of a sublime experience seems to be disregarded. Without this need for self-preservation, without the human reflexive move of saving oneself from embarrassment, our recognition of our moral obligation would not occur, as the free play of our imagination and reason, in conjunction with the contemplation of a world and a meaning outside of our own life, would suffice to provide us with a negatively pleasurable, supersensible, empirically eschewing experience, making

whatever comes afterwards an afterthought. One cannot deny the plausibility of this last statement – that a pleasure could be derived from a sustained contemplation of the “sublime object”- and, therefore, that without the move for self-preservation the experience of the sublime would simply be agitation and melancholy (the common nature of this phenomenological trait was just advanced in the previous paragraph). As such, what must be conceded is the irrelevancy of Kant’s self-preservative jump and its ad hoc construal. Kant’s theory does not require its moral and selfish inflection in order to maintain its coherent phenomenology. Rather, it seems from what has been argued that this last step not only goes one moment too far in a supposedly universal account of the sublime, but that it can even be invalidated by demonstrating its lack of plausible cause. In total, the inclusion of this last step presupposes its own existence, as Kant fails to provide us with a valid necessity for this emotionality and since it does not seem to be cohesive with the sublime theory as a whole.

The last phenomenological inconsistency I will address is Kant’s exclusion of art as a legitimate conductor of pure feelings of sublimity. I will support this claim by citing artist and audience centered accounts of artistic sublimity which express a phenomenology similar to that of Kant’s. Later I will utilize the implications of the similarities present between Kant’s aesthetic ideas and his rendering of the sublime.

In Julian Bell’s article, entitled “Contemporary Art and the Sublime,” he discusses modern art pieces which communicate Kantian conceptions of sublimity. Among the pieces is Richard Serra’s *The Matter of Time*, which Bell states forces its audience to “submit to the mute yet muscular cliffs of raw metal as if to geological limitations constraining your movement” in response to which asking “for mere ‘meaning’ when it comes to an experience on this scale seems almost trivial” (4). To put the final stamp on his comparison of art and its ability to

produce Kantian sublimity, in addition to sublimity in general, Bell states that the piece “was putting out a hand to apprehended things too big to catch in a single image: not only physical weight and the experience of passage, but his own capacious, kingly strength. The massive materialist’s mediation overpowers the viewer self-consciously, intent on its very own power” (4). Another art piece which can be considered as being conducive to an experience of sublimity can be seen in the descriptions of and reaction towards Marguerite Humeau’s sculpture and sound installation, titled *Birth Canal*. In this installation Humeau calls upon the audience to use three of their five senses in order to apprehend her goal of investigating themes of “the origins of humankind and related histories of language, love, spirituality, and war”^{xi}. Humeau pumps the room full of a particular sweet yet possibly neutral, pleasing scent. She envelops her sculptures with dauntingly shaped light, as well circularly places eerie, echo like sounds. Upon walking through the installation one is immediately confronted with ideas of first origination, uninfluenced pure power and energy, diminishing self-significance and uneasiness in regards to the divine entity’s inaccessibility and confounding being. The New Museum describes Humeau’s interactive piece as a rendition of “a scene from 150,000 years ago, when Mitochondrial Eve, the most recent matrilineal ancestor common to all humans, is estimated to have lived.” When interacting with this piece one experiences an unmistakable reflexive feeling of dominion and unapprehendable power in relation to an indeterminate *feeling* evoked by all these power-communicating qualities (the sound, smell etc.), which seem to hint at a totalizing truth or idea in relation to one place in the world and the world itself.

The jarring similarities present between Kant’s description of sublimity and his fine art’s aesthetic ideas are also indicative of the former’s incoherence with the normal phenomenology of the sublime. In fact, one could argue that this mutual likeness indicates that Kant, too, feels art

as being conducive to instances of sublimity, but that for the sake of coherence with his overall theory he must assert that it is not (as the intuition of art carries with it a determinate purpose of being a product of someone's craft). In Kant's conception of fine art the source of unparalleled, exemplary pieces is genius. Defined as a natural endowment that is "conferred directly on each person" and one which "dies with [the artist]," genius is able to produce pieces of art that act as the lawmakers for their respective crafts and, therefore, act as the examples of its perfection (177, my words added). The unique skill geniuses naturally obtain is the ability to imbue a work with spirit, which communicates aesthetic ideas in such a way that the audience becomes mentally attuned to it. Aesthetic ideas, Kant writes, are aspects communicated in a piece which evoke "presentation[s] of the imagination which prompt much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] *concept*, can be adequate to grasp it" (182). The enjoyment found in the contemplation of aesthetic ideas lies within our imagination's "freedom from the law of association (which attaches to the empirical use of the imagination); for although it is under that law that nature lends us material, we can process that material into something quite different, namely, into something that surpasses nature" (182). In other words, the enjoyment of an aesthetic idea is its amenability to marinating in a collection of indeterminate thoughts and concepts which are conducive to a creation of a realm surpassing nature and the empirical world. A world into which one can be pleasurably thrust, due to its ability to aide us in circumventing boredom and, most significantly, to encountering "a completeness for which no example can be found in nature" (183). However, since the digestion of art is always accompanied by an initial concept grasped from its form, an aesthetic idea must necessarily be

"-a presentation of the imagination which is conjoined with a given concept and is connected, when we use imagination in its freedom, with such a multiplicity of partial presentations that no

expression that stands for a determinate concept can be found for it. Hence it is a presentation that makes us add to a concept the thoughts of much that is ineffable, but the feeling of which quickens our cognitive powers and connects language, which otherwise would be mere letters, with spirit” (185).

As such, Kant believes that a piece of art has the ability to prompt, in the judging subject, a free play of the imagination, stemming from an apprehended determinate concept of the piece, which yields an interaction with and indeterminate cognition of a multitude of related supersensible, unconditioned ideas whose contemplation then has the goal of (by way of reason’s inclination) achieving a completeness of these ideas that can never be encountered in the empirical world. This phenomenologies described above are incredibly similar to that of the sublime, Both experiences contain the pleasurable feeling of ruminating in an intellectual realm surpassing the sensible world, both have that pleasure based in entertainment and its amenability to reason’s ideas, both allow one to access a facet of the world which puts them, or what is important to them, beyond the reach of natural reign and, finally, both experiences culminate in a strong emotional feeling of discovering something beyond the empirical world. There are, of course, obvious differences between the two. Firstly, the aesthetic experience of aesthetic ideas is not purely sublime as it is based on the determinate concept of presupposing a purpose and having a creator, whereas the sublime is based solely on sensory qualities and eschews the significance of the existence of the object. Secondly, aesthetic ideas do not culminate in self-reverence or the realization of strength, but rather in the contemplation of the kindred presentations and supersensible realities prompted by the piece. However, even if these differences could not be contended, the two experiences’ overlapping phenomenologies are sufficient enough to cast doubt on Kant’s belief that the two are indeed mutually exclusive. As mentioned briefly by Robert Wicks, “The similarities between Kant’s theory of aesthetic ideas and his theory of the sublime are too important to ignore, and they suggest that Kant’s account of

fine art as the combination of genius and taste is, rather, an amalgam of his (formalistic) theory of beauty and his theory of the sublime:” (191)^{xii}. The compatible emotionality of aesthetic ideas and sublimity, as well as Kant’s use of human-made structures and texts (such as St. Peter’s Basilica and the Jewish Testament) in his original theory^{xiii}, seem to allude to an inner belief that objects with determinate purposes can also be conducive to feelings of sublimity, as even if apprehended with a determinate purpose, one can still be lead to an intellectual abyss in which our empirical reality, and the initial determinate purpose, is of no use.

If one were to dig deeper into Kant’s account of aesthetic ideas, even disregarding its similarities to judgments about the sublime, one could still come across some inconsistencies in his account which point to its ability to produce sublime experiences. To begin, it is never illuminated as to why a judging subject cannot choose to look at a piece of art the way one *chooses* to look a natural object, i.e., strictly using one’s senses “as a poet does.” As will be discussed in section *II*, Kant contends that in our apprehension of a natural object our knowledge of the object’s existence is not eliminated but, rather, that the object’s lack of a known determinate purpose allows us to *choose* to look at the object in this way. This stance has its issue (I will state this briefly, as it is argued for in section *II*) since the intuition of a natural object always is accompanied with ideas of their respective purpose, and, if not, the intuition of this lack of objective purpose would be prompt determinate concepts of uncertainty, unfathomable antiquity and non-physical, inaccessible supremacy. This runs contrary to Kant’s assertion that the purely sublime begins on strictly sensory grounds and the reaction based on these sensory cues alone. This interpretation has been echoed by Robert R. Clewis, who states that it is “never show[n] why we cannot appreciate works of art aesthetically as mere magnitudes” or as perceived sensory qualities, as, again, the sublime arises from a manner of

contemplation that we choose to engage in (169)^{xiv}. In addition to this, one could question the solidity of the premise that an audience member would necessarily include in the initial digestion of its form the concept of art presupposing a determinate purpose if one can never immediately apprehend the objective purpose of an art piece manifested in it upon initial confrontation. The fact that artistic genius “presupposes understanding, but also a presentation (though an indeterminate one) of the material, i.e., of the intuition needed to exhibit this concept” indicates that what is present in an art piece is not immediately intuitable as purposeful or meaningful (186). Kant also writes that genius “manifests itself not so much in the fact that the proposed purpose is achieved in exhibiting a determinate concept, as, rather, in the way of *aesthetic ideas*, which contain a wealth of material [suitable] for that intention, are offered or expressed” (186). What this implies is that a piece of fine art may not even necessarily exhibit a determinate concept and, thus, contain no purpose to be apprehended. Rather, what the judging subject will confront is a base determinate concept formally presented in the piece, i.e., its depiction of a historic scene, natural sight etc. However, its true communication lays dormant. Only in conjunction with its form and other aesthetic qualities will one be guided, thanks to the skill of genius, to the actual meaning of the piece- its indeterminate aesthetic idea. This is akin to, as will be expanded on in section II, the determinate concept of the object of perception being known (i.e., I am aware that what I am judging is the sky), but its objective, true purpose remaining unknown (even though our reason communicates that it in fact does exist) and one’s purposeful poetic contemplation of it giving rise to feelings of supersensible ideas and totalizing connectivity.

Therefore, the conception that art cannot be conducive to sublimity due to the influence of determinate concepts in the initial confrontation with the object is not as robust as one may have

thought. And even if so, one then only need point out the striking similarities between the phenomenologies of the two experiences as evidence enough to argue that Kant believed that art is conducive to sublime experiences, but that a confession of such would run counter to this thesis of pure sublimity.

II. *The impossibility of pure judgments of sublimity based sensory qualities.*

All pure judgments of the sublime are limited to objects of nature. Kant reiterates this multiple times throughout his *Analytic of the Sublime*. In one such moment he clearly states:

“if an aesthetic judgment is to be *pure (unmixed with any teleological and hence rational judgment)*, and if we are to give an example of it that is fully appropriate for the critique of *aesthetic* judgment, then we must point to the sublime not in products of art (e.g., buildings, columns etc.) where both the form and the magnitude are determined by a human purpose, nor in natural things *whose very concept carries with it a determinate purpose* (e.g., animals with a known determination in nature), but rather crude nature (and even in it only insofar as it carries with it no charm, nor any emotion aroused by actual danger), that is, merely insofar as crude nature contains magnitude” (109).

This allocation of objects of nature as the sole conductors of the feeling of sublimity holds for both the dynamically and mathematically sublime, the former contending that the initial physical feel of endangerment evoked by an object is based on the sensory cues (visual, auditory, etc.) intuited from the perception and the latter implying that the semi-apprehendable, yet incomprehensible physical magnitude of an object, without any concept of the purpose of the object itself, is what prompts our object directed agitation and consequential feeling of physical inferiority and worldly insignificance. I contend that by allowing for one’s agitation and sense of feebleness to be based solely on the physical size of something, or the sensory cues digested, one, very explicitly, rejects the significance of the object. This allows for our respective sensations of endangerment and fear to, hypothetically, be elicited by *any* object which figures as having, or thought to have, these qualities. Before moving forward, it is important to point out that when Kant determines that aesthetic judgments are not based on determinate concepts of the

object he is not eschewing the judging subject's awareness of what that object is and that determination's involvement in our intuition of the object. Rather, I believe, he is stating that what is needed is an object whose intuition does not carry with it a determinate purpose. One that can, truly, be looked at as a poet does- only considering its visual and sensory cues and having these qualities communicate to us (along with, I believe, the reality that its purpose is unknown to us and its existence completely independent and separate from ours) its physical dominion and, consequently, existential superiority.

The idea that any object could be conducive to feelings of sublimity, if looked at indeterminately and sensually, might not seem like such an issue, as Kant repeatedly emphasizes that it refers to a way of thinking, or a property of the self, and is *not* a property of objects of experience. Objects are only sublime insofar as they are conducive to provoking an activity of the mind that culminates in a sublime realization, i.e. an awareness of our moral obligation or activity of life based on moral principals. As such, the fact that *any object* could be conducive to feelings of sublimity is technically correct, but does not phenomenally seem correct, nor does it seem to cohere with Kant's examples of sublimity strewn throughout. A similar criticism has previously been attributed to Kant's theory on beauty. Namely, the fact that judgments of beauty, whose object is also not judged based on determinate concepts, are universally valid because beauty arises from the free play of imagination and understanding which we are conscious of "the subjective relation [being] suitable to cognition in general [and] just as well hold[s] food for everyone" (Gracyk, 49, my words added)^{xv}. The consequence of this is that it makes possible our judging of *any* object and having that judgment result in one of beauty, which even if true phenomenally, does not cohere with Kant's account. Gracyk states that "the problem is that if Kant really meant that the fulfillment of those conditions which we grammatically register by the

predicate 'beauty' are the subjective conditions for every act of cognition, then every object should be beautiful" (50). I believe a similar thing is happening with Kant's theory of the sublime. Namely, that since our agitation and awe must be universally valid they must be based in our a priori ways of apprehending the world, i.e. space, time, capacities for apprehension/comprehension, base comprehension of visual cues, and any other uniform mental activity that excludes subjective conceptual, cognitive influence. It follows, therefore, that sensations of fear and agitation must be provoked by base, universally valid apprehensions of physically dominating or dynamically dominating sensory qualities. This base requirement is very general. Having the sublime's terror be based in solely sensory cues disregards the existence of the object- the influence of the determination of an object as one of objective power, mystery, inaccessibility and value- and allows for the experience to arise from powerful sensory qualities present in various, unnatural objects. Namely, it allows for mistaken perceptions, which are comprehended as objects of nature, to be conducive to experiences of the sublime.

An unlit atrium, with its qualities of impenetrable darkness and imperceptible depth, when contemplated poetically can bring forth feelings of sublimity. This is so because these sensory qualities not only communicate physical superiority, but also because the intuition of an unlit atrium (when first encountered) does not contain a determinate concept of itself, as its true container is unknown. The same goes for, let us say, the perception of a large trash barge that is floating in front of one and is figured as a large, strangely lush island. Or wandering into Lowline Park- a mimesis of an Amazonian wonderland located in New York City's Delancey area. In this way, even our admittedly confused or obscured perception of objects, if they contain the sensory qualities that provoke either failed comprehension (agitation) or fear (inferiority), can be "objects of sublimity."

The immediate reaction to this position is to claim that once this mis-categorized perception is realized the fear and/or agitation provoked will fade away as the concept of the object, which necessarily figures into its judgment, settles in. However, if we move through Kant's theory we see that the agitation or fear felt, because of the nature of the sublime's negative pleasure, necessarily coexists with the pleasure of contemplating the sight further, or the contemplation would stop at its inception because. Furthermore, following this step and imagination's supersensible play, as we know, one turns inward and a self-reflection begins in a moment in which the object is no longer of importance, lying in a domain which we intellectually and valorically leave/disregard. As such, by the time we would even recognize our faulty perception the sublime's temporal process would have already discarded its outward reference, regardless of whether its basis is now figured as having a concept or an objective purpose- our superiority and its implications take precedent. Whether that darkness was a cave or an atrium, or the faux forest a real one or not is irrelevant because once it reaches self-reflection it theoretically does not figure into the activity of the mind that calls forth the true sublimity. In addition, Kant's characterization of this aesthetic judgment as disinterested (the purpose of the existence of the object having no influence in its unfolding), prevents my criticism from being cast aside. One judges the object based on how the *qualities* of the object makes us feel, not what it objectively is. All that matters, according to Kant, is that the object not have a determining purposeful concept *so that it can be judged non-purposefully, strictly by the senses, uninfluenced by external, objective purpose.* As such, even if a mistaken unnatural object is judged in this way, if its qualities communicate the necessary force, it must be able to be conducive to sublimity.

Kant's "General Comment" section casts some doubt on this line of thinking, however, as

it emphasizes the fact that judgments of the sublime are based on the sensory, poetic qualities of a perception without ever losing the concept of what the object is in the first place. This is possible as the concepts of certain objects, supposedly, do not have a determinate purpose attached to them and, thus, no infiltrating preconceptions hinder the imagination's free play or its sustained contemplation. As Kant puts it:

“-we must not take for our examples such beautiful or sublime objects of nature as presuppose the concept of a purpose. For then the purposeiveness would be either teologal, and hence not aesthetic, or else be based on mere sensations of an object (gratification or pain) and hence not merely formal. When we call the sight of the starry sky *sublime*, we must not base our judgment upon any concepts of worlds that are inhabited by rational beings, and then [conceive of] the bright dots that we see occupying the space above us as being these worlds' suns, moved in orbits prescribed for them with great purposiveness; but we must base our judgment regarding it merely on how we see it, as a vast vault encompassing everything, and merely under this presentation may we posit the sublimity that a pure aesthetic judgment attributes to this object. In the same way, when we judge the sight of the ocean we must not do so on the basis of how *we think* it, enriched with all sorts of knowledge which we possess (but which is not contained in the direct intuition)-“ (130).

As a result, the position that my argument could be rejected on the grounds that a mistaken perception or a purposeless, perceived object with sensory qualities which have might and power figured into it could not provoke sublime thinking because judgments of sublimity contain a preliminary determinate cognition of the object's grounding concept which apprehends its purposelessness and, thus, gives the green light for sensory meditation is tempting. However, this is not viable because (i) unless approached from a religious point of view, any concept of nature carries with it some purposeful or accessory grounding knowledge of it and (ii) if its concept does not come with a determinate purpose, this lack of known purpose would imbue the concept of the object with determinate concepts of mystery, antiquity, individualized being etc. which would base the apprehended might figured into it in its concept not solely in its sensory qualities, thus making the judgment impure.

III. *The fallibility of Kant's persistent sublime.*

The achievement of an aim, Kant says, is always accompanied by a pleasure. However, as the amount of times a specific aim is accomplished increases, the novelty and hence pleasure of the act decreases. The sublime, seemingly, is impervious to this sink into normality, as experiences such as the imagination's boundlessness, connection with infinity and its amenability to an indeterminate aim never encounter a final, concrete conclusion. One never tires of looking at the starry sky, or the sight of horizontal, elongated greenery, or an expanse of water. However, it is questionable whether Kant's conception of the concept-less sublime can actually adhere to this trait. To prove this questionability I will address a thought experiment outlining the possibility of a domination and fear incited by sensory qualities not being conducive to further experiences of the sublime emanating from the same object. To support this point I will be looking at the experiences of professional mountain skiers and the way they speak about nature.

Kant's account of sublimity arises from the felt physical domination that the sensory qualities incite in the perceiver. No one knows these sights better, nor has seen them closer, than the professional athletes who traverse these spectacles for a living. One such athlete is the professional, natural mountain skier J.P. Auclair who, in the sports movie *Into the Mind*^{xvi}, is depicted descending an untouched, uncultivated mountain at an almost 180 degree angle, and who is shown scaling the entirety of the mountain before reaching his desired point of departure. The reality of what this entails, and more importantly, the sights encountered during these activities is beautifully captured in *Into the Mind*- which follows twenty three skiers and snowboarders doing what they do best, traversing difficult terrain. The film highlights women and men who literally tower over and, one could say, actually physically dominate nature for a

living. In one such moment of power exchange the audience is guided through a fifteen second clip of a skier carving over the tops of snow covered trees with ease. What is of note about these clips, which demonstrate with what agility and ability these athletes traverse the untouched, hence still objectively powerful, still unknown, still figured large and daunting, and hence still “excessive for the imagination” (115) spectacles of nature, is that they are juxtaposed with shots and scenes continually illuminating nature’s persistent inaccessibility, or inability to match its lore and power - *even though they are physically dominating it*.

Into the Mind continually and artfully exhibits Kantian conceptions of both dynamical and mathematical experiences of sublimity on the part of the athletes. This is done via wide shots of erect athletes facing the inapprehensible magnitude of the mountains, close ups of the precise work which goes into climbing hard, unsteady rocks, and general long takes on the immense size and attributes (i.e., fog, cold temperature, unsteady snow and rocks) of the mountain’s build dispersed between the depictions of the athletes’ ascent and descent. However, this movie’s take on sublimity differs from Kant’s in that its depiction of the experience of sublimity stops at the audience’s visceral and *final* realization of nature’s inapprehensible, unmatchable, untouchable power and lore. This phenomenological difference presents a possible interesting issue for Kant’s theory because the movie also depicts these same recipients of the feeling of sublimity as physically dominating nature- granted with some aide. The fact that this domination is limited to the physical is important because one would think that in Kant’s sublime- where it is prompted by the solely physical determiners of power and superiority of objects of nature - that physically dominating said natural object, or being able to match it for that matter, would be the threshold that if passed would transform said object into just another non-sublime object of nature. Going back to my initial point- this counter-experience proves detrimental for Kant’s theory, as since

his experience is based solely on sensory qualities, once a natural object has been physically matched, or encountered so many times that its dominating stature no longer effects a visceral reaction from one, the object's conductivity to a sublime experience wanes- which runs counter to his determination that the sublime is endlessly persistent. What is worth more discussion, is the film's depiction of such people, but its assertion that this dynamic does not alter one's conception of nature as sublime or endlessly more powerful than you.

Corsland and Mossop's movie presents an account of sublimity in which the physical power of the object is either met or seen as non-threatening to one's existence and still experienced as immensely powerful and superior in value. This implies that (i) the digestion of power in this natural object, as the base of the experience of sublimity, was not solely sensory and was accompanied by ideological or conceptual associations of valor this object contained and (ii) that this ideological/conceptual accompaniment must be responsible for the object's continued cohesion to an experience of sublimity, as if the initial requirements were to remain strictly physical/sensory than a domination of that object along those same lines would eliminate their conduciveness to further, persistently pleasurable experiences of sublimity.

The strength of my premise could be tested when one considers that the "domination" of the mountain depicted in the film was achieved only with the aid of tools and technology. I.e., that the physical match I claim is not a genuine one as the physical inequality claimed in Kant's sublime seemingly takes into consideration the unaltered, natural composition of the person and object in question. As such, there is no actual physical domination being achieved and, thus, the movie does not act as an alternate account, a "what-if," of Kant's sublime. However, I do not think this is completely true. On the surface level this appears to be so- in the consideration of the powers of you and a natural object the comparison should be pure, stripped of all external aid

or influence so that the conclusion is pure as well. In order to determine one's inferiority only after a purposeful, cognizant stripping oneself from all human-made tools, technologies, that have helped us survive thus far and which seem as given nowadays, or to ignore historical natural slights (our intense deforestation, for example) is to add an ideological/conceptual bases to the determination of an object of nature's superiority to us. My line of argument is this: it is not invalid to include omnipresent tools or technologies when considering oneself physical abilities in comparison to sublime objects, as these tools are as much a part of natural human power as the wind conduction in the mountains and or the density of the amazons. I.e., it is a manifestation of our natural abilities and instinct for survival and meaning. Even if someone wants to deny the legitimacy of considering this part of one's uninfluenced state, one cannot deny the fact that the act of comparing the perceived physical power of some object to ones power- and discarding the obvious, widely disseminated tools, previous actions, and appendages at our disposal (which would aid us in matching or dealing with the power of the perceived) is an act emanating from effort. Casting aside our power as incomparable or as a laughable copout implies that we are considering the power of this natural thing on a more than physical level. In fact, it demonstrates that we are considering this natural object as superior because of ideological or conceptual associations of supersensible, non-physical attributes which communicate its dominating aura. For example, if I look at a forest and feelings of inferiority, helplessness and demise arise from the sensory qualities of the thickness of the tree trunks, height of the plants, wildness of the river etc. I must be ignoring knowledge of myself, as a human being, of being able to (and having done so already) cut down all the trees, pave over the terrain, displace the river and the like. In addition, the fact that our conception of ourselves does include the widely disseminated methods for survival is the reason why perceptions of below freezing weather, hail

and the like do not trigger a sense of vast power. However, even if this rebuttal is not sufficient to save my premise, the film's communication of a Kantian sublime that culminates in persistent respect for nature's superiority is still relevant, as it acts as an example of a sublime based in the conceptual and ideological determinates of incomparable power, and not solely sensory cues.

If my premise is true and the athletes in the film can be considered as either having dominated or matched nature's physical might, one must concede to the reality that the fear and agitation present in the initial stages of experiences of sublimity emanate from, if not solely then in part, the ideological or conceptual power figured into the determination of the object. Support for this stance can be seen in the clips of ritualistic religious ceremonies, close-ups on the makeup of snowflakes and other-worldly natural phenomena dispersed throughout *Into the Mind*, to mediate between the objective external visual of nature and the audience oriented internal digestion of it. This tendency to digest nature with preliminary concepts of mystery, awe and inaccessible power can also be seen taking place in artistic renditions of nature, such as Joseph Mallord William Turner's *Norham Castle Sunrise* (1845), Ivan Aivovsky's *Wave* (1889), and Katsushika Hokusai's iconic *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1829-1833). But, as is of concern here, it can also be seen taking place in the movie, as the athletes shown have already accomplished and overcome the hurdle that Kant relies on in his critique- the thought possibility of the endangerment of one's physical self. If the physical domination of the natural object is not the aspect that prompts one realization of nature's value and superiority to us, then this value and superiority must lie in something non-physical, beyond the enticing view of the object. Namely, it must reside in what the sight of these objects represents or calls forth about its existence that figures as being superior and frightful. The consequence this determination, in addition to challenging the basis of Kant's sublime, illuminates that this ideological superiority must be the

basis for the continued enjoyment of natural objects, as judgments of sublimity may not be aroused in a person who has met nature's power before because one would not be able to feel the inferiority and, therefore, the negative pleasure of the sublime.

IV. Conclusion

I. My account of sublimity.

The sublime has been described as ultimately being directed towards a transcendent realization, whether that terminating thought be an awareness of one's own supersensible power or of an external power surpassing one's capabilities and understanding. Occupying the latter of the binary are philosophers who map the trajectory of the sublime as moving further and further away from the judging subject and empirical rules and constitution until it reaches its apex in intangible imaginative conclusion[s]. Before presenting my own account I would like to focus on one such philosophical theory, which places feelings of wonder, bewilderment and awe in the first moments of an encounter with objects of rarity or enchanting interest. Although his theory is not explicitly one of sublimity, Philip Fisher's rethinking of wonder brings to the forefront the importance that cognitive investigation, and purposeful rumination, has in aesthetic experiences. In addition, his theory usefully demonstrates the joy in discovery and the development of new knowledge, thus, providing preliminary legitimacy for the construal of sublimity as lying in the realization of big truths or ideas, and not simply in the apprehension of the realm in which it exists- namely, the infinite or "other."

Fisher, in his book *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences*, describes wonder as a visual phenomenon which begins by confronting an object recognized as being extraordinary- he uses the sight of a rainbow as his example. The recognition of its uncommonness prompts a reflexive feeling of surprise and delight that leads to a reflection "on the phenomenon at hand and [a motivation] to search in a guided manner for an adequate explanation of it" (295, my own words added)^{xvii}. Wonder, Fisher contends, reaches its culminating destination once acceptable answers to these questions are found, and is

phenomenally characterized by a restful, knowing pleasure^{xviii}. Again, I outline this account of wonder in order to illustrate the importance intellectual curiosity and investigations have in the constitution of extreme experiences. Large truths and ideas do not fall upon the lap of judging subjects nor do they occur fortuitously via a string of rightly placed experiences and responses. Neither are aesthetic experiences emotional reactions without content or implication. Therefore, the content in aesthetic experiences are not completely sensorial or non-conceptual, but are necessarily accessed, actualized and made palpable by purposeful cognitive activity, incited penetrating thought and relevant accompanying emotionality. As such, I believe experiences of sublimity, being one of the more extreme forms of aesthetic experience, have a rich vault of content, accessed via imaginative and cognitive contemplation and investigation into the supersensible connotations manifested in the perceived object. This vault of content, I argue, is the realization of an abstract, supersensible truth which is felt as existentially and fundamentally altering and momentarily accessed in its proper Truth, via the interaction of our reaching imagination and relevant evoked emotionality. As Werner Herzog states, “The soul of the listener or the spectator completes this act itself; the soul actualizes truth through the experience of sublimity: that is, it completes an independent act of creation” (11).^{xix}

The culminating phenomenology of the sublime, I believe, consists of an imaginative entrance and intellectual reach into a supersensible realm, intellectual satisfaction, bodily sensations accompanying the terminating sensation of enlightenment and/or spiritual elevation, awareness of the other worldly apprehended idea, a momentary sense of truly accessing the full reality of this truth, as well as an awareness of one’s subjection to the overwhelming power of it. Following Kant’s formulation, there is a pleasure and displeasure. Here, the pleasure is based in both our sense of intellectual and spiritual satisfaction in the discovery of a covert truth or idea

and in the accomplishment felt in reaching a realm that, even though exists and is all pervading, is rarely traversed or accessed. The displeasure, like Kant's theory, lies in the awareness of our subjection to this determination, which is realized as being overpowering, all pervading, and either previously unknown or irresolvable (i.e., whose authority cannot be evaded or one whose indeterminacy and reality can be pondered upon endlessly without ((a) an emotionally nullifying external solution (religion, for example) or (b) complete dejection). The discovered powerful truth in my account of sublimity will only ever be momentarily *felt and comprehended* as a Truth or Idea, as their consistent cognitive apprehension is indeterminate and infinitely referential to other indeterminate implications. As such, explicit knowledge of the other Truth can never be *fully* digested or comprehended, but the sublime gives one a painfully fleeting sense of having grasped the full, multi-dimensional reality of it, rather than just a worded rendering of its existence. The intense feelings of accomplishment and elevation accompanying the realization of sublime conclusions prevents the awareness and feeling of this truth turning into a prolonged state of existential dread - in response to our realized subjection and inferiority.

Overall, my theory of sublimity is that it is a feeling of elation, discovery and awe which accompanies the achievement of an indeterminate truth or reality which fundamentally affects one's sense of being in the world via recognition of this truth as a supersensible, overarching, dominating power functioning within the constitution of world. This realization is achieved via a curious, purposefully spiritual and abstract yet guided contemplation of an object of interest which is conducive to prolonged supersensible engagement. This is determined by its containing intuitions of intense power, originality, obscurity, intrigue and supersensible association (relations to morality, powerful origin, natural aspects of intangible influence etc.). However, these apprehended properties will only inspire sublime thought if one's mental activity has

already been colored by ideas of the possibility of beyond-empirical significance and supersensible legitimacy. In addition, intuitions of supersensible significance, ambiguity and appeal may only be properly assigned to objects whose properties, conceptual associations and determinate concept are conducive to manifesting these ideas. For example, having opened myself up to the design of abstract thought and contemplation I could look at a picture frame collecting dust in my perfectly lit living room and, because of its properties of beauty and personal relevance (intrigue) and objective connections to time, memory, the consistency of human familial linkage (supersensible thought), be propelled to scrutinize it further. All could then meld into a restful yet keenly aware contemplation of this frame, yielding a sublime realization about, perhaps, the inevitably quick passage of time or of the forgetfulness of mortality, which makes me feel inferior and subjected to the overpowering truth of human triviality or the forgetfulness of eternity. This is not simply a revelation or epiphany, as it is not just a surprising, matter-of-fact uncovering of a truth, nor is it the result of extensive, consistent pondering or analysis. Rather, it is a semi-spontaneous, visually prompted experience of indeterminately apprehending, momentarily comprehending, and intensely feeling a part of a supersensible substratum of worldly powers, which we recognize and feel to have no control over.

There are four categories of experience, of which I am equipped to discuss, that I believe are most conducive to experiences of sublimity: objects of experience whose intuition carries with it concepts conducive to supersensible thinking/investigation (as well as qualities of power, intrigue, and obscurity), works of art, cinema and literature. Each modality has its respective cognitive and phenomenal process in achieving an experience of sublimity; however, the process can be broken down into four general steps: (i) initial confrontation, (ii) apprehension of the

properties and ideas figured into the dynamic with the object in question, (iii) an engaging, contemplative investigation into the associations, implications and reasons behind the encountered object's draw, control or existence and, lastly, (iv) an awareness and feel of a powerful indeterminate, overarching truth[s] or pattern[s] prompted by this contemplation which fundamentally alters one's sense of being-in-the-world, putting one in a position of subjection or inferiority.

An object of sublimity, improperly assigned, must necessarily be apprehended as authoritative, tantalizing in its obscurity and aura as well as associated with concepts of inaccessible significance if it is to elicit our sustained engagement with and contemplation of it. The empirical qualities draw you in while concepts reaching to the apex peak cognitive interest. As such, the sight of an exquisitely crafted plate or bag will not interest me to the appropriate level because, although it is beautiful or perplexing, it does not have manifest in it ideas of authority, obscurity or supersensible significance or associations conducive to prolonged, affecting contemplation^{xx}. However, the sight of a single person praying in a silent church is appropriate to a sublime experience. This is so because the latter is conducive to further penetrating indeterminate, affecting abstract thought as well as containing intuitions of spiritual control, institutional authority or religious mystery.

Moving forward, of pieces of art I include engaging, obscure, confounding, jarring, grand, truth seeking works (re: aesthetic properties, form, initially apprehended content) which evoke supersensible, abstract engagement from the judging subject. In addition, the piece must guide the audience to its purpose not only intellectually and imaginatively, but emotionally as well, as the sublime realization can only reach its identifying brief moment of supersensible access by the convergence of overpowering relevant emotionality, intellectual rumination and

imaginative apprehension. Since the purpose manifest in a piece is not necessarily immediately digested, aesthetic properties of intrigue and supersensible association are what would instigate one to continue studying it in the appropriate manner. Because my conception of the sublime runs on the interpretation that such experiences are universally achievable and semi-spontaneous, I contend that a forced study of a piece will not culminate in a complete sublime experience. The investigation leading to sublime realizations is not one of haste and stake. It should not have a determinate goal or purpose. It is a restful, natural guiding of one to a realization because of personal curiosity and inclination. In addition, the necessary preliminary opening of oneself to be affected by this realization, engage in abstract thought and inquiry is possibly hindered if forced upon someone, or even completely eliminated.

I consider Auguste Rodin's sculpture *The Burghers of Calais* (modeled 1884-5, cast 1985) to be a sublime art piece. The sculpture is a depiction of six French leaders who sacrificed themselves to be killed for their town's salvation during the Hundred Years' War. The sculpture famously does not contain any hint of classical heroism or dignity in the composition of the men, but rather highlights the degradation, anguish, and defeatist aura surrounding the event. The most powerful being in the piece is a man who covers his bald head with both hands, his fingers stretched so far that they seemingly cradle it. He is slightly hunched over, face down and ignoring of the other five men in his vicinity. Although he has no noose around his neck it is evident that he is walking towards his death, and that the full weight of this realization is firmly settled. An initial confrontation with this sculpture is quite mesmerizing; the figures are large, towering casts shaded in a dark black and the expressions of fear and disbelief vivid enough to make one realize the overwhelming, unchanging nature of the emotion and its effect. However, it is only if you initially are struck by the churchly intensity of this sculpture or apprehend the

supersensible concept of unimaginable horror or of death's finality manifested in it, that one will find the motivation to study it further, which would then yield the sublime message of the intense human desire for life –as simply existence- or of the all-pervading, crippling force that true, unadulterated fear, death and impotence has (digested by the sight of such a dauntingly large, elderly figure cowering and broken). In addition, it is only via the portrayal and imparting of the feeling of such humanistic frailty and impotence that one will be able to reach that moment where the statement of the truth, whatever it may be, is given the breath of life and is felt and contemplated in all its multi-dimensional, full understanding.

Of cinema I would include films which manifest the trajectory of an overwhelming, overpowering sublime truth or idea by illustrating its emotionality, otherness, influential power, superiority and control over the audience or characters within. The film must cultivate an ambience of all these affecting properties of sublimity with the purpose of either indeterminately displaying the sublime truth, and its power, in action or alluding to it and calling upon the viewers themselves to complete the task (so that one may imaginatively and emotionally invest in and be affected by it). An example of a film which accomplishes this is Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2014), which very purposefully manipulates the emotions and imaginations of the viewers to highlight the horror of, and overwhelming truth that, humanity is replicable. Or, perhaps, that humanity in regards to the originality of it, desire for it, and right to life, is not exclusive to humans, as the things which make one human are able to be programmed. Not only is this sublime truth explicitly hinted at throughout, but the uneasiness of it, other world-ness, sadness of it and especially the otherness of it all is consistently pushed. To highlight this is the goal, I believe, of the jarring and out of place dance scene which occurs about halfway through the film. In the moments preceding this scene the viewers are hit with the maliciousness of the

main character Nathan Bateman, who in his creation and chastisement of human-like consciousnesses, is not only evil but a wannabe God figure who has decided for himself who is worthy of life and who is not, all based on the manner in which each consciousness came about. Following almost an hour of anxiety inducing, thought provoking narrative Garland places a fun choreographed dance scene in the middle, which is then immediately followed by the same tense question pushing narrative and cinematography previously used. With this dance scene I believe Garland was trying to emphasize the abnormal aura of the movie and how inhumane it felt in comparison to this very human activity. In a Kantian way, he was allowing oneself to go back to a neutral, unaffected mental state in order to highlight the affected cognition, emotion and physical sense of being that was being provoked previously. Garland's movie is a sublime one as the message he imparts, because it is able to be infinitely pondered upon and not explicitly communicated but necessarily teased out, is still pleasurable upon discovery and enlightening, despite its powerful reign. It also allows us to so ponder this indeterminate truth, emotionally and intellectually, so as to momentarily access its Truth. In other words, it is sublime because it adheres to the determination of a sublime truth while also communicating this truth by allowing us to feel it, to experience it, to discover and reflect on it for ourselves, rather than just explicitly telling us.

Lastly, of "sublime literature" I include poetry, fiction, short stories, anecdotes etc. which, by way of literary language, convey a version of a feeling, occurrence, perspective or experience which allude to a relevant and enlightening, yet intellectually and colloquially inaccessible truth, idea or emotion. I argue this because the sublime is essentially emotional and this form of the written word is most adept to viscerally communicating the emotional, humanistic aspect of being in and interacting with the world. As such, literature is the word of

the sublime, and does not require that much investigation, but rather simply that you read and immerse yourself in it. The tendency philosophers have to use literary language to describe experiences of sublimity is pointed out by Frances Ferguon, who writes:

“Rather, the very efficacy of language for Burke resides in its obscurity, and poetry assumes the highest place in his ordering of the arts because it is distanced from nature and defined precisely in terms of its not being an intimation of reality. It would, thus, be rather churlish to observe that Burke’s empiricism is undone by its dependence on language, which by virtue of its rhetoricity and hence its unreliability and subversiveness betrays the very claims to certainty that it desires, for the *Enquiry* itself preceded us in this gesture. Yet it would be equally useless for us to applaud the text’s canny (or uncanny) unraveling of itself or its own deconstructive gestures, because that move merely confirms the expectations we have engendered about the ways in which figurative language is, finally, always the ‘real story’” (43)^{xxi}.

As supported by Ferguson, literary language is sometimes the only vehicle which transports and places one in a realm outside the physical and empirical. Via emotion, imaginative guiding and the unique ability to put into words concepts, fleeting moments, points of views and feelings whose full effect and strength cannot be captured by any jargon or factual rendering, literary language and literary works in general can put one in a mental or emotional state conducive to a sublime realization. A piece could effectively outline a sublime realization and, via the emotional journey it imparts onto the reader, prompt the reader to personally digest this determination and have a sublime moment for themselves. Or, a piece could provide the surrounding narrative, emotionality, investigative thought leading up to a sublime moment while leaving the terminating step for the readers.

Having outlined the differences between the categories of “sublime objects” I may now generally draw out what I take to be the process of achieving sublime thought. I will note those steps in the process which change with modality, and briefly recount how they appear for each respective occurrence. The goal of this section is to very generally present my theory of the sublime- as a fully supported, detailed account is beyond the scope of this paper and one which

requires much more order and detail. However, I hope that this will be sufficient enough to communicate my theory on what are the essential aspects of the sublime and what phenomenology distinguishes the sublime from everyday realizations or critical discoveries.

As outlined in the previous paragraphs, sublime encounters are not possible without the preliminary preparation of one's self, or simply the fortuitously being in the mood for abstract, supersensible thought. As such, one will not be receptive to the awareness of the implications present in the concepts of certain objects, if not in an accepting cognitive state of these philosophical, quasi-religious thoughts. With this in mind, we can place the beginning of a moment of sublimity in the perception, and consequential study of, objects whose intuition carries with it concepts of obscurity, supersensible association, power, intrigue and inaccessibility (in regards to comprehending those indeterminate associations). The required empirical properties necessary to ensure continued vision and eventual investigation into these properties vary with each "sublime object." Generally, they must manifest a conduciveness to supersensible origin/association and be intriguing (objects), manifest a supersensible truth seeking purpose (art), aura/purpose (cinema), or thing trying to be illuminated (literature). The second step in a process of sublimity is our natural falling into a restful, pleasurable yet keen investigation into the intuited properties of indeterminacy, supersensible relation, appeal and power. As such, this investigation, as much as it is focused outwardly (namely, towards the supersensible, unnatural, worldly powers and workings) also has an inward focus. During the investigation we are aware of our attraction towards this curious object, of our attempts to dissect it and of our faint detection of this "otherness" of a certain power or association to a realm outside our own. As we get closer and closer towards achieving an indeterminate idea of what had only been a faint feeling at the outset, one feels oneself slipping further and further away.

Further away from power, imaginatively further away from our empirical realm and everyday rules and associations with the simultaneous feeling of our subjection to this indeterminately realized truth. Unlike Kant, our awareness of our ability to achieve these things, to think of such ungraspable ideas, does not overpower our sense of powerlessness (although the satisfaction is in fact present) but just makes the actuality of this grand truth all the more affecting and pleasurable (we have both discovered this large truth and realized its penetrating influence). At this point the final step in a sublime experience comes to the forefront- a momentary access into, if I may, a different world. We imaginatively, emotionally and briefly intellectually enter a realm in which the truth realized exists in its full being, implications, associations, consequences and all. The afterglow of this sublime feeling is a continued rumination in this anxiety inducing, yet intellectually and humanely satisfying, indeterminate truth encountered. A contemplation of one's full realization of it and what this means. In this moment we feel the surrounding inevitable reality and control of this thought. It causes us to lose our breath or make our vision momentarily blurred – it overtakes one. Our sense of physical self leaves the mind and our existence on a spiritual, worldly, philosophical manner is highlighted.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Every quote which has not been assigned a text or whose citation does not include the author's name is taken from the critique.

ⁱⁱ “Hence, in neither of them [judgments on the beautiful or the sublime] does our liking depend on a sensation, such as that of the agreeable, nor on a determinate concept, as does our liking for the good; yet we do refer the liking to concepts, though it is indeterminate which concepts these are” (97).

ⁱⁱⁱ Merritt, Melissa McBay. *The Sublime*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

^{iv} Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, page 111.

^v I will not be focusing on this determination of Kant's but to provide a justification for this reading I will leave a quote from his *General Comment on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments*:

“But it is this idea that is aroused in us when, as we judge an object aesthetically, this judging strains the imagination to its limit, whether of expansion (mathematical) or of its might over the mind (dynamically). The judging strains the imagination because it is based on a feeling that the mind has a vocation that wholly transcends the domain of nature (namely, moral feeling), and it is with regard to this feeling that we judge the presentation of the object subjectively purposive” (128).

^{vi} It is important to keep in mind that the initial displeasure of the dynamically sublime object never falters, as the reality that we are inadequate either to estimate its magnitude or, as in this case, match or accesses the reality of its power and far reaching value (determined by our figuring into the object's intuition its supersensible importance and “might over [our] mind”), always persists (128). The pleasure of the sublime experience always coexists with its displeasure, as the source of our displeasure (our imaginative inadequacy) never is resolved. Continuing on, this inadequacy also makes us aware of a pull emanating from within to dig deeper into this objectively unattainable idea or summation.

^{vii} “For here the liking concerns only our ability's vocation, revealed in such cases, insofar as the predisposition to this ability is part of our nature, whereas it remains up to us, as our obligation, to develop and exercise this ability. And there is truth in this, no matter how conscious of this actual present impotence man may be when he extends his reflection thus far” (CPJ, 121).

^{viii} Cochrane, Tom. “The Emotional Experience of the Sublime.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 42, no. 2 (2012): 125–148. Jstor.

^{ix} Rolston III, Holmes. “Aesthetic Experience in Forests.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56, no. 2 (1998): 164. Jstor.

- ^x Cochrane, Tom. “The Emotional Experience of the Sublime.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 42, no. 2 (2012): 136. Jstor.
- ^{xi} “The New Museum Presents the First US Solo Museum Exhibition by Marguerite Humeau (b. 1986, Cholet, France), Debuting a New Installation of Sculpture and Sound.” *Marguerite Humeau; Birth Canal*, The New Museum, www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/marguerite-humeau.
- ^{xii} Wicks, Robert. “Kant on Fine Art: Artistic Sublimity Shaped by Beauty.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 53, no. 2 (1995): 189–193. Jstor.
- ^{xiii} This is also mentioned by Wicks in his article: “For example, he cites two works of architecture as instances of the mathematical sublime (i.e., immense size), namely, the Pyramids and St. Peter’s Basilica.....” (192).
- ^{xiv} Clewis, Robert R. “A Case for Kantian Artistic Sublimity: A Response to Abaci.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 68, no. 2 (2010): 167–170. Jstor.
- ^{xv} Gracyk, Theodore A. “Sublimity, Ugliness, and Formlessness in Kant’s Aesthetic Theory.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 45, ser. 1 (1986): 49–56. Jstor.
- ^{xvi} *Into the Mind*, Directed by Eric S. Crosland and David Mossop. Spain: Sherpas Cinema, 2013. Prime Video.
- ^{xvii} Lintott, Sheila. “Review of *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences*, by Philip Fisher.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 64, no. 2 (2006): 295. Jstor.
- ^{xviii} “Pleasure saturates the complex experience of wonder, from sudden surprise, to the series of interestingly original (at least for the individual) explorations in thought that the phenomenon inspires and requires, to the final restful yet exhilarating moment enjoyed when an acceptable explanation of the phenomenon appears to have been achieved” (295).
- ^{xix} Herzog, Warner. “On the Absolute, the Sublime, and Ecstatic Truth”. Translated by Moira Weisel, *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 17, no. 3 (2010): 11. Jstor.
- ^{xxi} Ferguson, Frances. *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation*. New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 43.

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