STUDIA PHILOSOPHICA KANTIANA
1/2025, ročník 14
Filozofický časopis pre kriticko-rekonštrukčné uvažovanie

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Aleš Novák

Editorial

After Kant: What does Art and Literature owe to Kant?

As 2024 marked the 300th anniversary of the birth of the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant, one of the many reminders was a three-day international conference in Prague at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, from 24-26 June, entitled "*After Kant: What Does Art and Literature Owe to Kant?*" The title itself indicates that it was not only about Kant himself, but also about his further reception and influence, especially in the field of art and especially literature. This has led, on the one hand, to a more focused interest in Kant's third, unjustly underappreciated critique, namely the *Critique of Judgement*; on the other hand, to a smooth demonstration of Kant's *contemporary* impact and relevance.

I consider it a great honour that the journal *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, published by the University of Prešov, has generously accepted for publication ten selected papers presented at the conference, including both key-note lectures, James Reid and Ian Alexander Moore. We have not tried to pretend to be a monographic unity, and therefore we have kept the order of the papers simply in alphabetical order of their authors' names. Nevertheless, the internal interconnectedness of the individual texts is obvious and – again – smooth, giving the reader great freedom in reading, studying, and discussing each article.

As guest editor, I would like to thank the editors of *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* for their impeccable work, which is reflected in the high professional standard of all the articles.

Sapere aude!

Editoriál

Aleš Novák

Po Kantovi: Čo dlhujú umenie a literatúra Kantovi?

Rok 2024 bol významným medzníkom – pripomenul si 300. výročie narodenia veľkého nemeckého filozofa Immanuela Kanta. Jednou z mnohých spomienkových udalostí bola trojdňová medzinárodná konferencia v Prahe na Fakulte humanitných štúdií Karlovej univerzity, ktorá sa konala od 24. do 26. júna pod názvom „*Po Kantovi: Čo dlhujú umenie a literatúra Kantovi?*“ Samotný názov napovedá, že nejde len o Kanta samotného, ale aj o jeho ďalšie pôsobenie a vplyv – predovšetkým v oblasti umenia a najmä literatúry. Toto viedlo jednak k hlbšiemu záujmu o Kantovu tretiu, neprávom nedocenenú kritiku – *Kritiku súdnosti*, a zároveň k jasnému preukázaniu Kantovho *súčasného* vplyvu a relevantnosti.

Považujem za veľkú česť, že časopis *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, vydávaný Prešovskou univerzitou v Prešove, veľkoryso prijal na publikovanie desať vybraných príspevkov prezentovaných na konferencii, vrátane dvoch plenárnych prednášok, ktoré predniesli James Reid a Ian Alexander Moore. Nepokúšali sme sa predstierať tematickú jednotu – príspevky sú preto zoradené jednoducho v abecednom poradí podľa mien autorov. Napriek tomu je vnútorná prepojenosť jednotlivých textov zrejmá a – opäť – prirodzene plynulá, čo čitateľovi poskytuje veľkú voľnosť pri čítaní, štúdiu i diskusii o jednotlivých článkoch.

Ako hosťujúci editor by som sa rád poďakoval redakcii *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* za ich bezchybnú prácu, ktorá sa odzrkadľuje vo vysokej odbornej úrovni všetkých článkov.

Sapere aude!

Byron Byrne-Taylor
Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Rethinking Non-Teleological Art after Kant

Abstract: This paper begins from a closer analysis of how teleology features in Kant's third Critique, following this theme narrowly in each section to explore its interrogation by three major figures of Continental thought. It discusses how the relationship between art and teleology went on to be questioned by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (specifically in his 1927 – 1935 lectures) in his attempt to rethink art outside the realm of aesthetics. Finally, in the third degree of their separation, art and teleology were rejected altogether by French intellectual Michel Foucault in 1966, culminating in his notion of art as "*anti-monde*" or "anti-world," in which art is tasked with escaping the boundaries of representation, collective meaning and social utility altogether. Moving from one case to another reveals a marginalised and overlooked continuity running between these significant thinkers, in respect to art, its ends, and its purposes. I conclude by briefly re-evaluating these ideas with respect to artificial intelligence.
Keywords: Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, teleology, aesthetics, philosophy

Three centuries later, describing Kant's third critique as a meditation on beauty, art and aesthetics is not considered incorrect or wholly inaccurate. Yet it risks overlooking a secondary component that the present work addresses, with the hope of pushing it closer to the foreground of discussion. Namely, the element of teleology in respect to art. Derived from the Greek word "*telos*" (referring to an end or purpose), if we continue to dismiss this element of Kant's thinking as nothing more than the haunted vestige of bygone ideas, then we run the risk of restricting ourselves from recognising its centrality to the genealogy of subsequent ideas on the subject.[1]

[1] See: Butts, R. E., 1990. Teleology and Scientific Method in Kant's Critique of Judgment. *Noûs* 24(1), pp. 1 – 16. "To be sure, he peoples his discussion with 18th century figures now thought to be nothing more than ghosts of earlier ways of thought. There can be no doubt, however, that his

To qualify this more clearly, it is my suggestion here that be concentrating on this somewhat side-lined element of Kant's aesthetic project and following its reception into the 20th century, it can be shown how two towering figures of Continental thought interrogated its premises to rethink aesthetics entirely: asking what a nonteleological aesthetics would look like, could be imagined as, what it could become, rejecting along the way the teleological premise upon which Kant's aesthetic critique was built.

I will therefore begin with a closer look at teleology in Kant's third Critique in my first section, assessing where it came from and the impact it has on his argument. This is followed by section II, which considers how the German philosopher Martin Heidegger sought to construct what I refer to as 'an aesthetics in all but name.' This can be understood as part of Heidegger's larger project to reimagine a pre- (or post-) Socratic philosophical language. Despite aesthetics being established as a conceptual category by Alexander Baumgarten in 1735,[2] Heidegger nonetheless suspected that the category of aesthetics, too, deserved some serious revision. Section III rediscovers a timely interview. Here, the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault was interviewed in Paris on the eve of surrealist poet André Breton's death. Emerging from his discussion is a strange conception of art that refutes teleology so completely as to describe it as something that is '*anti-monde,*' or 'anti-world.'

Considering these three central figures of European thought comparatively, as three degrees of separation between art and teleology, I am forced here by geography and chronology to discuss each case fairly discreetly from one another; those in search of an account of how each thinker impacted the other more directly can be pointed in the direction of texts that treat their connections with more depth and erudition than is possible here.[3] As a preliminary discourse, it may not be entirely accurate to categorise these thinkers as "anti-aesthetic," yet I nonetheless insist that they were attempting to rethink the formal appreciation of art in ways that bear

discussion of the rationality of scientific prospects created the seed bed for later philosophical dialogue on the same problems.", p. 13.

[2] Alexander Baumgarten, an 18th-century German philosopher, first introduced "aesthetics" as a distinct philosophical discipline in his 1735 work "*Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus*," aiming to systematize the study of sensory experience and beauty.

[3] McQuillan, J. C., 2016. Beyond the Analytic of Finitude: Kant, Heidegger, Foucault. *Foucault Studies*, pp. 184 – 199. Vaccarino Bremer, S. F., 2020. Anthropology as critique: Foucault, Kant and the metacritical tradition. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28(2), pp. 336 – 358. Luna, W., 2023. *Anthropology and Enlightenment: Kant's significance in Foucault's work*. Dissertation. Sydney: UNSW. Louden, R. B., 2021. Foucault's Kant. *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 55, pp. 507 – 524.

specifically on (what Heidegger and Foucault considered, in their own times, as) outmoded ideas of art's teleology.

Heidegger and Foucault's interpretation of teleology differed, shaped inexorably by their broader projects and the intellectual milieu in which they worked. Suffice it to say, both shared an inherent distrust toward the idea of art having a definitive end, means or purpose. This notion may well have seemed intuitive to Kant, his predecessors and his contemporaries.[4] Against the background of German Expressionism in Heidegger's Germany,[5] or the spectre of surrealism in Foucault's Paris,[6] however, new and challenging artistic forms demanded from their respective audiences and intelligentsia a new critical apparatus with a correspondingly new vocabulary applicable to these new aesthetic horizons.

Moving between these three figures but restricting myself to the dimension of teleology in art, I will argue that they mark a sequence whereby art is first occluded with teleology in Kant's account, before Heidegger attempts to rethink aesthetics from the ground up with partial success, before Foucault attempts to rethink art outside of teleology altogether. These three degrees of separation, as I colloquially refer to it, reflect the scientific and aesthetic attitudes of their respective eras, while also demonstrating the inherent limitation of such inquiries. Which leads me to end by asking the question, three centuries after Kant: Even if he was originally misguided or incorrect, can *we* conceive of art outside of teleology ourselves today?

I: Teleology in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*

Across the *longue durée* of Western thought, Kant's critical project stands as a monumental attempt to reconcile the claims of reason with the fragile, trembling capacities of the human imagination. Yet Kant's delineation of aesthetic judgment—universal, disinterested, seemingly untouched by the specificities of time and history—seems, in the end, to leave art somehow suspended between two worlds: one of moral imperative and the other of sheer purposeless beauty. *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is pivotal in understanding aesthetics, today as it was in 1790.

Reflective judgment is central to Kant's teleological framework, as it

[4] McDonough, J. K., ed., 2020. *Teleology: A History*. Oxford University Press.
[5] Pollmann, I., 2017. *Cinematic Vitalism*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
[6] Talib, N., Fitzgerald, R., 2022. The art of illusion as government policy. Analysing political economies of surrealism. *Critical Discourse Studies* 19(1), pp. 19 – 36.

provides the means for interpreting purposiveness in both nature and art. Pippin notes that Kant's reflections, particularly after 1789, showed that judgments like "this rose is beautiful" required a non-conceptual, reflective activity of the subject, moving beyond surface-level aesthetic experiences.[7] This reflective activity does not rely on the subsumption of a particular object under a universal concept; rather, it reveals a purposiveness that emerges through the harmony of our cognitive faculties, without being directed towards any definitive end. This is the basis for Kant's idea of "purposiveness without a purpose," where we sense an order or harmony in an object without attributing it to a preordained design or goal.[8]

Understood in this manner, reflective judgment is not only limited to aesthetic experiences. Teleology, as adopted from the works of Blumenbach and Leibniz, shapes Kant's approach to how we engage with both art and nature. Blumenbach's concept of a *Bildungstrieb* [formative drive] in living organisms influenced Kant's teleology by reinforcing the idea that biological systems appear self-organizing and purposive, although Kant treated this as a necessary heuristic for human cognition rather than an ontological reality.[9] Leibniz's notion of 'pre-established harmony' and his use of final causes shaped Kant's teleological thinking by providing a framework where nature could be understood as purposefully organized, though Kant reinterpreted this as a reflective judgment rather than an inherent property of nature.[10]

Specifically, teleology serves as an interpretative method that allows us to consider the purposiveness of natural phenomena, without necessarily asserting that nature operates with a predetermined purpose. Kant also uses it to explain how we perceive nature as a system of organized beings, particularly in biological organisms. This recognition of unity within diversity is, itself, a teleological judgment; yet it remains bound by the reflective nature of our cognitive faculties. Thus, reflective judgment extends far beyond aesthetics to structure our scientific understanding of the world.[11] Kant's teleology suggests that meaning arises from the activ-

[7] Pippin, R., 2017. The Dynamism of Reason in Kant and Hegel. *Kant on Persons and Agency*, p. 192.
[8] Menting, T., 2020. *Purposiveness of nature in Kant's third critique*. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam.
[9] Fisher, N., 2021. Kant and Schelling on Blumenbach's formative drive. *Intellectual History Review* 31(3), pp. 391 – 409.
[10] Bianchi, S. De, 2022. Kant's functional cosmology: teleology, measurement, and symbolic representation in the Critique of Judgment. *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 12(1), pp. 209 – 224.
[11] Pippin, R., 2017. The Dynamism of Reason in Kant and Hegel, ibid., p. 193.

ity of judgment itself, from the way we impose order and purposiveness on the world, rather than from any external goal. In Sabrina Vaccarino Bremner's recent reading, this reflective capacity is a form of autonomy, a self-legislating activity of reason that organizes our experience of the world.[12]

Turning this idea to the sphere of aesthetics, Kant's teleology focuses on how we judge beauty and the sublime. Kant's analysis of the sublime further complicates this relationship. The sublime, especially when faced with the perceived formlessness of originality or experimental art, seems to resist purposiveness entirely. Kant suggests that experiences of the sublime, particularly those which are "contrapurposive," challenge our cognitive faculties by overwhelming them. From Katerina Deligiorgi's perspective, this confrontation with the formless leads us to abandon sensibility and to occupy ourselves with ideas that suggest a "higher purposiveness" within reason itself.[13] The sublime, then, does not follow the same teleological framework as beauty; rather, it reveals the limits of human cognition and the potential for moral ideas that transcend sensory experience. Thus, teleology in aesthetic judgments, whether of beauty or the sublime, underscores Kant's broader claim that our encounters with nature are shaped by our reflective capacity to impose purposiveness – and this is true even when no such purpose objectively exists:

> Hence, when I draw a figure *in accordance with a concept*, or, in other words, when I form my own representation of what is given to me externally, be its own intrinsic nature what it may, what really happens is that I introduce the purposiveness into that figure or representation. I derive no empirical instruction as to the purposiveness from what is given to me externally, and consequently the figure is not one for which I require any special end external to myself and residing in the object. But this reflection presupposes a critical use of reason, and, therefore, it cannot be involved then and there in the judging of the object and its properties.[14]

In this experience, we perceive an object as if it were purposive, though without a clear purpose. In this way, aesthetic judgments reflect a subjective universality—they are valid for all but not tied to a specific con-

[12] Vaccarino Bremner, S., 2021. On Conceptual Revision and Aesthetic Judgement. *Kantian Review* 26(4), pp. 531 – 547.
[13] Deligiorgi, K., 2014. The Pleasures of Contra purposiveness: Kant, the Sublime, and Being Human. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 72(1), p. 31.
[14] Kant, I., Walker N., 2008. *Critique of Pure Judgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 192 – 193.

cept. The sublime, on the other hand, represents a different mode of teleological experience. It occurs when we encounter something vast or formless that overwhelms our sensory faculties, yet at the same time it simultaneously incites reason to reflect on ideas that go *beyond* sensory experience. Kant's treatment of the sublime essentially showcases the dynamism of reason: the experience of the sublime prompts us to think beyond the empirical and towards higher moral or rational ideas.[15]

This experience is "contra-purposive," meaning that it does not align with any apparent teleological structure in the object itself. In this sense, and for present purposes, Kant opens the door toward a conception of art that is not bound by traditional notions of form or purpose. Martin Heidegger's statements on aesthetics, slim and un-systematic as they appear when placed in the shadow of Kant's third critique, nonetheless demonstrate a determination to free art from teleology's embrace.

II: Heidegger: An incomplete departure

If Kant's teleology can be seen as the final, exquisite refinement of a tradition that places the subject at the heart of meaning-making, Heidegger stands as the one who dares to darken that radiance, to draw the human figure back into the shadows of Being itself. Kant, after centuries of abstraction, still assumes that nature, life, and art are seen through the lens of purposiveness: a sublime geometry wherein the faculties of human understanding trace patterns of meaning upon the world. Heidegger's diminishing of the artist's centrality, meanwhile – his deliberate effacement of the individual creator's primacy – echoes with a resonant critique that reverberates through the long corridors of Western metaphysical thought.

Heidegger's most famous work, *Sein und Zeit [Being and Time]*, was published in 1927; in 1935 – 37, he would deliver a series of lectures in Frankfurt and Zurich, that would eventually be published as *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes [The Origin of the Artwork]* in 1950. Between these key texts, Heidegger also delivered lectures on Friedrich Nietzsche from 1927 to 1935. There is a notable sense, at times, that it is difficult to know where Nietzsche's influence ends and Heidegger's own philosophical ideas begin, that the former serves as a formative material for new ideas, as in the fascinating passage below.

[15] Pippin, R., 2017. The Dynamism of Reason in Kant and Hegel, ibid., p. 193.

> The highest value is art, in contradistinction to knowledge and truth. It does not copy what is at hand, does not explain matters in terms of beings at hand. But art transfigures life, moves it into higher, as yet unlived, possibilities. […] We must not take "world" in an objective or psychological sense; we must think it metaphysically. The world of art, the world as art discloses it by erecting it and placing it in the open, is the realm of what transfigures. What transfigures, transfiguration, however, is what becomes. It is a becoming that lifts beings, that is, what has become fixed, stable, and congealed over and beyond to new possibilities.[16]

Here, the teleological arc of modernity, so masterfully encapsulated in Kant's architecture, finds itself unravelling. In this profound reflection, Heidegger posits that art is not merely a mirror to reality, but rather an alchemical force that transfigures the fabric of existence itself. This assertion positions art as a realm of potentiality, a space where lived experience is elevated beyond its immediate, empirical confines. Here, Heidegger deftly dismantles the notion of art as a mere representation of "beings at hand," inviting us to perceive it instead as a dynamic interplay of becoming. In asserting that art moves life into "higher, as yet unlived possibilities," he evokes a sense of the sublime—a recognition that art is not to be confined within a teleological framework that demands practical utility, externally assigned outcomes or predetermined ends. Rather, art emerges as an uncharted territory, a liminal space where the fixed and stable congeal into the fluidity of potential, beckoning humanity toward a transformative engagement with Being itself.

Heidegger's insistence on a non-teleological perspective reverberates with the conviction that true art exists in a realm beyond mere cognition or utilitarian function. To approach art metaphysically, as Heidegger urges, is to acknowledge its role as a site of disclosure, a space where new worlds are erected and placed in the open. This act of "transfiguration" becomes a metaphysical undertaking, whereby what has become solidified is lifted to reveal latent possibilities, inviting an engagement that is as much about uncovering truth as it is about experiencing the ineffable. The very process of appreciating art, then, shifts from a judgment based on predetermined criteria of value to an awakening to the inherent dynamism of creation itself. In this sense, art is not an end in itself, nor is it a mere conduit for knowledge, but rather an ontological event that beckons us toward an understanding of existence that is ever in flux, ever becoming. Through this lens, Heidegger challenges us to embrace a richer, more profound engagement with art—

[16] Heidegger, M., Krell, D. F., 1991. *Nietzsche Vol. III & IV*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, p. 81.

one that acknowledges its transformative power and its capacity to reveal the deeper mysteries of our existence. Art ceases to be an object of judgment, a vessel for the pleasure of our cognitive faculties. In Heidegger's vision, the autonomy of art is not merely its liberation from practical ends but a profound autonomy from human desire itself. The artwork discloses not the beautiful, the pleasurable – but Being in its stark, unfathomable truth.

Thus, what Heidegger offers is no less than a reckoning. A summons to stand at the precipice of metaphysical certainties, where the artist is no longer a creator of meaning but a witness to the profound unfolding of that which lies beyond all human *telos*. Heidegger dislodges the artist from this sovereign position. It is not for humanity to project purpose onto the world, nor to claim dominion over the unveiling of truth through aesthetic mastery. Instead, Heidegger gestures toward an altogether different conception of art. The artwork, for Heidegger, is no longer a mirror to human understanding but a portal through which the world itself speaks. The teleological dream, so long nurtured in the West, fades here. What remains is not the triumph of human subjectivity, but the silent, inexorable presence of Being itself, waiting to be disclosed.

Yet by the time that Heidegger delivered his lectures on art in Frankfurt and Zurich, his departure from teleology was not quite as radical as it appears in the extract above. Heidegger's exploration of art reveals, instead, an intriguing continuity with Kantian aesthetics.[17] In contrast to Kant's emphasis on beauty as an end in itself – emerging from the delicate balance between form and purpose – Heidegger articulates a different understanding: art becomes the medium through which the truth of Being is disclosed, wherein the artwork serves not merely as an object of beauty but as a gathering place for the essence of existence. This transformative act of revealing suggests that the purpose of art is not abandoned but reimagined, positing that the essence of the artwork lies in its capacity to unveil the hidden depths of reality.

By this conclusion, I do not mean to evaluate Heidegger's attempts to rethink aesthetics as a failure, but it does draw our attention to a contradiction. From my own perspective, it is better understood as reflecting a tension between epochs. Kant's human-centred purposiveness presupposed a stable subject capable of making sense of the world, a subject through whom nature's hidden order is revealed. Heidegger destabilizes this premise: art is no longer a reflection of human judgment, nor a vehicle for projecting purpose onto the world.

[17] Young, J., 2001. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The shift from Kantian aesthetics to Heidegger's vision suggests not merely a reorientation of purpose but an unsettling ambivalence: can the act of revealing truly transcend the very structures of meaning that art seeks to dismantle? Rather than merely unveiling truth, art serves as a battleground for competing narratives, a dialogue that transcends the boundaries of Being and beckons us to confront the multiplicity of meanings that reside within each work.

III: Foucault: The Avant-Garde as "*Anti-Monde*"

If Heidegger, as second degree of separation, sought to pull art back to the ground of existence, to root it in the soil of Being itself, it should be expressly recalled that both Kant and Heidegger, for all their genius, left us with an art still weighed down by a sense of destiny, a *telos* towards which it must continue approaching. Michel Foucault, standing at a different threshold of thought, proposes another direction. His art, and his vision of its criticism, carries with it no such burden. For Foucault, art does not fulfil a historical mission; it does not serve the ends of human progress or the slow, inexorable unfolding of some vague but ultimate truth. Yet, to properly recover his strange idea, one must first reconstruct the site of its enunciation. His idea has, to the best of my knowledge, received no serious critical attention before now.[18] Especially for a popular figure so broadly cited, this reveals an unusual gap in Foucault's reception, which the present contribution hopes to contextualise accordingly.[19]

In the wake of André Breton's death in September 1966, Claude Bonnefoy interviewed Michel Foucault for the *Arts et Loisirs* journal. Rereading Breton in a revolutionary milieu, Foucault finds Breton's revolutionary quality precisely in his *refusal* to be revolutionary. What followed was, on three levels, a meeting of worlds: that of 1920s surrealism with the politicised upheavals of 1960s Paris; then, the distance between what Foucault broadly distinguished as '*l'écriture*' [writing] and '*savoir*' [knowledge], before outlining what he saw as Breton's contribution to this binary; most interesting, though, was Foucault's conviction that the

[18] A notable and eloquent exception is found in: Spiridopoulou, M., 2021. La conception du langage chez les surréalistes: données et réflexions. *Σύγκριση* 30, pp. 87 – 103.

[19] See: Hanania, R., 2024. *Why is Foucault Our Most Successful Intellectual?* [Accessed: 2024-10-01]. Available at: https://www.richardhanania.com/p/why-is-foucault-our-most-successful. 'According to a recent analysis, Michel Foucault has 1.36 million citations on Google Scholar. This is 70% more than any other author in history.'

work of art could be "*anti-monde*" or "anti-world," an object resistant to its context and the mundane geographies of the everyday.

What was Breton's relevance today? In response to this question, Foucault bombastically compares him with Goethe. If Goethe wanted to appropriate the world to the size of the human, Breton (according to Foucault) offered to go in the opposite direction, enlarging the self to encompass the world. As the interview progresses, Foucault seems keen to push a spatial metaphor: more specifically, the extension of space as metaphor for the enlargement of consciousness through '*savoir*.' How? Only, as Foucault insists, by rejecting the idea of Breton as 'a poet of unreason.'[20] Extending his globular metaphor, he quips that

> there is a writing so radical and sovereign that it faces the world, equilibrates it, compensates for it, even destroys it absolutely and scintillates outside it. […] One finds in Breton this *experience of the book as anti-world*, and it contributes strongly to changing the status of writing. And in two ways: first, Breton somehow re-moralizes writing by demoralizing it completely. The ethic of writing no longer comes from what one has to say, from ideas that one expresses, but from the very act of writing. In this raw and exposed act, the whole liberty of the writer finds itself engaged at the same time that a counter-universe of words is born.[21]

Here, art no longer reflects the world but stands apart from it, an object self-contained, autonomous, and yet poised forever on the edge of the abyss. In this striking move, Foucault introduces the concept of the "*anti-monde*." The avant-garde movements, particularly surrealism, which captivated Foucault's intellectual imagination, embody this strange exile of art from a world of purpose. These movements sought to dissolve the boundaries of reason and rationality. The "*anti-monde*", in some sense, represents art's ultimate solitude. It no longer participates in the historical process, in the narrative arc of human achievement. It has nowhere to go, and no end at which it must arrive. Paradoxically, in this very refusal to fulfil a purpose, it reveals something profound about the human condition. For what is human life if not an endless struggle with the demands of time, or without the necessity to make meaning? At the same time, should we leave this idea in the heady blur of 1966; should we necessarily

[20] Bonnefoy, C., 1966. "L'homme est-il mort." *Dits et Écrits (org. Daniel Defert et François Ewald)* 1, pp. 540 – 544.

[21] Lotringer, S., Hochroth, L., Johnston. J., 1991. *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews (1961-1984).* New York: Semiotext(e), p. 11, emphasis mine.

forbid ourselves from the possibilities that this "anti-world" aesthetic, or anti-representational art, could provoke, from the potentialities it could stir today?

Those questions will have to remain rhetorical for now. Another inquiry comes to mind: Can we to safely assume that the source of Foucault's thinking here is Breton himself? I think not.[22] Nowhere in this interview (or elsewhere, to my knowledge) does he mention any work by André Breton specifically. His lecture on René Magritte may sound like a relevant place to look, but even there, his analysis is more preoccupied with notions of similitude and representation already developed elsewhere.[23] In this interview, however auspiciously timed between the death of what Breton represented and the work that Foucault had recently published (*Les Mots et les Choses*), it generated a concept worthy of further elaboration, critical reapplication and perhaps a discourse of its own.

In this context, Foucault's rejection of teleology in art mirrors his broader rejection of history as the bearer of ultimate truths. In later works, Foucault relentlessly dismantles the comforting narrative that history is moving towards a final resolution, whether it be in the form of utopian liberation or the triumph of reason. In place of this teleological view, Foucault offers us an archaeology of ruptures, discontinuities, and breaks – an art that participates in this fragmentation, that reflects the fractured nature of historical time.[24] The "*anti-monde*," then, can be recognised more precisely as the culmination of this view. It stands outside of history, outside of the temporal demands that make art serve as a mirror to the progress of human civilization.

Instead, it offers us a glimpse into a realm where time itself has been suspended, where art no longer carries the weight of history but exists in a kind of perpetual present—a present that seeks nothing but its own annihilation. If Foucault's "*anti-monde*" is a radical rejection of the teleological demands of art, then the avant-garde, particularly in its surrealist form, offers a vision of freedom that is at once exhilarating and tragic. For there is, at the heart of the surrealist project, a profound tension between the

[22] Biographically, however, one *can* arguably discern a measure of similarity in Breton and Foucault's experiences and how they shaped their subsequent outlooks. Both were sceptical of the Post-War humanisms, shared a revolutionary drive that matched theory with praxis, and prioritised fluid personal transformation over programmatic consistency; also, such statements remind us of the world that both felt justified challenging, resisting and reinventing in their respective fields and through their respective approaches.

[23] Foucault, M., 1983. *This is not a pipe*. California: University of California Press.

[24] Foucault, M., 2013. *Archaeology of knowledge*. London & New York: Routledge.

desire for liberation and the inescapable recognition of human finitude. Breton and his contemporaries sought to free art from the constraints of reason, to allow it to operate in a space of pure potential. Yet this freedom comes at a cost. The avant-garde's refusal of purpose, its rejection of form and structure, places it outside the bounds of traditional meaning.

Foucault's vocal engagement with surrealism here brings us to a central concern of modern aesthetics: the power of the negative. The "*anti-monde*" is, in essence, a world of negation, a world that refuses to mirror reality, that rejects the teleological demands of representation. In this refusal, we encounter something profound: the recognition that art's power lies not in what it affirms, but in what it denies. The "*anti-monde*" is not merely a rejection of the world; it is a counter-world, a space in which new forms of existence might emerge, unburdened by the weight of historical destiny.

Michel Foucault's vision of art as non-teleological offers us a profound reflection on the condition of modernity. In rejecting the historical and philosophical imperatives that have traditionally governed art, Foucault opens up a space of radical freedom: a freedom that is both exhilarating and terrifying. The "*anti-monde*" of art stands as a testament to this freedom, a world that exists beyond the reach of purpose or the limits of finality. Yet this freedom comes with its own burden. To live without a *telos*, to create without a goal, is to inhabit a world that is, in some sense, without meaning. This is arguably the paradox at the heart of Foucault's idea: that in seeking to free art from the constraints of teleology, we may find ourselves confronting an abyss.

IV: Conclusion: Are we closer to nonteleological art today?

Having considered all three figures, traced as narrowly as possible in the foregoing sections as representing three stages of separation between art and teleology, one is forced to confront not only the limitations of this inquiry but also its possibilities in the present era. It is first worth recounting where this inquiry has taken us up to now. Kant's aesthetics are grounded in the notion of teleology, where beauty is seen as a kind of purposiveness without a specific purpose. This subtle interplay between form and end, for Kant, structures the aesthetic experience by suggesting that beauty itself gestures toward a finality, even if it resists practical function.

In contrast, Heidegger's thought seeks to distance art from teleology, redirecting it toward the disclosure of Being. Art, for Heidegger, is not the completion of an end but a site of unveiling, where truth is brought

into un-concealment, disrupting any notion of aesthetic purpose as an inherent goal. Foucault's gesture goes yet further, pushing art beyond the realm of teleology and even beyond Heidegger's metaphysical horizon. In his concept of art as the "*anti-monde*," Foucault imagines a space where art exists not to reveal or serve any end but subvert and estrange. Art becomes an act of dislocation, a force that interrupts established frameworks of meaning and exposes the voids where language and power converge. In this radical severance, art is freed from teleological constraints and enters a sphere of pure potentiality.

At the time of writing, it is simply too early to commit to any definitive claims regarding Artificial Intelligence. Still, in a strange way, this is not so irrelevant to the topic at hand as it may appear. Because, were one to ask AI to produce a work of art that is "*anti-monde*" or "anti-world," it would no doubt produce *something*. Whatever it produces, of course, would inevitably include some form of colour, shape, line or imagery. In other words, the visual production of art cannot escape the boundaries of space and time. This, incidentally, actually leads us all the way back to Kant's initial thesis in his first Critique, namely, that we cannot conceive of something outside the boundaries of space and time.[25] Paradoxically, AI, supposedly the cutting-edge of present possibilities and potentialities – even when tasked with cultivating something as impenetrable and difficult as Foucault's idea of the "*anti-monde*" – cannot help but lead us full circle, by confirming and returning to Kant's original thesis.

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The Kantian Sublime and the Theory of Tragedy: Comparing Schiller with Schelling

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Abstract: This article aims to investigate how Schiller and Schelling apply the Kantian sublime to their theories of tragedy according to the following axes: Firstly, I examine five of Schiller's essays (1792 – 1801), which, unlike Kant, strongly defend art's capacity to manifest the sublime. Herewith I discuss a shift in Schiller's thought (1801), whereby Reason is viewed as a subterfuge against nature's might and tragedy as man's optimal "tool" towards confronting it. Secondly, considering Schelling's lectures on *The Philosophy of Art* (1802 – 1804), I explain how and why freedom can be best presented in the tragic work of art through the indifference between freedom and necessity. Thirdly, questioning both views' adequacy in interpreting the essence of the tragic, I conclude that the Schellingian one offers a clearer insight into the tragicness of human nature as such, as a condition for the realization of freedom.
Keywords: Kant, Schelling, Schiller, sublime, tragedy

Introduction

The purpose of this article is threefold: Firstly, I will examine to what extent Schiller and Schelling differ from Kant in their account of the sublime [*das Erhabene*] and its relevance to the beautiful [*das Schöne*], as well as how they apply the sublime to their theory of tragedy. Secondly, I will try to answer the question whether or not the sublime coincides with the tragic [*dem Tragischen*] and, thirdly, I will attempt a comparison between the two as to the way they approach the complex essence of the tragic.

I. Schiller on the tragic and the sublime: 1792 – 1801

Regarding Schiller's first thorough engagement with Kantian aesthetics, he began to study the *Critique of Judgment* [*Kritik der Urteilskraft*][1] (1790)

[1] Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft. In: Windelband, W., ed. *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*,

in 1791, the precepts of which he tried, in the following year, to incorporate into his theory of tragedy.[2] Taking the Kantian –mainly the dynamically– sublime [*Dynamisch-Erhabene*] as a point of reference, Schiller also defends *art's* –and not only nature's–[3] capacity to manifest the sublime alongside the latter's close connection with man's grandeur of Reason [*Vernunft*]. Specifically, in the text "On the cause of the pleasure we derive from tragic objects [*Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen*]"[4] (1792), he argues that if we attribute a moral purpose [*einen moralischen Zweck*] to art, it loses all its freedom [*Freiheit*]; a freedom which is necessary for the production of free pleasure [*freies Vergnügen*] and aesthetic impact [*ästhetische Wirkung*]; and here free pleasure should be understood as harmonization of ends and means, where the beautiful interests imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] and mind [*Verstand*] equally, and the sublime interests Reason and imagination.[5]

In relation to the sublime, and in agreement with Kant,[6] Schiller asserts that the feeling of pain [*Unlust*] is a precondition for that of pleasure [*Lust*], since, through the realization of the incapacity of the imagination to intuit an object in its entirety, we discover another, super-sensual ability within us.[7] Moreover, Schiller here speaks of the terror of the imagination, unlike Kant, who associates terror [awe] only with the dynamically sublime.[8] In other words, Schiller conceives Kant's mathematically sublime [*Mathematisch-Erhabene*] in a somewhat variant way, without completely separating it from the dynamically sublime, as we will see in

Vol. 5. Berlin: Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (*Akademie* Edition); Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Pluhar, W. S. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

[2] Diamantopoulos, V., 2018. *Das Reflexionserhabene – Analyse des Erhabenen bei Schiller im Licht seines späten Pessimismus* (PhD Thesis). Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, p. 67.

[3] Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ibid., pp. 252 – 253; Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, ibid., § 26, p. 109.

[4] Schiller, F., 1884. On the cause of the pleasure we derive from tragic objects. In: *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical; including Dissertation on the "Connexion between the animal and spiritual in man"*. London: George Bell & Sons, pp. 360 – 372; Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen. In: Zeno.org. *Friedrich Schiller – Theoretische Schriften* [Accessed: 2023-6-6]. Available at: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schiller,+Friedrich/Theoretische+-Schriften/Über+den+Grund+des+Vergnügens+an+tragischen+Gegenständen.

[5] Schiller, F., 1884. On the cause of the pleasure we derive from tragic objects, ibid., pp. 363 – 364.

[6] Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ibid., pp. 244 – 246; Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, ibid., § 23, pp. 97 – 100.

[7] Schiller, F., 1884. On the cause of the pleasure we derive from tragic objects, ibid., p. 365.

[8] Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ibid., pp. 260 – 261; Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, ibid., § 28, pp. 119 – 120.

some of his later writings.[9] In addition, with regard to the [also] Kantian concept of the safe [spatial] distance from a physical threat, which Kant presupposes for the experience of the dynamically sublime,[10] Schiller adds the factor of the mitigation of the feeling of pain on the part of the person who suffers, so that, in the case of tragic art, the spectator can also experience the feeling of pity [*Mitleid*].[11]

Nevertheless, and here lies Schiller's important differentiation from his predecessor, he refers not only to the moral value of the repentance of a bad character, but also to cases where a bad deed "charm[s] our mind even at the cost of morality [*selbst auf Unkosten der moralischen zu ergötzen scheint*]".[12] How, then, can such a thing be explained? Schiller associates the sublime with morality, but not on the basis of the Kantian categorical imperative [*kategorischen Imperativ*], since what interests him is freedom in the representation [*Darstellung*] of passion. Therefore, even the representation [on stage] of the violation of the moral law is used by a skilled poet in order to create the highest pleasure [*höchstes Wohlgefallen*]; namely, the superiority of morality [*Sittlichkeit*] over sensuousness [*Sinnlichkeit*], aiming equally at the satisfaction [*Befriedigung*] both of the heart [*Herz*] and the mind.[13] Additionally, regarding the ways of achieving maximum pleasure, in his text "On the Tragic Art [*Über die Tragische Kunst*]"[14] (1792), Schiller emphasizes the need to arouse pity through the inevitability of compelling circumstances and not on the basis of the hero's personal responsibility or guilt [*Schuld*]. However, he also believes that free will is thus significantly curtailed. On that account, he criticizes ancient tragedy because of its emphasis on fate [*Schicksal*]. While he considers that pure pity is excited by the presence of the latter, passive empathy is not enough for him. Instead, the audi-

[9] Diamantopoulos, V., 2018. *Das Reflexionserhabene – Analyse des Erhabenen bei Schiller im Licht seines späten Pessimismus*, ibid., p. 73.

[10] Allison, H. E., 2001. *Kant's Theory of Taste – A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 328 – 239; Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ibid., pp. 260 – 261; Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, ibid., § 28, pp. 119 – 120.

[11] Schiller, F., 1884. On the cause of the pleasure we derive from tragic objects, ibid., p. 365.

[12] Ibid., p. 370.

[13] Diamantopoulos, V., 2018. *Das Reflexionserhabene – Analyse des Erhabenen bei Schiller im Licht seines späten Pessimismus*, ibid., pp. 78 – 80; Schiller, F., 1884. On the cause of the pleasure we derive from tragic objects, ibid., pp. 370 – 372.

[14] Schiller, F., 1884. On the Tragic Art. In: *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical; including Dissertation on the "Connexion between the animal and spiritual in man"*, ibid., pp. 339 – 360; Über die tragische Kunst. In: Zeno.org. *Friedrich Schiller – Theoretische Schriften*, ibid. Available at: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schiller,+Friedrich/Theoretische+Schriften/Über+die+tragische+Kunst.

ence must simultaneously exercise the freedom and independence of *its* Reason.[15]

Concerning the primary role of aesthetic pleasure as a prerequisite for the fulfilment of a moral function, I believe that these two poles remain inextricably linked. After all, he states that "it is the union of these two that can alone elicit emotion [*Rührung*]. The great secret of the tragic art consists precisely in managing this struggle well".[16] Moving on to his other texts, we find out that Schiller deals with the Kantian sublime in a more systematic way from 1793 onwards. In his text "Of the Sublime – Towards the Further Realization of Some Kantian Ideas [*Vom Erhabenen – Zur weitern Ausführung einiger Kantischen Ideen*]"[17] (1793), he distinguishes between the theoretically [*Theoretisch-Erhabene*] and the practically sublime [*Praktisch-Erhabene*]. Here Schiller speaks of a nature hostile to the senses, but compatible with the natural faculty of Reason within us. And against this hostility, we activate two distinct forces: The first relates to our ability to acquire knowledge [*Vorstellungstrieb/Erkenntnistrieb*] and the second to our desire to maintain our existence [*Erhaltungstrieb*]. In full agreement with Kant, therefore, Schiller's theoretically sublime corresponds to the mathematically sublime, and the practically sublime to the dynamically sublime respectively. Man's freedom, then, becomes conscious through the experience of the practically sublime.[18]

Subsequently, Schiller significantly differentiates himself from Kant, in that he distinguishes between *two* categories of the dynamically sublime. First, he mentions the contemplatively sublime [*Kontemplativ-Erhabene*], whereby it lies in the power of the imagination to decide whether "objects" such as darkness or silence –which are not life-threatening– can arouse fear. For this reason, he seems to prefer the next category of the pathetically sublime [*Pathetisch-Erhabene*], which

[15] Diamantopoulos, V., 2018. *Das Reflexionserhabene – Analyse des Erhabenen bei Schiller im Licht seines späten Pessimismus*, ibid., pp. 87 – 92; Schiller, F., 1884. On the Tragic Art, ibid., pp. 346 – 349.

[16] Ibid., p. 355.

[17] Schiller, F., 2004. Of the Sublime – Towards the Further Realization of Some Kantian Ideas (1793), trans. by Wertz, W. F., Jr. *Fidelio* 13(1–2), pp. 90 – 99. doi: https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/fidelio_archive/2004/fidv13n01-02-2004SpSu/fidv13n01-02-2004SpSu_090-friedrich_schiller_of_the_sublim.pdf; Vom Erhabenen – Zur weitern Ausführung einiger Kantischen Ideen. In: Zeno.org. *Friedrich Schiller – Theoretische Schriften*, ibid. Available at: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schiller,+Friedrich/Theoretische+Schriften/Vom+Erhabenen.

[18] Schiller, F., 2004. Of the Sublime – Towards the Further Realization of Some Kantian Ideas (1793), ibid., p. 90.

is a power destructive to man. Yet, it is necessary that this force does not really threaten its recipient, in order for him to be able to evaluate it aesthetically. For this to be possible, it is again up to the power of the imagination –and even more decisively, in this case– to safeguard the aestheticization [*Ästhetizität*] of passion, a fact that is best realized in tragedy. For something to be considered pathetically sublime, then, two conditions are necessary: First, a lively representation of passion, and second, an idea of resistance to suffering as evidence of our capacity to act freely. While, through the first, the spectacle becomes passive, through the second it is transformed into a sublime one; namely, *essentially* tragic.[19]

In his next text "On the Pathetic [*Über das Pathetische*]"[20] (1793), the hero's pathos [*Pathos*] must not only have no impact on his moral integrity, but very often it is *his* choice, as proof of obedience to his moral duty. Thus, the concept of duty functions practically as a motive [*Motiv*] and his passion as an act of free will [*Willenshandlung*]. For this reason, we must separate the resistance against a physical threat from that against the cause of passion, which is the only one appropriate to the Ideas of Reason [*Ideen der Vernunft*].[21] In this context, it is important to note that Schiller here distinguishes between the aesthetically sublime and the morally sublime, which means that the same object is able to produce a different effect, depending on whether we judge it in a moral or an aesthetical point of view; and this is because "our being [*Wesen*] consists of two principles and natures [*zwei Prinzipien oder Naturen*], so also and consequently our feelings are divided into two kinds [*Geschlechter*], entirely different".[22] However, a question arises here: Is Schiller attempting, from here on, to separate morality from sensuousness? In my opinion, this is not the case. After all, in the last paragraph of this text he implies that one must give each of the two poles its "share", so that both can shine independently in the end.[23] What is new here is the emphasis on the power of the imagination, which Schiller needs in order to answer the question of the stage representation of moral Ideas.

[19] Ibid., pp. 98 – 99.
[20] Schiller, F., 1884. On the Pathetic. In: *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical; including Dissertation on the "Connexion between the animal and spiritual in man"*, ibid., pp. 142 – 168; Über das Pathetische. In: Zeno.org. *Friedrich Schiller – Theoretische Schriften*, ibid. Available at: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schiller,+Friedrich/Theoretische+Schriften/Über+das+Pathetische.
[21] Schiller, F., 1884. On the Pathetic, ibid., pp. 146 – 149.
[22] Ibid., p. 160.
[23] Ibid., pp. 167 – 168.

II. Schiller's shift in his account of the tragic and the sublime

Regarding Schiller's text "On the Sublime", it puzzles scholars before they even begin to read it, because there is controversy as to the date of its composition. Some commentators place it between 1794 and 1796, as it does not comprise a different account of the sublime in comparison to the texts written at that period of time,[24] while others place it in 1801.[25] Personally, I agree with Diamantopoulos' view, according to which this text is composed at two different times: The first part is indeed written around 1793, but the second part constitutes another shift in the author's thought, "negative" enough this time.[26] Henceforth, Schiller presents the forces of nature in a very pessimistic way, speaking of misfortunes in life –such as the inevitability of death– that can be overcome only by Reason. The sublime, then, provides us with a way out of the world of the senses, to which the beautiful has held us captive, and through the confusion of the understanding [*Unfaßbare für den Verstand, die Verwirrung*], it brings out what the latter cannot grasp by its own means; namely, the supersensible [*übersinnliche*] faculty within us.[27]

Therefore, we have a completely new concept here, the confusion [or terror] of the understanding, considerably different from Kant's mathematically sublime – which refers to the failure of the imagination to summarize or represent large objects in one intuition.[28] Within this framework, Schiller stresses that the disorder of nature [*Unordnung der Natur*] fascinates much more than, for example, a beautiful and orderly French garden, also favouring the embrace of chance [*Zufall*], which eludes the

[24] Benn, S. M., 1991. Schiller and the Sublime 1759–96. In: *Pre-Romantic Attitude to Landscape in the Writings of Friedrich Schiller*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 139, 143. doi: https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110867268-010/html; Hay, K., 2022. On the Tragic-Sublime and Tragic Freedom – Thinking with Schiller and Schelling. *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 52, p. 164. doi: https://doi.org/10.4000/cps.6094.

[25] Gellrich, M. W., 1984 – 1985. On Greek Tragedy and the Kantian Sublime. *Comparative Drama* 18(4), p. 320. doi: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41153142; Robertson, R., 2013. *On the Sublime* and Schiller's Theory of Tragedy. *Philosophical Readings* 5, p. 194. doi: https://zenodo.org/records/35551.

[26] Diamantopoulos, V., 2018. *Das Reflexionserhabene – Analyse des Erhabenen bei Schiller im Licht seines späten Pessimismus*, ibid., pp. 132 – 133.

[27] Schiller, F., 1884. On the Sublime. In: *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical; including Dissertation on the "Connexion between the animal and spiritual in man"*, ibid., pp. 134 – 137; Über das Erhabene. In: Zeno.org. *Friedrich Schiller – Theoretische Schriften*, ibid. Available at: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schiller,+Friedrich/Theoretische+Schriften/Über+das+Erhabene.

[28] Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ibid., pp. 248 – 250; Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, ibid., § 25, pp. 103 – 106.

understanding's desire for unity [*Einheit*]. That being so, it is as if chaotic nature is intertwined with the ends of the freedom of Reason, which triumphs over the understanding as a sensory-dependent faculty. Here, then, a new conception of the sublime emerges, which Diamantopoulos rightly calls the reflective sublime [*Reflexionserhabene*], as it brings to the fore the aesthetical reflection activated by the tragic depiction of natural complexity and human despair.[29]

As per above, while Schiller does not clearly indicate a positive way out of the evils [*Übel*] of nature or fate, he does not seem to give up any hope of "salvation" either. In this context, we may well speak of a shift in the Schillerian approach to the sublime, admittedly marked by a generalised pessimism –possibly strengthened by Schiller's infection with tuberculosis at the time–, which is looking to actively motivate the human being towards reflection and justification, in an aesthetical way, of life's adversities.[30]

III. The philosophy of art in Schelling's system: 1800 – 1802

Commencing with the *System of Transcendental Idealism* [*System des Transcendentalen Idealismus*][31] (1800), Schelling's interest in art lies in the possibility of the realization of freedom through artistic activity. Since, according to Schelling, pure Reason [*reine Vernunft*] cannot realize the absolute –the unconditional ground [*der unbedingte Grund*] of the conditional–, it is up to practical Reason [*praktische Vernunft*] to do so. Although he sees practical Reason as an infinite approximation of a regulative ideal, Schelling adds that the creative freedom of artistic activity produces its own law as beauty, in the harmony [*Harmonie*] of form and substance [*Form und Stoff*] of the work of art, thus making possible the identity between freedom and necessity [*Identität der Freiheit und Nothwendigkeit*], man and nature, the ideal and the real. Art, then, presents and produces the absolute [*das Absolute*] in the finite world [*endliche Welt*]. Moreover, very important here is the aforementioned infinite approach to a regulative ideal, a constantly evolving process towards avoiding the realization of

[29] Diamantopoulos, V., 2018. *Das Reflexionserhabene – Analyse des Erhabenen bei Schiller im Licht seines späten Pessimismus*, ibid., pp. 152 – 155.
[30] Ibid., pp. 156 – 157.
[31] Schelling, F. W. J., 1978. *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. by Heath, P. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia; Schelling, F. W. J., 1997. System des Transcendentalen Idealismus. In: Hahn, E., ed. *F. W. J. von Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, 1st Part, Vol. 3. Berlin: Total Verlag (CD-ROM/Windows-Version), pp. 1021 – 1228.

the absolute, as this would lead to dogmatism, which Schelling strives to avoid. Therefore, given Kant's "inability" to convincingly provide a principle for the thing-in-itself [*Ding an sich*] in practical Reason, Schelling attempts to replace the passivity of the subject through its own activity,[32] showing how art becomes "the only true and eternal organ [*das einzige wahre und ewige Organon*] and document [*Dokument*] of philosophy".[33]

Whereas in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* artistic activity is grounded on the activity of the subject, the next period in Schelling's thought is defined as absolute idealism [*absoluter Idealismus*], whereby the world is constructed through Reason. Starting with the work *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* [*Darstellung Meines Systems der Philosophie*][34] (1801), the absolute should now be apprehended as the absolute Reason [*absolute Vernunft*] or as total indifference [*totale Indifferenz*] of the subjective and the objective.[35] In this context, art is still considered highly important for the representation of the ideal in the real world, for both transcendental and absolute idealism rely on the power of the imagination, which ensures continuity between the theoretical, practical and philosophical aspects of art.[36]

IV. Schelling on the tragic and the sublime

The first thematization of the tragic in Schelling's work appears in one of his earlier writings, the *Philosophical Letters of Dogmatism and Criticism* [*Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus*][37] (1795), in the "Tenth Letter [*Zehnter Brief*]" of which he describes tragedy as the manifestation of the most fatal necessity [*Verhängniß*], against which the tragic hero can do nothing other than voluntarily accept his punishment. In particular, he takes tragedy as an illustrative example of what should never happen in a world enveloped by "the light of Reason [*dem Licht der Vernunft*]", aiming at demonstrating the "unsuitability" of ancient tragedy as a model of practical action amenable to critical thinking, since the primacy of necessity, by rendering

[32] Krell, D. F., 2005. *The Tragic Absolute – German Idealism and the Languishing of God*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 184; Shaw, D. Z., 2010. *Freedom and Nature in Schelling's Philosophy of Art*. London and New York: Continuum, pp. 3 – 66.

[33] Schelling, F. W. J., 1978. *System of Transcendental Idealism*, ibid., p. 231.

[34] Schelling, F. W. J., 1997. Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie. In: Hahn, E., ed. *F. W. J. von Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, 1st Part, Vol. 4, ibid., pp. 1328 – 1342.

[35] Ibid., § 1, pp. 1333 – 1334.

[36] Shaw, D. Z., 2010. *Freedom and Nature in Schelling's Philosophy of Art*, ibid., p. 90.

[37] Schelling, F. W. J., 1997. Zehnter Brief, Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus. In: Hahn, E., ed. *F. W. J. von Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, 1st Part, Vol. 1, ibid., pp. 289 – 292.

the individual passive, contradicts the essence of art, which is the affirmation of freedom.[38]

In the next major work of his aesthetic theory, the lectures on *The Philosophy of Art* [*Philosophie der Kunst*][39] (1802 – 1804), already immersed in the principles of absolute idealism, his previously subjective idealism of 1800 is substituted by an attempt to construct the absolute through the power of the intellectual intuition [*intellektuelle Anschauung*] of Reason itself.[40] Here the absolute is God, whose essence is to affirm himself, "to translate his reality from an unarticulated identity into a differentiated world of form".[41] Now, if we particularly turn to Greek tragedy, we will see that freedom can survive the very worst blows of necessity. In that respect, the task for art is to dig to the core of necessity and yet discover human freedom still to be safe and sound.[42]

The type of art that can best manifest this indifference is drama; because only when there is a clear conflict between the integral will of the hero and the events in the external world, can both fate and freedom be vividly represented.[43] Hence, not only must a poetic form present a narrative of events, but "participation in the characters must be added […] in the events themselves". Only thus does "participation become action and deed [*Handlung und That*]", which, if it is to move the soul, the hero must be "placed before our eyes [*selbst vor Augen gestellt wird*]".[44] Here, perhaps for the first time in Schelling's philosophy, it becomes clear that the identity between freedom and necessity cannot be something that is or has always been present, but must be seen as something being realized; and this realization, which is to be understood both as action and as enlightenment or knowledge, is necessarily tragic.[45]

[38] Hay, K., 2011. Die Notwendigkeit des Scheiterns oder das Tragische als Struktur der Philosophie Schellings. In: Hühn, L. – Schwab, P., eds. *Die Philosophie des Tragischen – Schopenhauer-Schelling-Nietzsche*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 248 – 250; Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy – From Plato to Žižek*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 9 – 11.

[39] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. by Stott, D. W. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Schelling, F. W. J., 1997. Philosophie der Kunst. In: Hahn, E., ed. *F. W. J. von Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, 1st Part, Vol. 5, ibid., pp. 1905 – 2177.

[40] Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy – From Plato to Žižek*, ibid., p. 100.

[41] Vater, M., 1998. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. In: Kelly, M., ed. *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* 472. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 220 – 224. doi: https://epublications.marquette.edu/phil_fac/472.

[42] Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy – From Plato to Žižek*, ibid., p. 75.

[43] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., pp. 248, 261; Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy – From Plato to Žižek*, ibid., p. 76.

[44] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., p. 251; Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy – From Plato to Žižek*, ibid., pp. 75 – 77.

[45] Hay, K., 2011. Die Notwendigkeit des Scheiterns oder das Tragische als Struktur der Philosophie Schellings, ibid., p. 252.

At this point, the question regarding the importance of Schelling's notion of the sublime arises, concerning which the lectures on *The Philosophy of Art* are divided in two main sections, the "General Section [*Allgemeiner Theil*]" and the "Specific Section [*Besonderer Theil*]". While in the former Schelling elaborates on the nature of art and how his aesthetics relates to his philosophy, in the latter he attempts a detailed "construction [*Construktion*]" of the different forms of art. Schelling uses the notion of the sublime in both sections.[46] In the "General Section" the sublime is explained as a key category within the general system of his philosophy of art, whereby "that which constitutes the informing of the infinite into the finite [*Einbildung des Unendlichen ins Endliche*], expresses itself within the work of art primarily as sublimity [*Erhabenheit*]; the other, that which constitutes the informing of the finite into the infinite, as beauty [*Schönheit*]".[47]

Further, borrowing Schiller's words from his text "On the Sublime", he is surprisingly paraphrasing him[48] stating that sublimity in nature takes place in one of two ways: "We refer it either to our *power of apprehension* [*Fassungskraft*] and are defeated in our attempt to form an image of its concept; or we refer it to our *vital* power [*Lebenskraft*] and view it as a power against which our own dwindles to nothing [*in nichts verschwindet*]".[49] In this sense, the concept of chaos plays a fundamental role as the primal aesthetic intuition [*ästhetische Anschauung*] of the sublime, since the inner essence of the absolute is primal chaos itself. Of course, the connection between the experience of the sublime and chaos is by no means a novel one. In the *Critique of Judgment*, for example, Kant writes that "it is rather in its chaos that nature most arouses our ideas of the sublime, […] provided it displays magnitude and might [*Größe und Macht*]".[50] However, the Schellingian concept of chaos acquires a new meaning linked to the absolute, which reappears throughout *The Philosophy of Art* – and not

[46] Hay, K., 2022. On the Tragic-Sublime and Tragic Freedom – Thinking with Schiller and Schelling, ibid., p. 164.

[47] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., § 65, p. 85.

[48] According to the translator of *The Philosophy of Art* and Katia Hay, Schelling here misquotes Schiller's text "On the Sublime", which does not refer to the sublime as the result of a confrontation with a natural force, but to a "sublime object".
Hay, K., 2022. On the Tragic-Sublime and Tragic Freedom – Thinking with Schiller and Schelling, ibid., p. 169; Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., p. 302 (note 3).

[49] Ibid., § 65, p. 86.

[50] Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ibid., p. 246; Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, ibid., § 23, pp. 99 – 100.

only there, as will be shown below.[51] From this perspective, tragedy is the most appropriate art form for the manifestation of the sublime; because the tragic hero, "engaged in a struggle with misfortune [*Unglück*], a struggle in which he neither wins a physical victory nor capitulates morally [*weder physisch siegt, noch moralisch unterliegt*], is only the symbol [*Symbol*] of the infinite, of that which *transcends all suffering* [*was über alles Leiden ist*]".[52]

Still, how can someone transcend all suffering through his inner disposition? Is that kind of stance attributed to the power of Reason, as in Kant? Not really, as Schelling emphasizes on that human being who is able to internalize necessity through freely accepting his misfortune. The highest possible misfortune is to become guilty by fate without genuine guilt [*wahre Schuld*], as in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.[53] In this context, Schelling does not agree with Aristotle, for whom, in his *Poetics*, it is necessary that guilt be contracted through error [*Irrthum*].[54] And this is also what differentiates necessity, fortuitousness [*Zufälligkeit*] and the tragic: An external misfortune is not itself tragic, as it depends on empirical necessity [*empirische Nothwendigkeit*] and can be comprehended by the understanding. Empirical necessity is not necessary in and for itself, hence it cannot suspend chance. By contrast, the necessity that appears in tragedy can only be of an absolute sort and is thus tragic itself. Sublime, on the other hand, is only when the bearer of this absolute necessity freely accepts his punishment [*freiwillig die Strafe übernimmt*], transfiguring himself into the highest identity with necessity. That this punishment must also be of a necessary form is further strengthened by the fact that the Gods should by no means appear in order to help the characters or be hostile against them; and this is why Schelling disregards Euripides' trick of *deus ex machina* as an evasive intervention for the essence of the tragedy.[55]

Nevertheless, one could object that this interpretation of the ancient drama is too restrictive. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, for instance, the chorus stresses that the motives for her action are determined both by personal choice and ancient punishment [*ἄτη*], as if she is the bearer of a curse

[51] Hay, K., 2022. On the Tragic-Sublime and Tragic Freedom – Thinking with Schiller and Schelling, ibid., pp. 178 – 179.
[52] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., § 65, p. 89.
[53] Ibid., p. 252; Sophocles, 1904. Oedipus the King. In: *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, trans. by Sir Richard, C. J. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1 – 58.
[54] Aristotle, 1984. Poetics, trans. by Bywater, I. In: Barnes, J., ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 2325.
[55] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., pp. 254 – 258.

sequel deep rooted in the distant past.[56] On the other hand, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* fits perfectly Schelling's aspect of the internalization of fate, a fact that we can observe in *Antigone* as well, albeit in a different way. When Antigone chooses to act out of respect to the moral and not the civil law, she knows that she will be punished in the end. Therefore, although she doesn't freely accept her guilt, she opts freely for her loss.

Based on the above, I believe that one would better look at the "bigger picture" when assessing Schelling's theory of tragedy, in an endeavour to trace the tragedy of human existence itself. In line with Katia Hay's and David Farrell Krell's respective views,[57] one should attempt to read Schelling's theory of drama together with the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* [*Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*][58] (1809) and *The Ages of the World* [*Die Weltalter*][59] (1811 – 1815), as I will elucidate below.

V. Comparing Schiller with Schelling

To begin with, we should bear in mind that we are dealing with a theory of drama [in Schiller] versus a philosophical system into which a theory of drama is integrated [in Schelling]. Also, while both of them borrowed elements from Kant's theory of the sublime, they modified it in a really distinct way. For Schelling, through the correlation between the beautiful and the sublime –since "both qualities appear inextricably interwoven [*unauflöslich voneinander durchdrungen*] in everything that in a broader sense is absolute in and for itself [*für sich absolut*]"–,[60] through the dissolution of individuality into the "world soul", the trag-

[56] Gellrich, M. W., 1984 – 1985. On Greek Tragedy and the Kantian Sublime, ibid., pp. 326 – 327; Sophocles, 1904. Antigone. In: *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, ibid., pp. 147 – 148.

[57] Hay, K., 2011. Die Notwendigkeit des Scheiterns oder das Tragische als Struktur der Philosophie Schellings, ibid., pp. 257 – 260; Krell, D. F., 2005. *The Tragic Absolute – German Idealism and the Languishing of God*, ibid., pp. 70 – 148.

[58] Schelling, F. W. J., 1997. Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände. In: Hahn, E., ed. *F. W. J. von Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, 1st Part, Vol. 7, ibid., pp. 2978 – 3029; Schelling, F. W. J., 2006. *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. by Love, J. – Schmidt, J. New York: State University of New York Press. Shall hereafter be referred to as "*Freedom* treatise".

[59] Schelling, F. W. J., 1942. *The Ages of the World*, trans. by de Wolfe Bolman, F., Jr. New York: Columbia University Press; Schelling, F. W. J., 1997. Die Weltalter. Erstes Buch. (Aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlaß.) In: Hahn, E., ed. *F. W. J. von Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, 1st Part, Vol. 8, ibid., pp. 3244 – 3335.

[60] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., § 66, p. 91.

ic hero manages to affirm God's infinity via the realization of his freedom.[61]

Yet, what is the exact role of morality in this context and its relation to the Kantian approach? Sublimity, for Kant, consists in the acknowledgment of our physical impotence in front of an irresistible physical threat, without, however, allowing the feeling of fear to prevail, as proof of our moral capacity.[62] For Schelling, by contrast, the aim is not respect for the moral law as such, but the affirmation of freedom. Of course, this also has to do with morality but from another angle.[63] For Schiller, the affirmation of freedom constitutes a battle with necessity, whereas for Schelling, there is no such division. In other words, it is like Schelling's free man producing his freedom, whereas Schiller's alternative is more like a defense against the hostile natural forces through reflection – especially in the text "On the Sublime".[64]

This, however, does not mean that there are no similarities between the two. Both Schiller and Schelling believe in the importance of the beautiful alongside the sublime. In "On the Sublime", in particular, Schiller mentions that man also needs the beautiful as he must not ignore his senses, by which he is also determined. Therefore, the cultivation of both contributes to man's fulfilment as a perfect inhabitant of nature.[65] Further, Schelling notes the importance of the chorus in ancient drama as a symbolic person in a way similar to Schiller, who, in his essay "On the Employment of The Chorus in Tragedy [*Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie*]" –Prologue to the play *The Bride of Messina* [*Die Braut von Messina*]– (1803), regards the chorus as a necessary accompaniment towards the mitigation of the affects through reflection.[66] However, Schelling criticizes Schiller's use

[61] Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy – From Plato to Žižek*, ibid., p. 92.

[62] Allison, H. E., 2001. *Kant's Theory of Taste – A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, ibid., p. 329.

[63] Hay, K., 2011. Die Notwendigkeit des Scheiterns oder das Tragische als Struktur der Philosophie Schellings, ibid., pp. 253 – 256; Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy – From Plato to Žižek*, ibid., p. 92.

[64] Scheier, C.-A., 2011. Schelling und die Epochen des Tragischen. In: Hühn, L. – Schwab, P., eds. *Die Philosophie des Tragischen – Schopenhauer-Schelling-Nietzsche*, ibid., pp. 201 – 202.

[65] Schiller, F., 1884. On the Sublime, ibid., pp. 141 – 142.

[66] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., p. 259; The Schiller Institute, 2002. *On the Employment of The Chorus in Tragedy (1803) by Friedrich Schiller* [Accessed: 2023-6-6]. Available at: https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/fid_91-96/931_chorus_trag.html; Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie. In: Zeno.org. *Friedrich Schiller – Dramen* [Accessed: 2023-6-6]. Available at: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schiller,+Friedrich/Dramen/Die+Braut+von+Messina+oder+die+feindlichen+Brüder/Über+den+Gebrauch+des+Chors+in+der+Tragödie.

of the chorus there for lack of indifference and impartiality, as he attributes the choric passages to separate speakers.[67] Indeed, the chorus for Schelling necessarily "consists of several persons who nonetheless portrayed only one [*nur Eine vorstellten*]".[68]

To sum up, the opposites remain opposites in Schiller's approach. This also explains why he places too much emphasis on remorse, when he analyses the sublimity of a [previously] bad character.[69] By contrast, Schelling distinguishes between the ancient and the modern drama, stressing that the morality of the tragedy should be of a noble nature [*edler Art*]. The presentation of a transgressor by character "would be possible only in the other tragic case, where an extremely unjust person is cast from fortune to misfortune [*ein äußerst ungerechter Mensch aus dem Glück in Unglück gestürzt würde*]".[70] And this is not the case in ancient tragedies, as the transgression there always appears imposed by fate.[71]

As for Schelling's aforementioned "holistic" insight into the tragicness of man, although he breaks away from the identity philosophy [*Identitätsphilosophie*] from 1809 onwards,[72] the idea that the realization of freedom depends on misfortune is already present in *The Philosophy of Art*[73] and further developed, initially in the *Freedom* treatise, through the concept of a necessity lying at the core of every single existence as the condition for the possibility of freedom. The standpoint of the text is no longer that of an absolute Reason, as in 1801,[74] but of an absolute indifference [*absolute Indifferenz*] between the ground [*Grund*] and everything that exists [*alles Existirendes*], which resides in the abysmal darkness of the non-ground [*Ungrund*];[75] an indifference dynamic and rich, though, given that it is the "source of all life [*Urquelle alles Lebens*]", as indicated in *The Ages of the World*.[76]

[67] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., pp. 260, 321 (note 179).
[68] Ibid., p. 260.
[69] Hay, K., 2022. On the Tragic-Sublime and Tragic Freedom – Thinking with Schiller and Schelling, ibid., pp. 186 – 189; Schiller, F., 1884. On the cause of the pleasure we derive from tragic objects, ibid., pp. 367 – 370.
[70] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., p. 257.
[71] Ibid., pp. 256 – 257.
[72] Goudeli, K., 2002. *Challenges to German Idealism – Schelling, Fichte, Kant*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 96 – 118.
[73] Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., p. 250.
[74] See above, footnotes 34 and 35.
[75] Hay, K., 2011. Die Notwendigkeit des Scheiterns oder das Tragische als Struktur der Philosophie Schellings, ibid., pp. 258 – 260; Schelling, F. W. J., 2006. *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, ibid., p. 68.
[76] Krell, D. F., 2005. *The Tragic Absolute – German Idealism and the Languishing of God*, ibid.,

Conclusion

In a nutshell, without abandoning morality, Schiller emphasizes on aesthetic freedom through the unrivalled power of the imagination. He also presents the experience of the sublime as a means, whereby we are reminded of our superiority over nature – echoing Kant's view that the aesthetic judgments of the sublime prepare us for morality.[77] On the other hand, for Schelling there is nothing "against", as externality's dread is also within us; something which implies that he does not consider art as a tool through which we will become better human beings.[78] In that regard, he abstains from the, at times, empiricist Schillerian approach,[79] towards a dive into the tragic essence of human nature as such; this incessant wheel driven by madness as a result of "the highest conflict between the cosmic potencies [*Potenzen*], the will [*Wille*] that negates expression and leads to contraction [*Zusammenziehen*] and the will that strives for fulfilment and expansion [*Wiederausbreiten*]".[80] This conflict, a child of chaos and darkness, is "the innermost [character] of all things [*das Innerste aller Dinge*]";[81] a celebration of freedom, with necessity always by its side.

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p. 78; Schelling, F. W. J., 1942. *The Ages of the World*, ibid., p. 137.

[77] Allison, H. E., 2001. *Kant's Theory of Taste – A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, ibid., p. 343; Guyer, P., 1997. *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 331; Kant, I., 1793. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ibid., pp. 265 – 266; Kant, I., 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, ibid., § 29, pp. 124 – 126.

[78] Hay, K., 2022. On the Tragic-Sublime and Tragic Freedom – Thinking with Schiller and Schelling, ibid., pp. 175 – 177.

[79] De Man, P., 1996. *Aesthetic Ideology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 139 – 147.

[80] Goudeli, K., 2002. *Challenges to German Idealism – Schelling, Fichte, Kant*, ibid., p. 174.

[81] Krell, D. F., 2005. *The Tragic Absolute – German Idealism and the Languishing of God*, ibid., pp. 128 – 131; Schelling, F. W. J., 1942. *The Ages of the World*, ibid., p. 228.

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From Kant to Schiller to Dostoevsky: Morality and Aesthetics in The Brothers Karamazov

Abstract: The aim of this article is to trace a specific influence from Immanuel Kant to Fyodor Dostoevsky, through Friedrich Schiller. I do so by utilizing Anton Barba-Kay's arguments about Schiller's philosophical reactions to Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophies. Barba-Kay argues that Kant's moral maxim of duty raises a problem of "aesthetic visibility," opening an epistemic gap between external action and internal intention. In response to this widening gap between the external and the internal, Schiller does what Kant refused to do and combines the moral with the aesthetic. In reaction to Kant, Schiller posits two moral/aesthetic types: "Grace" and "Dignity." After showing the general influence Schiller had on Dostoevsky, I show how these two Schillerian moral/aesthetic types play central roles in *The Brothers Karamazov*. I close by showing one literary technique Dostoevsky uses to overcome the problem of aesthetic visibility which Barba-Kay fears.
Keywords: Aesthetics, The Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky, Kant, Moral psychology, Schiller

I. Introduction

In his article "The Aesthetics of Agency in Kant and Schiller," Aton Barba-Kay argues for two things. First, he argues that Kant's view of moral agency raises a question about what he calls the "aesthetic visibility" of the moral act. He argues that Kant's moral theory opens a gap between an agent's visible exterior act and the hiddenness of their interior motive. Since the interior motive is non-transparent, the two can come apart, both externally for a witness and internally for the agent herself. Second, Barba-Kay argues that Schiller's moral type of "Grace" is modeled on Kant's aesthetic theory as a solution to the gap between the invisible interior act and the visible exterior action. Schiller's solution of Grace requires "the extinction of self-consciousness" within the agent for the act to be considered mor-

al.[1] But this solution still allows for alienation for external witnesses of the act, since Grace requires an inner lack of self-conscious reflection. In both Kantian moral struggle and Schillerian Grace, the question remains of how the external observer can tell if the agent is sincere or merely playacting?

In short, Barba-Kay argues that the more morality depends on the demands for sincerity or an unselfconscious "natural" character of agency, the more aesthetics figures into agency and morality. For the purposes of my paper, I will assume Barba-Kay is right on this matter and will only summarily rehearse the problem that connects Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophies to Schiller's response. The important upshot of Barba-Kay's argument is the claim that Schiller's two moral/aesthetic types were created in response to Kantian philosophy: the natural and effortless moral genius labeled "Grace" and the character of great moral struggle labeled "Dignity." Despite their differences, both types rely heavily on the demand for sincere action and aesthetics. After this exposition on the connection between Kant and Schiller, I will turn to discussing the impact Schiller (and therefore Kant) had upon Dostoevsky.

With these pieces in place, I then show how Dostoevsky uses both Schillerian moral/aesthetic types of Grace and Dignity within *The Brothers Karamazov.* Going a step further, I then show how Dostoevsky, as an artist, uses a literary technique to overcome the problem of aesthetic visibility which Barba-Kay argues was raised by Kant's moral philosophy.

II. From Kant to Schiller

Since the main target of this paper is not Kantian philosophy alone, but Kant's influence on Dostoevsky, in what follows, I will present a familiar yet summary-level interpretation of Kant's moral philosophy. As is well known, in *The Groundworks of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant describes morally good actions as those that are done solely from good will. These are done according to duty to the moral law and for no other reason. In a famous example, Kant claims that the shopkeeper who acts honestly out of self-interest does not act from duty but mere personal advantage. An act which has genuine worth is not done from self-interest or even *natural inclination*. Instead, genuine moral action is done solely from duty to the moral law.

[1] Barba-Kay, A., 2018. The Aesthetics of Agency in Kant and Schiller. *Idealistic Studies* 46(3), p. 261. doi: https://doi.org/10.5840/idstudies201882069.

As introduced above, Barba-Kay argues that this gives rise to a problem of aesthetic visibility, both to ourselves and to those outside of us.[2] Not only are others unable to tell if we are acting sincerely from duty, but we may even be self-deceived as to our final motives. As Kant says:

> it is absolutely impossible by means of experience to make out with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action that otherwise conforms with duty did rest solely on moral grounds and on the representation of one's duty… it cannot be inferred with certainty that the real determining cause of the will was not actually a covert impulse of self-love under the mere pretense of [duty].[3]

To say that we can *never* know whether our own motives are pure may be an overly rigorous interpretation of Kant once we consider other Kantian texts. However, even if Kant's maxim is not so simple or rigorous, Barba-Kay still thinks Kant raises an aesthetic problem.

The aesthetic problem arises due to the Kantian antagonism between inclination and duty. The honest shopkeeper is inclined to honest action out of self-advantage and not duty. Another reason to be honest may be a natural inclination to enjoy being honest. For example, even if the shopkeeper loses business by being honest, if he possesses the natural desire, enjoyment, or disposition to be honest, then he is still honest according to inclination rather than duty. Kant provides an example of this kind of situation. If people find "an inner gratification" when acting benevolent, their benevolent action "lacks moral content" and "still has no true moral worth."[4] While their behavior is praiseworthy and may conform with duty, morally, their action remains on the "same footing as other inclinations."[5]

Barba-Kay argues that this antagonism between inclination and duty opens a gap in our ability to visually tell if an action is good or not. We cannot tell, by merely looking, whether an action was done from duty alone or whether there is some ulterior motive or hidden inclination. After all, the same honest or benevolent act may conform with duty in every exterior manner. However, its moral worth and content will depend on something interior, on the amount with which the

[2] While I explain his view in a didactic manner, I do not conclusively argue for it.
[3] Kant, I., 2012. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 21 – 22.
[4] Ibid., p. 14.
[5] Ibid., p. 14.

action was taken out of duty and not natural inclination or self-advantage.[6]

This raises problems of visibility for both outside observers *and* self-deception in what Barba-Kay calls our action's "aesthetic visibility."[7] He takes aesthetic visibility to be a less rigorous way of cashing out the antagonism of inclination and duty. The feeling of disinclination to some moral act functions as neither a necessary condition for, nor a constitutive role of, duty. Instead, disinclination and struggle play an *aesthetic* role; they "clarify the presence of duty in contrast to its surrounding incentives."[8]

But how do struggle and disinclination to perform our duty help us *see* that we are acting from duty alone? Kant describes the good will as shining "like a jewel" amongst the struggle to perform one's duty.[9] Even if struggle is not a necessary condition nor constitutive of dutiful moral action, it is *aesthetically* helpful to make moral action more visible and certain. Not only do struggle and disinclination highlight what moral duty might look like within ourselves but Barba-Kay argues that Kant uses moral dramatizations to illustrate what moral action may look like from the outside.[10] It is as if by witnessing someone struggling to do the right thing, we can gain access to their inner dialogue in the way we can access our own. Kant's moral dramatizations, such as the shopkeeper, give us evidence about and insight into the psychology of the characters who struggle to perform the moral act.[11]

Even if perceiving visible struggle and using our imagination can provide evidence about someone's reasons for acting, it is imperfect. It is not often that when I observe the action of another person that I gain certain and accurate access to their private internal dialogue. Instead, I gain a kind of "hypothetical and imaginative view" of their motives.[12] So, we no longer have direct access by external vision, and our imaginative view of someone's inner dialogue is fallible to say the least. From these considerations, Barba-Kay concludes: "it is clear that the problem of the visibility of moral worth throughout these cases sharpens the problem about the status of the beholder…the pretense of duty could be indistinguishable from the genuine article."[13]

[6] Ibid., p. 16.
[7] Barba-Kay, A., 2018. The Aesthetics of Agency in Kant and Schiller, ibid., p. 262.
[8] Ibid., p. 262.
[9] Kant, I., 2012. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* ibid., p. 10.
[10] Barba-Kay, A., 2018. The Aesthetics of Agency in Kant and Schiller, ibid., p. 263. He mentions Kant's suffering philanthropist as an example.
[11] Ibid., p. 263.
[12] Ibid., p. 263.
[13] Ibid., p. 263.

This inability to be certain of what is genuine from observation gives rise to a threat of deception through theatricality. The threat of theatricality is not only for cases of observing others who may be playacting. It raises concerns of self-deception as well. Perhaps I am even pretending for myself in order to hide my own motives. The potential for deception means that the litmus test for moral action becomes a kind of sincerity. E.g., are you really acting sincerely out of duty to the moral law or are you just playacting? This same potential for deception takes place externally for others and internally for yourself. But how can you be sure that you are being sincere and not just putting on a show?

From this concern about morality, Barba-Kay points out a kind of tension between the Kantian moral demand for sincere struggle, and Kant's aesthetic work on the "genius." In stark contrast to the moral agent for whom sincere struggle is a means of gaining moral visibility, the aesthetic genius is unselfconscious and natural. The genius is so natural in her actions that she seems the perfect candidate to overcome Barba-Kay's fear of theatricality. The genius acts without any self-consciousness. Everything she does is natural and spontaneous. There is no room for a reflexive kind of "faking it." Is this the character whom Kant suggests can overcome moral problems of potential insincerity and self-deceit?

Even if it is tempting to use Kant's aesthetic genius figure as a solution to the fear of theatricality in Kant's moral philosophy, Kant rejects this move. Barba-Kay argues that this is because of Kant's fear of mechanism obviating the moral worth of duty. As we saw above, natural inclination can undermine the moral worth of an act. So, even if the aesthetic genius can act in this natural unselfconscious manner, in moral terms this would count as mechanistic inclination. In the realm of Kant's moral philosophy, this naturalness would *undermine*, rather than bolster, moral worth.

Given this tension between Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophies, Schiller endorses the tempting move which Kant rejects. Schiller connects Kant's aesthetic agency, illustrated in the Kantian genius, with moral agency. Where Kant wished to keep the abiding skepticism and self-consciousness of our motives about duty, Schiller resolves the tension by connecting aesthetic naturalness with morality. Instead of aesthetics and morality being at odds, they now work together organically.

Schiller's person of ideal virtue is the "beautiful soul," whose moral action comes naturally and with a sense of simplicity and self-forgetfulness.[14]

[14] Schiller, F., 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context.* Rochester, NY: Camden House, pp. 152 – 154.

Schiller says that: "One refers to a beautiful soul when the ethical sense has at last so taken control of all a person's feelings that it can leave affect to guide the will without hesitation and is never in danger of standing in contradiction of its decisions."[15] In the beautiful soul, reason, duty, and inclination are all in harmony, and grace is "their expression as appearance."[16] However, the beautiful soul's *actions* are still not ethically creditable, for an action "satisfying an impulse is never considered creditable."[17] Yet, Schiller still holds that the beautiful soul is ethically creditable in its essence and by its very being.[18]

Unlike Kant, Schiller also embraces an expressive sense of moral agency. Schiller believes we can get a better read of the internal state from the expression of the external appearance. Someone's bodily motion and exterior expression may be enough to pick out what is genuine. To support this view, Barba-Kay notes that Schiller thinks you can observe moral agents as if they were unselfconscious works of art.[19] Morality can be seen through the natural and unselfconscious possession of grace. As Barba-Kay puts it succinctly: "To act well, one must lose sight of the fact that one is an actor."[20] For Grace, to act morally is to act naturally and without any self-consciousness. Their inclinations, reason, and actions are all in harmony. Where Kant feared the specter of mechanism or natural inclination, Schiller embraced the naturalness of the aesthetic genius. Naturalness, instead of struggle, is a sign of moral sincerity and beauty.

However, Schiller is double-minded. Even if Schiller embraced a moral type based on naturalness and grace, he also endorses struggle, and Schiller ends with two important moral/aesthetic types.[21] We've just discussed Grace which is modeled on Kant's aesthetic philosophy and focuses on naturalness and sincerity. The second moral/aesthetic type, Dignity, is modeled on the freedom and dignity of the struggle to act from duty found in Kantian *moral* philosophy. Unlike the genius beautiful soul, Dignity struggles against her natural inclinations.[22] Grace shows inclination and duty in harmony, but Dignity requires them "in conflict."[23] Here we

[15] Ibid., p. 152.
[16] Ibid., p. 153.
[17] Ibid., p. 152.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Barba-Kay, A., 2018. The Aesthetics of Agency in Kant and Schiller, ibid., p. 267.
[20] Ibid.
[21] For these claims see ibid., pp. 265 – 269.
[22] See e.g., Schiller, F., 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context,* ibid., p. 158.
[23] Ibid.

see the Kantian moral intuition we discussed above that struggle is the surest sign of genuine moral worth. With Dignity, Schiller goes so far as to say that: "Only when we see the struggle are we convinced that victory [over the inclinations] is possible. Thus, we expect an expression of conflict in the appearance and will never be persuaded to believe there is virtue where humanity is not even present."[24]

So far, we have quickly summarized Kant's moral philosophy and how Barba-Kay takes this to open a problem of aesthetic visibility. We then introduced Schiller's two moral/aesthetic types stemming from Kant. One stemming from Kant's aesthetic genius figure and the other from the struggle seen in Kant's moral philosophy. In Kant the genius figure remained in the realm of aesthetics, yet Schiller placed this type into the moral realm with the natural genius who is effortlessly a beautiful soul. As Barba-Kay suggests, in both cases sincere experience is needed for moral worth. In Dignity, sincerity is found in struggle against inclination.[25] In Grace, sincerity is seen in unselfconsciousness and effortlessness; there is no playacting, merely acting. If this is right, then it is not surprising that Schiller's moral/aesthetic types, originating from Kant, are found in the fiction of Fyodor Dostoevsky.

III. From Schiller to Dostoevsky

Finding Schiller's types of Grace and Dignity in the work of Dostoevsky is unsurprising because of the immense influence Schiller's work exercised on Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky was first exposed to Schiller at the age of ten when his father took him to a performance of Schiller's play *The Robbers*.[26] Even decades later, Dostoevsky would write that the play made a "tremendous impression" on him and that it "acted very richly on [his] spiritual side."[27] In the early 1840's Dostoevsky translated *The Robbers* into Russian with his brother.[28] In the same years, Dostoevsky wrote to his brother that he had "learned Schiller by heart, talked him, dreamed him…the name of Schiller has become near and dear to me, a kind of magic sound, evok-

[24] Ibid., p. 162.
[25] Schiller thinks mimicked Dignity can appear as mere bombast or preciosity. E.g., ibid., pp. 168 – 169.
[26] Frank, J., 1979. *Dostoevsky. The Seeds of Revolt, 1821–1849*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 60.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

ing so many reveries."[29] Preeminent Dostoevsky biographer Joseph Frank even goes so far as to call *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky's "own version of *The Robbers.*"[30]

Dostoevsky by no means saw Schiller's impact as some idiosyncratic or merely personal influence. He frequently cites the German Schiller as hugely influential on all of Russia. In 1861, Dostoevsky wrote that "the Russians ought to regard Schiller in a very special manner, for he was not only a great universal writer, but—above all—he was our national poet."[31] He later wrote that Schiller "soaked into the Russian soul, left an impression on it, and almost marked an epoch in the history of our development."[32] Dostoevsky frequently placed Schiller amongst the ranks of artists such as Shakespeare, Goethe, and Cervantes.[33] He would also suggest Schiller as a required author to multiple parents seeking reading lists for their children.[34]

It is a clear historical fact that Dostoevsky was greatly impacted by Schiller. So, it should be no surprise that the Schillerian types we've traced from Kant should appear in his fiction. To give evidence of the types of Grace and Dignity, I'll show Dostoevsky's focus on naturalness and unselfconsciousness on the one hand and sincerity in struggle against inclination on the other. Both types require sincerity and the rejection of self-deceitful playacting. I focus on one of Dostoevsky's most Schiller-inspired novels – *The Brothers Karamazov.*

IV. *The Brothers Karamazov* and Schiller's Moral Types

According to Frank, "a Schillerian atmosphere envelops *The Brothers Karamazov* from the first page to the last."[35] I will argue that in *The Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoevsky sets up a Schillerian moral universe in which sincerity is the main virtue and self-deceit is the unforgivable sin. On this moral spectrum, sincerity is found in both Schillerian moral types: Grace and Dignity. "Graceful" characters, like Alyosha, are sincere in their natural unselfconsciousness, while "Dignified" characters, like Dmitri, are

[29] Ibid., p. 80.
[30] Ibid., p. 61.
[31] Frank, J., 2002. *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871 – 1881*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 394.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., pp. 525 and 717.
[34] Ibid., p. 717.
[35] Ibid., p. 395.

sincere in their struggle against their inclinations and toward the moral law. Self-deceitful characters, like Fyodor, will not struggle for the moral law since they reject sincere motives when they arise.

The themes of sincere naturalness as opposed to intense self-consciousness are present in the novel from the very beginning. E.g., in the introductory chapters we learn that Ivan, at the age of ten, is already highly self-conscious of the fact he lives on the charity of strangers, while Alyosha could not be more unselfconscious about the same charity.[36] Unlike the highly self-conscious Ivan, Alyosha "never cared at whose expense he was living."[37] Alyosha is given many descriptions which fit the type of Grace, a kind of naturally beautiful soul. He is described as having the "inherent" gift of "making himself loved directly and unconsciously;" it was "in his very nature so to speak."[38] Schiller says that Grace causes attraction and love. Love is even "a feeling that is inseparable from grace and beauty."[39]

In school, Alyosha is described as never remembering an insult. After an hour he would forget it had happened. Dostoevsky is careful to tell us that "it was not that [Alyosha] *seemed* to have forgotten or *intentionally* forgiven the insult, but simply that he did not regard it as an insult, and this completely conquered and captivated the boys."[40] Unlike most schoolchildren, it is not the case that Alyosha was pretending to not care, nor was it even that he cared and then worked to forgive them. Instead, he is so naturally good-tempered that he merely forgets. The school children are captivated by this natural moral beauty. Schiller suggests that there is nowhere that one finds more grace "than in children," and Alyosha is one such child. [41]

Dostoevsky further describes Alyosha's naivety and natural charm through the following "aphorism":

> Here is perhaps the one man in the world whom you might leave alone without a penny, in the center of a strange city of a million inhabitants, and he would not perish, he would not die of cold and hunger, for he would be fed and sheltered at once; and if he were not, he would find shelter for himself,

[36] Dostoevsky, F., 2011. *The Brothers Karamazov.* New York City: W.W. Norton & Company Inc, pp. 19 and 23.
[37] Ibid., p. 24.
[38] Ibid., p. 23.
[39] Schiller, F., 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context,* ibid., p. 165.
[40] Dostoevsky, F., 2011. *The Brothers Karamazov,* ibid., p. 23. Emphasis added.
[41] Schiller, F. 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context,* ibid., p. 162.

> and it would cost him *no effort or humiliation*, and to shelter him would be no burden, but, on the contrary, would probably be looked on as a *pleasure*.[42]

This little vignette highlights the effortlessness and unselfconscious nature of Alyosha, as well as how irresistible and enjoyable his Graceful personality is. Another characteristic of a Graceful person is their calming effect. Someone who is tense releases their "wild storm of his emotion" on the Graceful person's "peacefully breathing breast."[43] This is notable because Alyosha spends much of the novel rushing around, acting as the calming confidant and shoulder to cry on for everyone else, often described as an angel.[44]

Alyosha's Graceful nature can be highlighted even further by contrast. Ivan is set up to be a character who is highly self-conscious. Even since childhood Ivan "bitterly sensed that he was living on the bread of others."[45] Both Ivan and Alyosha lived on charity in their childhoods. Yet imagine if both brothers acted as if this charity did not bother them. If Ivan acted as if he were not bothered about being given charity, this would be false and insincere. He would be playacting to his benefactor or perhaps to himself. Yet, the same action from Alyosha *is* sincere; he does so unreflectingly and out of a natural outpouring of his good nature. Ivan would feel like an actor, pretending not to chafe under the charity given him, yet, for Alyosha, there is no acting at all. His carefree Graceful attitude is how he really is.

The theme of sincerity in naturalness is then contrasted with falsity and self-deception in the early confrontation between Fr. Zosima and the sensualist father Fyodor. In the face of Fyodor's intentional buffoonery and falsity, Zosima commands him, "above all, don't lie to yourself," calling Fyodor's behavior nothing but "deceitful posturing."[46] Zosima immediately repeats this injunction to Madame Khokhlakov who is also playacting for Zosima: "Above all, avoid falsehood, every kind of falsehood, especially falseness to yourself."[47] The theme of sincerity and falsity runs alongside the moral status of the characters throughout the novel as Dostoevsky slowly reveals the true inner motives of each character. It is notable that much of the surprise of the novel arises due to the mismatch of characters' visible actions and their inner moral dispositions. However,

[42] Dostoevsky, F., 2011. *The Brothers Karamazov,* ibid., p. 24. Emphasis added.
[43] Schiller, F., 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context,* ibid., p. 167.
[44] See e.g., Dostoevsky, F., 2011. *The Brothers Karamazov*, ibid., pp. 95 & 169.
[45] Ibid., p. 24.
[46] Ibid., p. 43.
[47] Ibid., p. 55.

not all characters are sincere by means of a natural grace.

Dmitri showcases the second moral/aesthetic type of Dignity, in which sincerity still plays an important role. In Dmitri's case, it is sincerity in his struggle and his complete lack of self-deceit. Unlike the effortlessly good-natured Alyosha, Dmitri's natural inclination is to carouse, fight, and enjoy his life as a sensualist. Even in his dissipated lifestyle, it is made clear that Dmitri lives this way out of a kind of passion. E.g., when Dmitri asks the peasant Andrey if he will go to hell, Andrey replies that even though Dmitri is hasty-tempered, God will forgive Dmitri for his kind heart. To Andrey, Dmitri's passionate vices are forgivable since Dmitri is "like a little child."[48] Even if Dmitri needs to struggle for virtue more than Alyosha, there is nothing deceitful about him.

Dmitri is sincere even if his temperament is excessive and his actions are drunken and violent. When we meet Dmitri, he is struggling to struggle against his natural inclinations! As Schiller suggests about Dignity, "the most courageous spirit, despite being completely opposed to sensuousness, can neither suppress feeling itself, nor desire itself, but can only reject their influence on the direction of the will."[49] Dmitri has currently been failing to reject the influence of his sensuousness. But he is aware of own shortcomings and the need to struggle against his natural inclinations, which he recognizes as vicious.

Early on, Dostoevsky gives Dmitri three chapters worth of Hamlet-like soliloquies in which he confesses his baseness to Alyosha. Notably Dmitri expresses himself through Schiller's poetry, including "Ode to Joy" and "The Eleusinian Festival." Dostoevsky uses Schiller's poetry to highlight the sincerity of Dmitri's "ardent heart" and his interior struggle.[50] Dmitri's emotional and open confessions showcase the struggle of the moral type of Dignity. Faced with the reality of his own contradicting "Karamazov nature" Dmitri struggles to overcome it.[51] It is in these chapters that Dmitri utters the famous line describing his internal struggle: "God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."[52]

[48] Ibid., p. 352.

[49] Schiller, F., 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context,* ibid., p. 157.

[50] Each of these chapters begins with the title: "The Confessions of an Ardent Heart."

[51] See e.g., Dostoevsky, F., 2011. *The Brothers Karamazov,* ibid., pp. 97 – 98: "For I am a Karamazov. For when I do leap into the abyss, I go headlong with my heels up, and am pleased to be falling in that degrading attitude, and consider it something beautiful. And in the very depths of that degradation I suddenly begin a hymn of praise." Dmitri concludes that "man is broad, too broad, indeed, I'd have him narrower."

[52] Ibid., p. 98.

This early in the novel, it is unclear if Dmitri will win his struggle against his own natural hatred and disgust of his father; it is unclear who will win inside Dmitri, God or the devil.[53] In Schillerian terms, it is unclear if he will display the "independence" of his will and prove himself moral by "crushing the power of desire."[54] Dmitri's vice and fury can be redeemed so long as Dmitri remains sincere and willing to face this struggle out of duty to the moral law. His sincerity and willingness to struggle against his inclinations in duty to the moral law is exactly what separates Dmitri from characters like the intellectually hypocritical Ivan, the "contemplative" Smerdyakov, and the ironic and Voltaire-quoting Fyodor.

We can see this contrast clearly when Dmitri is (incorrectly) arrested for the murder of his father. Dmitri explains that his greatest moment of shame was when he acted like Ivan, acting like a calculating thief and not as his usual passionate and sincere self.[55] Dmitri is much more ashamed of the self-conscious scheming to steal a small sum of money, something he views as an insincere action, than the would-be passionate murder of his father and the real-life assault on Grigory. In contrast to Dmitri's passionate sincerity, consider the characters all associated with intellect or the false manners of high society: Ivan, Smerdyakov, Fyodor, the seminarian Rakitin, the Grand Inquisitor, and Kolya. Each of these characters are described as either self-deceptive or intentionally false in their dealings with others. This ranges from self-conscious social airs to deep self-deception. Each character is more or less aware of their own falseness, and yet each character is labeled as missing the mark due to this falsity.

Between Dmitri and Alyosha we've seen the two Schillerian types. Alyosha is the type of Grace, the naturally beautiful soul.[56] Dmitri exemplifies sincerity within the moral type of Dignity. Self-deceived and false characters like Fyodor, are incapable of good acts, as they self-consciously refuse to struggle out of duty to the moral law. We can see the deadliness of irony and insincerity even more clearly in a character who served as a front-runner for Fyodor Karamazov—the absent father Versilov in *The*

[53] E.g., ibid., p. 110. "Oh, I don't know...I don't know...Perhaps I won't kill him, and perhaps I will. I'm afraid that he will suddenly become so loathsome to me with his face that moment... And I won't be able to contain myself."

[54] Schiller, F., 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context,* ibid., p. 157.

[55] E.g., Dostoevsky, F., 2011. *The Brothers Karamazov,* ibid., p. 416. Dmitri says: "I put it aside because I was vile, that is, because I was calculating, and to be calculating in such a case is vile..."

[56] This is not to say Alyosha does not change. He is converted to a fuller version of himself, becoming even more Zosima-esque, more charming, good-humored, and serene at the end of the chapter "Cana of Galilee."

Adolescent.[57] Dostoevsky describes Versilov in much the same terms as Fyodor: "Versilov had a very nasty aristocratic trick. After saying (when he could not help it) some particularly clever and fine things, he would all at once intentionally cap them with some stupid saying.... To hear him, one would suppose he was speaking quite seriously, and all the time he was posing to himself, or laughing."[58]

Frank describes Versilov as both aware of his own ideas and inchoate emotions yet disengaged from them by a "twist of his self-reflexive irony."[59] Versilov is self-reflective and aware of his own problems yet "always regards them from a certain ironic distance..."[60] Both Versilov and Fyodor are undercut by their own irony. They avoid taking the moral law seriously by actively undermining whatever normative force it may have on them. Both Versilov and Fyodor know, in some capacity, about the moral law, yet they practice the self-deceit that Zosima warns against. Without struggle against their inclinations, neither character can improve. And one way to never struggle against your inclinations is to deceive yourself about them. Neither self-deceived character struggles, even when they acknowledge their moral shortcomings head-on. Unlike Dmitri, these characters do not fit the moral type of Dignity. They fail to struggle against their inclinations, even when they know they should. When they *do* feel the normative force of the moral law they undercut it with irony or hide in self-deception.

Ivan is also self-deceived, but he is still in flux. He is not as calcified as Fyodor or Versilov. Instead, much of Ivan's character arc is his struggle to find whether he believes in the moral law and whether he will be obedient to it. If Dmitri struggles with his natural inclinations, then Ivan struggles with his intellectual hypocrisy, his own kind of self-deceit. Ivan is not sure of himself or what to believe. Like Dmitri, Ivan struggles, but his struggle is between choosing Dignity or a life of ironic sneering like his father. I continue reviewing the case of Ivan in the final section by discussing a literary technique which overcomes the problem of aesthetic visibility raised by Barba-Kay.

In this section I argued that Alyosha is an example of the Schillerian moral/aesthetic type of Grace and that Dmitri is as an example of Dignity.

[57] *The Adolescent* is considered the biggest failure of Dostoevsky's major novels. However, written directly before *The Brothers Karamazov*, it shared the same mission of attempting to lure the Russian Populist youth to theism.
[58] Frank's translation in Frank, J., 2002. *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871–1881*, ibid., p. 179. See also, e.g., Dostoevsky, F., 2004. *The Adolescent*. New York City: Vintage Classics, p. 130.
[59] Frank, J., 2002. *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871–1881*, ibid., p. 179.
[60] Ibid.

Characters like Fyodor and his predecessor Versilov act as moral warnings. Filled with irony and self-deceit, they refuse to follow Dmitri's example of struggling against his own dispositions. In the final section, I will show how Ivan's character arc is a struggle between the sincerity of Dignity and the moral death of self-deceit about one's own actions and the requirements of the moral law.

V. Ivan and Overcoming Aesthetic Visibility

As I continue to discuss Ivan's character, I will also answer some aesthetic questions about Dostoevsky. How exactly does Dostoevsky overcome the problem of aesthetic visibility as raised by Barba-Kay? How does Dostoevsky make something invisible, like sincerity of naturalness or struggle, visible? If an observer's knowledge about the moral worth of a person's actions is based on knowing that their action was sincerely about duty to the moral law, then being able to view the conscious internal struggle on the one hand or the unselfconscious naturally "beautiful soul" on the other, will be vital. Earlier, I noted Kant's use of moral dramatizations to illustrate this internal dialogue. In Dostoevsky, these fictions are expanded to the grandest schemes, making him one of the greatest psychological novelists. One of his great achievements in psychological realism is to make what is usually invisible, such as sincerity and self-deception, visible in such a believable and illuminating manner.

This skill has not been lost on literary critics. One of Dostoevsky's techniques for making the interior visible is by means of what Ulrich Schmid calls "split consciousness."[61] Schmid argues that Dostoevsky uses the technique of splitting the consciousness of one individual into several characters, such that each character acts out a *part* of the protagonist. In this case, external dialogue between discrete individuals acts like a running inner monologue within a single individual. With this technique Dostoevsky can show the internal struggle of an individual by externalizing the interior and showing the inner monologue as an external conversation.

This technique can be seen throughout his novels. However, a simple case is that of Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov in *Crime and Punishment*. Svidrigailov's character acts as an exaggerated part of Raskolnikov's split consciousness. As the two dialogue, Raskolnikov becomes aware of the

[61] Schmid, U., 2011. Split Consciousness and Characterization in The Brothers Karamazov. In: Oddo, S. M., ed. *The Brothers Karamazov*. New York City: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., p. 776.

moral ugliness of Svidrigailov and his ideas. This allows Raskolnikov to realize the moral ugliness of his *own* ideas. However, the technique of split consciousness can be seen at its most dramatic (and most literal) in *The Brothers Karamazov* when Ivan is visited by the devil. Ivan and the devil dialogue about Ivan's deepest intentions, beliefs, and views of morality. What is it that Ivan really believes about God, a universal moral law, and whether all is permitted? The entire interaction is infused with skepticism. Ivan is unsure if his visitor is truly supernatural or just a hallucination of his own diseased brain.

In a very literal way, Dostoevsky externalizes Ivan's invisible interior struggle through this hallucination. The reader is now able to watch Ivan in a heated debate *with himself* and his own conscience as he struggles to decide about his moral duty and whether to accept that a universal moral law exists. It is his indecision and self-deceit on this very topic which causes such psychic torment for him throughout the novel. At this pinnacle moment, since Ivan supposedly does not believe in any moral law, we see Ivan's struggle to do something he has no reason to do, yet which he *feels* he ought to do—sacrifice himself for the innocent Dmitri.

This invisible struggle made visible is Ivan's own struggle to find what he really believes and, as Dostoevsky sets up the case, to undeceive himself about the reality of the moral law. As a type of Dignity, Ivan cannot be saved until he struggles toward the moral law, yet, intellectually, he refuses to be admit such a law exists.[62] He both knows and does not know that it exists. Even though he performs the right action according to the moral law by confessing at Dmitri's trial, his motive for doing so is suspect. We are led to believe that he confesses without any good will at all, but only out of spite. This is much closer to an attitude like his father or Smerdyakov than Dmitri. At the end of the novel, Ivan's future fate is left uncertain. It is unclear if he will fill the role of Dignity and struggle toward the moral law or whether he will collapse into a life of self-deceit and spite.

With Ivan, we have a masterful example of Dostoevsky's literary talent overcoming the hiddenness of psychology, making "moral strength" visible "indirectly through sensuous signs."[63] Dostoevsky overcomes Barba-Kay's concerns of aesthetic visibility through literary technique and through psychologically penetrating and convincing storytelling.

[62] I say only "intellectually" since Dostoevsky's main contention is that Ivan's emotional and volitional reaction is to reject that "all is permitted," even if he intellectually thinks it is.
[63] Schiller, F., 2005. *Schiller's "On Grace and Dignity" in Its Cultural Context*, ibid., p. 158.

VI. Conclusion

As Schiller took Kant's ideas and expanded upon them aesthetically, so Dostoevsky took Schiller's ideas and expanded them even further, complicating and mixing the ideas of sincerity, deceit, struggle, and naturalness into a rich and complex moral universe. However, Schiller's moral/aesthetic types of Grace and Dignity are still clear. Yet these moral types require visibility; the reader must penetrate into the invisible psychological processes to be certain of their sincerity, either their sublime naturalness or their struggle for the sake of the moral law. Dostoevsky's literary techniques make these invisible attributes visible.

As mentioned before, Barba-Kay suggested that the more morality depends on sincerity, the more important aesthetics becomes. It seems to me that this idea reaches a kind of dual pinnacle in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Dostoevsky's final novel is a crowning showcase of Schiller's Grace and Dignity *and* the artistic technique to show them to us convincingly. Yet these types stem from Schiller's response to Kantian moral and aesthetic philosophy. So, if art owes nothing else to Kant other than Dostoevsky, through Schiller, then art should be grateful.

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Dreaming with Kant and Nietzsche: The Recovery of the Artistically Creating Subject in *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense*

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Abstract: Friedrich Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense* is an enigmatic text that has proven difficult to interpret. I argue that Immanuel Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* influences and sheds light on this early essay. I demonstrate that Kant's discussion of the transition from infancy to adulthood is present in Nietzsche's discussion of the origin of the truth drive. Having established a textual connection, I argue that Nietzsche inverts Kant's account of cognitive development and aims to shear it of teleology by arguing that the choice to privilege the rational over the aesthetic is grounded in pragmatic criteria and not in any essential structure of the individual. Seen in this light, the essay is shown to be a pragmatic anthropology (in Kant's sense of the term) which aims to provide individuals with a life-affirming orientation grounded in creative self-expression.
Keywords: Aesthetics, Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, Kant, On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense, Nietzsche

Introduction

In this paper I discuss the relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense* and Immanuel Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View.* I show that there are striking similarities between Kant's account of cognitive development in the *Anthropology* and Nietzsche's discussion of the origin of human interest in truth, and I argue that this is evidence that Nietzsche was familiar with Kant's *Anthropology*. I also argue that the similarities and dissimilarities between these two texts may be used to interpret Nietzsche's essay and to show that Nietzsche's aim in this text is to examine human interest in truth rather than truth itself. As such, Nietzsche may be said to provide a pragmatic anthropology in Kant's sense of the term.

I proceed by first discussing the background of *Truth and Lie* and the difficulties involved with its interpretation, as well as general allusions to Kant that it may contain. Next, I introduce Kant's *Anthropology* and its discussion of cognitive development and compare it to Nietzsche's discussion of the origin of the truth drive. I argue that given the similarities between key passages in both texts, it is plausible that Nietzsche is using Kant's account and at the same time making the case that Kant's account is life-denying. Finally, I examine Kant's discussion of imagination in the mature individual and the need for the mature individual to retain control over her imagination, and I argue that Nietzsche is reacting to this when discussing the intuitive man and the rational man. I show that Nietzsche creatively appropriates some of Kant's observations and assertions concerning human beings in order to present what he considers to be a life-affirming path for individuals.

Nietzsche and Kant

Nietzsche had a complicated relationship with Kant's thought.[1] He was most familiar with Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment.* There is also some evidence that he had read some of Kant's other works, including the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Early in his career he was deeply influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, as well as by Neo-Kantian thinkers such as Friedrich Lange and Kuno Fischer. Much of his information about Kant comes from these three philosophers. In 1868 he was planning to write a dissertation on teleology and life which would have made significant use of Kant's work in addition to that of Schopenhauer, Lange, and Goethe.[2]

In this paper, I focus on Nietzsche's relationship with Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Nietzsche does not directly quote from Kant's *Anthropology* in any published work, and his most explicit published reference to its ideas is found in the *Genealogy of Morality* (published in 1887), where he states that: "let us for instance honor Kant for

[1] For an overview of Nietzsche's engagements with Kant's thought see: Hill, R. K., 2003. *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of His Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1 – 32.

[2] For a discussion of this abandoned project, see Gardner, S., 2019. Nietzsche on Kant and teleology in 1868: '"life" is something entirely dark …' *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy 62*(1), pp. 23 – 48. In this article, Gardner also argues that Nietzsche's encounter with Kant's thought played an important role in the development of *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*.

what he was able to teach us, with the naivete of a country preacher, about the unique properties of the sense of touch!"[3] Since the *Anthropology* is the only published work in which Kant has an extensive discussion of the nature of touch, it is likely that this is a reference to this text.[4]

George J. Stack argues that it is plausible that Nietzsche had read Kant's *Anthropology*.[5] He points to a striking resemblance between two passages in Nietzsche's *Truth and Lie* and two passages in Kant's *Anthropology*. The first is the following from Kant: "So it already belongs to the original composition of a human creature and to the concept of his species to explore the thoughts of others but to withhold one's own; a near quality which then does not fail to progress gradually from dissimulation to intentional deception and finally to lying."[6] This has a resemblance to the following passage from Nietzsche:

> This art of dissimulation reaches its peak in man. Deception, flattering, lying, deluding, talking behind the back, putting up a false front, living in borrowed splendor, wearing a mask, hiding behind convention, playing a role for others and for oneself, in a short, a continuous fluttering around the solitary flame of vanity—is so much the rule and the law among men that there is almost nothing which is less comprehensible than how an honest and pure drive for truth could have arisen among them.[7]

Stack also points out that Nietzsche, in *Truth and Lie*, states the following: "As a means for the preservation of the individual, the intellect unfolds its principal powers in dissimulation, which is the means by which weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves—since they have been denied the chance to wage the battle of existence with horns or with the sharp teeth of beasts of prey."[8] Whereas Kant states the following in his *Anthropology*:

[3] Nietzsche, F., 1887/2014. On the Genealogy of Morality (1887), trans. De Caro, A. In: *Beyond Good and Evil / On the Genealogy of Morality.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 293 [GM, III 6].
[4] Kant, I., 1798/2007. Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1798), trans. R.B. Louden. In: Louden, R. B. – Zoller, G., eds. *Anthropology, History and Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 265 – 266 [7:154-156].
[5] Stack, J. G., 2005. *Nietzsche's Anthropic Circle: Man, Science, and Myth. Rochester: University of Rochester Press*, p. 214.
[6] Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ibid., p. 427 [7:332].
[7] Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense (1896), trans. Breazeale, D., In: *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*. London: Humanities Press International, p. 80 [TL 1].
[8] Ibid., p. 80 [TL 1].

> The questions whether the human being was originally destined to walk on four feet [...] or on two feet; [...] whether the human being is a herbivorous or [...] a carnivorous animal; – whether, since he has neither claws nor fangs, consequently (without reason) no weapons, he is by nature a predator or a peaceable animal—the answer to these questions is of no consequence.[9]

I agree with Stack that these similarities strongly suggest that Nietzsche had read Kant's *Anthropology* and was thinking about it explicitly when writing *Truth and Lie*. In my discussion below, I will present further similarities and argue that they show a philosophical connection such that *Truth and Lie* may be interpreted as an attempt to invert Kant's *Anthropology* in order to present what Nietzsche sees as a more life-affirming path than the one presented by Kant.

Interpreting *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense*

On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense is an early text that Nietzsche wrote in 1873, one year after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. Nietzsche's reasons for not publishing it himself are unknown. It was published by his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, in 1896. In this short text, Nietzsche discusses the origin of the human desire for truth (that is, the belief that truth in itself is good and falsehood as such is bad). He marvels at the fact that human beings possess this drive since the truth is often deeply harsh and difficult to take into account, and that much of human life requires deception.

Nietzsche aims to provide a genealogical account of the desire for truth, and partially locates the origin for this desire in communal living where to lie (i.e. to use signs in a way that contradicts established conventions) makes people untrustworthy and unpredictable in a malicious way. Truth as such is derived from the desire for predictability and the security that comes with having a sense of what one can expect to occur in the future so that one may prepare for it. This would suggest that the concept of truth is not derived from a desire to understand the world independently of its relationship to a human knower, but rather from a desire to control the world so as to make it predictable and therefore safe.[10]

[9] Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ibid., p. 417 [7:322].

[10] "What men avoid by excluding the liar is not so much being defrauded as it is being harmed by means of fraud. Thus, even at this stage, what they hate is basically not deception itself, but rather the unpleasant, hated consequences of certain sorts of deception. It is in a similarly restricted sense that man now wants nothing but truth: he desires the pleasant, life-preserving

Part of Nietzsche's contention is that people see lying as bad when it causes harm, but when it does not cause harm, such as in theatrical plays or in dreams, then people are not offended by lying. As will be discussed later, Nietzsche posits a creative process as more fundamental than the drive towards truth, which provides material for the formulation of concepts whose use can later be delineated according to public rules so as to produce knowledge claims in the appropriate circumstances.

This text has proven to be difficult to interpret, especially given the fact that it is not a complete essay and was not chosen for publication by its author. Nietzsche's discussion of truth is potentially threatened by a vicious circularity. This is because he makes claims about the rootedness of truth claims in falsehoods, but then makes claims about human knowledge which, if taken at face value, would undermine his claims that truths are in some sense always grounded in lies. Some scholars have seen Nietzsche as aiming to show the impossibility of understanding truth claims in terms of propositions corresponding to non-linguistic states of affairs, in a way which anticipates postmodern approaches to truth. According to this view, Nietzsche's aim is performative, since he demonstrates to the reader that language is inherently metaphorical and so never aims to establish truth about an independent reality. This is something which can only be shown and not stated, so that once one grasps the point of the essay one can simply move on from taking claims concerning the nature of truth seriously.[11] That is, the essay shows to the reader, in a non-propositional way, that, given the way that language works, we should not think of any truth claims as describing the permanent reality of things and as being unrevisable.

This approach is challenged by Maudmarie Clark, who argues that Nietzsche advocates for a Kantian approach to truth.[12] She argues that Nietzsche is not primarily focusing on the nature of language in this essay, nor does he deny that there are things in themselves independent of human experience. Rather, she maintains that Nietzsche is arguing that scientific claims to objective truth are undercut by the "metaphorical" nature of human perception, which is constitutively incapable of representing reality as

consequences of truth." Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, ibid., p. 81 [TL 1].

[11] For a discussion of this approach, see Warminski, A., 2013. *Material Inscriptions: Rhetorical Reading in Practice and Theory.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 103 – 129. Also, see de Man, P., 1979. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 103 – 118.

[12] Clark, M., 1990. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy.* New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 63 – 93.

it is independently of any human knower. This approach is Kantian, in that it shows that our perceptions of the world allow only for objective claims concerning the conditions for things being presented to a knowing subject rather than descriptions of things in themselves. According to this view, Nietzsche's point is that truth claims only stand as such when they are divorced from attempts to definitively characterize a thing-in-itself.

Jessica Berry provides another approach that rejects both the postmodern reading as well as Clark's Kantian reading.[13] She argues that Nietzsche's primary concern in this essay is to account for the origin of the drive toward truth in human beings, that is, he is concerned with answering the questions of why and how human beings came to care about truth as such. She terms his interests to be psychological rather than metaphysical, arguing that in this essay Nietzsche is not interested in truth as such, but rather in the drive to truth. She argues that Nietzsche is following the route of the Phyrronian Skeptics in that he aims to show a path that steers clear of dogmatic assertions concerning the nature of reality.

My approach in this paper builds on Berry's in that it focuses on the nature of the truth drive rather than on truth as such, and sees Nietzsche as interested in presenting an approach to truth that is ultimately life-affirming. As stated earlier, my interpretation seeks to present Nietzsche's approach as a pragmatic anthropology in Kant's sense of the term.[14] By this I mean that, Nietzsche aims to reveal the role played by truth claims in human life and also to delineate approaches to those truth claims that are life-affirming and those that end in frustration. He does this by building on Kant's anthropological account of how human beings become mature rational agents while at the same time offering a subversive critique of Kant's approach, which privileges reason in human life.

Allusions to Kant in *Truth and Lie*

Though Nietzsche does not explicitly mention Kant in *Truth and Lie*, it is plausible to read certain passages as referring to Kant more generally in addition to those which I maintain are related to Kant's *Anthropology*.[15] Nietzsche makes some snide comments concerning philosophers in gen-

[13] Berry, J., 2006. Skepticism in Nietzsche's Earliest Work: Another Look at Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense." *International Studies in Philosophy 38*(3), pp. 33 – 48.
[14] Pierre Gori argues that Nietzsche's approach in *Twilight of the Idols* is a pragmatic anthropology in Kant's sense of the term. See Gori, P., 2015. Nietzsche's Late Pragmatic Anthropology. *Journal of Philosophical Research* 40, pp. 377 – 404.
[15] See Hill, R. K., *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of his Thought,* ibid., pp. 171 – 175.

eral toward the beginning of this essay. Kant easily fits as a target of Nietzsche's derision. For example, Nietzsche states that:

> ... [the human intellect] has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. Rather, it is human, and only its possessor and begetter takes it so solemnly—as though the world's axis turned within it. But if we could communicate with the gnat, we would learn that he likewise flies through the air with the same solemnity, that he feels the flying center of the universe within himself...[16]

It is easy to see this passage as a mocking criticism of Kant's view that the possession of reason grants human beings a higher dignity than that of other living beings and reveals a destiny for human beings that lies beyond the sensible world. Nietzsche presents his own view as the opposite of this and asserts that humans possess an intellect only because they are "the most unfortunate, delicate, and ephemeral beings."[17]

Certainly, the above passage could also refer to philosophers other than Kant. However, Nietzsche's discussion of sensibility and concept formation clearly has an unmistakably Kantian air about it:

> All that we actually know about [the] laws of nature is what we ourselves bring to them—time and space, and therefore relationships of succession and number. But everything marvelous about the laws of nature, everything that quite astonishes us therein and seems to demand our explanation, everything that might lead us to distrust idealism: all this is completely and solely contained within the mathematical strictness and inviolability of our representations of time and space. But we produce these representations in and from ourselves with the same necessity with which the spider spins.[18]

This clearly evokes Kant's claims concerning the nature of space and time as forms of sensibility of a knowing subject rather than as things in themselves. Nietzsche makes the Kantian claim that our most fundamental concepts are not derived from sense perception but rather our sense perception is structured in such a way that the world we experience must conform to conditions inherent in the knowing subject.[19] As a result, we do not know things in themselves but rather know things in light of our

[16] Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, ibid., p. 79 [TL 1].
[17] Ibid., p. 80 [TL 1].
[18] Ibid., p. 87 [TL 1].
[19] Stack discusses Kant's influence on this aspect of Nietzsche's essay. See Stack. J. G., 2005. *Nietzsche's Anthropic Circle: Man, Science, and Myth*, ibid., pp. 7 – 10, 24 – 26.

own cognitive frameworks, and so arrange sensory perceptions according to our own internal criteria of intelligibility.

It is clear from the above, that Nietzsche is thinking about Kant when he is writing this essay, and that this point is uncontroversial. In the next section, I establish that he is specifically responding to Kant's *Anthropology*.

Becoming Rational

As discussed earlier, there are good reasons for thinking that Nietzsche had access to Kant's *Anthropology*. The similarities pointed out by Stack are striking and, as I will show, it is possible to correlate even more passages in these two texts, and to establish that Nietzsche is playing with some of Kant's ideas, accepting certain aspects of Kant's descriptions while challenging others.

Kant published *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* in 1798 and it is based on lectures that he gave annually from 1772 to 1796. Anthropology is the study of human beings, and Kant maintains that there are two approaches to anthropology: physiological and pragmatic. The former focuses on biological mechanisms involved in human capacities. For example, physiological anthropology concerns itself with discovering the brain structures involved in the formation of memory, while pragmatic anthropology would seek to find techniques which individuals may use in order to improve their memories.[20] Thus, pragmatic anthropology investigates human beings with respect to how they make their way through the world with the aim of helping human beings live better lives in order to achieve a fulfillment of their human nature. The discussion below aims to show that Nietzsche's discussion of human beings in *Truth and Lie* fits very well with this notion of a pragmatic anthropology.

In this text, Kant states the following concerning children:

> The observation that a child neither expresses tears nor laughs until three months after his birth appears to be based on the development of certain ideas of offense and injustice, which point to reason. In this period of time he begins to follow with his eyes shining objects held before him, and this is the crude beginning of the progress of perception (apprehension of the ideas of sense), which enlarges to knowledge of objects of sense that is of experience.[21]

[20] See Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ibid., p. 231 [7:119].
[21] Ibid., pp. 239 – 240 [7:127-128].

From this passage, it is clear that Kant sees childhood as a time in which the individual does not think about herself as a unified subject who represents the world in a coherent way, but rather as having a stream of individual perceptions, and as having a feeling for her own existence and a will to exert on the world, to bring the world under her control, which also involves a sense of dignity which entails demanding respect from others. This only changes as the child is habituated socially and develops the ability to speak, to apply the word "I" to herself, to apply concepts to perceptions and so to experience a world of stable objects. There is an element of teleology in this description in that the adult's rational nature is already present in an implicit manner in this early stage of life. Even though the child cannot think about itself in terms of "I thoughts," it has a sense of its own dignity and demands respect from others. Thus, Kant is clear that the child is already on its way to becoming a rational agent and in some sense possesses this rationality in a state that is not yet fully actualized. This makes sense in light of the fact that he maintains that the understanding (which along with reason is a cognitive faculty) is heterogenous with respect to sensibility despite both closely working together to enable cognition.[22]

Kant is also clear about the forcefulness of human beings at this early stage. He refers to the child as a "tiny dictator"[23] who engages the world primarily through touch and so through manipulating things. He compares the faculty of the understanding to a sovereign and compares the sensible faculty to the people dominated by the sovereign. Sensibility and understanding are present in the human being from the very beginning and the process of maturation, according to Kant, is in some sense analogous to that of a group of individuals being made to conform to a governing force which is heterogeneous with it. Hence, Kant is clear that there is a hierarchy where sensibility is the lower faculty and the understanding is the higher faculty in the sense that the understanding provides organization to the products of sensibility.

Kant describes the relationship thus:

> … the faculty of intuition (pure or empirical) contains only the singularity in objects, whereas the faculty of concepts contains the universality of representations, the rule to which the manifold of sensuous intuitions must be

[22] Kant defines the understanding as "the faculty of thinking (representing something by means of concepts)." Ibid., p. 303 [7:196]. He defines reason as "the faculty of deriving the particular from the universal and thus of representing it according to principles as necessary." Ibid., p. 306 [7:200].
[23] Ibid., p. 239 [7:128].

subordinated in order to bring unity to the cognition of the object.[24]

The picture that emerges from this passage and the passage discussing childhood above is that children begin with unique representations and then in the process of maturation come to gain the ability to compare and contrast those representations and take them to present stable objects that are perceivable also to other observers. They learn to talk about their perceptions in ways accessible to other people, in ways accessible to their community for affirmation and correction. As stated above, though, for Kant this process involves the community acting to help the maturing individual gain control over her own sensibility so that her own reason may gain control over her own imagination.

In *Truth and Lie*, Nietzsche also describes this process of initiation into community as involving an individual learning how to understand her sensibility in terms of publicly accessible concepts. However, he rejects the inherent hierarchy that places concepts over sensibility and rejects the idea that the community simply helps the individual along the natural path of developing her innate rational capacity. He argues that "from boredom and necessity" human beings desire to "exist socially and with the herd," and that this involves accepting that "a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first law of truth."[25] Failure to follow these laws results in expulsion from the community.

Kant also uses the term "herd" in discussing human society, but he uses it to describe what a human society is not supposed to be. He states that "the human being was not meant to belong to a herd, like cattle, but to a hive, like the bee."[26] By this he means that human beings are meant to work together, in an organized manner, toward the common goal of living according to reason, a goal which is meant to ultimately encompass all human beings.[27] He sees human beings "as a species of rational beings that strives among obstacles to rise out of evil in constant progress toward the good." Kant is also clear that "one cannot expect to reach the goal by the free agreement of individuals, but only by a progressive organization

[24] Ibid., p. 303 [7:196].
[25] Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, ibid., p. 80 [TL 1].
[26] See Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ibid., p. 425 [7:330].
[27] "they subjugate themselves, though reluctantly to a discipline (of civil constraint). But in doing so they subjugate themselves only according to laws they themselves have given and they feel themselves ennobled by this consciousness; namely of belonging to a species that is suited to the destiny of the human being, as reason represents it to him in the ideal". Ibid., p. 425 [7:330].

of citizens of the earth into and toward the species as a system that is cosmopolitically united."[28] Thus, he sees this structured communal living according to an ideal of goodness as the goal of all human life.

Nietzsche also uses the imagery of bees in *Truth and Lie*. He states that human beings are higher than bees because a bee "builds with wax that he gathers from nature," while the human being "builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture from himself."[29] He goes on to compare scientific activity to that of bees who gather honey and place it in cells within honeycombs: "Just as the bee simultaneously constructs cells and fills them with honey, so science works unceasingly on this great columbarium of concepts, the graveyard of perceptions. It is always building new, higher stories and shoring up, cleaning and renovating the old cells…"[30] The images here are quite striking as, according to Nietzsche, the work of science, which functions under a common idea of truth and progress, does not extract something from those perceptions that is nourishing and life enhancing but takes those perceptions and drains them of their vivacity.

As the above discussion makes clear, both Kant and Nietzsche see the process of maturing into a rational adult as involving an individual learning to treat her perceptions in terms of concepts inherited from her community. They both affirm that we first feel ourselves existing and having a fundamental dignity prior to being able to talk and think about ourselves and express that reality through concepts. What is missing from Nietzsche's account that is present in Kant's, is that Kant sees the external regulation of human activity as aiding the child to develop an internal power of self regulation such that the child is able to actualize her cognitive faculties and gain control over representations provided by the senses. In doing so, she becomes more fully what she already is striving to

[28] Ibid., pp. 428 – 429 [7:333]. Kant spells this out more fully earlier in the text where he states that each human being "has a character, which he himself creates, insofar as he is capable of perfecting himself according to ends that he himself adopts. By means of this the human being, as an animal endowed with the capacity to reason (animal rationabile), can make out of himself a rational animal (animal rationale)-whereby he first preserves himself and his species; secondly trains, instructs and educates his species for domestic society; thirdly governs it as a systematic whole (arranged according to principles of reason) appropriate for society." Ibid., pp. 415 – 416 [7:321-322].

[29] "As a genius of construction man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax what he gathers from nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture himself." Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, ibid., p. 85 [TL 1].

[30] Ibid., p. 88 [TL 2].

be. This element is entirely absent from Nietzsche's account. This contrast becomes even more pronounced when Nietzsche's and Kant's comments concerning the active role of imagination in mature human beings are examined.

The Choice to Remain Rational

According to Kant's account, the child is not entirely absent in the fully actualized rational adult. He states that in observing children, an adult may be taken back to this earlier state where the imagination was less limited by reason:

> [In] playtime, the happiest time of all, during which the teacher once more enjoys the charm of childhood and practically makes himself a child. However, the memory of the teacher's childhood does not reach back to that time; for it was not the time of experiences but merely of scattered perceptions not yet united under the concept of an object.[31]

Hence, Kant believes that adults have not completely lost this sense of their childhood past. In watching the child, the caretaker is brought back to an earlier time without even having the ability to remember that time. Kant emphasizes that the caretaker does not remember being a child in that early stage, and this suggests that the playfulness of childhood remains as a potential in the adult and not something understood as simply a past condition. Hence, despite all of the developments of maturation, the adult retains a capacity for creativity, unrestrained by concepts, which characterizes this earlier stage of human life.

Later on in the *Anthropology*, Kant explicitly associates the early stage of human life with an infectious creativity that overwhelms the capacity for rational justification, and maintains that this capacity continues in adults when they dream and engage in fantasy, as is clear in the following passage: "…unintentional play of productive power of imagination, which can then be called fantasy, the tendency to harmless lying that is always met with in children and now and then in adults […]. The events and supposed adventures they narrate issue from the power of imagination like a growing avalanche as it rolls down…"[32] Here, he mentions how children in this state have an innocent tendency towards lying, and so one could say that they have an extramoral sense of lying because they delight in fan-

[31] See Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ibid., p. 240 [7:128].
[32] Ibid., p. 289 [7:180].

ciful inventiveness separated from the harmful effects of lying such as the intention to deceive others. Those engaging in this play create descriptions and statements woven together through loose association and emotions rather than through the objective entailment relations of their conceptual content. Kant provides more detail in the following passage:

> The play of fantasy with the human being in sleep is called dreaming and it also takes place in a healthy condition, on the other hand if it happens while the human being is awake, it reveals a diseased condition […]. Dreaming is a wise arrangement of nature for exciting the power of life through affects related to involuntary invented events while bodily movements based on choice. Are in the meantime suspended. – But one must not take the stories we dream to be revelations from an invisible world.[33]

It is clear from this passage that, for Kant, this earlier state is to some degree operative in human beings who have matured and actualized their rational capacities. Fantasy is associated with children, but remains in mature human beings when they dream and can occasionally appear in waking adult life. Dreaming is a sort of throwback to this earlier stage of development, and if it manifests itself in someone who is not sleeping, then it is a sign of disease.

Kant also warns against the tendency to take dreams as instances of contact with an immaterial world. He connects control over the tendency to be carried away by imaginative activity with mental health. Kant provides the following vivid description where he draws such a connection:

> The night enlivens and raises it above its real content; just as the moon in evening makes a great figure in the heavens, though on a bright day it is seen as an insignificant little cloud. The power of imagination swarms in one who studies by candle-light in the still of the night or who quarrels with his imaginary opponent, or wanders about in his room building castles in the air but everything that seems important to him then loses its entire importance the following morning after a night's sleep. With time, however, he feels a wakening of his mental powers from this bad habit. Therefore the taming of the power of imagination, by going to sleep early so that one can get up early is a very useful rule for a psychological diet.[34]

Truth and Lie contains passages that have a striking affinity with the ones just provided. For example, towards the end of the essay, Nietzsche makes

[33] Ibid., p. 285 [7:175].
[34] Ibid., pp. 289 – 290 [7:180-181].

the following claim:

> Because of the way that myth takes it for granted that miracles are always happening, the waking life of a mythically inspired people—the ancient Greeks for instance—more closely resembles a dream than it does the waking world of a scientifically disenchanted thinker. When every tree can suddenly speak as a nymph, when a god in the shape of a bull can drag away maidens, when even the goddess Athena herself is suddenly seen in the company of Peisistratus driving through the marketplace of Athens with a beautiful team of horses [...] then as in a dream anything is possible at each moment and all of nature swarms around man as if it were nothing but a masquerade of the gods, who were merely amusing themselves by deceiving men in all these shapes. But man has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived and it were, enchanted with happiness when the rhapsodist tells him epic fables as if they were true, or when the actor in the theater act more royally as any real kind. So long as it is able to deceive without injuring the master of deception, the intellect, is free.[35]

This is very similar in spirit to Kant's description above of the intoxicating play of the power of the imagination. It is as though Nietzsche takes Kant's description of someone enchanted by his own imagination and extends it to an entire civilization, and so characterizes the ancient Greeks as a society of waking dreamers.

A key difference between these two passages, though, is that Kant identifies such intoxicating activity of imagination which comes to be carried away beyond what it can rationally demonstrate to be a sign of immaturity or even disease. Nietzsche, however, revels in the unrestrained activity of the imagination, though at the same time he recognizes how it might appear dangerous and unsettling. He describes the process by which the imagination is tempered by concepts thus:

> Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can one live with any repose and consistency: only by means of the petrification and coagulation of a mass of images which originally *streamed from the primal faculty of human imagination* like a fiery liquid only in the invincible faith that this sun, this window, this table is a truth in itself, in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an artistically creating subject, does man live with any repose, security, and consistency.[36] (emphasis is mine)

[35] Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, ibid., p. 89 [TL 2].
[36] Ibid., p. 86 [TL 1].

The first three lines of this passage fit very well with Kant's discussion of children quoted earlier, where he states that children first perceive the world in terms of a stream of representations not unified by concepts which would present them as belonging to stable objects. As established, both Nietzsche and Kant hold that the individual develops into a state where sensibility is consciously understood in light of concepts that delineate similarities between individual sensory representations, which allows the formation of expectations based on judgments according to rules for determining the conditions under which sensations present objects. They also agree, as discussed above, that the criteria of delineating similarities and contrasts are dependent on conditions inherent in the knowing subject and not in the thing as it is in itself.

A key element, according to Nietzsche, is that the criteria according to which an individual chooses the regularity offered by the rational development of concepts are pragmatic, whereas for Kant, these criteria are inherent in the individual whose essence is to be a rational agent. For Nietzsche, the wild stream of representations coming from the imagination threatens to do away with predictability and with feelings of safety, and so it is filtered according to criteria that favor survival. Here, he clearly departs from Kant. Given the passage immediately prior, it is clear that Nietzsche agrees with Kant that this tendency of imaginative activity can be suppressed though not entirely eliminated. They also both agree in asserting the intoxicating power of the imagination. However, Nietzsche aims to show, throughout the text, that the suppression of the imagination is not governed by distinctions that cut at the joints, so to speak, of human consciousness. Rather, he maintains that this suppression is governed by the desire to survive, that is, to continue to exist as long as possible. He stresses that this obsession with survival is to some degree self-defeating. For example, he begins the essay with the parable of the clever beasts who are very proud of their rationality but end up signifying nothing. Towards the end of the text, he asserts that "the man who is guided by concepts and abstractions only succeeds by such means in warding off misfortune without ever gaining happiness…"[37] This rational man is someone who "desires to rule over life" by "knowing how to meet his principal needs by means of foresight, prudence and regularity…"[38] Given the description in the passage above, it is clear that Nietzsche sees this as involving an active attempt to forget one's own creative nature, and that such an approach to existence is ultimately life-denying.

[37] Ibid., p. 91 [TL 2].
[38] Ibid., p. 91 [TL 2].

Nietzsche contrasts the rational man with the intuitive man, who also wishes to rule over life but is not interested in survival for the sake of survival and acts as "as an overjoyed hero, counting as real only that life which has been disguised as illusion and beauty." He goes on to discuss the intuitive man in the following terms:

> And while he aims for the greatest possible freedom from pain, the intuitive man, standing in the midst of a culture, already reaps from his intuition a harvest of continually inflowing illumination, cheer and redemption—in addition to obtaining a defense against misfortune. To be sure, he suffers more intensely, when he suffers; he even suffers more frequently, since he does not understand how to learn from experience and keeps falling over and over again into the same ditch. He is then just as irrational in sorrow as he is in happiness: he cries aloud and will not be consoled.[39]

The intuitive man is thus someone who accepts the uniqueness of each moment and of each situation and sees within it the opportunity to respond in new and unforeseen ways. In doing so, the intuitive man is able to affirm the precarity and finite nature of his own existence and is able to affirm that existence precisely in its finitude.

The above contrast strongly suggests that Nietzsche is not attacking the concept of truth as such but contextualizing it within the desire to survive and arguing that the choice between living a life according to reason and living a life according to creative inspiration is not a choice between reality and irreality but rather a choice between a life concerned with survival and a life concerned with itself as a unique event. This is precisely what a pragmatic anthropology, in Kant's sense of the term, is meant to do. The choice between the rational man and the intuitive man is made in terms of pragmatic criteria (and this approach to the world is life-affirming for a human being). Nietzsche's description of how concepts are generated aims to show that people who live according to artistic inspiration are neither immature nor defective.

Conclusion

In his *Anthropology*, Kant describes dreaming in adults as a throwback to childhood, as the dreamer's imagination is less constrained by social conditioning. He writes about children as unable to identify themselves as

[39] Ibid., p. 91 [TL 2].

unified rational subjects but as having a direct felt awareness of their own existence, which includes a sense of power and dignity. He describes the process of maturation as aiding the individual in gaining control over her sensibility by her cognitive faculty and so allowing her to actualize herself as a human being.

I have shown how these elements are present in Nietzsche's essay and have focused especially on how Kant's account of an adult intoxicated by imaginative creation bears a striking similarity to Nietzsche's aesthetic man. Nietzsche echoes those parts of the *Anthropology* where Kant discusses the continued presence of childhood in adult lives, but sees its continuation as a pointer to another way of living that is beyond the rational rather than a sign of immaturity or mental illness. Thus, Nietzsche claims that "the waking life of a mythically inspired people—the ancient Greeks for instance—more closely resembles a dream than it does the waking world of a scientifically disenchanted thinker."[40] Nietzsche picks up on the trace of the primordial aesthetic element still present in the mature subject in Kant's account, and he points a path forward that he considers to be more life-affirming than the one presented by Kant.

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The Condemned Door: The Non-Sublime Side of the Kantian Sublime or the Intractable Excess of the Sensible World

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Abstract: Properly speaking, the sublime "cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason". Moreover, for the sublime to take place—Kant affirms—we must abandon sensibility. To some extent, the sublime is a negation of the sensible world. Therefore, in contrast to Kant's approach, I will focus instead on the non-sublime aspect of the sublime, i.e., that sensible element that plays a critical role in the experience but is not considered worthy of the label "sublime". After all, it is the Analytic of the Sublime that highlights what it tries to overshadow: the intractable excess of the sensible realm and imagination's non-subservience to the mandates of reason. Unlike the properly sublime, art is not intended to serve a shielding function (the sublime comfort us by reassuring us of the purposiveness of our moral vocation); rather, like the non-sublime, it promotes the disruption of what is well formed.
Keywords: Kant, sublime, sensible, inadequacy, imagination, art

Introduction

I will centre my paper on the non-sublime part of the Kantian sublime, my claim being that it is the non-sublime that contains Kant's most valuable contribution to art and literature. By "non-sublime", I refer to that which, while playing a critical role in the experience of the sublime, is not considered worthy of the designation "sublime", and is thus ultimately dismissed by Kant.[1] I shall therefore intentionally refrain from following Kant's approach, namely the one focused on our supersensible vocation, the one

[1] Cf. Kant, I., 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 129 (Ak 5:245). (From now on, and for all references to works written by Kant, I will refer to the pagination of Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the German Academy of Sciences. These pagination numbers, which are also indicated as marginal numbers in the Cambridge translations I will be using, will be preceded with the abbreviation "Ak."). Beyond the various passages where Kant excludes any object from being called "sublime", the designation "sublime" is explicitly attributed a noble connotation, cf. Ak 5:272-273.

concerned with "our independence in the face of the influences of nature."[2] In other words, if according to Kant, for the sublime to take place, we must abandon sensibility,[3] I, on the contrary, will highlight the side of sensibility. My focus is, indeed, less on what Kant aims to convey and more on what is exposed within the Analytic of the Sublime, notwithstanding Kant: the intractable excess of the sensible and our incapacity to deal with it. In that sense, because this manifestation of the domain of nature is well taken into account by Kant himself—however, only to turn his back on it—the perspective I aim to open comes from Kant's own description of the sublime. As a matter of fact—and this will be highlighted as part of my argument—Kant is quite fixated on what pertains to the non-sublime. Yet, no proper philosophical attention is given to it by him.

This article will be divided into three parts. In the first, I will present the main features of the sublime and consequently, of the non-sublime. The second part will examine the sublime through the lens of the non-sublime, underscoring, among other aspects, the unmasterable nature of the sensible realm. Finally, the third part will explore the non-sublime's contribution to art. The first part—I wish to state at the outset—will expound on points that are quite well-known to anyone familiar with Kant's aesthetics. It is, however, only deceptively expository. There is a reason for me to emphasise Kant's own description of the sublime.

1. The hybrid monster[4]

a. The properly sublime (or the floating head within its safe abode)

Kant clearly states that "what is properly sublime cannot be contained *in any sensible form*, but *concerns only ideas of reason*"[5] and therefore that "we express ourselves on the whole incorrectly if we call some object of nature

[2] Ak. 5:269.

[3] Cf. Ak 5:246.

[4] I am not claiming that the sublime is about the monstruous. Kant clearly rejects any associations between them (cf. Ak. 5:253; see also: Kant, I., 2006. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Cambridge University Press, p. 140 [Ak. 7:243]). The distinctively Kantian understanding of the properly sublime banishes everything that lacks form. Kant's exclusion of the non-sublime can be related to his aversion to *Schwärmerei*, which, among other things, refers to the illusion that creates hybrid beings and facilitates the "heterogeneous mixture of faculties or objects of thought", cf. Allouche-Pourcel, B., 2010. *Kant et la Schwärmerei. Histoire d'une fascination*. Paris: L'Harmattan, p. 18. In brief, I will not be arguing that the sublime is synonymous with the monstrous, but that Kant's thought cannot help but be haunted by it.

[5] Ak. 5:245; emphasis added.

sublime".[6] He asserts this premise not only explicitly but also reiteratively.[7] However, such a position is not at all unexpected. The Analytic of the Sublime's inclusion in the third *Critique* seems to be due to the significant place that the central theme of the sublime occupies within Kant's overall thought. The experience of the sublime is, in fact, a pathway for us to feel, and thus acknowledge (and hence confirm, if only subjectively) our autonomy and superiority in regard to the sensible.[8] The core of the sublime is indeed our rational and moral vocation.[9] The sublime had therefore to be freed (radically and from the very start) from the sensible. But, aside from its meaning there is also a technical aspect explaining the exclusion of the sensible, namely the rigour that the concept "aesthetic" demands.

Rigorously speaking, as aesthetic judgments, both the sublime and the beautiful do not and cannot pertain to the object. Their "determining ground cannot be other than subjective",[10] affirms Kant, and this should prevent us from the outset from mixing an aesthetic judgment with a cognitive judgment ("nothing at all in the object is designated")[11] or one based on mere sensation (both the beautiful and the sublime "presuppose and cultivate a certain liberality in the manner of thinking, i.e., an *independence of the satisfaction from mere sensory enjoyment*").[12] Indeed, both of these judgments are objective and the blurring of this distinction would completely distort the essence of Kant's understanding of "aesthetic". Although Kant's approach is straightforward in this regard, some extra precaution appears to be in order.

First, the fact of not being a cognitive judgment entails, among other things, that is not about norms or criteria that would give us tools to properly discuss art or what is beautiful. Such discussions are heavily dependent on the characteristics possessed by an object (how much these are distorted within our analyses is another matter). Though it's true that such insight on the object would help elevate such discussions, that is by no means the kind of rigour that a strict comprehension of "aesthetic" demands.[13] Second, concerning the distinction between "aesthetic" and mere sensation, it is not uncommon to encounter the conflation of "sub-

[6] Ibid.
[7] Cf. Ak. 5:250, 268, 280.
[8] Also in this regard, Kant is quite persistent: cf. Ak. 5:246, 257, 258.
[9] Cf. Ak. 5:245, 269.
[10] Ak. 5:203.
[11] Ak. 5:204.
[12] Ak. 5:268; emphasis added.
[13] Cf. Ak. 5:284-285.

jective" with "private", thereby associating "subjective" with what remains confined to the narrow sphere of the personal. This conflation is further nourished by the (post-)Romantic exacerbation of the individual feeling. However, the distinct characteristic of the Kantian aesthetic judgments lies precisely in their *a priori* foundation, which consequently grants them universality. It is exactly what explains their placement in a *Critique* and not just in any minor writing like his 1764 essay. Moreover, although we tend to understand "objective" as independent of bias and subsequently associate it with knowledge, "objective" refers as well to "what is real in an empirical representation".[14] In other words, the intellectually humble "judgment of the senses" can also be objective, and though a part of that judgement may be subjective (e.g. the fact that a meal is pleasant to me), it is built in direct sense relation to the material aspect of the object.[15]

Kant presents aesthetic judgments in a radically different manner, as they pertain solely to what occurs within the subject, specifically the interaction between its faculties. By definition, the beautiful and the sublime are not and cannot be ascribed to external objects.[16] Certainly, this association of pleasure (and displeasure) primarily with the subject rather than with the object is not an original idea of Kant. It was previously articulated by other philosophers—such as Alexander Gerard—though the extent to which pleasure was attributed to the object or the subject varied among them. However, in every case—and that includes Kant before the third *Critique*—it was developed within an empirical framework. In any case, it is in Kant's third *Critique* that this view will reach a rigorous conceptual delimitation, as Kant took a step further (when not a whole leap) from his predecessors and contemporaries. This conceptual turning point is particularly evident on his own approach of the sublime: the sublime is not to be found outside but only within us.

It is worth noting that, when it comes to what should be strictly understood for "sublime", there are more similarities between the beautiful and the sublime than is typically acknowledged.[17] In fact, in his *Anthropology*, Kant explicitly asserts: "The sublime is the counterweight but not the opposite of the beautiful",[18] and a (not even that) careful reading of the third *Critique* cannot but lead us to the same conclusion. After all, the central

[14] Ak. 5:203-4.
[15] Cf. Ak. 7:239-240.
[16] Cf. Ibid.
[17] There is also this significant affinity: "[both] are purposive in relation to the moral feeling" (Ak. 5:267).
[18] Ak. 7:243.

interest of the third *Critique* is purposiveness, with both the feelings of the beautiful and the sublime offering their own distinct form of purposiveness. The beautiful suggests the purposiveness of nature, while the sublime the purposiveness of our moral vocation,[19] which is why the term "sublime" itself "designates an expression of approval".[20] Indeed, the sublime and the beautiful are also analogous in this regard: they both provide a satisfaction [*Wohlgefallen*].[21] Certainly, more than once, the sublime is depicted as a negative satisfaction.[22] However, a negative satisfaction does not equate to displeasure. And more importantly, Kant is explicit explaining that it is only negative on the aesthetic side, but positive when considered from the intellectual side.[23] Once again, the core of the sublime is our pure rational nature.

Furthermore, the clear-cut distinction between those feelings is due to the fact that every time they are discussed, i.e., in the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, in the Critique *of the Power of Judgment*, and in his *Anthropology*, the sublime is introduced and described in contrast to the beautiful. Their distinction is therefore aimed at better outlining the particularities of the sublime but it does not mean that Kant's approach set them as radically different. However, considering that it conveys our superior nature, the sublime could be considered a source of a more fulfilling satisfaction, since our rational nature—within a Kantian framework of understanding—is more meaningful that the "feeling at home" that the beautiful provides. As a side note, this raises the question: considering that it not only saves us from our utter insufficiency [*Unzugänglichkeit*] but also grants us a comforting idea of ourselves, can the sublime legitimately be deemed an uninterested feeling? The sublime pertains indeed to our *propium* and therefore, it suits Kant's pursuits. The sensible realm, on the other hand, does not.

b. The non-sublime (or the intractable amorphous body propelling the floating head)

The Analytic of the Sublime is unambiguous in distinguishing the *objects involved in* the experience from the *feeling produced by* the experience. And Kant's focus is unmistakably directed toward the reassuring aspect of

[19] Cf. Ak. 5:258.
[20] Ak. 5:245.
[21] Cf. Ak. 5:244.
[22] Cf. Ak. 5:269.
[23] Cf. Ak. 5:271.

the sublime, namely its conformity with the laws of reason.[24] Now, because of that conformity, the sublime can be said to be under control, since not only it does not break Kant's rational order of things but, actually, it rather confirms it. However, if what is properly sublime (a *feeling*) suits that order, conversely, the *objects* that trigger this experience, on the contrary, "appear in its form to be contrapurposive for our power of judgment".[25] Consequently, they cannot but be described negatively: "Who would want to call sublime shapeless mountain masses towering above one another in wild disorder with their pyramids of ice, or the dark and raging sea, etc.?"[26] This explains the particular necessity of not ascribing the sublime to the sensible: if the sublime expresses our moral purposiveness, thus our superior nature, the objects mistakenly labelled as "sublime" expose, on the contrary, our unsurmountable frailty and insufficiency, and consequently, our lack of correspondence to the world we inhabit. Whether it is in the context of the mathematical sublime or the dynamic sublime, the non-sublime—i.e., not the ultimate effect of the experience but the unfolding that leads to that effect—puts us in relation with our surrounding world, and reveals the latter as an excess, an overflow, as an abondance that surpasses our capacities to measure, determine, comprehend, contain, master it. In other words, the non-sublime is what does not suit us (our human capacities, our view of ourselves, and thus, our expectations). The non-sublime reveals indeed a "greatness that is contrapurposive (*magnitudo monstrosa*)".[27] But if the sublime is so dear to Kant, it is precisely for the opposite reason: it reveals "*our own greatness* and power".[28] The barring of the formless objects that excite in us the sublime must then understandably be radical. This explains that, for Kant, "the representation in thought of the sublime by description or presentation can and must always be beautiful",[29] and that accordingly "[an] artistic presentation of the sublime […] can and should be beautiful […]".[30] Lacking form, not only no presentation is possible, but no idea and no concept either. If the third *Critique* is concerned with the forms left undetermined by the

[24] Cf. Ak. 5:257.
[25] Ak. 5:245.
[26] Ak. 5:256.
[27] Ak. 7:243.
[28] Ibid., emphasis added.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid. In the third *Critique*, this approach is radicalised: no product of art could correspond to the sublime (cf. Ak. 5:252). However, in §52 (Ak. 5:325), he goes back to the idea present in his *Anthropology*, namely that in art, the presentation of the sublime has to belong to beautiful art.

a priori laws of our understanding,[31] the beautiful and the sublime (as crafted by Kant) fulfil that lacune, even though only partially and only by an empirical law. With the non-sublime that is by no means the case. The non-sublime remains ungovernable. Understandably, it is set aside. But what does this exclusion reveal about our idea of us, if, aware of their existence, we deny the forms that do not conform to our capacities and projections? We will address that matter later. In any case, the non-sublime is, indeed, disregarded, but only when it is deemed unnecessary.

Kant rejects the unsettling nature of the sensible, however he employs precisely its unsettling character, as it is the necessary trigger for the experience to actually unfold, i.e., for us to feel our rational nature.[32] Indeed, just as he draws an unambiguous demarcation between what is properly sublime and what cannot be named sublime, Kant is equally unequivocal when asserting that the sublime is "a pleasure that arises *only indirectly*",[33] "a pleasure that is *possible only by means of a displeasure*".[34] So despite the fact that a rigorous understanding of the sublime demands the exclusion of the sensible, it cannot be overlook that this interaction between faculties takes place in response to certain elements present in our surrounding sensible world, and not *ex nihilo* within us. To put it another way, the interaction within the subject happens because of an interaction with the world. Almost every one of Kant's assertions concerning the role played by the "formless" [*formlos*][35] and "shapeless" [*ungestalt*][36] objects giving rise to the sublime is clear in asserting how crucial they are for this experience to take place: it is "*the very inadequacy* of our [imagination that] *awakens* the feeling of a supersensible faculty in us".[37] Not only there is no ambiguity around it but Kant is quite persistent in putting forward the need of inadequacy for the feeling of the sublime to manifest. In other words, the non-sublime, that is, that which is excluded from the label "sublime", is no minor feature at all but, quite the opposite: it is precisely "that which […] excites in us the feeling of the sublime".[38] In short, the non-sublime is constitutive of the Kantian

[31] Cf. Ak. 5:179-180.
[32] Cf. Ak. 5:257.
[33] Ak. 5:245; emphasis added.
[34] Ak. 5:260; emphasis added.
[35] Ak. 5:244, 247, 249, 279.
[36] Ak. 5:279.
[37] Ak. 5:250; emphasis added. If we follow the text, Kant does not refer exclusively to the effect on us but also to the object. This is more evident in Ak. 5:245.
[38] Ak. 5:245.

sublime. However, no matter how necessary they are, no object of nature will be transformed because of this experience into something sublime. They will remain non-sublime. Otherwise, the essence and the worth of the sublime, which are rooted in the independence of our reason vis-à-vis nature, would be lost. And yet, the sensible is there, traversing the totality of the experience, and not just in a moment of time.

2. The upsetting pervasiveness of the sensible

a. The sensible within the sublime

As much as they ought to be distinguished from mere judgments of the senses, it is just as important to underline the fact the feelings of the beautiful and the sublime happen within the sensible realm. In brief, the role of the sensible is significant. Certainly, such a statement lacks substantive content. To begin with, they are feelings, and in most scholarly works, they are addressed as such. Next, the domains of knowledge and of morality also take the sensible into account; in fact, they make no sense without it; the sensible world and the challenges it poses to our faculties are far from being disregarded by Kant. Furthermore, it permeates his whole philosophical itinerary. However, the sensible plays a lesser role in those other domains, as it does not shape the judgment as decisively as it does the aesthetic judgment. Deceptively passive, the manifold of the sensible ultimately presents a false challenge to the cognitive judgment; it is rather a given to give form to. Some sense impressions won't be even acknowledged but being negligeable, their absence will have no consequence. As for the ones that we are conscious of, they will be easily subsumed.[39] Concerning morality, the sensible is simply muted, as the moral law determines the will immediately.[40]

Conversely, in the context of aesthetic judgement, the sensible is really at play, as it shapes the fundamental features of the judgment. Aesthetic experiences are thoroughly moulded by one of the most intellectually burdening features of the sensible, i.e., they are concrete singular experiences. By establishing the aesthetic judgments as reflective judgments, their outset comprehension bars any attempt of drowning them (in advance) and thus defacing them through the subsumption of an *a priori* principle. This suggests that, in contrast to other empirical occurrences,

[39] Cf. Ak. 5:179,

[40] Cf. Kant, I., 2015. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ak. 5:25, 48, 71.

their way of being—i.e., individual physical experiences—is respected. It is precisely in their singularity that lies their philosophical interest, their originality, their intellectual challenge. In fact, it is because they are permeated through and through by the sensible, that it took Kant so long to give them a philosophical treatment. And though his view on aesthetic feelings took a radical turn with the discovery of *a priori* principles, the prevalence of the sensible aspect, i.e., their configuring role, was not obliterated. That explains also why, after being admitted in the philosophical sphere, they still presented a challenge. Kant stresses, indeed, that the judgments of the beautiful and the sublime are both singular.[41] Furthermore, it is not just that objects have a considerable influence in these experiences. Their participation is more pervasive, the dynamics of the aesthetic experience being much more complex, as it is not simply about the things that are already there, but that what is already there has to be or appear a certain way. The feelings of the sublime (and of the beautiful) do not arise over just any object nor over any manifestation of the object. As feelings, they are awakened, i.e., they have to be awakened. They need to arise. And they happen by means of singular and particular empirical occurrences. In that sense, although not regarding its foundation (which is only *a priori*), the sensible is nonetheless *sine qua non* for the unfolding of the experience. There is indeed a difference between the foundation of the feeling of the sublime and its taking place. And notably regarding aesthetics judgments, one cannot diminish the value of their taking place. It matters for Kant that this feeling unfolds. Its possibility is not enough, for it is with the feeling being awakened that the superiority of our rational vocation becomes intuitable [*anschaulich*] and palpable [*fühlbar*] to us.[42]

If I choose to stress this, it is because I believe that we do not sufficiently underscore the critical role played by the phenomenal framework in the experiences of the beautiful and the sublime. Not that the reader is oblivious of that fact, after all the beautiful and the sublime are almost always discussed within the framework of Aesthetics. Rather, it is when they are applied to other subjects, such as politics, that they raise some eyebrows. However, in our effort to follow rigorously the demands of Kant's approach, we tend to focus more on their autonomy, on their universal validity, hence, on the necessity to separate them from the mere sensuous. Certainly, their *a priori* nature is what fundamentally

[41] Cf. Ak. 5:244.
[42] Cf. Ak. 5:246, 257, 262.

transformed his approach to aesthetics and what established a profound distinction between his perspective and that of his contemporaries: aesthetic judgments are singular, they have however a universal validity;[43] and it is precisely because their possibility is grounded on human nature[44] that the demand for universal assent is legitimate.[45] Furthermore, Kant does not only make them universal, but connects both the beautiful and the sublime to morality (although, differently),[46] which gives even more weight to its proximity to the *a priori*. I, for one, don't want to overlook their differences. Yet stressing the sensible aspect does not contradict Kant's assertion that the feeling of the sublime has an *a priori* foundation. It just points out that the theme of the sublime calls for more than reflecting on the faculties that make them possible, for the sensible is acknowledged, even particularly emphasised, but only as something to surpass, i.e., they are not reflected upon. Despite its shaping role and, above all, the manifest challenge they pose, the philosophical gaze is directed elsewhere, namely towards the purity of our rational nature. Certainly, when contrasted with the intellectual achievement that was the discovery of *a priori* principles, the sensible appears to be merely the (almost too) evident aspect of the experience. However, does its apparent evidence render it philosophically irrelevant? Most notably concerning the sublime, the impact of the singular phenomena on the promotion of the feeling should be highlighted, since those occurrences are rare. We are not regularly confronted with objects that evoke limitlessness or power. Why is this relevant? Because elsewhere (in the context of cognition, for instance), the weight and scope of the non-regular would be dismissed as ineffectual. But in the context of the sublime, on the contrary, it has a profound role in the sculpting of the experience; the forms of the sensible world are far from being passive, they actually are a disruptive force. The non-sublime reveals a sensible realm that lacks order or at least an order receptive to our purposes. And precisely for this reason, I believe it is necessary to ask: how does Kant's thought handle those objects that appear contrapurposive [*zweckwidrig*] and unsuitable [*unangemessen*] for our faculties? The sensible in its impertinence cannot be philosophically neglected.

[43] Cf. Ak. 5:249.
[44] Cf. Ak. 5:265.
[45] Cf. Ak. 5:249.
[46] Cf. Ak. 5:267.

b. The dark side of Kant's sublime: the sensible beyond (?) the sublime

From the angle I have chosen to read the sublime—which is a side exposed by Kant himself—Kant's most exciting contribution to art and literature lies in the transparency with which he carries out his fight against forms that our faculties cannot get a hold of. The fight against our cognitive and physical insufficiency is, indeed, far from being hidden by Kant.[47] However, despite his own insistence on the existence of contrapurposive forms of nature and how much this disparages our order, the Analytic of the Sublime chooses to guide the reader through the corridors of the rational-moral dimension and apply its intellectual focus to it. There is, certainly, a legitimate excess of reason, i.e., our capacity to transcend the influences of the sensible, something Kant also insists upon.[48] However, there is what the sublime says about us (as Kant intended), and then what the non-sublime reveals about us, notwithstanding Kant. And although reason may prove its capability to go beyond every standard of sense and, as such, to overcome inadequacy, this is only possible by escaping the sensible.[49] In other words, it does not happen within the sensible realm. The only self-preservation [*Selbsterhaltung*] available for us, Kant himself clarifies, is of quite another kind ["*von ganz anderer Art*"] than a physical one.[50] As natural beings [*Naturwesen*], there is only insufficiency [*Unzulänglichkeit*] and physical powerlessness [*physische Ohnmacht*].[51] Regarding this world, inadequacy is and will remain ineluctable. Reason may abandon sensibility but the sensible realm does not go away, and actually neither does our presence within it. Therefore, not only reason's sufficiency is not all-encompassing, but this makes us wonder: is reason truly independent as the theory of the sublime claims it is? For if sensibility has to be abandoned, if the door has to be closed to the formless objects that exert violence on our faculties (and to imagination in its unbounded ways, as we shall see afterwards), then a banning of existence (at least, of one of its ways of being) is being executed for our own sake. Since this desertion of the sensible is in conformity with reason, the sublime can be read as the validation of the negation of the sensible.

[47] To reference only a few passages: on the formless objects, cf. Ak. 5:244, 247, 249, 279, 280; on inadequacy: cf. Ak. 5:245, 250, 252, 255; on the violence [*Gewalt*] exerted on imagination, cf. Ak. 5: 245, 259.
[48] Cf. Ak. 5:246, 257, 258, 261, 268.
[49] Cf. Ak. 5:246, 261-2.
[50] Cf. Ak. 5:261.
[51] Cf. Ibid.

Paradoxically, in its aim to underscore our supersensible nature, the Analytic of the Sublime highlights what it strives to overshadow: the intractable excess of the sensible, that which overwhelms our faculties, including reason, to the point of choosing to abandon it. With the non-sublime, the sensible realm reveals that it has not been entirely dealt with. Unlike the judgments of knowledge, of morality, and of the beautiful, the sublime—though by way of the non-sublime—shows that the sensible remains a challenge, yet a stimulating one. Another understanding of the sensible realm indeed emerges. What is the path chosen by Kant (but not just by him)?

c. The true scope of the Kantian sublime

Contrapurposive, the sensible messes up our plans, our expectations, our need of order. In the face of our unsurmountable defeat, a window is desperately opened towards "our nature". It is, indeed, more so a window than a door, because being only a feeling, the sublime offers only a view. Being aesthetic, nothing can be built upon. In any case, with the sublime, our *propium* lies outside. Kant, it's true, characterises the theory of the sublime as a mere appendix,[52] since, compared to the beautiful, it is far less important and rich in consequences. However—and this is explicit in his text—such a depiction of the sublime pertains to the purposiveness *of nature*. As the section of the sublime progresses, it becomes clear that the sublime is about the purposiveness of *our* nature, of our moral vocation.[53] And even though it is only an alternative and less consequential one than the moral law for affirming our rational nature, it is still more decisive within Kant's system than the accordance with the world that the beautiful suggests, for it pertains the possibility of a supersensible nature. Even though it provides no solid ground upon which we could build something further, the sublime fulfils, though partially (and awkwardly), that intellectual craving, or at least it makes possible for us to feel some reassurance in the face of our unsurmountable inadequacy.

When exploring the sublime, two different scopes of the theory of the sublime become apparent. The first is the more familiar and narrower one, the one circumscribed to the formless objects capable of doing violence to our imagination. Second, the one that encompasses the whole sensible realm. Certainly, the sublime is awakened, not by just any object, but by the ones that potentially threaten our safety, i.e., the first scope is what

[52] Cf. Ak. 5:246.
[53] Cf. Ak. 5:269.

seems to be supported by the Analytic of the Sublime. This narrower view is, in any case, pertinent, since through the contrast with the possibility of our harm, an important aspect of the sublime is outlined. Against such magnitudes and forces, our helplessness in the physical realm is undeniable.[54] It could therefore be argued that the sublime is what allows us, if not to physically preserve ourselves, at least to keep our humanity unharmed.[55] However, the sublime does more than provide us with this sort of safe space or panic room in the face of what presents itself as, to say the least, distressing. Its function is greater. The worth of the sublime, and Kant hardly ceases to remind us, is to show us our independence from the influences of nature,[56] that is, from the sensible in its entirety, and not just this or this other unsettling object. Kant's approach of the sublime seems aimed at confirming the gulf between nature and freedom. Therefore, it can be suggested that the true scope of the theory of the sublime, extends beyond its common description, beyond those specific (and disturbing) entities capable to precipitate the arousal of the feeling of the sublime. The sublime encompasses the whole sensible realm. It is Kant himself who puts it like this when he explains that for the sublime to take place, we must abandon sensibility.[57] Contrary to what appears to be—an aesthetic subject of limited reach, namely those very rare occasions when nature presents formless forms that disrupt our otherwise, if not harmonious, at least uneventful, relationship with the surrounding world—when one considers what the Analytic of the Sublime aims to convey and what this says about how we view ourselves, about our place in the sensible realm, about our relation with it, the sublime contains much more than an "aesthetic theory".

d. The Kantian loophole (or That other contribution to art and literature)

First (apparently) felt and judged as negative, inadequacy reveals itself afterwards as what is actually properly adequate: it is only appropriate for us to be insufficient within the sensible.[58] Thus, a very palpable inadequacy,

[54] Cf. Ak. 5:261.
[55] Cf. Ibid.
[56] Cf. Ak. 5:269.
[57] Cf. Ak. 5:246.
[58] Cf. Ak. 5:245, 268. Viewed in the context of his entire philosophical journey, the gulf preventing the reconciliation between both spheres—an ambition of the pre-Critical Kant— later served as a relief, as it demonstrated the superiority of our nature. However, this idea requires further development, which would distract us from our current focus.

instead of being fully accepted, is transformed into something that suits us. What is more, it is precisely what proves a more elevated adequacy[59] than the one between us and the world. Not only the failure of our imagination is in accordance with the law of reason[60] but it is what allow us, within the sensible and through the effect of the contrast with the capacity of reason, to "reach" the supersensible. Thus, the fact of not belonging, the gulf between our nature and the place we dwell, which otherwise would be a source of tribulation, conversely attests our independence and superiority; a higher adequacy.

Now, isn't that one of the threads weaving through what constitutes the Romantic hero? (Because Romanticism is not the subject of this article, I allow myself to set aside the rich details of the development of this current, as well as Kant's intense battle against the *Sturm und Drang*). The crucial matter of an inescapable inadequacy being explained/reshaped by the belief or the idea of a more suitable and proper belonging that is however of another nature, that matter, and attached to the term "sublime", can be found conceptually crafted in Kant. Within Romanticism, though, it won't pertain to every human being. In Romanticism, another gulf is indeed dug, this time amongst humans, for this belonging to another nature will only apply to a select few. The Romantic hero's inadequacy in regard to the world, which translates into suffering and/or rebelliousness, lies in the fact that the laws pertaining to society, and therefore, to every man, do not apply to him, which does not mean that he is bound to no principle, but that the ones governing him are of another order, which in turn explains his social maladjustment.

The Kantian contribution to this narrative is the distinct outlining of the abyss between realms and the attribution of a more noble meaning to this gulf, something which Romanticism radicalised. To put it in very simple terms: the world will never agree with us, but it couldn't be any other way. The sentiment of not belonging, the inadequacy manifesting itself over and over again, whether through a tragic fate or an outlaw's life, does not render the Romantic hero's existence illegitimate or wrong. As a matter of fact, it is the reverse: as with the Kantian sublime, there is a higher adequacy that relies precisely on a fracture. There is then a truth that suits the Romantic hero, but it resides, like the sublime, solely within him. Tragedy cannot but unfold, but it is precisely this that confirms his more elevated nature.

[59] Cf. Ak. 5:269.
[60] Cf. Ibid.

However different they may be—especially if one considers Kant's rejection of both passion and the pretension to immediately connect with the sacred—Kant's sublime and Romanticism follow the same thread, the nurturing of the narrative of our meaning, of our distinction, of our belonging to a nature that is more elevated than the simple surrounding world. In contrast to a world that appears contrapurposive to our capacities and our needs, the concept of the sublime is conversely (and suspiciously) perfectly fitting. Such approaches mute the world. What the non-sublime emphasises, on the contrary, is not us (our capacities, our vocation) but the immeasurable variety of the sensible. The non-sublime makes the world emerge.

It is therefore what is discarded from the sublime that constitutes the best contribution, not to what preserves our supersensible vocation from any intrusion and subsequent harm coming from the sensible, but to that which feasts on the wreckage of any set ideas orienting, and therefore, fixing the limits of our minds: art. By privileging the non-sublime, we go from the negation of the sensible to the opening of the infinite within the finite.

3. The condemned door: imagination's zestfulness and art as a playground

By (over)exposing inadequacy to underscore the distinct nature of our moral vocation, Kant simultaneously points to a door he carefully seals: that of the ungovernable aspect of the sensible realm with its overflow of forms (hence, a sort of infinite) that our faculties cannot help but leave undetermined. Within the theory of the sublime, confronted with forms that appear unmasterable, unmanageable, and unruly, we close the door to the "formless"—that is, to what does not align with our narrative. This is precisely what the non-sublime reveals: the excess of the finite sensible world, a diversity of nature that does not seek to be made sense of and that will not submit to us. The manifold elements of the sensible persistently overflow over the bounds we set in place for our cognitive benefit. After all, why should we expect our faculties to measure up to this tangle of singular pluralities that is existence? In any case, if our faculties do give up, it is only regarding our particular thirst for mastering what is presented to them. Mastering the sensible world is, however, a fiction of the intellect. Yet, another way of dealing with the world is possible. And this is where art and literature come into play.

In a 2002 interview, Chilean novelist Benjamin Labatut characterised literature as the "older, crazy sister of science".[61] He argued that because it is not tied down to any set idea of the truth, literature has a freedom that science and philosophy cannot afford. As such, with no obedience having to be rendered, literature (and by extension, art) can engage with the wrong, false and impossible. Certainly, Labatut's depiction of literature suggests that "crazy" does not mean (or not only) merely disturbed, but rather unconcerned with truth. Is it pertinent to contrast this view with Kant's thought? At first, glance, certainly not. Significant conceptual differences hinder any rigorous contrast.

First, the sublime is "a satisfaction of reason" [*Wohlgefallen der Vernunft*].[62] Second, it is a feeling that, within a Kantian framework, is by no means equated with passion. Kant is, indeed, unequivocal: passion "can never, in any circumstances, be called sublime".[63] In fact, even affectlessness or "*apatheia*" (*Affektlosigkeit*) is, according to him, closer to the sublime.[64] Furthermore, freedom, according to Kant, means rationally determined.[65] Our commonsensical view of freedom may deem this a negative version of freedom because of the self-restrain it imposes over our inclinations. However, within Kant's thought, the moral law is, on the contrary, a positive account of freedom.[66] It is rather in the speculative realm where Reason is constrained, having to limit itself to an immanent use. And concerning affects, passion, in complete opposition to what freedom suggests, is an oppressive force.[67] Far for opening the door to passion, Kant's understanding of freedom is related to the capacity of not been subjected to exterior forces, for such subjection would derail us from the law of reason. In brief, freedom does not equate to lack of constraints.[68] On the contrary, pretending to be able to see something beyond all bounds of sensibility is nothing but delusion. Kant is rather explicit: "if enthusiasm [*Enthusiasm*] can be compared with the delu-

[61] Louisiana Channel, 2022. *"Writing should give access to the world." Writer Benjamín Labatut* [Accessed: 2024-3-25]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohsQ3WtdWoM&t=43s

[62] Ak. 5:272.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Cf. Ibid.

[65] Cf. Doran, R., 2015. *The Theory of the Sublime. From Longinus to Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[66] Cf. Ibid., p. 187.

[67] Cf. Ak. 5:275.

[68] There is certainly a play in the experience of the beautiful, but only within boundaries of what is understood as freedom. The pleasure that we take from the beautiful relies, indeed, on the objects appearing adequate [*angemessen*] to our faculties.

sion of sense [*Wahnsinn*], the visionary rapture [*Schwärmerei*] is to be compared with the delusion of mind, the latter of which is least of all compatible with the sublime […]."[69] In other words, the path undertaken by imagination when unbounded and unbridled is deemed worthless by Kant. Enthusiasm may be considered less negatively than *Schwärmerei,* but is still regarded as incompatible with the sublime. Enthusiasm is unreined [*zügellos*], *Schwärmerei* is unruled [*regellos*].[70] One being blind, the other deranged, neither could be considered, in the slightest, sublime. What is, in any case, compelling, is Kant's "passion" for what must be barred. It is as if Kant was pointing to the door that leads to a playground.

Kant neither ignores nor conceals the possibility of deviations. In particular, with regard to the deviation he most firmly rejects—*Schwärmerei*—it is not only present here in the third *Critique*, but also throughout his corpus. To such an extent, that it could be argued that Kant has a "repressed fascination"[71] for it, and that—being that what he fights against—it is the "guiding thread" of his entire work.[72] From this, I want to suggest a parallel between *Schwärmerei*—a deviation of our faculties—with the non-sublime, i.e., the forms that deviate from our determinations. Similarly to *Schwärmerei*, the "forms left undetermined" is a matter Kant returns to more than once. The concern behind the third *Critique*—i.e., "what is left undetermined"—[73] is indeed not new. Having already dealt in the first *Critique* with the manifold of the sensible—that is, with forms that had to be determined—in the second *Critique* Kant affirms that "the moral law determines that which speculative philosophy had to leave undetermined".[74] In a way, his philosophical itinerary appears to be a continuous chasing of those forms, with the non-sublime resisting that rational urge and remaining indeterminate and undeterminable. As a result—as previously indicated—the non-sublime will be abandoned.

[69] Ak. 5:275. Only to not modify the source, we maintain Paul Guyer's translation of "*Schwärmerei*" as "visionary rapture". We agree with Karsten Harries in deeming inadequate to translate it to "fanaticism", for it corresponds to a more common use of the word, which in this case, does not entirely suit what Kant is convening. However, as Kant himself was ambivalent with the use of the word, we opt for keeping the German word.

[70] Cf. Ak. 5:275.

[71] Allouche-Pourcel, B., 2010. *Kant et la Schwärmerei. Histoire d'une fascination*, ibid., p. 14.

[72] Cf. Ibid. Since we do not have sufficient space for this discussion, we recommend this book for it explores a fundamental point to consider to better understand Kant: the legitimate need to combat *Schwärmerei*.

[73] Ak. 5:180.

[74] Ak. 5:47.

Now, if there is an overflow of the forms of existence, there is also the overflow of imagination: the defiant and zesty side of imagination. Just as with the unruly forms of the sensible, Kant may discard and invalidate those deviations, the reality of their possibility is nonetheless admitted. Indeed, within the well outlined framework of the properly sublime, Kant cannot help but underline imagination's propensity to stretch beyond its limits. Understandably, whatever lies beyond the law of reason is dismissed. But is this exclusion legitimate?

Being the supersensible the chosen aim to fulfil, imagination is bound to fail. By definition, it cannot attain the idea of reason.[75] Imagination's striving towards infinity is, as expected, depicted as "vain" [*vergeblich*].[76] And yet, its effort [*Bestrebung*] to go beyond its limits is stressed by Kant.[77] Imagination, Kant affirms, strives towards infinity.[78] Imagination, therefore, demonstrates, not only to be vigorous but also to be autonomous, as it tends to go against what purportedly corresponds to its nature, whether by pursuing the unattainable demands of reason or derailing into delusion. In brief, imagination is not, by nature, subservient. It is reason that assigns it a limited function. Certainly, from Kant's perspective, imagination is merely "an instrument of reason's idea",[79] and as such, its failure serves as evidence of its conformity to rational law. From another perspective, however, imagination has a disregard for the law, hence its readiness to ignore and push through its limits. Its effort is vain only within a framework that considers that every effort should be fulfilled. Within such framework, no playful expenditure of energy is allowed. However, not having a claim, imagination does not have a duty to fulfil. It is reason that has the claim to absolute totality,[80] i.e., a finished form. Despite being disregarded, or rather dismissed, there is an undeniable and lively interaction between our senses, our imagination and our empirical surroundings, that is, with the world. By the time reason is awakened by inadequacy, imagination has already begun engaging with the sensible, and in its eagerness, it pays no attention to the possibility of even derailing into delusion. However, is it really delusion? The non-sublime exposes that it is the world that puts up a resistance to our attempts to organise it and make it subservient to us.

[75] Cf. Ak. 5:268.
[76] Cf. Ibid.
[77] Cf. Ak. 5:252, 255, 257, 258, 269.
[78] Cf. Ak. 5:250, 253.
[79] Ak. 5:269.
[80] Cf. Ak. 5:250.

Conclusion

Indisputably acknowledged, the non-sublime exposes a rich terrain that ultimately is unexplored. Kant's three *Critiques* suggest that his thought was particularly concerned with what was left undetermined by our faculties. If his philosophical work subsequently undertook the path towards resolving that challenge (the reflective judgment aims to make sense of the diversity of the sensible world), his latest attempt,[81] the Analytic of the Sublime, exposes through the non-sublime—that is, its photographic negative—its ultimate defeat. Kant, indeed, does not conceal the sensible's capacity to disrupt our configurations. He nevertheless seals that door (as well as the door to imagination's other possibilities that fall outside its conformity to reason), in favour of the beforehand well-established rational order. In contrast, the non-sublime opens a space where neither obedience nor dominion is required, where the sensible—unsettling forms included—is vigorously affirmed. The playground behind the condemned door is a place where *Unangemessenheit* is welcome, as art feasts on dislocated forms and, furthermore, provokes their dislocation. Unconcerned with the rational imperative to assert dominance over everything that surround us, art and literature can deal with what reason can't. Or rather, art and literature free us from our urge to exercise a dominion over everything.

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[81] If Michel Souriau and Giorgio Tonelli are correct in asserting that the Analytic of the Sublime was one of the last (if not the final) texts written for the Third *Critique* (cf. Tonelli, G., 1954. La formazione del testo della Kritik der Urteilskraft. *Revue internationale de philosophie* 8(30), p. 434), then the theory of the sublime is quite telling of Kant's concern (and defeat) regarding what is "left undetermined".

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Reconciliation and Recalcitrance in the Philosophy of Tragedy after Kant: Schelling, Heidegger, Schürmann

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Abstract: Kant had little to say about tragedy, whether as a literary genre or as a description of the human condition. Yet, it was thanks to his insights into the sublime and the antinomy of freedom and nature that the young Schelling was able to place tragedy at the center of the philosophical enterprise. In this paper, I contend that the post-Kantian philosophy of tragedy begins with Schelling's conception of the tragic as a model for reconciliation and ends with Heidegger's and especially Reiner Schürmann's conception of the tragic as an irreconcilable feature of being.
Keywords: tragedy, reconciliation, double bind, Schelling, Heidegger, Schürmann

> "The hero of tragedy, one who nonetheless calmly bears all the severity and capriciousness of fate heaped upon his head, represents for just this reason that *In-Itself*, that Unconditioned and Absolute itself in his person. [… He] is only the symbol of the infinite, of that which *transcends all suffering*."
> —Schelling[1]

> "*Beyng* itself is 'tragic.'"
> —Heidegger[2]

> "this nomic monster: the originary, and in that sense ultimate, disparity of legislation-transgression. This is the tragic double bind."
> —Schürmann[3]

[1] Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*. Schelling, K. F. A., ed. Stuttgart: Cotta, I/5, p. 467 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*. Ed. and trans. D. W. Scott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 89 (modified).
[2] Heidegger, M., 1975–. *Gesamtausgabe*. 102 volumes. Frankfurt: Klostermann, p. 417 / Heidegger, M., 2017. *Ponderings VII–XI: Black Notebooks 1938–1939*. Trans. R. Rojcewicz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 325.
[3] Schürmann, R., 2019. *Tomorrow the Manifold: Essays on Foucault, Anarchy, and the Singular-*

Immanuel Kant had little to say about tragedy, whether as a literary genre or as a description of the human condition. Yet, it was thanks to his insights into the sublime and the antinomy of freedom and nature that the young Schelling was able to place tragedy at the center of the philosophical enterprise. Philosophy after Kant has been, will or nil, a philosophy of tragedy. As Dennis Schmidt has written: "while Schelling makes the rejuvenation of the question of tragedy an explicit matter, it is Kant who makes this return inevitable […]. [T]he predominance, if not the complete domination, of the question posed by the idea of the tragic in the past two centuries is owing to the work of Kant."[4]

By "philosophy of tragedy," I mean several things: (1) the recognition that tragedy is an exemplary site for addressing philosophical problems; (2) the view that philosophy, at various points in or even throughout its entire history, has had a tragic character, in which case we might speak instead of the "tragedy of philosophy"; (3) the question of whether the tragic character of philosophy is ineradicable, and (4), if not, whether this might have something to do with the status that philosophy accords—or fails to accord—to tragedy. Might tragedy, or better, *the tragic*, be the *Sache*, the very matter, of philosophy? Further, what happens to the tragic when philosophy attempts to grasp it? Is it overcome? Or is any pretension of overcoming not itself hubristic, hence a constitutive element of the tragedy of philosophy? But what else can we do? Is it possible to think of being as irreconcilably conflicted, yet without purporting to resolve the conflict in the very thinking of it? These questions, which set the stakes of the philosophy of tragedy after Kant, can be summarized in the following alternative: is the tragic a model for *reconciliation*, or is it rather an irreconcilable feature of being, hence inherently *recalcitrant* to resolution?

Now, I obviously cannot tell the whole story of the philosophy of tragedy after Kant, for that would, if what I said above is true, amount to telling the complete story of philosophy after Kant. Nor, in this paper, can I discuss all or even many of the most prominent protagonists of this tale. Instead, I will concentrate on what I take to be the beginning and end of the post-Kantian philosophy of tragedy, namely, Schelling's *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795) and *Philosophy of Art* (1802–1803), on the one hand, and Heidegger's private manuscripts from Nazi Germany and, even more so, Reiner Schürmann's *Broken Hegemonies* (1997), on the other hand. These

ization to Come. Rauch, M. F. – Schneider, N., eds. Zurich: Diaphanes, p. 125.

[4] Schmidt, D. J., 2001. *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 74.

texts (by the early Schelling, on one side, and by Heidegger and Schürmann, on the other) represent not only the beginning and end of this tradition but also, as I will show, the two prongs of the alternative of reconciliation or recalcitrance.

Before I begin, some terminological distinctions are in order. In what follows, I will refer to the literary genre as *tragic drama*. I will use the word *tragedy* to describe a catastrophic event. And *the tragic* will signify a conflicted state or condition (whether epistemological, ontological, or anthropological). When reconcilable, I will characterize the tragic as *transfiguring*. Both the transitive and intransitive uses of "transfigure" should be heard in participial adjective of phrase "the transfiguring tragic." The tragic solves other problems, thereby transfiguring them (transitive). But it can also transfigure (intransitive) or, as one would more commonly say in English, transfigure itself (reflexive) in the process, indeed to the point of no longer being tragic.[5] "Transfiguring," despite its awkwardness, also has the advantage over synonyms such as "transforming" and "transmuting" in connoting the Transfiguration of Jesus (*Verklärung Christi*). Karl Jaspers has claimed there is no such thing as Christian tragedy, since the "chance of being saved destroys the tragic sense of being trapped without chance of escape."[6] It will be necessary to ask whether the proponents of the conciliatory model of the tragic are ultimately too tied, however knowingly, to the Christian paradigm to do justice to the tragic itself. In their work, the tragic would be but a figure for something else, something more akin to a Divine Comedy.

When irreconcilable, I will characterize the tragic as a *double bind*. Gregory Bateson's definition in "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia" (1956), which the Oxford English Dictionary records as the earliest known usage of the phrase in English, is helpful, although, with Schürmann, I will extend its scope beyond the realm of psychopathology. For there to be a double bind, Bateson maintains that there must be a "primary negative injunction," a "secondary injunction conflicting with the first," and a "tertiary negative injunction prohibiting the victim from escaping from the field."[7] In other words, there must be not only two conflicting laws, but a third law proscribing flight, resolution, or even appeal to higher jurisdiction. The third law says: *tertium non datur*, there is no third option.

[5] The OED (s.v. "transfigure") gives this example from Browning for the rare intransitive use: "He no genius rare Transfiguring in fire, or wave, or air, At will."

[6] Jaspers, K., 1947. *Von der Wahrheit*. Munich: Piper, p. 924 / Jaspers, K., 1952. *Tragedy Is Not Enough*. Trans. H. A. T. Reiche, H. T. Moore, and K. W. Deutsch. Boston: Beacon, p. 38.

[7] Bateson, G., 1987. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, pp. 206 – 207. OED, s.v. "double bind."

I. The Transfiguring Tragic in the Early Schelling

In 1795, the young Schelling began work on a series of philosophical letters that would soon appear in a journal coedited by Fichte and Niethammer. These letters, which challenge both Kantian-Fichtean criticism and Spinozist dogmatism, have been said to "herald," after over two millennia of neglect, "the return of tragic art as an ineluctable question for philosophy."[8] The reason for this return of tragic drama at the end of the eighteenth century was the inadequacy of philosophy, as a rational enterprise, to show the unity of freedom and necessity, of idealism and realism, of subject and object, of critical and dogmatic systems, in the absolute. Of such unity, which can be seen as an attempt to overcome both the third antinomy and the ontological limitation of freedom as a mere postulate of practical reason in Kant, Schelling writes in the ninth letter:

> He who has reflected upon freedom and necessity has found for himself that these two principles must be *united* in the absolute: *freedom*, because the absolute acts by unconditional autonomy, and *necessity*, because it acts, precisely for this reason, only according to the laws of its own being, the inner necessity of its essence. […] Absolute freedom and absolute necessity are identical.[9]

In Schelling's view, ancient Greek tragic drama is capable of doing what philosophy, whether critical or dogmatic, cannot. (In his *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling will explain what is distinctive about this form of tragic drama in contrast to both modern tragic drama and other poetic genres. Drama, of which tragic drama is a species, is a synthesis of freedom and necessity, whereas lyric poetry is merely subjective and represents only freedom and epic poetry is merely objective and represents only necessity. Comedy, the other species of drama, is inadequate because it fails to stage the conflict of freedom and necessity. Modern tragic drama is inadequate because it internalizes fate.[10]) If the ninth of the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* ends with the suggestion of an unending quest for the absolute, the tenth shows precisely where it is realized, namely, in tragic drama, which Schelling identifies both as "the highest in art" and, particularly in

[8] Schmidt, D. J., 2001. *On Germans and Other Greeks*, ibid., p. 73.

[9] Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/1, pp. 330 – 331 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1980. *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794–1796)*. Trans. F. Marti. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, p. 189 (modified).

[10] For more on these distinctions in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art*, see Young, J., 2013. *The Philosophy of Tragedy: From Plato to Žižek*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 75 – 80.

the 1802–1803 *Philosophy of Art*, as "sublime" (thereby confirming the Kantian background, if not the solution, to the problem).

First, a quotation from the tenth of the *Letters*:

> Many a time the question has been asked how Greek reason could bear the contradictions of its tragedy. A mortal, destined by fate to become a criminal and himself fighting *against* this fate, is nevertheless appallingly punished for the crime, although it was a work of destiny! The *ground* of this contradiction, that which made the contradiction bearable, lay deeper than one would seek it. It lay in the contest between human freedom and the power of the objective world in which the mortal must succumb *necessarily* if that power is absolutely superior, if it is a *fatum*. […] It was a *grand* thought [*ein* großer *Gedanke*], to suffer punishment willingly even for an *inevitable* crime, so as to prove one's freedom by the very loss of this freedom, and to go down with a declaration of free will.[11]

Schelling is referring to Oedipus here. In contrast to Aristotle, who considered the protagonists of successful tragic drama to be neither wholly virtuous nor wholly vicious but instead to perish due to *hamartia megalē* or "a great error" in judgement (*Poetics* 1453a16), Schelling considers Oedipus (like Christ) to be blameless.[12] Oedipus is freest when he accepts his unmerited and irreversible downfall. He thereby, Schelling believes, allows for an aesthetic intuition of the unity of freedom and necessity in the absolute. In the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), Schelling will explain that this sort of intuition is nothing other than an "intellectual intuition [that has] become objective."[13] Art, in particular ancient Greek tragic drama, thus grants us intuitive knowledge of that which, according to Kant, transcends the bounds of experience and thus of what can be known. Indeed, in the first *Critique*, Kant had declared intellectual intuition (i.e., an apprehension of the noumena unmediated by space and time as forms of sensibility and by the categories of the understanding) to be, as such, impossible for human beings.

[11] Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/1, pp. 336 – 337 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1980. *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge*, ibid., pp. 192–93 (modified).

[12] See the later discussion in Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/5, p. 695 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*. Ed. and trans. D. W. Scott. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 252.

[13] Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/3, p. 627 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1978. *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*. Trans. P. Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, p. 231. "Intellectual" is Schelling's later correction of "transcendental."

Schelling's recourse to intellectual intuition is not, as I suggested earlier, the only aspect of his understanding of tragic drama that is at once indebted to and seeks to go beyond Kant. In the *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling develops his interpretation of Oedipus, this time connecting it more explicitly to the sublime as articulated in Kant's third *Critique*:

> *Misfortune* obtains only as long as the will of necessity is not yet decided and apparent. As soon as the protagonist himself achieves clarity, and his fate lies open before him, there is no more doubt for him, or at least there should not be. And precisely at the moment of *greatest* suffering [*im Moment des* höchsten *Leidens*] he enters into the greatest liberation and greatest dispassion [*Leidenslosigkeit*]. From that moment on, the insurmountable power of fate, which earlier appeared in absolute dimensions [*absolut-groß*], now appears merely relatively great, for it is overcome by the will and becomes the symbol of the absolutely great, namely, of the sublime attitude and disposition [*Gesinnung*]. […] [T]hat this guiltless guilty person accepts punishment voluntarily—this is the *sublime* in tragedy [*das* Erhabene *in der Tragödie*]; thereby alone does freedom transfigure itself [*verklärt sich*] into the highest identity with necessity.[14]

Several things should be noted here. First, Schelling's phrase *absolut-groß* is taken directly from the third *Critique*, where Kant uses it to describe the sublime as immeasurable and incomparable: "If […] we call something not only great, but simply, absolutely great, great in every respect (beyond all comparison), i.e., sublime [*schlechthin, absolut, in aller Absicht (über alle Vergleichung) groß, d. i. erhaben*], then one immediately sees that we do not allow a suitable standard for it to be sought outside of it, but merely within it."[15]

Second, Schelling initially appears to follow Kant in associating the sublime with Oedipus's disposition. In Kant's view, the sublime does not, properly speaking, refer to an object, despite the frequency with which one may, via "subreption," judge a natural phenomenon, e.g., an erupting volcano or a sea storm, to be sublime.[16] Rather, the experience of such

[14] Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/5, pp. 698 – 699 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1989, *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., pp. 254–55. Schelling does reference the sublime once in the tenth *Letter*: "The invisible power is too sublime [*zu erhaben*] to be bribed by adulation; their [the ancient Greeks'] heroes are too noble to be saved by cowardice. There is nothing left but to fight and fail." Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/1, pp. 337 – 338 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1980. *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge*, ibid., p. 193.

[15] Kant, I., 2009. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Klemme, H. F., ed. Hamburg: Meiner / Kant, I., 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Guyer, P., ed. Trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 5:250.

[16] Ibid., 5:257.

things points instead to the sublimity (*Erhabenheit*, from the German *erheben*, "to elevate") of the "disposition of the mind in estimating [them]," that is, to the elevation (*Erhebung*) of the mind over nature.[17] However, Schelling goes on to locate the sublime in the tragic drama *itself*, thereby de-subjectivizing it.

Third, this shift from the subject to the object is also a shift from nature (as experienced by the subject) to art, which was at best secondary for Kant, if it could even be called sublime.

Finally, and now turning to my main concern in this paper, Schelling's conception of tragic drama here is fundamentally *conciliatory*, which could also be said of Kant's project, despite the merely regulative use of reason.[18] Recalling his *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, Schelling writes that the synthesis of freedom and necessity in the hero's acceptance of his fate is "the innermost spirit of Greek tragedy," "the only genuinely *tragic* element [*das einzig wahrhaft* Tragische] in tragedy," and "the basis for the reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] and harmony [*Harmonie*] residing in them [i.e., Greek tragic dramas], the reason they do not leave us devastated but rather leave us healed and, as Aristotle says, cleansed [*uns nicht zerrissen, sondern geheilt, und … gereinigt zurücklassen*]."[19] It should come as little surprise that Schelling goes on to discuss Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, where the Erinyes are pacified and Orestes is acquitted. Further, Schelling's use of the verb *verklären* ("transfigure") in the earlier quotation from the *Philosophy of Art* ("thereby alone does freedom transfigure itself into the highest identity with necessity") suggests less the self-blinding of Oedipus at Thebes than his apotheosis at Colonus. And what, for Schelling, the blind, elderly Oedipus sees is not the tragic nature of being but rather reconciliation, harmony, "perfect indifference [*vollkommene Indifferenz*]," and

[17] For the paronomasia in Kant, see ibid., 5:262.

[18] As K. Kerimov writes in his critique of Andrew Cooper's book *The Tragedy of Philosophy*: "Tragedy must in Kant's account give way to moral and epistemic optimism. […] Kant's response to tragedy is an overcoming of it, one that is accomplished with reference to the principle of purposiveness and, more importantly, the moral argument for God's existence. Consider Kant's response to Moses Mendelssohn's pessimism about progress in human history, which is one of the very few places that Kant uses the term 'Trauerspiel' in his corpus. Kant writes: 'To watch this tragedy [*Trauerspiel*] [i.e., of human history] for a while might be moving and instructive, but the curtain must eventually fall. For in the long run it turns into a farce; and even if the actors do not tire of it, because they are fools, the spectator does.' Does not [contra Cooper] Kant appear as a deeply and explicitly anti-tragic thinker judging by this passage?" Kerimov, K., 2019. [Review of] Andrew Cooper, *The Tragedy of Philosophy: Kant's* Critique of Judgment *and the Project of Aesthetics*. *Philosophy Today* 63(2), pp. 540 – 541.

[19] Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/5: 697 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., 254 (modified).

the very "equilibrium [*Gleichgewicht*]" that, Schelling claims, "is the ultimate concern [*die Hauptsache*] of tragedy."[20] Here *höchste Leidenslosigkeit* reigns, the "highest dispassion" or, more literally, the "highest lack of suffering."[21] When, on an unnamed mountaintop, Christ anticipates his great suffering at Golgotha, he too gives a sign of its transfiguration: "There in their presence he was transfigured [μετεμορφώθη, *ward verklärt*]: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). The tragic in the early Schelling is basically Christian—hence, one could argue, untragic.

To be sure, my focus on the transfiguring tragic in early Schelling is not meant to stand in for Schelling as a whole, although I might note that Schelling's stress on God's containment of the unruly ground within himself and on Christian eschatology in, for example, the *Freedom Essay* has a similarly conciliatory outcome, even if he gives more weight there to disorder and disease at the outset.[22] One can certainly find traces of what David Krell has called a "tragic absolute" throughout Schelling's tormented corpus.[23] But it is remarkable that the inception of the "philosophy of the tragic," which Peter Szondi locates in Schelling's *Letters* (in contrast to a "poetics of tragedy" beginning with Aristotle), is not about the tragic *nature* of being or of the human being. It is not about a tragic double bind. Rather, Schelling "subscribes," in Szondi's words, "to the idealistic faith that believes it has the tragic under its power and that acknowledges it only because it has discovered a meaning in it: the assertion of freedom. Accordingly, [Schelling] sees the tragic process in *Oedipus Rex* as significant not in itself, but only in view of its telos. […] [T]he possibility of a purely tragic process was alien to him."[24]

[20] Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/5: 699 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., 251, 255. Such reconciliation seems hardly "agonal" or "monstrous," as Das nevertheless contends in *The Political Theology of Schelling*, chapter 6.

[21] See the block quotation above. See also Schelling, F. W. J., 1856–1861. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ibid., I/5: 467 / Schelling, F. W. J., 1989. *The Philosophy of Art*, ibid., 89, partially quoted already in the first epigraph: "The courageous person engaged in a struggle with misfortune, a struggle in which he neither wins a physical victory nor capitulates morally, is only the symbol of the infinite, of that which *transcends all suffering* [über alles Leiden *ist*]. Only within the maximum of suffering can that principle be revealed in which there is *no* suffering, just as everywhere things are revealed only in their opposites."

[22] See Moore, I. A., 2024. The Divine Stakes of Human Freedom: Jonas in Dialogue with Schelling. *Kabiri: The Official Journal of the North American Schelling Society* 4, pp. 113 – 129.

[23] See Krell, D. F., 2005. *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, especially chapter 6.

[24] Szondi, P., 1978. *Schriften I*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, pp. 151, 159 / Szondi, P., 2002. *An Essay on the Tragic*. Trans. P. Fleming. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 1, 8 – 9.

II. The Tragic Double Bind and Its Transfiguration in Heidegger

I will now leap ahead to the end of the transfiguring tragic in the twentieth century. One could, no doubt, find contributions to this end in intermediate figures such as Hölderlin and Nietzsche. Space constrains me to leap over them, however, and go right to Heidegger.

Heidegger has a fair amount to say about tragic drama as a form of poetry in which being is founded or instituted, that is, as a way in which a world is opened up and sustained for a people or epoch. He also considers the fate of Western metaphysics as a kind of tragedy.[25] Here, however, I will concentrate on the few occasions that concern less tragic drama than the tragic as a condition of being. These remarks (and indeed his serious engagement with tragic drama more broadly) are almost entirely confined to the years of Nazi Germany. Much could be said about this, but I will leave aside the fraught relation between Heidegger's biography and his thinking. My contention is that, although Heidegger lays the groundwork for, and begins to develop, the tragic double bind, in the end he shrinks back from it.

First, some evidence in Heidegger in favor of the tragic double bind. Although he does not explicitly associate it with the language of the tragic, an important passage in support of the tragic double bind in Heidegger, one that will be crucial for Schürmann in *Broken Hegemonies*, can be found in §146 of Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (1936–1938). This section deals with *Seyn* or "beyng" and *Nichtseyn* or "not-beyng." (Both of these words are written with an archaic "y" instead of an "i" in order to mark their difference from "metaphysics" in Heidegger's pejorative understanding of the word, that is, their difference from the approach to being that understands it as an entity or in terms of entities. Heidegger sometimes uses the term "beingness" to refer to the mistaken way in which being itself is understood in this approach.) Heidegger writes:

> Because the "not" [*das Nicht*] belongs to the essence of beyng […], beyng likewise belongs to the "not." In other words, what has genuinely the quality of the "not" [*das eigentlich Nichtige*] is the negative [*das Nichthafte*] and is in no way whatever mere "nothingness" [*das bloße "Nichts"*] as the latter is grasped through the representational denial of something. […] Out of the uniqueness of beyng there follows the uniqueness of the "not" that belongs to it and thus the uniqueness of

[25] See, for example, Heidegger, M., 1975–. *Gesamtausgabe*, ibid., GA 95: 236 / Heidegger, M., 2017. *Ponderings VII–XI*, ibid., pp. 182 – 183.

> the other. / The one *and* the other compel for themselves [*erzwingen selbst sich*] the either–or as first. / But this apparently most general and emptiest distinction [namely, "*either* something *or* nothing"] has to be recognized as one that is such only for the interpretation of beingness [and not for non-metaphysical beyng].[26]

The belonging together (but not identity) of beyng and not-beyng here can be understood as a variation on other conflictual twofolds in Heidegger, such as the strife of world and earth in, for example, the work of art, of unconcealment and concealment in *a-lētheia*, and of appropriation (*Ereignung*) and expropriation (*Enteignung*) in the event (*Ereignis*). In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger is trying to think of the truth of beyng as *constitutively* conflictual, as *zerklüftet* or "fissured" *at the very origin* (and not, say, as the result of a *lapsus* or *kenōsis*). As he puts it in the final section of the manuscript (later rearranged for publication), connecting it to the task of the human to inhabit this fissure: "What compels […] is only that about the event which cannot be calculated or fabricated—in other words, only the truth of beyng. Blessed is whoever may belong to the wretchedness of its fissure [*Selig, wer der Unseligkeit seiner Zerklüftung zugehören darf*]."[27] One way of understanding "the other beginning" in Heidegger is precisely in terms of this strange beatitude: the other beginning occurs when one no longer dreams of wholeness and simplicity, when one plants oneself not on solid ground but in the gap of an abyss, when one, as Heidegger notes of the *incipit tragoedia* of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, says "'yes' to the extreme 'no.'"[28]

Yet there is another current running through Heidegger's discourse, one that pushes him away from the tragic toward harmony, gentleness, repose, serenity, and conciliation. This is not to say that the twofold character of beyng disappears. But it is purified of conflict. I do not find it

[26] Ibid., GA 65: 267–68 / Heidegger, M., 2012. *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Trans. R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 210. Schürmann nevertheless leaves out the object in his translation of the penultimate sentence: "The one *and* the other are binding." Schürmann, R., 2019. *Tomorrow the Manifold*, ibid., p. 134.

[27] Heidegger, M., 1975–. *Gesamtausgabe*, ibid., GA 65: 416 / Heidegger, M., 2012. *Contributions to Philosophy*, ibid., p. 329. Schürmann renders *Das Zwingende […] des Ereignis* as "the event alone is binding" (Schürmann, R., 2019. *Tomorrow the Manifold*, ibid., p. 149). He contends that Heidegger is here "speaking of the tragic event in its disparate pull of appropriation-expropriation" (ibid.), and that "these words from the last section of the *Contributions* […] sum up the tragic condition […] which Heidegger paid so dearly to discover" (Schürmann, R., 2017. *Des hégémonies brisées*. 2nd ed. Zurich: Diaphanes, p. 672 / Schürmann, R., 2003. *Broken Hegemonies*. Trans. R. Lilly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 583).

[28] Heidegger, M., 1975–. *Gesamtausgabe*, ibid., GA 6.1: 251 / Heidegger, M., 1991. *Nietzsche: Volumes One and Two; The Will to Power as Art, The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*. Trans. D. F. Krell. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2:32.

a coincidence that the German words for tragedy and the tragic almost entirely disappear from Heidegger's writings after the war. (The one exception I can think of associates "the essence of tragedy [= the tragic]" with a *Verwinden* or "surmounting" of "disorder."[29]) Yet it should be noted that Heidegger was already hesitant about the terminology of tragic in the 1930s. Moreover, his frequent association of the tragic not just with downfall, but with a subsequent, superior beginning calls into question its insuperability.

To show this, four passages will have to suffice. The first can be found in one of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* from 1938–1939. Initially, he asks whether the contemporaneous lack of interest in "realms of decision" means "that being has withdrawn from beings, whereby a *katastrophē* into its (beyng's) abyss has become unimaginable." "Catastrophe" here is taken literally and positively, as a "turning downward," not as a calamity. It is what enables a proper relation to beyng. Heidegger can accordingly call beyng tragic ("*Beyng* itself is 'tragic'"), but only in the sense that "it begins out of the downgoing qua abyss [*Untergang als Ab-grund*] and tolerates such beginnings only as that which does justice to its truth."[30]

The second passage comes from Heidegger's manuscript *Besinnung*, composed in the same years as the aforementioned *Black Notebook*. It links this downgoing more explicitly to the history of metaphysics "from [Ancient Greek] *phusis* to the 'eternal return' [in Nietzsche]," a history in which, incidentally, he also includes "'tragic poetic works' [*'tragischen Dichtungen*'] hitherto" as "perhaps mere forecourts, because in accordance with their belongingness to the metaphysics of the Occident, these poetic works poetize beings, and only indirectly do they poetize beyng." Heidegger begins by defining "'the tragic'" (again in scare quotes). It resembles the previous definition; only, now the "beginning" becomes more of an Aristotelian *telos*. That is to say, the beginning is at once the basis and goal of the movement of history: "If we see the essence of the 'tragic' as consisting in the beginning being the ground of the downgoing, and the downgoing being not an 'end' but rather the rounding of the beginning, then the tragic belongs to the essence of being." However, since this structure of beginning–downgoing–beginning is intelligible without recourse to the language of the tragic, Heidegger suggests dropping the term.[31]

[29] Ibid., GA 5: 357–58 / Heidegger, M., 1984. *Early Greek Thinking*. Trans. D. F. Krell and F. A. Capuzzi. New York: Harper and Row, p. 44.
[30] Ibid., GA 95: 417 / Heidegger, M., 2017. *Ponderings VII–XI: Black Notebooks 1938–1939*, ibid., p. 325 (modified).
[31] Ibid., GA 66: 223–24 / Heidegger, M., 2006. *Mindfulness*. Trans. P. Emad and T. Kalary. New

The third passage comes from a different *Black Notebook*, composed sometime between 1939–1941. The topic is again how to understand downgoing, but here Heidegger rejects the tragic. He also uses two terms for the beginning that point in the direction of the pacification of conflict and in the direction of a different notion of the other beginning than the one I alluded to earlier. These two terms are *still*, "silent/still/tranquil," and *einfach*, "simple":

> Two essentially different kinds of "*downgoing*" are now not only possible, but necessary: downgoing in the sense of nonconformity with the "time" of the consummation of modernity, a lagging behind on account of a refusal to participate in machination, and, on the other hand, downgoing as disappearance into the concealedness of another beginning. The latter downgoing bears all the traits of the first one and yet is in advance and constantly different—by no means a "heroic" and "tragic" downgoing, but instead only the most silent and simplest one on the basis of the affiliation to being in the midst of the abandonment by being of the beings disporting themselves only in machination, and by no means a downgoing laden with regret and sorrow [*Trauer*].[32]

Finally, in a lecture course from Summer Semester 1943, Heidegger goes so far as to associate the tragic with the will to will, which marks the culmination of metaphysical machination: "The increasingly shrill cry for 'perceptibility' passes from the comic directly into becoming a sign of the tragic—that is, the sign of a will which, while it wills itself, in fact only wills against itself and counteracts itself and thereby even perceives itself as 'logical.'"[33]

Heidegger, in short, moves from a tragic double bind, though the transfiguring tragic, to the abandonment of the tragic as a—let alone *the*—matter for thought.

III. The Tragic Double Bind in Schürmann

In 2011, French philosopher Mehdi Belhaj Kacem called Reiner Schürmann's posthumously published *Broken Hegemonies* "the greatest philosophy book of the last 25 or 30 years," adding that its author was "the greatest

York: Continuum, pp. 197–98 (modified).

[32] Ibid., GA 96: 180 / Heidegger, M., 2017. *Ponderings XII–XV: Black Notebooks 1939–1941*. Trans. R. Rojcewicz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 142.

[33] Ibid., GA 55: 138–39 / Heidegger, M., 2018. *Heraclitus: The Inception of Occidental Thinking and Logic: Heraclitus' Doctrine of the Logos*. Trans. J. G. Assaiante and S. M. Ewegen. London: Bloomsbury Academic, p. 104.

Heideggerian of the 20th century. His thinking is the most negative, the darkest in the history of philosophy, which is why he is no longer read, and why he must, in my opinion, be read."[34] What is so dark about this book is its unflinching stress on the insuperably tragic condition of both being and the human being, which Schürmann understands in terms of a double bind between, at the level of being, appropriation and expropriation and between, at the level of the human being, natality and mortality. The ultimate task of *Broken Hegemonies* is to rehabilitate this tragic double bind through, among other things, a critical analysis of the "hegemonic fantasms" under which the West has lived since antiquity. Hegemonic fantasms are, in each case, ultimate, simple norms for all legitimate thought, discourse, and action. They are hegemonic because totalizing, and fantasmatic because deluded about their scope. Schürmann describes the task of *Broken Hegemonies* as follows:

> With the exterminations [in the death camps] still alive in our memories and planetary asphyxiations already in our throats, the ease with which a whole age nonetheless continues to graze, as if nothing had happened, is enough to leave one perplexed. To think is to linger on the conditions in which one is living, to linger at the site we inhabit. Thus to think is a privilege of that epoch which is ours, provided that the essential fragility of the sovereign referents becomes evident to it. This assigns to philosophy, or to whatever takes its place, the task of showing the tragic condition beneath all principle-based [*principielle*] constructions [i.e., beneath what Schürmann will soon call "hegemonic fantasms"].[35]

Here, I will not focus on Schürmann's effort to find a tragic double bind at work in the various hegemonic fantasms throughout history and in the writings of those who contributed to their rise and fall. I do, however, want to note that, despite numerous problems with Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philososphie: Vom Ereignis*, and despite the near absence of the language of "tragedy" and "the tragic" in it,[36] Schürmann finds in Heidegger's so-called second magnum opus the closest attestation of the tragic double bind as Schürmann understands it: "In this work, Heidegger pursues the

[34] Kacem, M. B., Zahm, O., 2011. Interview. *Purple* S/S 15. [Accessed: 2024-08-10]. Available at: https://purple.fr/magazine/ss-2011-issue-15/mehdi-belhaj-kacem-4/.
[35] Schürmann, R., 2017. *Des Hégémonies brisées*, ibid., pp. 9, 13 / Schürmann, R., 2003. *Broken Hegemonies*, ibid., pp. 3, 6 (modified).
[36] The word *tragisch* does not appear, and the two references to *Tragödie* are elliptical. See Heidegger, M., 1975–. *Gesamtausgabe*, ibid., GA 65: 360, 374 / Heidegger, M., 2012. *Contributions to Philosophy*, ibid., pp. 284, 296.

question of being qua being and answers it (although not in exactly these words) by interpreting being itself as the one originary double bind."[37] Yet Schürmann does not register the late Heidegger's retreat from the tragic, believing instead that Heidegger, like Oedipus at Colonus, had learned his lesson.

To appreciate Schürmann's understanding of the tragic double bind (which he also calls "the legislative tragic") and how we might learn to live in the face of it, I will focus instead on two models Schürmann develops in the general introduction to his magnum opus. The first comes from the tragic dramas of ancient Athens, the second from a far less likely context, namely, debates in physics over the being of certain substances (electromagnetic energy, quantum-scale objects).

Although, for Schürmann, Oedipus exemplifies the hero of "tragic logic," whose "empty and black globes see the double bind admitting of no reconciliation, superelevation or synthesis,"[38] Agamemnon is the most important figure in helping us to appreciate tragic denial, by which I mean both denial of the tragic and the tragic implications of this denial or what I had earlier referred to simply as tragedy. For, the disparity of the double bind that Agamemnon faces is more pronounced than those faced by the other heroes of tragic drama.

Agamemnon was the leader of the Achaeans in the Trojan War. After the Trojan prince Paris abducted Helen, i.e., the wife of Agamemnon's brother Menelaus, the brothers gathered a vast army to get her back (to say nothing of other motives such as territorial expansion, the plundering of wealth, curiosity in the case of Odysseus, etc.). Before sailing across the Aegean Sea to what is now Western Turkey, the army assembled in the Greek port-town of Aulis in ancient Boeotia. Artemis, goddess of childbirth and the hunt, delayed the voyage by sending unfavorable winds, either because of the deaths that would follow and of all those who would thus be unborn (as recounted in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, lines 134–38) or because Agamemnon had killed a sacred stag in her sacred grove and boasted about it (as told in Sophocles's *Elektra*, lines 558–72). Calchas, the *stratomantis* or seer for the army, prophesied that a sacrifice would have to be made in turn, namely, that of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia. The Greek leader was therefore left with a clear choice: act either for the sake of

[37] Schürmann, R., 1994. A Brutal Awakening to the Tragic Condition of Being: On Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*. Trans. K. Blamey. In: Harries, K. – Jamme, C., eds. *Martin Heidegger: Art, Politics, and Technology*. New York: Holmes & Meier, p. 90.
[38] Ibid.

what was believed to be the largest army ever assembled, that is, for what one might call the Greek universal, backed as it was by Zeus himself, or for the sake of his sole daughter Iphigenia, that is, for the singular.

At first, in a passage cited by Schürmann as an epigraph to the section of the general introduction on "The Birth of the Law from the Denial of the Tragic," Agamemnon recognizes the bind he is in: "Cruel is my lot," he exclaims, "if I rebel; but it is just as cruel if I must sacrifice my child, the jewel of my house, and, at the altar, soil my fatherly hands with the bloody flood gushing from a slaughtered virgin. Is there a course that does not spell misery?"[39] Note, first, the equality of options here: one is *just as bad* as the other. Thus calculation, the weighing of alternatives, the search for models to imitate, are all moot. At this point, Agamemnon's question can only be taken as rhetorical. Either course spells misery.

Comfort, at least, might be had in the search for causes and the assignation of responsibility. Perhaps, if we are to take Sophocles's version of the story seriously, Agamemnon shouldn't have shot the stag. Perhaps Helen should have stayed home. Perhaps Paris should have refused to decide which goddess was the fairest. Perhaps Eris shouldn't have thrown the apple of discord. Perhaps the Olympians should have invited her to the party. Perhaps Tantalus shouldn't have tried to feed his son to them to test their omniscience. Wouldn't that have saved his distant descendent Agamemnon? The search for causes is the philosopher's way out. It has, Schürmann maintains, long been a copout. It is noteworthy that Agamemnon does not go there. It would do nothing to change his situation.

But where he goes only makes it worse. Agamemnon proceeds by asking another question, again rhetorical, but this time, only one side in the dispute is named: "How can I fail in my duty to the alliance and thus become a deserter of the fleet?"[40] The answer is, *you cannot*. For no question about failing his daughter follows. Rather, her claim is forgotten, and Agamemnon deems himself right to kill her, *without qualification*: "If this sacrifice, this virginal blood, shackles the winds, one can with ardor, proud ardor, desire it without fault."[41] Here, Agamemnon blinds himself to the tragic double bind, thereby giving rise to numerous catastrophic events (= tragedies), including his own death at the hands of his wife ten years later. The lesson Schürmann wants us to take from this is not that

[39] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, lines 205–211, as cited in Schürmann, R., 2017. *Des Hégémonies brisées*, ibid., p. 38 / Schürmann, R., 2003. *Broken Hegemonies*, ibid., p. 26.
[40] Aeschylus, 1950. *Agamemnon*. Fraenkel, E., ed. Volume 1. Oxford: Clarendon, lines 212–13.
[41] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, lines 214–18, as cited in Schürmann, R., 2017. *Des Hégémonies brisées*, ibid., p. 39 / Schürmann, R., 2003. *Broken Hegemonies*, ibid., p. 27.

we can avoid the tragic double bind but that tragedy results precisely from attempting to do so**,** whether, with Agamemnon, one adheres only to the universal or, with nominalists, transgressivists, and a host of postmodernists, one adheres only to the singular.

What Schürmann offers is not a way out, but various ways in which to see the split at the heart of reality. Schürmann's reading of *Agamemnon* is one such way. Another is his use of Heinrich Hertz's work on electromagnetic energy to explain how he understands the difference between a contradiction (French *contradiction*, German *Widerspruch*) and a differend (French *différend*, German *Widerstreit*).

Hertz had experimentally proven James Maxwell's equations of electromagnetism, thereby demonstrating, for example, that magnets affect iron-containing objects in their vicinity not instantaneously but only at the speed of light. What, however, was the precise nature of the forces that Hertz's apparatuses were able to capture? Were they, as physicists still wonder with respect to quantum-scale objects today, waves or particles? Rather than tormenting himself with the search for a solution at the ontological level, Hertz was eventually content to work with both models, which proved equally useful: "A magnetic field with a given force X results from waves traveling at frequency Y"; "a magnetic field with a given force X results from corpuscles displaced at velocity Z."[42] The contradiction was not resolved for him; it was merely "eliminated" as a problem plaguing the mind. Take this quotation from Hertz, which Wittgenstein had considered using as the epigraph to the *Philosophical Investigations*: "Even after these painful contradictions have been eliminated, the question of being will not have been answered; but the mind, no longer tormented, ceases to ask this question it considers unjustified."[43]

Some conflicts can in fact be resolved by the clarification of language use (or by new evidence, such as that in support of the undulatory character of electromagnetic energy). Schürmann, following Hertz and Wittgenstein, calls these resolvable conflicts "contradictions." Other conflicts cannot be so resolved. Schürmann calls these conflicts "differends," extending their usage beyond physics (for which they may not be appropriate anyway; after all, the case is not closed on wave–particle duality in quantum mechanics today) and beyond questions of communication (for which Jean-François Lyotard used the term) into metaphysics.

[42] Schürmann, R., 2017. *Des Hégémonies brisées*, ibid., p. 42 / Schürmann, R., 2003. *Broken Hegemonies*, ibid., p. 29.
[43] Cited in Schürmann, ibid., p. 38 / p. 26.

Although he discusses many differends throughout *Broken Hegemonies*, perhaps the most relevant and wide-reaching is the differend between the universal and the singular, which Schürmann contrasts with the universal/particular pair. During the reign of "hegemonic fantasms," all individuals are deemed to fall under the sway of a maximal universal. They are "particulars" *of* it. What is not supposed to, and yet invariably does, fall outside that universal is a "singular" in Schürmann's terminology:

> A fantasm is hegemonic when an entire culture relies on it [*s'y fie*] as if it provided that in the name of which to speak and act. Such a chief-represented (*hêgemôn*) works upon the unspeakable singular when it calls it a part of a whole; hegemonies transform the singular into a particular. They serve to say what is, to classify and inscribe, to distribute proper and common nouns. [...] Life is paid for by denying the singular; or in the vocabulary of apriorism: by subsuming it under the figure of the particular. Now, what then would become of principles if the singular obliterated by the subsumptive fantasms were to be reaccredited? Would not an inextricable double bind [*double prescription*] follow?[44]

Note that the reaccreditation of the singular does not deny the claim of the universal and affirm an extreme form of nominalism in its stead; it denies the claim of the universal to be all-encompassing. Although, as I said, he offers no way out—indeed, the presumption of escape is one of the problems—Schürmann does believe that this conflict can be coped with (which is not to say it can be resolved) by learning how *not* to deny "[t]ragic truth, the truth of the *differend*."[45]

We thus arrive at the antipodes of the early Schelling's post-Kantian reconfiguration of the tragic as conciliatory, harmonious, and free of suffering. For Schürmann and, to some extent, Heidegger, the tragic is, rather, irredeemably recalcitrant, disharmonious, and something we must suffer whether we like it or not. Schürmann nevertheless asks us to face and learn from it, not to overcome it, but to live in accord with it. He even wonders, at the end of *Broken Hegemonies*, whether we might be able to love the ultimate double binds of appropriation and expropriation, natality and mortality, universalization and singularization:

> It is […] possible to enlarge one's way of thinking beyond the fantasied common […], possible to think for itself the double bind that we know. With eyes

[44] Ibid., p. 15 / p. 7.
[45] Ibid., p. 40 / p. 28.

> opened by the hubristic sufferings that our age has inflicted on itself—as Oedipus at Colonus wants [*veut*] his eyes open and who thought of [*se veut*] his eyes as open—is it possible to love the ultimates in differend?[46]

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[46] Ibid., p. 724 / p. 631. For helpful comments on an earlier draft, the author would like to thank Henrique Carvalho Pereira, Francesco Guercio, David Farrell Krell, and Nicolas Schneider. Portions of this paper were presented at Charles University and Brown University. My thanks also to the participants for the fruitful discussions.

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Kant: Borges and Beckett, Where Reason and the Ineffable Coexist

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the way in which Kant's thought influenced the writing of Jorge Luis Borges and Samuel Beckett. The former occasionally mentioned Kant, almost in bewilderment; the latter hardly ever, and yet Beckett's intense interest in Kant is demonstrable in his "*Philosophy Notes*" from the 1930s. In both cases, we are left with a practice of writing between infinity and finitude, where reason and everything that withdraws from our ultimate knowledge of the world co-exist.

Keywords: Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges, Epistemology, Immanuel Kant, Literature, Paradox

This paper will focus on the way in which Kant's thought influenced the writing of Jorge Luis Borges and Samuel Beckett. It will examine how his ideas impacted these two very different writers' reflections on our place in a world that fails to provide absolute answers.

Now, while Borges' oeuvre consistently engaged with the kind of metaphysical questions that pertained to what Kant called "dogmatic metaphysics," Beckett's emphasized the limits of our knowledge given our embodied finitude. Both writers, fair to say, found Kant's work difficult to understand. The former occasionally mentioned Kant, almost in bewilderment; the latter hardly ever, and yet Beckett's intense interest in Kant is demonstrable in his "*Philosophy Notes*" from the 1930s.[1] In both cases, we are left with the practice of writing between infinity and finitude, where reason and the ineffable coexist.

[1] Of the five hundred pages in his "*Philosophy Notes*" on philosophy in general (ancient Greek philosophy, Platonism, medieval philosophy, modern philosophy, including German idealism, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche), Beckett dedicated 172 pages to Kant alone and 20 to The Thing-in-itself, which he often abbreviated as TII.

Jorge Luis Borges and Infinity

Jorge Luis Borges' work belongs to world literature, much like that of Kafka, and for certain Continental philosophers—such as Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, and Baudrillard—it also belongs to the realm of philosophy.[2] However, in relation to our topic, while Beckett's notebooks contain countless references to Kant, Borges only makes a handful of mentions of him. However, I want to argue that the number of references does not tell the full story. Borges' favorite philosophers, based on the number of mentions, were Berkeley, Schopenhauer, Zeno, and Hume, in that order. What intrigued Borges above everything else were questions of ultimate reality and time, and their connection, of course, to writing.

As early as 1923, with the publication of his first book, *Fervor of Buenos Aires,* a book of poetry about his native city, Borges focused on the notions of time present and time past, on memory, and the "reality" of space. This is significant because while Borges understood that the "Buenos Aires" of the book was his "Buenos Aires" and no one else's, that Buenos Aires seemed to exist for him in a Heraclitean universal time, outside of subjectivity. In a 1932 essay, "The Penultimate Version of Reality," he declared: "I return to metaphysical consideration. Space is an incident in time and not a universal form of intuition, as Kant imposed" ("Discusión", p. 200, my translation).[3] At this point in his life, still under the sway of his literary mentor, Macedonio Fernandez, Borges felt a certain unease about abandoning metaphysics, which brings us to Kant's notion of space and time and its significance for rethinking metaphysics.

Here is what Kant famously wrote in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> Both [time and space] taken together are, namely, the pure forms of all sensible intuition, and thereby make possible synthetic a priori propositions. But these a priori sources of cognition determine their own boundaries by that very fact (that they are merely conditions of sensibility), namely that they apply to objects only so far as they are considered as appearances, but do not present things in themselves. Those alone are the field of their validity, beyond which no further objective use of them takes place (p. 166, A39/B56).

[2] Borges plays a major role in Deleuze's concept of seriality in *The Logic of Sense*, while for Lyotard and Baudrillard he is an important figure in his questioning of scientism and aesthetic realism.

[3] All page references to Kant, Beckett, and Borges will henceforth appear in parentheses; all other references will be given in footnotes.

What Kant did here was to remove us from the abstraction of absolute time and space, and place time and space within us by conceiving of them as "conditions of sensibility." In other words, he replaced the "transcendental realism" of Newton with his own "transcendental idealism." According to this view, whatever we can say or experience of the world results from the very structure of our minds, which imposes certain schemas upon the objects of perception—i.e., appearances—beyond which we have no access. Yet what fascinated Borges was not the limits of pure reason, but rather the possibility of thinking the unknowable—the old metaphysical questions of Being, and cosmic time and space. This fascination is evident from the very beginning, as seen in a poem like "Break of Day" from *Fervor of Buenos Aires*, where Borges hopes that the city of Buenos Aires exists in universal time and space and is not merely an object of the mind. He writes:

> I recalled the dreadful conjecture
> of Schopenhauer and Berkeley
> which declares that the world
> is a mental activity,
> a dream of souls,
> without foundation, purpose, weight, or shape (p. 23).

He will, in later years, find solace in the Berkeleyan notion that objects persist in existence outside the human mind because there exists a transcendental entity, namely God, who, by perceiving them, also sustains their existence.[4] But it will be in essays and stories such as "A New Refutation of Time," "The Perpetual Race of Achilles and the Tortoise," "Avatars of the Tortoise," "Death and the Compass," "The Library of Babel," and "Funes, His Memory" where Borges will delve into the metaphysical themes for which he is known. These include questions concerning time: eternal and circular; space: infinite and periodic; and the limits of reason as a labyrinthine adventure.

Now, if we begin with "A New Refutation of Time," which is two essays in one, even the title already presents a series of problems, begin-

[4] "Schopenhauer speaks of the dreamlike essence of life, and for Berkeley, universal history is a long dream of God who creates and perceives it infinitely," wrote Borges in the prologue to the Italian writer and journalist, Giovanni Papini's (1881 – 1956) books: *The Tragic Everyday, The Blind Pilot, Words and Blood* published in one volume in Spanish (*On Mysticism* 103). Incidentally, Beckett also wrote a review of the English translation of Papini's book *Dante Vico* entitled "Papini's Dante" (*Disjecta,* pp. 80 – 81). But where Borges had nothing but praise for Papini, Beckett had nothing but criticism for his bombastic, impressionistic style.

ning with the very word "new"; for if time is, as Borges wants to at least partially claim, universal and transcendent, then time cannot be refuted. For Borges, temporality is a slice of time, and to refute that is to refute our very existence. As such, writing, as a manifestation of our being, "is so saturated and animated by time that, quite possibly, not a single line in all these pages fails to require or invoke it," writes Borges (p. 318). If writing is like Escher's drawing of a hand drawing itself, which reminds us of the impossibility of negating identity in time, then its opposite, say of a hand erasing itself, would amount to the same thing. Interestingly, Borges in both versions of the essay, A and B, cites Berkeley's famous assertion that *esse est percipi*, or the notion that nothing exists outside a mind. He interprets Berkeley's notion of the "succession of ideas in my mind" as an affirmation of the existence of time, for clearly, the idea of succession contains the idea of time. On the other hand, a few pages later, he writes:

> I deny, in a large number of instances, the existence of succession. I deny, in a large number of instances, simultaneity as well. The lover who thinks "While I was so happy, thinking about the faithfulness of my beloved, she was busy deceiving me," is deceiving himself. If every state in which we live is absolute, that happiness was not concurrent with that betrayal. The discovery of that betrayal is merely one more state, incapable of modifying "previous" states, though not incapable of modifying their recollection. Today's misfortune is no more real than yesterday's good fortune (p. 322).

In short, as he says, "every instant is autonomous" and unique within time, but "if time is a mental process, how can it be shared by countless, or even two different men?" he asks, almost as if suggesting a possible answer, something akin to Kant's, which, on the other hand, he seems reluctant to accept. And yet, later, he writes: "All language is of a successive nature; it does not lend itself to reasoning on eternal, intemporal matters" (p. 324). This is reminiscent of what Kant states in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* about language, wherein he writes:

> All language is signification of thought and, on the other hand, the best way of signifying thought is through language, the greatest instrument for understanding ourselves and others. Thinking is speaking with oneself (the Indians of Tahiti call thinking "speech in the belly"); consequently, it is also listening to oneself inwardly (by means of the reproductive power of the imagination), (p. 86).

The point here—as with Borges—is the simple assertion that language is the external means by which we communicate the interiority of thought. Interestingly, Kant even seems to locate language in the body, as if to highlight its limited reach. And insofar as writing is also a form of listening to oneself—an aspect of self-reflection—it becomes a product of the "reproductive power of the imagination." That, according to David E. Johnson in his article "Kant's Dog," is precisely the problem for Kant. Johnson writes:

> We understand ourselves, our thought, through language, which always comes to us from another and which always necessarily points away from itself in pointing toward thought. Yet, Kant explains, such understanding, which can never be immediate self-understanding, because the condition of possibility of understanding is time—that is, designation, referral—is never secure…[5]

But, of course, it is not secure; we can hear Borges answer. Nothing is secure. We have language because we don't have access to things themselves. The role of language, inseparable from the imagination, is to produce or create truths and/or fictions: images of thought, as Deleuze might say. The Kantian distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal world, was for Borges the recognition that the mind functions 1) in terms of series, 2) binary oppositions or antinomies, and 3) synthetically, or what was the same for him, metaphorically and symbolically. The analytic proposition of identity (A is A) and the principle of non-contradiction or excluded middle were dead ends. In fact, what fascinated Borges about paradoxes was that they served him as examples of the infinity of thought; infinity here understood as conundrums of thought. In his short story, "Funes, His Memory," he imagines a character, Funes, who "literally" exemplifies the opposite of what John Locke held to be either impossible or pointless: a language "in which each individual thing—every stone, every bird, every branch—would have its own name" (p. 136). Borges writes:

> The truth was, Funes remembered not only every leaf of every tree in every patch of forest, but every time he had perceived or imagined that leaf. He resolved to reduce every one of his past days to some seventy thousand recollections, which he would then define by numbers. Two considerations dissuaded him: the realization that the task was interminable, and the realization that it was pointless (p. 136).

[5] Johnson, D. E., 2004. Kant's Dog. *Diacritics* 34(1), p. 32.

Borges then goes on to tell us that Funes "was incapable of general Platonic ideas," so he was not able to see, for instance, "that the generic symbol 'dog' took in all the dissimilar individuals of all shapes and sizes. It irritated him that the 'dog' of three-fourteen in the afternoon, seen in profile, should be indicated by the same noun as the dog of three-fifteen, seen frontally" (p. 136). In other words, Funes was incapable of thinking conceptually. He was the exemplar of "particulars" without universals, which in itself is also a pointless abstraction. He lacked the "transcendental schematism" to which Kant refers in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Obviously, Borges, without ever mentioning the name of Kant, was inspired, if that is the word, by Kant's posing of such an epistemological/metaphysical problem concerning particulars and universal. In the *Critique* Kant writes:

> The concept of a dog signifies a rule in accordance with which my imagination can specify the shape of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any single particular shape that experience offers me or any possible image that I can exhibit in concreto. This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty. We can say only this much: the **image** is a product of the empirical faculty of productive imagination, the **schema** of sensible concepts… (p. 272, B181).

Now, while Kant distinguishes between image as a product of the imagination and schema as that of "sensible concepts," Borges does not. He agrees with Kant that it is due to the imagination that my "dog" is not such a particular abstraction so that when I see my dog a second later, I can recognize it, but he does not agree with Kant that this is solely due to the understanding, devoid of any empirical content. For Borges, the understanding and the imagination are always conceived together. In his essays "The Perpetual Race of Achilles and the Tortoise" and "Avatars of the Tortoise," Borges takes on Zeno's famous paradox concerning non-movement. In the first, he deals with philosophers' treatment of the paradox, ending with Bergson and James, after which he ironically concludes:

> I have reached the end of my article, but not of our speculation. The paradox of Zeno of Elea, as [William] James indicated, is an attempt upon not only the reality of space but the more vulnerable and sheer reality of time. I might add that existence in a physical body, immobile permanence, the flow of an afternoon in life, are challenged by such an adventure. Such a deconstruction, by means of one only one word, infinite, a worrisome word (and then a concept),

> we have engendered fearlessly, once it besets our thinking, explodes and annihilates…Zeno is incontestable, unless we admit the ideality of space and time. If we accept idealism, if we accept the concrete growth of the perceived, then we shall elude the *mise en abíme* of the paradox (p. 47).

And in "Avatars of the Tortoise" he writes:

> It is venturesome to think that a coordination of words (philosophies are nothing more than that) can resemble the universe very much. It is also venturesome to think that of all these illustrious coordinations, one of them – at least in an infinitesimal way – does not resemble the universe a bit more than the others. I have examined those which enjoy certain prestige; I venture to affirm that only in the one formulated by Schopenhauer have I recognized some trait of the universe. According to this doctrine, the world is a fabrication of the will. Art – always – requires visible unrealities. Let it suffice for me to mention one: the metaphorical or numerous or carefully accidental diction of the interlocutors in a drama. . . Let us admit what all idealists admit: the hallucinatory nature of the world. Let us do what no idealist has done: seek unrealities which confirm that nature. We shall find them, I believe, in the antinomies of Kant and in the dialectic of Zeno (pp. 207 – 208).

In short, Zeno's paradox is an example of a series of antinomies: beginning/end; motion/stasis; divisibility/indivisibility; finitude/infinity, etc., and it is by thinking it in such terms that the "dialectic of Zeno" can be understood. And again, this is precisely the aspect of metaphysics that interested Borges. Where Kant had mocked Swedenborg's "metaphysical pretensions" and his mystical visions, Borges had nothing but admiration for him. Not because Swedenborg presented scientific truths but rather because through writing, he attempted to do what Kant found objectionable in dogmatic metaphysics: pretend to transcend phenomena. For Borges, then, writing was an expression of speculative metaphysical questions, an attempt to say the ineffable. And in this way, books were transcendental vessels, each of which reflected some aspect of totality. At the end of "The Library of Babel," Borges writes: "The library is unlimited but periodic. If an eternal traveler should journey in any direction, he would find after untold centuries that the same volumes are repeated in the same disorder—which, repeated, becomes order: the Order. My solitude is cheered by that elegant hope" (p. 118). Now, where there is hope in Borges of someday establishing some relationship with the noumenal world (even as thought experiments) there is little to none in Beckett. Where the former emphasized the notion of infinity, the latter underscored that of finitude: ten-

sions that lie at the very heart of Kant's philosophy: critical, practical, and aesthetic. And Didi and Estragon wait for Godot.

Samuel Beckett and Finitude

"The entire works of Kant arrived from Munich. I had to go away beyond the Gare de l'Est to collect them. I haven't had the time to open them, two immense parcels that I could hardly carry from customs to taxi," wrote Beckett to his friend, the Irish poet and critic, Thomas McGreevy on the 5th of January of 1938. The complete works of Kant were comprised of eleven volumes, the last volume, a monograph by Ernst Cassirer, entitled *Kant's Life and Thought*, which Beckett would consult time and again throughout the 1930s. In fact, most of the notes concerning Kant came from three primary sources, as can be seen in the *"Philosophy Notes"* as well as in the "Whoroscope' Notebook". These sources were Wilhelm Windelband's *A History of Philosophy* and Jules de Gaultier's *From Kant to Nietzsche*.[6]

What is interesting is the way in which Beckett's reading of Kant impacted his writing almost from the very beginning. Not much differently than Borges, Beckett would occasionally disavow the importance of philosophy in general for him. But this was clearly not the case as *"Philosophy Notes"* patently proves. He often expressed frustration with their convoluted arguments that seemed to him to go nowhere, as we will note later. In any case, philosophy in general, rationalists and idealists like Descartes and Berkley, and Kant in particular provided him with material that he would turn into a very unique kind of philosophical literature.

In "Tristesse Janale," a poem written in French sometime in the 1930s, Beckett explores the sadness of looking to the past or the present, evoking the dual-faced Janus. He equates the beauty of Pierre Louÿs' fictional Bilitis from *Songs of Bilitis* with Kant's *thing-in-itself*: "Le Chose kantienne, l'icone bilitique" (*Collected Poems,* p. 44) or "The Kantian Thing, the Bilitis-like icon" (my translation). This idealized beauty remains an unattainable ideal in a world marked by dualities, where "fierce ecstasies" devolve into "convulsions of filth". And in an untitled poem that begins with "ainsi-a-t-on beau" ("so it goes"), Beckett explores similar themes. Here is a translated excerpt from the poem:

[6] Beckett read Windelband's *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1935) in German and *Gaultier's De Kant à Nietzsche* (1900) in French. See the chapter, "Philosophy" in Van Hulle, D., Nixon, M. *Samuel Beckett's Librar*y. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 128 – 169.

> as if it were yesterday one recalled the mammoth
> the dinotherium the first kisses
> the glacial periods bringing nothing new
> the great heat of the thirteenth of their era
> over smoldering Lisbon Kant coldly bent (p. 98).

And here once again, we encounter a series of dualities: the ice age juxtaposed with the warmth of first kisses, the fires caused by the great earthquake of 1755 in Lisbon where between thirty and forty thousand people died, and Kant's cold response to the earthquake. This reference to Kant and the Lisbon earthquake came directly from Cassirer's *Kant's Life and Thought*.[7] According to Cassirer, the earthquake that had precipitated the debate between Rousseau and Voltaire on the question of whether this was "the best of all possible worlds" made Kant look for rational justifications for it.[8]

Yet all these factoids, while somewhat fascinating, are rather trivial. They are only significant as starting points. Much worthier are the connections between Kant and Beckett at the level of the latter's writing and worldview. A case in point is Beckett's second novel, *Watt*, a deeply philosophical novel that in many ways engages with the idealist philosophical tradition, including Berkeley, Descartes, and especially Kant.

The title is also the name of one of the characters, though it would be difficult to call Watt the "protagonist" of the story, as he doesn't seem to stand for anything in particular. He is, in fact, a "what?"—a question mark—who goes to work for a Mr. Knott, a man with many servants. Though I would not want to push the analogy too far, P.J. Murphy in his essay "Beckett's Critique of Kant" suggests that where Watt could be associated with the interrogative pronoun, Knott could be associated with the negative adverb "not" and by extension with Kant and can't. "The Kantian negatives concerning what man could and could not know are dramatized in the journey of Watt to take up a position as a servant at Mr. Knotts establishment. Kant/Knott is itself a double negative whereby Beckett punningly sorts 'can't' from 'cant,' the knowable from the unknowable," writes

[7] Cassirer, E., 1981. *Kant's Life and Thought*. Trans. James Haden. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 59.

[8] In the *"Whoroscope" Notebook* (verso 97) John Pilling points out, Beckett had made the following note concerning Kant: "Kant's exact description of Westminster Bridge (without never having set foot outside of Prussia)" (p. 45). This was Beckett's reference to a passage in Cassirer's *Kant's Life and Thought* (p. 46). While Cassirer intended this as praise for Kant's imaginative powers, Beckett's parenthetical remark, "without never having set foot outside Prussia," appears to be a critique of Kant's philosophical abstractions.

Murphy.[9] But unfortunately, here we are still at the surface.

More significantly is the episode of the bell that keeps on ringing in Erskine's room, Mr. Knott's gardener. When Watt, like a Borgesian detective, goes to investigate, he finds that there is indeed a bell in Erskine's room, but that it is broken, which only adds to the mystery: how could a broken bell have sounded? Watt becomes exasperated. His failure to locate the source of the bell's sound represents his failure to fulfill his duties, to know where everything is, and to maintain order in Mr. Knotts' house. This failure to know, to arrive at some indubitable knowledge, Beckett tells us, mirrors our own existential and epistemological failures. Just as Watt cannot understand the mysteries of Mr. Knott's household, we, too, struggle with the limits of our knowledge and the incomprehensible nature of reality, reflecting a deeply Kantian perspective on human understanding and its limitations. Beckett writes:

> And so always, when the impossibility of my knowing, of Watt's having known, what I know, what Watt knew, seems absolute, and insurmountable, and undeniable, and uncoercible, it could be shown that I know, because Watt told me, and that Watt knew, because someone told him, or because he found out for himself. For I know nothing, in this connexion, but what Watt told me. And Watt knew nothing, on this subject, but what he was told, or found out for himself, in one way or in another (p. 109).

What is worse for Watt is that having located the bell in Erskine's room, as we noted above, doesn't lead him anywhere, except to even more mysteries, for while in Erskine room, he makes another discovery that is equally puzzling: "The only other object of note in Erskine's room was a picture, hanging on the wall, from a nail. A circle, obviously described by a compass, and broken at its lowest point, occupied the middle foreground of this picture. Was it receding?" (p. 109).

Watt can't tell what he is looking at or whether it's real or an illusion, and wonders if the object before him is receding. But everything is receding… in *Watt*. The thing-in-itself is wholly inaccessible. All we have are inventions and constructions. We don't know who or what Watt was before he entered the novel. Watt is the invention of a character named Sam, who states that what he has written down are Watt's revelations to him and that the events he narrates may never have happened (p. 65). Then suddenly, toward the end of the novel, a footnote appears addressed to the "at-

[9] Murphy, P. J., 2011. Beckett's Critique of Kant. *Sofia Philosophical Review* 5(1), p. 199.

tentive reader" (p. 183) that recalls the first words of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, "idle reader." The novel as an object exists because there is a reader; however, in the subject-object distinction, the difference is moot. Sam the character is as much an object as Sam the writer, the author of *Watt*. In the entry on *Watt* in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, Ackerley and Gontarski write: "…Mr. Knott needs the succession of servants [*Watt* 114] that he might be witnessed and thus not cease to be. This inverts Berkeley's *percipi* as Watt may not appreciate."[10] The positive value that Berkeley's idealism held for Borges, in Beckett is critically questioned. While for the former the gaze guaranteed existence, for the latter that was precisely the problem. One may recall here Beckett's *Film* (1964) where O (object), the character played by Buster Keaton, paranoically runs away from E (the eye or the gaze). To exist is to suffer, and what we want to do is to escape, in Buddhist fashion, the cycle of rebirth and continual existence without meaning or answers. Or perhaps not, as Beckett often seems to suggest. In any case, we have bodies that bleed and ooze, and as in that early poem, "Tristesse Janale" experience "ecstasies" and "convulsions of filth."

On May 12, 1938, four months after mentioning to McGreevy that he had received Kant's complete works and following his recovery from a stabbing incident in Paris, Beckett wrote to his friend Arland Ussher: "I read nothing and write nothing, unless it is Kant (*de nobis ipsis silemus*)…" (p. 622). This Latin phrase, taken from the motto of the second edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, is quoted by the narrator of *The Unnamable*. "*De nobis ipsis silemus* [we are silent about ourselves], decidedly should have been my motto," says the unnamable (p. 329). But this is the dilemma that all of Beckett's personages run into in the trilogy, and Beckett himself in in his own writing and aesthetics: the conflict between wanting, desiring silence, to speak no more, to cease to be, and the contradictory drive to go on existing, saying, inventing. Molloy says: "All I know is that the words know, and the dead things, and that makes a handsome little man, with a beginning, a middle and an end, as in the well-built phrase and the long sonata of the dead. And truly it little matters what I say, this, this or that or any other thing. Saying is inventing" (p. 31).

However, having said that, Molloy quickly reverses what he just said, as though not wanting to arrive at a conclusion that in itself would constitute an invention. He then declares: "Wrong, very rightly wrong. You invent nothing, you think you are inventing, you think you are escaping, and all

[10] Ackerley, C. J., Gontarski, S. E., 2004. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*. New York: Grove Press, p. 300.

you do is stammer out your lesson, the remnants of a pensum one day got by heart and long forgotten, life without tears as it is wept" (p. 32).

In Beckett's light the writer is not a creator, an imperial subject, a form of God that shapes the world as she or he sees fit. And thus, Kant's epistemological finitude becomes in Beckett an existential (emotional and bodily) and aesthetic of finitude. It is not simply that we lack knowledge of the objects of our perception, much worse, we lack knowledge of ourselves. We don't speak, we stammer as we try to make sense of the world. Thinking is a burden, a punishment that we must all bear as finite beings because it tempts us like Tantalus with unrealizable possibilities. If Kant could derive some relief from thinking that in eternity the crooked timber of humanity could be straightened out, there is no such faith in Beckett. And so, in *The Unnamable* the narrator says:

> I spoke, I must have spoken, of a lesson, it was a pensum I should have said, I confused pensum with lesson. Yes, I have a pensum to discharge, before I can be free, free to dribble, free to speak no more, listen no more, and I've forgotten what it is. There at last is a fair picture of my situation. I was given a pensum, at birth perhaps, as a punishment for having been born perhaps, or for no particular reason, because they dislike me, and I've forgotten what it is (p. 310).

All the narrator knows is that he was given a "pensum to discharge" but he does not remember what it was, though he thinks it was given to him "as a punishment for having been born." Significantly here is the word "discharge" for thinking according to Beckett is always bodily, which again is the reason why it will never achieve absolute knowledge of anything. "Strange notion in any case, and eminently open to suspicion, that of a task to be performed, before one can be at rest. Strange task, which consists in speaking of oneself. Strange hope, turned towards silence and peace" says the unnamable (p. 311). What Beckett finds puzzling is that in the drive to say, to speak of oneself, is the drive toward silence, in the form of a hope, a word that Borges also occasionally employed. But while Borges turned to writing on things beyond our capacity to know, Becket paradoxically turned to silence with words.

So, how are we humans to grapple with all these questions that go beyond our capacity? For Beckett, the answer did not lie in reason, as it did with Kant. In an interview with Michael Haerdter, he once remarked:

> The crisis started with the end of the seventeenth century, after Galileo. The eighteenth century has been called the century of reason, le siècle de le raison. I've never understood that: they're all mad, *ils sont tous fous, ils déraissonent*!

> They give reason a responsibility which it simply can't bear, it's too weak. The Encyclopedists wanted to know everything … But that direct relation between the self and – as the Italians say – *lo scibile*, the knowable, was already broken.[11]

And yet, it is the limits of human reason and finitude that propels him, that impels him forward, even at the end of his life to say: "So on unknowing and no end in sight" ("Stirring Still"), (*The Complete Short Prose*, p. 263).

"Last words"

Analogically, the difference between Borges and Beckett may be something like the difference between Schelling and Fichte or Freud and Jung. Where Borges built baroque cathedrals of words, Beckett built sparse spaces of words and silence. Both, at times, grew impatient with philosophy. Borges, for instance, one confessed with some frustration that he had failed to understand the *Critique of Pure Reason*. And Beckett's Unnamable complains about the incomprehensible discourse of certain philosophers "with all their balls about being and existing" (p. 348).

"Have contemporary philosophers had any influence on your thought?" Gabriel D'Aubarède asked Beckett on 16 February 1961, to which Beckett responded: "I never read philosophers," which, of course, was not entirely true. He may have stopped studying philosophy by that point, or he may have been using the word "read" ironically in his response, but it is doubtful that philosophy had ceased to be of interest to him. Later when asked whether existentialism could be a key to understanding his work, he answered: "There is no key or problem. I wouldn't have had any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subject in philosophic terms".[12]

Clearly, for Borges and Beckett, literature and philosophy were not equal but complementary endeavors. Beckett turned universals Meaning, the unknown) into particulars (Watt, Molloy, Didi and Estragon) and Borges particulars (Buenos Aires, Funes) into universals (Ideas, the Will, Eternity). Borges did do with the irony of the antinomies and Beckett with the bitter humor of finitude. Nevertheless, in both cases, their philosophical engagement with Kant remained undeniable and profoundly significant.

[11] Cited in McMillan, D., Fehsenfeld, M. 1981. *Beckett in the Theatre*: *The Author as Practical Playwright and Director*. New York: Riverrun Press, p. 231.
[12] Feldman, M., 2010. Beckett and Philosophy, 1928–1938. *Samuel Beckett Today* 22. Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies, p. 163.

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Freedom in Nature: The Moral of Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgment

Abstract: Kant's philosophy is centered on the idea of freedom. But the metaphysical condition of our responsibility appears to come at a price. We purchase Kantian freedom at the expense of intelligibility (we can know nothing about how an absolutely free cause is possible) and against every meaningful *natural* circumstance. Because freedom can't be experienced, it is impossible to know whether we've ever acted freely. The result seems to amount to an intellectual sort of schizophrenia: when we are doing science, freedom disappears in the causal order of nature; when we are acting morally, the natural world vanishes in the consciousness of our freedom. That Kant will develop an account of a natural world receptive to the work of freedom isn't surprising. What is initially strange is that some of Kant's most powerful thoughts on freedom *in* nature are forged in a treatise on aesthetics. The present paper offers an account of Kant's aesthetic vision of freedom in nature.
Key Words: Kant, Freedom, Nature, Aesthetics, Morality, Beauty, Sublimity

> For beauty and sublimity are aesthetic ways of presenting, and if we were nothing but pure intelligences […] we would not present in this way at all.
> *Critique of Judgment*, 5:271

Freedom, Nature, and Aesthetic Experience

Kant's mature philosophy as a whole gravitates around the idea of freedom.[1] On Kant's own testimony, the arguments for transcendental ide-

[1] In the Preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant observes that "the concept of freedom […] constitutes the *keystone* of the entire structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason; and all other concepts (those of God and immortality) […] now attach themselves to this

alism in the first *Critique* serve both our scientific interest in the objective grounds of what is the case and our moral interest in what ought to be the case; and they accomplish the latter task by making room, in our philosophical thoughts and practical beliefs, for the abstract *possibility* of freedom.[2] The argument for a categorical imperative of morality in the second *Critique* establishes the objective *reality* of freedom as a necessary condition of moral agency and responsibility.[3] And the *Tugendlehre* of the *Metaphysics of Morals* tells us (somewhat) concretely what finite moral agents are called upon to do with their freedom. Everywhere we look, we discern the influence of a moral image of human life in the wording of Kant's most enduring philosophical and scientific concerns. As Kant remarks succinctly in 1784, "Freedom is the inner worth of the world."[4]

But the metaphysical condition of our agency, moral responsibility, and human dignity seems to come at a heavy price. We purchase Kantian freedom at the expense of intelligibility (we can know nothing about how an absolutely free cause is possible) and, at least at first, against every meaningful *natural* circumstance and broad setting of our moral agency. And because freedom is nothing we can experience, at least not in the way we experience tables and chairs and other people as objects in nature, it is impossible to know whether we've ever acted freely. The result of our investment seems to amount to an intellectually respectable sort of schizophrenia: when we are doing science of any recognizable kind, freedom disappears in the causal order of nature; when we are acting morally, the natural world dissipates in the bare consciousness of our freedom and abstract moral obligation. In the second (published) Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant himself draws attention (twice) to the enormous gulf (*Kluft*) that separates the domains of freedom and nature, "just as if they were two separate worlds" incapable of influencing each other.[5]

concept and with it and by means of it get stability and objective reality, that is, their *possibility* is *proved* by this: that freedom is real, for this idea reveals itself through the moral law" (5:3-4). References to Kant throughout follow the pagination in the *Gesammelte Schriften* by volume, followed by page number(s), with the exception of references to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, which follows the convention of referring to the first and/or second edition (A/B).

[2] See the *Critique of Pure Reason*, A802/B830 and the well-known passage in the Preface to the second edition on the need to deny *Wissen* in order to make room for *Glauben* (Bxxx).

[3] In the second *Critique* Kant claims that the establishment of pure practical reason (as source of the moral law) also reveals a "consciousness of freedom of the will." *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:42.

[4] Collins transcript of Kant's lectures on moral philosophy (1784-5) in *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 125 (27:344).

[5] Kant, I., *Critique of Judgment*, 5:175-6 and 195.

And yet Kantian freedom is supposed to be embodied in the moral aspirations of agents who belong partly to nature.[6] However strongly we moral aspirants identify with Kant's vision of freedom and human worth, we have to grant that the concept of freedom loses much of its point if it fails to illuminate the moral lives of creatures enmeshed in the natural order. It is therefore fair to ask what relevance Kant's metaphysics of freedom has in the concrete conduct of human life, where the natural world has a way of persisting and making its (often reasonable) claims and the moral agent sometimes manages to bring about something that agrees with her intentions. As Kant also notes in the third *Critique*, the (intelligible, supersensible and theoretically useless) world of free agency "*is* to have an influence on" the natural world in which the finite moral agent finds herself placed.[7] The domain of freedom is not to remain aloof from the natural world (the only world we can, according to the first *Critique*, be said to know) but ought somehow to govern and shape it; otherwise the ideals of morality will seem chimerical, if not to the metaphysician, at least to the actual moral agent in whose name the metaphysics of free causality has been propounded. Kant's thought doesn't require the successful realization of every moral purpose. Sometimes we are left with only the best intentions. But an account of the moral life that forces us to choose between a vaporous freedom, bereft of every natural setting, and a nature that altogether excludes what freedom aspires to bring about is unlikely to encourage serious moral endeavor. And to the philosopher interested in defending the primacy of practical reason and the commitments that define our moral lives, such an account is likely to seem philosophically impertinent.

That Kant will eventually develop an account of (an *experience* of) a natural world less hostile to the work of freedom is, therefore, nothing surprising. What *is* at first blush strange is that the earliest concrete links between freedom and nature, developed without reference to God as the point of contact in our thoughts between the two domains, are forged in a treatise on aesthetics; for it is not until the first half of the third *Critique* that Kant begins to develop a vision of nature as freedom's collaborator and encourager, without theological underpinnings.

[6] In the words of one prominent scholar, "the agent and the intelligent person are one and the same subject." Henrich, D., 1994. *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World*, p. 4. And a few lines later: "We certainly cannot claim that the world of objects and the world seen from the moral viewpoint are totally separate. For moral action has as its domain the very situations and circumstances we regard as part of the physical world."

[7] Kant, I., *Critique of Judgment,* 5:176.

In what way Kant's account of aesthetic experience recasts his earlier vision of freedom and nature, what the final vision includes and what it disallows, and what the revision means for the life of theoretical and practical reason are topics as immense as the great gulf itself; in what follows I offer merely the humble beginnings of a larger and more systematic study of freedom, nature, and aesthetic experience and education in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, centered around the account of the moral import of the experience of natural beauty offered in section 42 of the third *Critique*, and supported by Kant's views on the ideal of beauty (section 17) and genius (sections 46 – 50).[8]

Taking an Intellectual Interest in the Beautiful

Someone inclined to dismiss either the moral significance of aesthetics or the aesthetic import of the moral point of view would have to conclude that moral considerations *intrude* throughout Kant's allegedly neutral analysis of judgments of taste. Despite the claim that every aesthetic judgment is disinterested (is neither a judgment about what is merely agreeable nor a claim about the morally good), Kant repeatedly ties aesthetic matters to certain features and concerns of ethical life.[9] This is perhaps most obvious in the Analytic of the Sublime, which, contrary to some of our more commonplace romantic expectations, argues that certain natural objects make us aware of our own (moral and rational) superiority to the natural world: the vast and turbulent ocean, the mighty cataract, and the towering peaks of the rocky mountain chain are reduced (almost) to nothing alongside the sublimity of reason itself and its moral ideas.

We might, then, be tempted to look to the sublime as a way into Kant's moralizing aesthetics. And we would certainly not be disappointed. But from the critical vantage point mapped out above, the Analytic of the Sublime paints a regressive picture of the moral life: it reinforces Kant's earliest tendencies to elevate a disembodied moral vocation of human reason over everything merely natural.[10] From the point of view

[8] This essay is, in fact, the fragment of a chapter in a book manuscript in progress on Kant's evolving concept of freedom.

[9] In section 17, as we shall see, Kant introduces the Ideal of Beauty, which amounts to the visible expression of moral ideas in the human figure. And the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment as a whole culminates in the suggestive claim (in section 59) that beauty is a symbol of morality.

[10] What it adds, however, is the idea that natural objects can evoke moral experiences and expectations. And this is, of course, no small addition. But it doesn't advance the thesis that certain experiences reveal a nature that somehow *favors* our moral demands.

of the Kantian sublime, nature fails to live up to what reason demands. (This is perhaps why Kant says that the theory of the sublime is a "mere appendix to our aesthetic judging of the purposiveness of nature."[11] And it also stands in contrast to Kant's views on genius, which, as we shall soon see, espouse the notion that nature inscrutably gives rules to art and so cooperates in our spiritual and intellectual activities.[12])

The same cannot be said for the account of the intellectual interest we take in the beautiful adumbrated in section 42: the experience of beauty appears to reveal a natural world that favors us by making room in our thoughts for the realization of our moral ends. Kant's argument opens with a familiar debate: some claim that an interest in beauty is the mark of a good soul, while others point out that the aesthetically cultivated or cultured are often vain, obstinate, and delivered over to ruinous passions, and even less attached to moral principles than their untutored counterparts. It seems difficult, then, "to reconcile the interest which can be connected with the beautiful with the moral interest" and almost impossible to claim "an intrinsic affinity between the two."[13] But pessimism is certainly not the last word. Kant is happy to grant that an interest in beautiful *art* is no proof of moral earnestness but may be a sign merely of vanity. There is no reason to think that someone who admires a Renoir or a Picasso and loves to talk about her favorite artist must also take an interest in her moral *Bestimmung*. But he goes on to suggest that taking an unpremeditated and direct interest in the beauty of nature "is always the mark of a good soul." When we are alone and take spontaneous delight in the shape of a flower or the song of a bird, our experience has recognizable moral content. And if our immediate interest in natural beauty becomes habitual, it "indicates at least a mental attunement [*Gemütsstimmung*] favorable to moral feeling."[14] The beauty in nature some of us discover and appreciate is, after all, morally significant, whether we appreciate it at the time of our discovery or not and regardless of the philosophical views we go on to defend.

[11] Kant, I., *Critique of Judgment*, 5:246.

[12] Kant's account of genius is worked out in sections 46 – 50. We shall turn to it below. For an interesting account of genius in Kant and Wordsworth, see Timothy Gould's "The Audience of Originality: Kant and Wordsworth on the Reception of Genius" in *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics*. Allison doesn't appreciate fully the central significance of the account of genius in the third *Critique*, which contributes to the theory of nature's purposive contribution to human experience. See Chapter 12 of *Kant's Theory of Taste* and, more specifically, Allison's observations on p. 272.

[13] 5:298.

[14] 5:298-9.

We can interpret Kant's claim about the moral significance of natural beauty in one of two (it seems to me compatible) ways. On the one hand, Kant appears to be making a *psychological* claim about a state of mind favorable to the development of the moral life; and this claim cannot be separated from Kant's renewed appreciation of the importance of moral *feeling* in the development of mature moral agency.[15] An ability to appreciate beautiful things in nature is a precursor to the moral sentiments Kant is better prepared to appreciate and defend in the *Religion* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*. As Henry Allison notes, the third *Critique* proffers aesthetic experience as a way of weaning the moral agent from "sensuous interests and egocentric involvements."[16] From this point of view, taking disinterested pleasure in natural beauty is analogous to treating our fellow human beings as ends in themselves, and never as *mere* means.[17] To be receptive to natural beauty is to be better prepared to heed the claims of others in the moral life; receptivity itself is an important mark of a morally good soul in the making. (And from this there seems to follow the pedagogical point, exploited by Schiller, that aesthetic experience can play a vital role in moral education.)[18] The beautiful "prepares us for loving something, even nature, without interest."[19]

This already marks a significant advance over the earlier view of freedom and nature locked in seemingly eternal conflict: the soul attuned to natural beauty stands a better chance of taking an interest in the moral life. For those who think that Kant's views on the moral life exclude love and moral sympathy, the *Critique of Judgment* offers welcome relief from the tedious examples used in the *Groundwork* to illustrate action *aus Pflicht*. In 1790, at least, a certain sentiment can be said to *ground* or further our commitment to, if not our knowledge of, what duty requires. For knowledge of the latter, we have always to look to pure practical reason.

But Kant also seems to be making another sort of claim about what it is that the good soul discovers to be good about natural beauty; and this bears less on how the soul's feelings and affections are readied for the higher demands of the moral life and what role moral sentiment

[15] See my "Morality and Sensibility in Kant: Toward a Theory of Virtue" in the *Kantian Review* for an analysis of Kant's shifting and final evaluation of the role of feeling in the moral life.
[16] Allison, H., 2008. *Kant's Theory of Taste*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 196.
[17] Notice that the possibility of this moral interest rests upon the *dis*interestedness of the judgment of taste defended in the Analytic of the Beautiful.
[18] See Schiller's letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.
[19] Kant, I., *Critique of Judgment*, 5:267.

might play in the mature cultivation of virtue, and more on what it is about the beautiful object itself, at every stage of our moral education, that is worthy of the good soul's "admiration and love." This conception of the experience of natural beauty is consistent with a view of what we feel in response to nature that ties our feelings to what we experience or consider their objective *target* to be.[20] Aesthetic experience may not add to the content of our scientific *knowledge* of what there is; but it seems to amplify what we take nature to be able to do, with or without an explicit intention. Kant adds to these remarks the important qualification that if the natural object turns out to have been fabricated, if the admired bird proves artfully carved or the beloved flower skillfully made by an artist, the intellectual or moral interest in the item disappears; and it vanishes precisely because the intellectual interest in the beautiful is motivated by the thought that natural beauty is like an intended *work* of nature: *here*, at least, nature's complex activity is responsive to the mind's love of order and purpose. In nature under the aspect of beauty we discover "a voluptuousness for the mind in a train of thought" that we can hardly unravel.[21] And part of what we find voluptuous is an apparent reconciliation between the mind in contact with its own distant ideals and a nature infinitely complex and often thought to be indifferent to what the ordering mind longs to see. When nature shows traces, however faint, of a concealed harmony between ourselves as moral and spiritual agents and what is out there in the (physical) world of objects not intentionally made to conform to our plans and projects, we have reason to think that nature is not always and necessarily in conflict with what moral reason demands. If we disregard what the aesthetic experience of nature is *about*, we miss something important about the experience and its object.

If the first construal of the intellectual interest some take in natural beauty makes freedom over in an image of nature in the shape of moral sentiments consistent with the requirements of duty, the second view makes nature over in an image of freedom consistent with our desire to find ourselves in accord with what is out there in the world. But in each case, we have to contend with a world in which the demands of freedom and the value of nature are two sides of the same *moral* coin.

[20] I have defended elsewhere a heavily qualified *cognitive* view of emotion in Kant against variations on the claim that Kant's views of emotion are always dismissive of the affective life and insensitive to the intentionality of our emotional orientations toward what we find significant in the world of our moral involvements. See "Morality and Sensibility in Kant."

[21] Kant, I., *Critique of Judgment*, 5:300.

The Body as Expression of the Moral: An Excursion on the Ideal of Beauty

In terms of the epistemological and psychological intentions of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, admirably detailed by Guyer in an early work on Kant's third *Critique*,[22] the account of the ideal of beauty in section 17 of the *Critique of Judgment* (a description of what we rightly find lovely in the human figure) might be dismissed as a digression, perhaps rather interesting in itself, in Kant's otherwise undeviating account of the purity of our judgments of taste;[23] for here, too, Kant allows moral notions and concerns to contaminate what might have been a coherent defense of the validity of our conceptually indeterminate experience of beauty, anchored in a free play of our cognitive powers (without moral or utilitarian designs). An account of beauty worthy of the name has to account for what we find delightful across the spectrum and in distinct areas of our aesthetic experience: from this point of view, it matters little whether we are dealing with an interesting pattern painted on a wall or the aesthetic complexities of *King Lear* or a certain look about the human body. And it shouldn't matter that Shakespeare's play might be said to have a moral (this is controversial enough anyway) and the human body a moral configuration while the design on the wall doesn't. What matters is only what delights in a certain way, by encouraging a free play of our cognitive faculties (understanding and imagination) without the deployment of a fixed concept. Does Kant himself not confess in section 16 that judgments of taste resting on definite conceptual underpinnings are neither pure nor free, the beauty of their objects being merely adherent (*adhärierende Schönheit*) and dependent on what we think the thing we take delight in is supposed to be, how it functions, and what it looks like at its (functional or moral) best? Doesn't the introduction of a concept of perfection restrict the imagination's freedom?[24]

But what we find digressive or more relevant depends on what we take the author's overarching, and often unacknowledged or dimly expressed, intentions to be: if the third *Critique* displays an abiding and consistent interest in the possible *connections* between aesthetic experience in its purity and the demands of the moral life, then what appears from one

[22] Guyer, P., 1997. *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[23] Kant himself tells us that judgments concerning an ideal of beauty are not pure judgments of taste. (5:236)
[24] 5:230.

point of view irrelevant, perhaps even incoherent, becomes crucial to the overall design of the work. As Kant himself notes, judgments on adherent beauty, and the experiences they rest upon, further taste itself by allowing rules to be "prescribed for it with regard to certain objects that are purposively determined."[25] And more to the point, "these rules will not be rules of taste but will […] be rules for uniting taste with reason, i.e., the beautiful with the good, a union that enables us to use the beautiful as an instrument for our aim regarding the good."[26] As Allison wisely notes, Kant's discussion of adherent beauty tells us "how taste can enter into more complex forms of evaluation."[27] Here, too, aesthetic experience serves the interests we take (or ought to take) in the moral life.[28]

But Kant's account also sheds important light on the interweaving of moral concepts and natural forms; for what comes into sharp relief in the ideal of beauty is the human figure *as expression of the moral* in a natural form. Surprisingly, Kant doesn't take quite as seriously our ability to find the human figure beautiful without discovering moral purposes displayed in it, unless the idea of beauty, in contrast to the ideal of beauty, is supposed to capture the pre-moral experience of lovely human forms. But even this idea of beauty is tied to the (moral) ideal of beauty.[29] He might, however, reply that every impure judgment of taste regarding the human form is, if not grounded in morality, then merely sexual, and so not really aesthetic and not truly a judgment of *taste*. In this case, we would be reducing the object of our aesthetic regard to a pleasing collection or combination of attractive fleshy parts, fascinating precisely because of the pleasure we associate with amorous conquest. Here, our interest in the object reduces to mere desire: what we take delight in is the anticipation of the agreeable sensations we associate with a certain experience of, or contact with, the erotic object. Our relation to the human form, and what we find appealing in it, would be (morally, if not always biologically, and possibly culturally) regressive; and what is at stake in section 17 is the possibility of elevating aesthetic experience onto the plane of the morally good, where what we find desirable and what we are inclined to pursue must often be held in suspension for the sake of our

[25] 5:230.
[26] 5:230.
[27] Allison, H., 2008. *Kant's Theory of Taste*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 140.
[28] See also Zammito's discussion of dependent beauty in *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'*, pp. 124-9.
[29] See 5:233.

proper ethical intentions and ends.[30] But we are getting ahead of the story in this parenthetical remark.

Kant tells us that human beings *alone* can exhibit an ideal of beauty, tied to concepts of objective purposiveness and perfection, precisely because we are the only objects in the natural world capable of giving ourselves moral purposes and perfecting ourselves by reason; for the ideal of beauty is nothing less than the expression of the moral (as an *Urbild* of taste) in a particular human figure. In searching for an ideal of beauty, reason itself is seeking to discover itself and its highest vocation—namely, the moral determination of the will—in the sensible world. Kant grants that we come to know *how* the moral takes shape in the visible world only empirically. We become gradually acquainted with the signs of serenity, fortitude, purity of soul, and so on. But we must still be able to connect what we see in this particular figure with what reason alone is able clearly and distinctly to think. We must learn to subsume certain configurations of the face and limbs under concepts of the morally good. (Similarly, we must learn to associate other configurations with the tokens of vice. The human body bears witness to the activities of soul. To take a trivial, or not so trivial, example, the face bears visible traces of a life spent in dissipation. We must learn as well how avarice or lust or self-control and courage display themselves in the movements of our bodies. In the absence of moral concepts, we are left with a mere object, however lovely, in motion or at rest. Our concepts of the morally good allow us to move from what we discover in the object to what we suspect lies within it—the soul in its *moral* endeavors and successes.[31] When we judge a human body in this way, we apprehend something of the inner life that animates it.

This is an important admission; and it qualifies Kant's often skeptical views concerning our concrete moral knowledge. Although we can never know with absolute and unshakable certainty that the moral law is weaving itself more durably into our dispositions, we can, it seems, be more *confident* that we are on the track of the morally good. And our confidence comes *not* by merely reflecting upon the purity of our own souls, where we are likely to go astray and to nurture opinions flattering to our

[30] This still doesn't really answer the question: Can't we find the athletic body lovely without sexualizing it and without moralizing it? I think Kant grants that we can: there is an average norm or standard of the human figure that we can appreciate without erotic impulses and in the absence of moral purposes. But Kant's discussion of this idea of beauty in section 17 is apparently meant to lead to the (moral) ideal of beauty.

[31] I discuss the importance of this ability for the exercise of moral judgment in "Morality and Sensibility in Kant."

self-esteem, but by learning to read the signs of moral commitment and success in the life of the body, where our virtues (and, of course, our vices, too) have a local habitation as well as a name.[32] Here, too, freedom and its laws work themselves out in the realm of nature.[33]

Genius and the Moral Life: Nature Gives the Rule to Art

On the surface at least, Kant's account of genius in sections 46-50 of the third *Critique* contributes little to our understanding of the moral life: what does a sonnet by Rilke or a painting by Cézanne, a sculpture by Phidias or Rodin or Proust's monumental *In Search of Lost Time*, at once beautiful and rich in thought, tell us about our duties and how to fulfill them, assuming we can call these works of genius without controversy? We can, and perhaps should, appreciate fine art (which Kant identifies with the work of genius in section 46) on its own terms, without allowing moral notions to interfere with our aesthetic experience. When we bring moral convictions, or biases, as the case may be, into the encounter, we run the risk of moralizing our experience and passing hasty judgment upon the work from an alien point of view, before we've come to appreciate what it has to give *as a work of art*, and not, say, as the illustration of some moral lesson or catechism.

Kant's remarks sometimes lend support to this plausible suggestion, a grounding principle in the practice of formalist criticism in the last century, where the pleasure we take in the work has little to do with what we value and what we think human life ought to be and what we aspire to bring about in our ethical commitments and communities: the imagination of the genius "creates, as it were, another nature out of the material that nature gives us."[34] And fine art is valuable in part because we can use it "to entertain ourselves when experience strikes us as overly routine."[35] A poem or a play offers welcome relief from the tedium of everyday life, and provides the mind with a healthy escape from the toil and trouble of practical life. Occasionally (as in science fiction and fantasy novels) we expect the laws of nature themselves to be rewritten (or, if not altered, at least expanded in unexpected and hypothetical directions). Works of art offer

[32] Kant develops an account of moral confidence (without certainty) in the *Religion*.
[33] I agree with Guyer that Kant's discussion of the ideal of beauty is motivated by the search for a sensible vehicle to represent the primacy of practical reason. Guyer, P., 1996. *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*, pp. 41-2.
[34] 5:314.
[35] 5:314.

us another, perhaps more absorbing and enthralling world in which we can (temporarily) lose ourselves; and they do this regardless of, perhaps, in some cases, even despite our moral convictions and practical concerns. After the encounter has run its course, we can return to the real world of daily life more refreshed and invigorated and ready to cope with what the burdensome day has to give. When our moral concerns are at issue, works of art must leave us stranded. Ethical interpretation of art rests upon a culpable failure to draw certain boundaries clearly and to respect the autonomy of the work.

On a slightly more elevated plane, but still consistent with the principles of aesthetic formalism, the products of genius "quicken the mind" and contribute to the cultivation of our mental powers.[36] Although the work of art gives no fixed *concepts*, it does give rise to "so much thought" and "makes reason think more."[37] Art critics do, after all, expend considerable intellectual energy on their material; art criticism is a *reflective* activity, in a sense not altogether detached from the Kantian. The point of art appreciation at its best is not merely to have agreeable sensations. A fine bottle of wine and a plate of Kobe beef give pleasure at least as well as, and certainly more easily than, *The Sound and the Fury*. We rightly assess the value of the fine arts in light of "the *Kultur* they provide for the mind."[38]

The work of art is able to prompt thought and cultivate our mental powers in the way it does, without offering the audience any clearly defined concepts with which to work but merely suggesting lines of thought to be further pursued and developed in its reception. And this is because the *Geist* of genius responsible for quickening and strengthening our mental powers is "nothing but the ability to exhibit *aesthetic ideas*"[39] to which no concept is adequate.[40] And while the connection between genius and morality is not altogether explicit in the third *Critique*, it is thanks to the introduction of aesthetic ideas that Kant's account of genius and its products can be tied to the life of the *moral* agent.

Aesthetic ideas can be linked to moral experience precisely because they offer a sensible analogue and compelling exhibition of the *supersensible*.

[36] 5:315. In section 44, Kant claims that a work is *fine* art "if its purpose is that the pleasure should accompany presentations that are *ways of knowing*" (5:305). We shall see in a moment why this must be so and what this claim implies.
[37] 5:315.
[38] 5:329. Kant says as much already in section 44, 5:306.
[39] 5:314-15.
[40] Kant contrasts the aesthetic idea with its rational counterpart, which provides a concept to which nothing in intuition is ever adequate (5:314).

Here, too, reason, both generally and as a *moral* faculty, is able to discover itself within the order of the visible—in spatial forms, in tone and rhythm, perhaps, and especially in the sounds of poetry.[41] Among the sorts of supersensible things fine art is said to be able to capture in its own way, Kant includes "the realm of the blessed, the realm of hell, eternity, creation," but also "death, envy, and all the other vices, as well as love, fame," and, most importantly for our purposes, *virtue*.[42] If we think of the pleasure the work of art furnishes the mind merely in terms of the complex structure it displays, say, or the wit an author has displayed in the creation of an original metaphor or trope, without considering the conceptually indeterminate *content* it strives to express, our encounter is more likely to be impoverished than enriched.[43] The work obviously derives its meaning from the complex interplay of form *and* content (most formalists would probably find nothing troubling in this claim); but Kant seems willing to grant in section 49 of the third *Critique* that the content worked over and symbolized in a work of art is often *moral*.

It makes no small difference that Withof's line (cited by Kant in section 49) is about virtue, or goodness in the original, rather than, say, the pleasures of sex or the allure of a bowl of ripe figs.[44] If we wish to ponder and consider how the sun's flowing serenely forth and gently illuminating the earthly turmoil below gives sensible expression to what we mean by virtue, we cannot afford to bracket our concepts of moral excellence and what virtue often has to struggle against, forces lying outside the agent's own control, disappointing human affairs, and frustrated expectations: if content without form is barely conceivable—a lower limit of intelligibility, aesthetic or otherwise—form without content is an empty and frivolous play, something about which we rarely care, except when we are merely diverting ourselves with a pleasing show of design, regardless of where we find it, whether in a work by Milton or on a meaningless piece of wallpaper in a neighbor's kitchen. Every work of art worthy of our sustained and

[41] "And it is actually in the art of poetry that the power of aesthetic ideas can manifest itself to full extent" (5:314). This point won't be lost on Hegel, who argues for a similar thesis in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. In section 53 Kant places music at the bottom of the artistic hierarchy "in reason's judgment," just because it is "more a matter of enjoyment than of culture" (5:328). In this respect, Schopenhauer, good Kantian though he (thought he) was, shows himself to be no mere disciple of Kant.

[42] 5:314 and 316.

[43] See Guyer's discussion of form and content in *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 357-8. Guyer rightly notes that concepts will come into play in the audience, but without being sensed as constraining the mind's free play.

[44] 5:316.

attentive concern is *about* something. And, by implication, every work of art that commands our, or our reason's, greatest and most sustained attention is about the struggles, successes, and failures of the moral life, for the simple Kantian reason that reason's highest vocation and most important and lasting concern is ethical.[45]

Importantly, there can be considerable ambiguity and richness in the moral portrait, in keeping with Kant's views on the conceptual indeterminacy and endless intellectual provocativeness of fine art. One has only to think of a novel by Dickens or Hardy, which may deal with moral problems, but never in an overly simplified and facile way, even when the author's underlying moral vision comes more or less clearly into focus in the work itself. Nobody doubts that *Hard Times* is taking a stand against the degradations of an overly industrialized and inhuman culture or that the heroine of *Tess* is the victim of social standards and conventions the author invites us to question. But these works leave ample room for diverse and non-dogmatic, moral interpretation and evaluation. Not every ethical criticism of fine art is necessarily *moralizing* criticism, where the critic knows *a priori* or in advance what the author's conclusions must be, because everything has already been decided before we've allowed the work to be more fully encountered in terms of what it has to say *about something in which we already take an interest*.[46]

The train of thought just sketched, centered on ideas of a sort (call them 'aesthetic'), seems to place the phenomena of art-making entirely under the dominion of reason, consciousness, and freedom of choice, as we might expect when we have to deal with something brought into being by human agency. The work of art is above all something someone somewhere makes; and every instance of human origination is guided by what the maker knows, or thinks she knows, and what she conceives in light of a clearly delimited end or aim. Doesn't Kant tell us in section 44 that fine art offers representations designed to evoke pleasure in *ways of knowing*?[47] And isn't artistic production distinct from its natural counterpart by virtue of being "production through freedom, i.e., through a power of choice that bases

[45] It is worth noting that in the *Anthropology* Kant argues against the reading of (certain) novels, on the grounds that they encourage too much free-floating fantasy and disorganize the mind. And in the second *Critique*, Kant praises the telling of those tales that encourage in the developing moral agent the cultivation of morally praiseworthy dispositions.

[46] For this distinction, see Wayne Booth's fine study *The Ethics of Fiction*. Booth, W., 1989. The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[47] 5:305.

its acts on reason"?[48] If the lovely honeycomb resembles a work of art in displaying what looks like conscientious design, the bee itself is no artist, precisely because the work's production is a matter of instinct, without deliberation and choice, and, as Kant himself notes, the work itself is a product of its nature. Nature in the bee merely acts *as if* it had a clear end in view. The bee itself knows nothing of this; a creative artist, on the other hand, is knowingly and deliberately about something.

And yet, if the "audience of originality," to borrow Gould's fine phrase, is offered in the work of art something conceptually inexhaustible that always, therefore, surpasses its complete understanding (which is why we expect great art to be endlessly interpretable and exposed to potentially endless conflicts of interpretation), the maker of it, as the genius, likewise cannot be said to be in complete cognitive control of what gets made. A work that fails to be suggestive and leaves nothing in the dark is hardly worth our enduring critical concern.[49] Kant has here anticipated the view that the artist is in no privileged position as a critic to tell us what her work means.[50] As a member of the audience of critics, the artist is one voice among many. If she has done her job well, her own work will exceed anything she has to say about its making and its meaning. As Kant observes in section 47, "no *Homer* or *Wieland* can show how his ideas, rich in fancy and yet also in thought, arise and meet in his mind; the reason is that he himself does not know, and hence also cannot teach it to anyone else."[51] And this is because, *despite* the self-consciousness and deliberateness of art-making, which always involves something like rules, without which there would be nothing organized and *coherent* in the product, as Kant is eager to insist[52], in true works of genius "nature gives the rule to art."[53] If the artist herself could devise the rule in a clear and distinct consciousness of what she's attempting to say or do, the work of art would be conceptually bound and determined. This is probably true of the mechanical arts, which can be methodically developed and

[48] 5:303.

[49] In the lectures delivered at the University of Virginia, Faulkner frequently claims that the novelist's art partly consists in the ability to suggest various lines to the reader, without giving out too much.

[50] But this view was, of course, anticipated by Plato: see the *Apology* and *Ion*. But what for Plato constitutes a defect is in Kant's view one of the merits of great art.

[51] 5:309. The context is a contrast between the discoveries made by the scientist, always methodical and hence teachable, and the products of genius.

[52] As Kant notes, perhaps with Herder in mind, "shallow minds believe that the best way to show that they are geniuses in first bloom is by renouncing all rules of academic constraint, believing that they will cut a better figure on the back of an ill-tempered than of a training-horse" (5:310).

[53] 5:307.

taught. But it is characteristic of the work of *fine* art that its aesthetic ideas can never be exhausted in a fixed concept. This is just what makes an aesthetic idea an *idea*, inexhaustible and endlessly thought-provoking: "it must be nature in the subject […] that gives the rule to art."[54] As Gould shrewdly observes, "genius shows itself as one of nature's more singular interventions in the realm of the human."[55]

Here, too, nature, this time *within* some of us, is no longer something to be conquered and subdued: in certain privileged individuals and in presumably rare moments, nature seems to operate as freedom's benevolent collaborator.[56] And if some works of genius illuminate and symbolize aspects of the *moral* life, as I've tried to show, then nature helps, at least indirectly, to promote the concrete life of freedom and morality in *this* natural world of ours, where we find ourselves invariably situated among meaningful *things* and called upon to embody the sensible tokens of our ethical aspirations.

Concluding Remarks: A Naturalized Freedom?

The suggestive trains of thought pursued along various and, as I hope we've seen, *converging* paths above prompt the difficult and more distant question: How close have we come in the first half of Kant's third *Critique* to a naturalized view of freedom? It would be rash to venture an answer without first working out a more comprehensive interpretation of the *Critique of Judgment* as a whole, including the frequently neglected Critique of Teleological Judgment, which may or may not (although I think it would) offer confirmation of the position we've been defending above. But confining ourselves to what we've already had a chance now to see, we can say at least a few words about the view of freedom working itself out in nature outlined in the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment.

[54] 5:307.

[55] Gould, T., 1982. "The Audience of Originality" in *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics*, p. 182.

[56] For a more cynical reading of Kant's account of genius, which sees in it an assault on Herder and the *Sturm und Drang*, see Zammito's discussion of the topic in *The Genesis*, 137-42. Even if Zammito is right to interpret a few scattered passages as polemical references to Herder, I still think that the discussion as a whole is meant to be taken seriously, as a way of explaining (or not) how great works of art are possible. It is true that Kant places science higher on the scale of reason; but this isn't incompatible with the view that works of art exhibit ideas that enrich our cognitive view and present otherwise remote and intangible ideas of reason in sensibly accessible forms. See Kant's discussion in section 59 of beauty as a symbol of the morally good. Kant's interest in bringing morality closer to feeling and intuition is already apparent in the Typic of the second *Critique*. And if the third *Critique* as a whole is motivated partly by the 'great gulf' problem, the account of genius contributes partly to its solution.

What is at issue in the first half of the third *Critique* is, among other things, how the natural world ought to appear (and occasionally *does* appear) from the standpoint of the morally attuned individual, and what works of fine art, where nature (in the genius) gives the rule to art, have to offer to culture, moral or otherwise. But in this context at least, the appearance of freedom in nature has nothing to contribute to the explanation of natural phenomena, including human behavior (although it does invite speculation on the harmonious play of our cognitive faculties). We are not offered an alternative model for the explanation of nature (as, say, the actual embodiment of our moral ends) more compelling than the causal paradigm of natural explanation defended in the first *Critique*.[57] Nor are we given another, more naturalized account of human freedom, comparable to the physiological explanation of perception or emotion. If the naturalization of freedom boils down to the claim that freedom is among the causes we rightly expect to find operating among a certain class of objects in nature (call them 'human beings'), then the book's vision of freedom in nature is nothing naturalistic. What the third *Critique* offers is a way of experiencing certain objects of nature (call them beautiful) that resonates with our developing moral sensibility: at most it can be said to contribute to the development of a *moral* image of the world.[58] But the *Critique of Judgment* lays out a framework for the moral construal of nature that leaves nature itself, as an object of scientific knowledge, well enough alone. And in this way the work reaffirms on the plane of aesthetics the primacy of practical reason: from the standpoint of the morally mature adult, nature need not appear always in conflict with the demands of moral reason and freedom.

This helps to explain the awkwardness of Kant's views on the universality and necessity of the judgment of taste.[59] From the standpoint of science,

[57] As Kant reminds us repeatedly in the third *Critique*, in aesthetic experience nature displays *purposiveness* but no definite *purpose*. If we discovered true purposes in nature *as causes* of what we experience, aesthetic experience would have true scientific import.

[58] Again, see Dieter Henrich's essay on "The Moral Image of the World" in *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World*. As usual, the essays in this volume anticipate a large body of more recent valuable work on the connections between aesthetics and moral philosophy in Kant. It is becoming clear that while the judgment of taste is disinterested, and so neither itself a moral judgment nor grounded in a claim about the good, Kant's interest in aesthetic judgment is impossible to disentangle from an ethical interest in the formation of a coherent *moral* view of the world. Zammito documents the ethical turn in Kant's work on the third *Critique* in *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'*, Chapter 13. Far from naturalizing freedom, the third *Critique* might profitably be read as an attempt to make nature over in an image of a morally invested freedom, without displacing the hard work of scientific explanation in accordance with the principle of (natural) causality.

[59] The very idea of 'subjective universality' is nonsense in the first *Critique*, where universality

aesthetic experience seems merely subjective: it gives us no new principle for the explanation of natural phenomena and ascribes no real predicate to bare physical things, but tells us something about how we are occasionally attuned in the presence of certain objects (and the third *Critique* tells us why we ought to care about this attunement). From the point of view of the individual who shares in an experience of beauty, aesthetic encounters appear curiously objective: when we discover something beautiful, regardless of the sort of object it is supposed to be, we naturally long to communicate our experience and rightly expect others to judge as we do. When they don't, we, again rightly, find fault with their capacity to judge, and say that they lack *taste*.

The conflict or tension disappears once we realize that Kant's contribution to the philosophy of nature, and his emerging conception freedom *in* nature, in the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* unfolds in the order of the analogical. This comes forward clearly in the short discussion of beauty as a symbol of the morally good in section 59 of the third *Critique*. Freedom is still nothing natural. But the realization of freedom in the life of the moral individual is *like* what we find beautiful or harmonious in a natural form. Nature is still nothing free. But the appearance of the beautiful in a natural shape is *like* what we discover in a soul whose sensibility harmonizes with the claims of moral reason. Taste itself is, in the end, nothing less than the ability to judge the way non-sensible or supersensible moral ideas are embodied in analogous sensible forms in nature and in works of art.[60] And the tasteful individual is entitled at least to *imagine* the domains of freedom and nature combining to form a single moral world.[61]

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and necessity are the surest marks of objectivity (or apriority).

[60] *Critique of Judgment*, §60, 5:356.

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Art of Politics Under the Light of Kant's and Schiller's Writings

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Abstract: Schiller underscores the pivotal role of intellectual freedom in fostering moral progress. The imperative "*Sapere aude!*" encapsulates an idea that can only be realized through the shared communication of thoughts. However, as a strong opponent of the Reign of Terror, Schiller believes that theoretical cultivation must be complemented by aesthetics in order to achieve the future liberal state of reason. He also contends that art could enable people to transcend personal desires and actively contribute to the establishment of political freedom. Kant supports that the public sphere is crucial for the functioning of a democratic society, as individuals gather to discuss issues of common interest. Within this sphere, he asserts that aesthetics taste and judgements contribute to build a more enlightened citizenry. In light of the above, I will first try to show how to achieve moral development in a liberal democracy through freedom of speech and aesthetics.
Keywords: Aesthetics, Cosmopolitanism, Kant, Moral Progress, Politics, Schiller

Introduction

In this paper, I aim to investigate how Kant's philosophy shaped Schiller's thinking. Schiller himself frequently acknowledges his debt to Kantian philosophy. In *Aesthetic Education*, he asserts that most of his arguments are grounded in Kantian principles.[1] In the *Kallias letters*, he contends that "it is certain that no mortal has spoken a greater word than this Kantian word, which also encapsulates his whole philosophy: determine yourself from within yourself, which forms the basis of his entire philosophical

[1] Schiller, F., 2004. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, First Letter.

framework".[2] In a letter to Goethe, he expresses his belief in Kant's philosophy and commends the open-ended approach of his research methodology, which is rooted in the exploration of public sphere.[3] In addition, Schiller's aesthetic theory was based on the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, which greatly impacted him.[4] Nevertheless, Schiller expressed disapproval of certain aspects of Kantian philosophy, diverging from Kant's ideas and pursuing a distinct intellectual path. To gain a deeper comprehension of the areas where the two thinkers agree and disagree, I will analyse the concepts of moral progress and enlightenment, political freedom, and the liberal state as they are explored in their respective works, as well as their connection with aesthetic cultivation.

1. Political Freedom and Moral Progress

How can moral progress be achieved? When examining the reasoning presented by Kant in *Perpetual Peace* regarding the nation of devils, it becomes evident that even self-centered individuals can experience moral progress and refinement. How is this accomplished? When two devils agree to follow the law, acknowledging that they both gain advantages from their collaboration, they develop a strong desire to stick to it. Hence, we expect that a well-governed society will foster the ethical development of its citizens.[5] In the second part of "The Conflict of the Faculties", Kant addresses the question, "Is the human race continually progressing toward the better?" He identifies law as the guiding thread of moral progress: "not an ever-growing quantity of morality with regard to intention, but an increase of the products of legality in dutiful actions whatever their motives".[6]

[2] Schiller, F., 2002. *Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner*. In: Bernstein, J. M., ed. *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 153.
[3] Schiller, F., 1943. *Schillers Werke, Nationalausgabe*. Petersen, J. et al., eds., 43 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger. Letter from Schiller to Goethe (1794-10-28). NA 27:74.
[4] Schiller was deeply influenced by Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and, in consequence, interpreted freedom as beauty in phenomenal appearance. He was most concerned with the influence of art and beauty on rational life throughout history. Schiller argued that to the extent that the sensuous will comes to recognize the true nature of beauty, the soul is transformed into beauty itself. In this state, the moral and rational wills cease to conflict and begin to enter into harmonious accord. Dieter, H., 2003. *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*. Pacini, D. S., ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 75.
[5] Kant, I., 1996. *Toward Perpetual Peace*. In: Gregor, M. J., ed. *Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 335 – 336.
[6] Kant, I., 1996. The Conflict of the Faculties. In: Wood, A. W. – di Giovanni, G., eds. *Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 307.

What does Kant consider to be the perfect constitution? The Republican constitution guarantees a) external freedom, b) common legislation for all subjects, and c) legal equality for citizens. What is the concept of political freedom? The concept "*Sapere aude!*"[7] is a call to action during the Enlightenment era, urging individuals to have the courage to think independently and rely on their own reasoning abilities. The cosmopolitan notion of Kantian philosophy can be achieved by employing public use of speech. Reason requires the presence of external freedom to guarantee the process of cultivation. Reason must be communicated for we need a criterium veritatis externum.[8] Any actions related to the rights of others, whose guiding principles are not compatible with publicity, are unjust. This is because all principles that require publicity to achieve their purpose must align with both justice and politics.[9]

According to Kant, his age is the age of criticism, to which everything must submit. Legislation through its majesty commonly seek to exempt itself from it. But in this way, it excites a just suspicion against itself, and cannot lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination.[10]

> Reason must subject itself to critique in all its undertakings and cannot restrict the freedom of critique through any prohibition without damaging itself and drawing upon itself a disadvantageous suspicion. Now there is nothing so important because of its utility, nothing so holy, that it may be exempted from this searching review and inspection, which knows no respect for persons. The very existence of reason depends upon this freedom, which has no dictatorial authority, but whose claim is never anything more than the agreement of free citizens.[11]

As mentioned by Kant, no one should deny the people the freedom of the pen.[12] While freedom of speech or writing may be taken by superior force,

[7] Kant, I., 1996. An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment? In: Gregor, M. J., ed. *Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 17.
[8] Koukouzelis, K., 2012. Republican Citizenship and Public Use of Reason from a Cosmopolitan Point of View. In: Telegdi-Csetri, A. – Ducu, V., eds. *Cosmopolitanism and Philosophy in a Cosmopolitan Sense*. Bucharest: New Europe College, p. 111.
[9] Kant, I., 1996. *Toward Perpetual Peace*, ibid, p. 351.
[10] Kant, I., 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Guyer, P. – Wood, A. W., eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 100 – 101.
[11] Ibid., p. 643.
[12] Kant, I., 1996. On the Common Saying: That May be Correct in Theory, but it is of No Use in Practice. In: Gregor, M. J., ed. *Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 302.

the freedom of thought can never be taken away. Therefore, it is reasonable to question whether, and with what justification, it is possible to think if we do not think collectively with others, to whom we communicate our thoughts and who, in turn, share theirs with us.[13] A necessary condition is the concept of the citizen as free and equal, from the perspective of republicanism. Through subjects who publicly use their own reason, even on legislative matters, Kant believes that improvements in state constitutions and reforms for better political institutions can be achieved.

As per Schiller, the most perfect of all works of art, is the building up of true political freedom within a liberal state. In his "Second Letter", Schiller uses Kantian terminology to portray individuals as human beings and citizens of the world, urging active participation in the political arena where the destiny of humanity is being determined.[14] Schiller acknowledges and does not disregard positive aspects of the Enlightenment, such as the pursuit of rationality and the promotion of human rights. The current era is characterized by enlightenment due to the widespread availability of knowledge, which enables the correction of our practical principles. To enlighten individuals, the adoption of the maxim "*Sapere aude!*" is urged.[15] If we are to solve that political problem in practice, we should follow the path of aesthetics, since it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom.[16]

2. The Schillerian Critique on Kantian Philosophy

Nevertheless, Kant asserts that the greatest problem faced by the human species is the achievement of a civil society that uniformly upholds the principles of justice. This problem is at the same time the most difficult and the latest to be solved by the human species.[17]

However, Schiller believes that the current era does not offer a version of human nature that can be identified as an essential condition for the moral progress of society. He criticizes force, violence, and an excessive focus on mentalism. The objective is to ensure fairness in every aspect of human existence. The primary objective of civilization is to protect and

[13] Kant, I., 1996. What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking? In: Wood, A. W. – di Giovanni, G., eds. *Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 16.
[14] Schiller, F., 2004. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* ibid., Second Letter.
[15] Ibid., Eighth Letter.
[16] Ibid., Second Letter.
[17] Kant, I., 2007. Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim. In: Louden R. B. – Zöller G., eds. *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 112 – 114.

preserve aesthetics and individuality.

To comprehend Schiller's ideas, it is necessary to delve into his anthropology. Schiller's premise is that man is composed of two aspects: nature and mind, which can also be understood as the senses and the Reason (freedom). As a living being, he is completely bound by natural laws, but only as a spiritual or rational being can he achieve freedom and morality. Given the risk of one side dominating over the other, the key issue is to cultivate a third character capable of merging the two elements.[18]

This is the reason why Schiller critiques the rigidity of Kantian moral philosophy, in which the idea of duty is portrayed with severity which frightens all the Graces away.[19] According to Schiller, individuals must integrate both pleasure and duty. He should willingly adhere to his rational principle. Kant is known as the Draco of his era.[20] However, what is the appropriate methodology? Schiller identifies himself with the lawgiver Solon, whom he compares himself to.[21] This identification is not coincidental; Solon, besides being a philosopher and legislator, was also a poet. In contrast to the rigidity of Kantian ethics, Schiller presents the concept of the beautiful soul, which combines aestheticism and reason, as well as vocation and duty.

Schiller argues that individuals with a weak reason might easily attempt to seek moral perfection on the path of a gloomy and monkish asceticism.[22] Nevertheless, he contends that Kant's subjective view was a result of the prevailing intellectualism. When examining the *Xenions* passage, which was written together by the author and Goethe, we can observe the author's subtle critique of the rigidity of Kantian ethics: the author expresses a willingness to assist their friends, but laments that their actions are driven by personal emotions, leading to concerns about their own virtue.[23]

One of the negative aspects of the Enlightenment that Schiller identi-

[18] Schiller, F., 2004. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ibid., Twenty-seventh Letter.

[19] In Greek mythology, the Graces were goddesses of charm, beauty, nature, human creativity, and goodwill.

[20] The Draco was a despotic lawgiver and the first man to document the code of law in ancient Sparta. The laws of the Draco were highly strict as evidenced by the fact that thieves were subjected to death penalty.

[21] Wilm, E. C., 1906. The Relation of Schiller's Ethics to Kant. *The Philosophical Review* 15(3), p. 285. doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/2177374 and Schiller, F., 1992. On Grace and Dignity. Washington: Schiller Institute, p. 366.

[22] Schiller, F., 1992. On Grace and Dignity, ibid., p. 365.

[23] Goethe, J. W., Schiller, F., 1915. *Goethe and Schiller's Xenions.* Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, p. 122.

fied is the existence of Reign of Terror. Schiller rejects all types of violence, including the one inflicted by practical reason on our emotions when it ethically determines the will, as it results in something painful in the phenomenal world. We absolutely reject any form of coercion, including when it is carried out by Reason itself.[24]

3. The Role of Aesthetic Cultivation in the Light of Kantian Philosophy

The main argument of this work is that there is a need to bring together and make consistent all parts of human experience (including the senses, the spirit, mind, and reason) through the cultivation of beauty and aesthetic culture. This is seen as essential to attain the ultimate unity and harmony of the individual within the "aesthetic state". Schiller's discussion is around the concept of a sphere of goodness that seeks to ensure that all natural beings are both free and equal citizens, with the capacity to express consent to all matters. The first law of gentility is: have consideration for the freedom of others. The second: show your freedom. The correct fulfilment of both is an infinitely difficult problem, but gentility always requires it relentlessly, and it alone makes the cosmopolitan man.[25] The ultimate objective of humanity can only be attained by gradual progress within civilization. The core of mankind's fate is childishness, an ideal that arises from the interplay of nature and rationality.

However, we should not ignore the fact that Kant argues that aesthetics can also contribute to the cultivation of man. The human being is destined by his reason to live in a society with human beings and in it to cultivate himself, to civilize himself, and to moralize himself by means of the arts and sciences.[26] Aesthetics is a social condition, consisting in the ability to make social judgements. It also involves the communication of feelings, pleasure or dissatisfaction, to others. Another important term explaining the importance of Kantian aesthetic philosophy, is that of "sensus communis".

> By *sensus communis*, however, must be understood the idea of a communal sense, i.e., a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else's way of representing in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole and thereby avoid the illusion which,

[24] Schiller, F., 2004. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ibid., Twenty-seventh Letter.
[25] Schiller, F., 2002. *Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner*, ibid., pp. 173 – 174.
[26] Kant, I., 2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. In: Louden, R. B. – Zöller, G., eds. *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 420.

> from subjective private conditions that could easily be held to be objective, would have a detrimental influence on the judgment. Now this happens by one holding his judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgments of others, and putting himself into the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that contingently attach to our own judging.[27]

The maxims of the *sensus communis* are only a negative guide: They tell us only what we must not do in thinking or on communicating if a shared plan is to be possible.[28] According to the first view, only those who think for themselves can contribute to a debate or a project. In the second part of the "sensus communis", only those who try to think from the other's point of view and honestly strive to listen, to interpret and to understand what others are saying are genuinely seeking to avoid opinions which others cannot agree on. The second aspect of the *sensus communis* is called the principle of the liberal mentality, which is adapted to the concepts of others. And finally, the third aspect concerns the endless work of the set of judgments that we formulate independently, and that we revise as we change our perspective in order to take into account the perspective of others.[29] Thus, the reflective and earthly aspect of the use of reason and reasoning is not governed by transcendental criteria, but by the attempt to orient one's thinking in ways that do not exclude accessibility to others. I put myself in the position in which any rational being could find himself.

4. The Aesthetic State and the Kingdom of Ends

Schiller argues that the ultimate goal of humanity is progress, which can be achieved by means of the state. Civilization must free men. Freedom is the defining factor that grants individuals the status of being a mem-

[27] Kant, I., 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Guyer, P., ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 173 – 174.

[28] O'Neill, O., 1990. *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 25. O'Neill detects elements of political philosophy in his central epistemological work, *Critique of Pure Reason,* while Arendt explores these themes even within Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment.* Arendt, H., 1992. *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Beiner, R., ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[29] As indicated by Kant, the three leading maxims are: 1) Think for oneself, 2) Think into the place of the other (in communication with human beings), 3) Always think consistently with oneself. Kant, I., 2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ibid., p. 308; Kant, I., 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ibid., p. 174.

ber of a superior social system. The objective of Die Horen[30] magazine's announcement is to bring together the politically fragmented world by promoting the ideals of truth and beauty.[31] He discourages writers from discussing contemporary times and instead encourages them to focus on historical events and the previous society, or explore the future through philosophical eyes, with the aim of attaining real progress in the social condition. In his letter to Jacobi, he expressed the notion that while we are compelled to be citizens of our own century, philosophers, and poets, have the responsibility to transcend any specific moment or society and be really timeless.[32]

In his famous essay on Schiller, Thomas Mann asserts that Schiller's plays symbolize human freedom. Specifically, Mann argues that *Don Carlos* represents the freedom of Holland, *The Virgin of Orleans* represents the freedom of France, and *William Tell* represents the freedom of Switzerland.[33] In his little essay "The Theatre as a Moral Institution", Schiller asserts that the theatre exalts virtues and condemns transgressions that the legal system neglects to punish; when justice is corrupted by gold, the theatre takes on the role of a fair judge. By obtaining a common national play, we are going to create a sovereign nation.[34] His theoretical contemplation is intricately linked to his poetry and theatrical works.

The central idea of Schiller's Aesthetics is the notion of the "aesthetic state". As per the thinker's own account, the aesthetic state refers to the realm of art and beauty, occupying a distinct space between the domains of natural compulsion and moral principles. The mission is to free people from the constraints of individualism and self-interest. It aims to elevate them to the level of the collectively and, consequently, to the level of universal Reason. Ultimately, it seeks to take them from the realm of natural necessity to the realm of morality, freedom, truth, and happiness.

[30] In ancient Greek mythology, they were a trio of fraternal goddesses known as the Hours. The name of the magazine he managed ("Die Horen") was derived from these mythological figures. The three sisters were named Eunomia, Dike, and Eirene. The three sisters in question were offspring of Themis, the goddess associated with law, and Zeus, the god associated with force. The three sisters welcomed Aphrodite, the godness of beauty, in Cyprus. Schiller's view of the relationship between law and beauty is linked to this myth. Beauty is freedom in appearance.

[31] Schiller, F., 1794. Ankündigung Schillers Monatszeitschrift Die Horen. *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 1795 (Vol. 1), pp. 1001 – 1002.

[32] Schiller, F., 1943. *Schillers Werke, Nationalausgabe*, ibid., NA 27:129.

[33] Mann, T., 2002. *Δοκίμιο για τον Σίλλερ* [*Essay for Schiller*]. Athens: Ίνδικτος, p. 77.

[34] Schiller, F., 1802. Die Schaubühne als moralische Anstalt betrachtet. *Kleinere prosaische Schriften* (4), pp. 7 – 27.

Another aspect of the aesthetic state is its potential social, political, and historical value. It represents a "pure democracy" or an ideal state that may not have been achieved yet. However, as a leading principle, a practical ideal, or even a utopia, it already holds credibility.[35]

In Kantian moral philosophy, the Kingdom of Ends serves as the guiding principle.[36] Kant's methodology bears resemblance to that of Schiller. Although it may never be fully achieved, we should always consider it as a guiding principle. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant addresses the philosophy of history and civilization, asserting that "only civilization can be the ultimate purpose that we have reason to ascribe to nature with respect to the human species."[37]

For the completion of the Enlightenment, Kantian philosophy emphasizes the importance of educating citizens in the law. The ultimate goal of the human race is moral perfection. How should we seek this perfection, and where should we hope to find it? Kant's answer is through education. However, the educational process should be adapted to the entire civil society and would be more effective if it were organized so that talents develop alongside the formation of character in a moral manner. Only if all members of the state receive similar education will we achieve the necessary stability. Can we hope for this? Once human nature attains the highest possible perfection, justice and equality will prevail over the power of authority. This is the highest moral perfection to which humanity can hope to achieve.[38]

Conclusion

So, both the Kantian and the Schillerian teleology set as a regulative ideal the elimination of all forms of coercion up to the level of the highest moral perfection. If political philosophy cannot assume that the human species is progressing, then the entire transcendental philosophy risks remaining a wonderful but impractical idea. However, until moral perfection is achieved, if it is indeed possible, we can ensure through politics the protection of free-

[35] Androulidakis, K., 2009. Η θεμελίωση της νεώτερης Αισθητικής: Μπάουμγκαρτεν - Καντ - Σίλλερ [The Foundation of Modern Aesthetics: Baumgarten - Kant - Schiller]. *Φιλοσοφία στην Ευρώπη: Κείμενα Νεώτερης και Σύγχρονης Φιλοσοφίας*. Patras: Ελληνικό Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο, p. 136.

[36] Kant, I., 1996. *Groundwork of The Metaphysics of Morals*. In: Gregor, M. J., ed. *Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 83 – 88.

[37] Kant, I., 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ibid., p. 298.

[38] Kant, I., 1997. *Lectures on Ethics*. Heath, P. – Schneewind, J. B., eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 222; Kant, I., 2007. *Lectures on Pedagogy*. In: Louden, R. B. – Zöller, G., eds. *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 446.

dom of speech, human rights, and the free exchange of ideas.

In brief, Kant argues that establishing an ideal political constitution is conditional to resolving the issue of legal relations between states. Thus, the former cannot be successfully addressed without first resolving the latter. He envisions eternal peace through the formation of a federation of independent states. On the contrary, Schiller desires the building of a political system that values beauty and aesthetics. The establishment of the European Union might be compared to Kant's concept of a federalism of free states, guaranteed by republican institutions, representing the peak of the European Union. The seal of the European Union pertains to its aesthetic aspect: it represents the selected anthem for the European Union, which is the poem "Ode to Joy" by Schiller, put to music by Beethoven.[39]

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[39] The melody used to symbolize the EU comes from the Ninth Symphony composed in 1823 by Ludwig Van Beethoven, when he set music to the "Ode to Joy", Friedrich von Schiller's lyrical verse from 1785. The anthem symbolises not only the European Union but also Europe in a wider sense. The poem "Ode to Joy" expresses Schiller's idealistic vision of the human race becoming brothers – a vision Beethoven shared. In 1972, the Council of Europe adopted Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" theme as its anthem. In 1985, it was adopted by EU leaders as the official anthem of the European Union. There are no words to the anthem; it consists of music only. In the universal language of music, this anthem expresses the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity. The European anthem is not intended to replace the national anthems of the EU countries but rather to celebrate the values they share. The anthem is played at official ceremonies involving the European Union and generally at all sorts of events with a European character. European Union. *European anthem*. [Accessed: 2024-10-26]. Available at: https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/european-anthem_en

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Weird Sublime (Blackwood, Hodgson, Lovecraft)

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Abstract: The paper focuses on a specific kind of sublime, as depicted in several works of "weird fiction". It is based on excerpts from the books by canonic authors of this genre – A. Blackwood, W. H. Hodgson, and H. P. Lovecraft. To explain the nature of the "weird sublime", this paper uses the comparison with classic forms of sublime in the theoretical works by I. Kant (*Critique of Judgement*) and F. Schiller (*Of the Sublime*). Due to this comparison, the weird sublime is presented as outwardly bizarre and arbitrary, but in essence moderate type of "the boundary experience" of the sublime.
Keywords: Sublime, weird fiction, disgust, imagination, transcendence

The weird fiction genre (or subgenre) developed in the late 19th and early 20th century. Many weird fiction books feature the elements of supernatural and psychological horrors and science fiction, combined in various constellations, and their protagonists – and, by proxy, readers – are confronted with unfathomable, terrifying and often disgusting phenomena, both natural and supernatural. Yet, despite their bizarre and repelling features, some weird tales let the readers experience not only terror and disgust but also a strange feeling of the sublime. To understand this weird sublime better, it is vital to remember the classic notion of the sublime in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790), together with some of its revisions in Schiller's "Of the Sublime" (1793). The reference to these concepts should facilitate the understanding of the weird sublime dynamics, and also enable it to demonstrate its outstanding features.

In the *Critique of Judgement,* Immanuel Kant discusses two types of sublime – mathematical and dynamical. The experience of the mathematical sublime is initiated by the failure of the human imagination when estimating the magnitude of natural existence;[1] the experience

[1] Kant, I., 2007. *Critique of Judgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 81 – 83.

of the dynamical sublime comes from the contemplation of nature as a might one cannot defy.[2] The negative emotion, caused by the realization of one's inadequacy – "check to the vital forces"[3] – is immediately obscured (yet not really obliterated) by a revitalization that brings exaltation, because in the first instance the impression of inadequacy of the sensible, corporeal nature leads to the understanding of the ability to think ideas,[4] while in the second instance it leads to the understanding of the ability to make free decisions, which emphasizes the idea of human freedom and independence of the corporeal connection to nature.[5]

As for Friedrich Schiller's thoughts, it is vital to refer to his terminological shift in the categorization of the sublime. To emphasize its wholeness, Schiller uses the word "theoretical" for the mathematical sublime, and "practical" for the dynamical.[6] In the first case, however, he subconsciously emphasizes the possibility of other failures of human cognitive abilities than of those he (like Kant) is writing about. The most important part is, however, Schiller's categorization of the practical sublime into contemplative and pathetic. As for contemplative sublime, the impression is caused by "an object as power" itself;[7] for the pathetic sublime, the impulse is human suffering, caused by an irresistible outer power.[8] Thus, by this pathetic notion, Schiller unambiguously places the sublime into the realm of art, especially literature, for only fiction makes elation and suffering mutually compatible.

The new modality of the sublime, presented by the authors of weird fiction, preserves the dynamics of the classic sublime but does not emphasize (at least in an unproblematic way) the faith in non-natural or supernatural identification of man. This essential difference (together with other ones, in mutual coordination) can be demonstrated by numerous examples, but it is sufficient to stick with parts from Algernon Blackwood's novella *The Willows* (1904), several excerpts from William Hope Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland* (1908), and Howard Phillips Lovecraft's short story *The Call of Cthulhu* (1926). The protagonists

[2] Ibid., pp. 90 – 91.
[3] Ibid., p. 76.
[4] Ibid., pp. 87 – 90.
[5] Ibid., pp. 91 – 93.
[6] Schiller, F., 2004. Of the Sublime. *Fidelio* 13(1 – 2), p. 90 – 91. [Accessed: 2024-09-09]. Available at: https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/fidelio_archive/2003/fidv12n01-2003Sp/fidv12n01-2003Sp.pdf.
[7] Ibid., p. 96.
[8] Ibid.

of these three canonical weird fiction works are confronted with something radically strange, something that enters the human and natural world from the unknown areas of outer space.

Blackwood's *The Willows* are set in the vacant floodplain in the Danube basin,[9] "covered by a vast sea of low willow-bushes".[10] Two friends taking a river cruise get caught in the bad weather, and thus they experience the power of the "ordinary" earthly nature. Having landed on a flat island in the river (and, therefore, in relative safety that enables contemplation), one of them watches the elements raging. He is overwhelmed by the vastness of the floodplain landscape, strength of the wind, power of the rising river, and, consequently, by the idea of physical endangerment, which is not yet imminent: the "resistless, thundering flood of water" gives him "the sense of awe".[11]

At the same time, he realizes that his "uneasiness lay deeper far than the emotions of awe and wonder",[12] evoked by the known nature. That is because he believes that the usual manifestation of the natural power "somewhere link on intimately with human life and human experience"[13]. These are phenomena that "stir comprehensible, even if alarming, emotions" and may even cause exaltation.[14] But the omnipresent willow shrubs cause uneasiness that brings no exaltation at all. The traveler feels he has trespassed the borders of a different world where usual human knowledge and habits are no longer relevant:

> [The Willows] made me think of a host of beings from another plane of life, another evolution altogether, perhaps, all discussing a mystery known only to themselves. I watched them moving busily together, oddly shaking their big bushy heads, twirling their myriad leaves even when there was no wind. They moved of their own will as though alive, and they touched, by some incalculable method, my own keen sense of the horrible.[15]

As the protagonist would find out later, the willows are imbued with a distant cosmic life that uses them to get to Earth. That is why the elementary understanding of the world fails when one encounters the

[9] Compare to Ashley, M., 2001. *Algernon Blackwood. An Extraordinary Life*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, pp. 107 – 108.
[10] Blackwood, A., 2011. *The Willows*. Auckland: The Floating Press, p. 4.
[11] Ibid., p. 11.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., p. 12.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 20.

willows, and so does the human ability to classify and categorize – the plants act like animals, they even seem to possess a mysterious kind of reason.

Later in the story, the travelers are confronted with even more conspicuous and menacing phenomena. The protagonist awakens in the middle of the night on the island, gets of his tent, and witnesses a strange event – vague shapes or figures move between the willows:

> They were interlaced one with another, making a great column, and I saw their limbs and huge bodies melting in and out of each other, forming this serpentine line that bent and swayed and twisted spirally with the contortions of the wind-tossed trees. They were nude, fluid shapes, passing up the bushes, within the leaves almost—rising up in a living column into the heavens.[16]

At that moment, the protagonist reaches to the strange creatures connected to the willow shrubs in an act of primitive worshiping, and escapes his fear for a little while; however, as soon as "the immediate wonder of their great presence" washes away,[17] he is overwhelmed by feelings of terror and helplessness. Following some more experiences, both travelers admit they have reached a strange place where non-human powers enter our world. And yet they clearly see these powers are no ancient gods or natural demons; the creatures are not connected to the human world through tales and myths, and therefore they must be extra-terrestrial, perhaps intelligent, but totally dissociated from people, and strangely connected with plants instead. The human brain, asking for versatility, is suddenly of no use for the protagonists.[18]

In the beginning, Blackwood evokes the impression of dynamic/practical sublime, only to destruct it immediately. The protagonists of his story cope with phenomena that cannot be integrated into their sensory horizon, not even by emphasizing the transcendence of human subjectivity. Therefore, the reader cannot experience the impression of the pathetic sublime in the situations when the travelers are exposed to the dangers of the island. That is because these dangers do not have the nature of a spiritless natural power; instead, they evoke the impression of a rational order, largely unfathomable for the human cognitive

[16] Ibid., p. 24.
[17] Ibid., p. 26.
[18] Compare to Conley, G., 2013. The Uncrossable Evolutionary Gulfs of Algernon Blackwood. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 24(3), pp. 426 – 445.

abilities. The protagonists remotely feel that they could face some sort of bizarre transformation rather than death, but they have but a vague idea of its nature.[19] Thus, the story questions the superiority of man as a rational, therefore super-natural being, and the classic exaltation is rendered impossible.

Similarly confusing is the use of the elements of the classic sublime in Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland*. The protagonist, living in a secluded old house in Western Ireland, experiences similar intermingling of worlds like the unhappy travelers in Blackwood's story, only his forays into different planes of reality are much more specific – he reaches very distant places in the outer space, or the distant future of the Earth where there is no more life.[20] In his first adventure, his study is suddenly full of glow that turns the wall of the house into some kind of a window to a different world. A scene arises that, under usual circumstances, would clearly make an impression of Kant's mathematical sublime:

> […] I was looking out on to a vast plain, lit with the same gloomy twilight that pervaded the room. The immensity of this plain scarcely can be conceived. In no part could I perceive its confines. It seemed to broaden and spread out, so that the eye failed to perceive any limitations.[21]

In the context of the unfathomability, the vast plain rather evokes confusion and terror. It does not have any understandable connection to the human world and the nearby countryside, so no experience with it can be integrated into human life. Its vastness only strengthens the impression of failure to navigate the universe rationally.

Compared to the Blackwood's story and Hodgson's novel, the destruction of the classical sublime is even more conspicuously depicted in Lovecraft's short story "The Call of Cthulhu". In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the long-drowned town of R'lyeh rises above the surface, concealing extra-terrestrial beings, seemingly dead.[22] But the creatures wake up, which is at first reflected in the dreams of sensitive individuals around the world, including an excentric young sculptor from New England:

[19] Compare to Cisco, M., 2021. *Weird Fiction. A Genre Study.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 278.
[20] Compare to Murphy, T. S., 2020. It Might Have Been a Million Years Later. Abyssal Time in William Hope Hodgson's Weird Fiction. *Studies in the Fantastic* 9, pp. 63 – 100.
[21] Hodgson, W. H., 2009. *The House on the Borderland*. Auckland: The Floating Press, p. 30.
[22] Compare to e.g. Nyholm, M., 2021. *Searchers After Horror. Understanding H. P. Lovecraft and His Fiction*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, pp. 114 – 117.

> […] he had had an unprecedented dream of great Cyclopean cities of titan blocks and sky-flung monoliths, all dripping with green ooze and sinister with latent horror. […] from some undetermined point below had come a voice that was not a voice; a chaotic sensation which only fancy could transmute into sound […][23]

In a sense, sky-flung blocks and monoliths correspond to the formal requirements of Kant's understanding of the mathematical sublime, as their colossal greatness goes beyond the powers of the aesthetic estimation of magnitude. They can also feel like the dynamical sublime, as they refer to the immense power that created them, and radiate the sinister, hidden menace. They are the creations of intelligent beings, not natural phenomena, and therefore do not fit into Kant's definition of the sublime, but they were not created by humans either, and therefore cannot be grasped by human understanding. They are a product of an alien nature, unfathomable for humans. But they destruct the classical sublime by their ominous unfathomability, emphasized, in the excerpt quoted above, by the reference to the chaotic sensation that only becomes sound due to the human imagination. Later in the story, the unfathomability is especially expressed by the non-Euclidean geometry of the buildings in R'lyeh, impossible to grasp, and deadly for human visitors.[24]

However, there is another aforementioned feature of the weird fiction present in the quotation, hardly ever compatible with the classic sublime: green slime is running down the blocks and monoliths of the lost city that has just suddenly reappeared from the sea. So R'lyeh is not only stunning, terrifying and confusing but also disgusting. And disgust even becomes the most intense emotion in the story's climax: when the sailor escaping the dangers of R'lyeh desperately navigates his ship through the body of the temporarily revived guardian of the city, the monstrous and colossal Cthulhu, there is "a bursting as of an exploding bladder, a slushy nastiness as of a cloven sunfish, a stench as of a thousand opened graves."[25] The distance between the man and the disgusting is completely eliminated, and the horrendous impression made by the great Cthulhu strengthens the sailor's realization of the permeability and porosity of his own body.

[23] Lovecraft, H. P., 2008. *The Fiction. Complete and Unabridged*. New York: Barnes & Noble, p. 358.
[24] Compare to Harman, G., 2012. *Weird Realism. Lovecraft and Philosophy*. Winchester – Washington: Zero Books, pp. 70 – 72.
[25] Lovecraft, H. P., 2008. *The Fiction. Complete and Unabridged*, ibid., p. 378.

All of these four aspects – quoted only in short excerpts here – join forces in The Call of Cthulhu, strengthening one another. Thus, the story's protagonists do not experience any exaltation at all; on the contrary, their experiences with the aliens from outer space leads them, via the sight of the human insignificance, to self-abdication. The combination of the external elements of the classic sublime, radical unfathomability and disgusting moments is a typical feature of many weird fiction works. The exalting emotion is eliminated from the story, and even the sensitive reader is denied of the classic impression of the sublime – in their failures, the protagonists do not refer to the human superiority above nature, they rather prove the delusiveness of this idea. Yet we cannot say that the exaltation is entirely missing in weird fiction; it is just more difficult to trace its origins, which is clearly shown by the heated discussions on these topics.[26]

To identify the nature of the weird sublime, we first need to briefly summarize the motivation of the weird fiction authors. Their work can be explained as a response to the changing understanding of man's place in the cosmic space; this change was driven by the development of sciences in the late 19th and early 20th century. From the perspective of evolutionary biology, humans were no longer unique beings, much more important than all other material existence;[27] the discoveries, hypotheses and theories of modern physics, especially the non-classical disciplines, seriously questioned the human faith in the ability to navigate the world.[28] Weird fiction can of course be interpreted as a sign of resigned acceptance of this new understanding of the human place in the universe, but it might also be a modest attempt to give a new, more resilient form to the human faith in man's dignity.

The weird stories usually do not feature anything exalting per se, or any reference to exaltation whatsoever, yet the stories are results of free fictional transformation of the human experience of "marginalization" in the big picture; therefore, they are a demonstration of transcendence.

[26] Compare to Will, B. A., 2002. H. P. Lovecraft and the Semiotic Kantian Sublime. *Extrapolation* 43(1), pp. 7 – 21; Ralickas, V., 2007. 'Cosmic Horror' and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18(3), pp. 364 – 398; Houston, A., 2011. Lovecraft and the Sublime. A Reinterpretation. *Lovecraft's Annual* 5, pp. 160 – 180; Moreland, S., 2018. The Birth of Cosmic Horror from the S(ub)lime of Lucretius. In: Moreland, S., ed. *New Directions in Supernatural Horror Literature*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13 – 42.

[27] Compare to e.g. Hurley, K., 2004. *The Gothic Body. Sexuality, materialism, and degeneration at the* fin de siècle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 55 – 64.

[28] Compare to e.g. Joshi, S. T., 1990. *H. P. Lovecraft. The Decline of the West*. Berkeley Heights: Wildside Press, pp. 17 – 18.

Due to the rationally controlled artistic imagination, the non-human universe of new sciences becomes the impulse for the experience of the theoretical-dynamical sublime, based on the harmony of the humble awe of the unfathomability of reality, combined with the joy of the ability (as author or reader) to give this experience an aesthetic expression. The weird fiction enables anyone to rise, through terror and disgust, above their limits, whatever origin they are of – not towards the supposed higher nature but above themselves, towards the mystery of the universe in its unpredictability.[29]

This makes the weird sublime much different to Kant's concept. It may also be "the expression of the boundary experience",[30] yet in this case the boundary is not drawn between the sensible and supersensible, but divides the area of Kant's sensible – i.e. the material nature – to a sphere that is easily accessible to man as a sensible-reasonable human being, and another sphere that only reluctantly yields to human understanding, usually indirectly and never in its entirety, which inspires anxiety and provokes human imagination at the same time. In weird fiction, this constellation of emotions creates bizarre avatars of the cosmic unknown,[31] paradoxically connecting what Kant's understanding of the dynamical sublime keeps separate, i.e. terrifying and exalting. The supersensible – at least in Kant's sense – is denied to man, and he intensely experiences his corporeality in its porosity, often disgusting; thus, the weird fiction aesthetic is different to Kant's, for whom an impression evoking disgust destroys "all aesthetic delight, and consequently artistic beauty".[32] The most peculiar difference, however, is in the ability enabled by the experience of the weird sublime – the imagination, i.e. the ability that, in case of the classic sublime, fails and gives way to the spontaneity of reason. Therefore, neither the author nor the reader of weird fiction does not put aside their affiliation to material nature, not even in their transcendence, though fancily arbitrary on the outside.

[29] Compare to Newell, J., 2020. *A Century of Weird Fiction. 1832–1937. Disgust, Metaphysics and the Aesthetics of the Cosmic Horror*. Cardiff: University of Walles Press, p. 13.
[30] Pries, Ch., 1933. Übergänge ohne Brücken. Kants Erhabenes zwischen Kritik und Metaphysik. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, p. 38.
[31] Compare to Reynolds, B., 2009. Lovecraft's Avatars: Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Dagon, and Lovecraftian Utopias. *Lovecraft Annual* 3, pp. 96 – 108.
[32] Kant, I., *Critique of Judgement*, ibid., p. 141.

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Romanticizing the World

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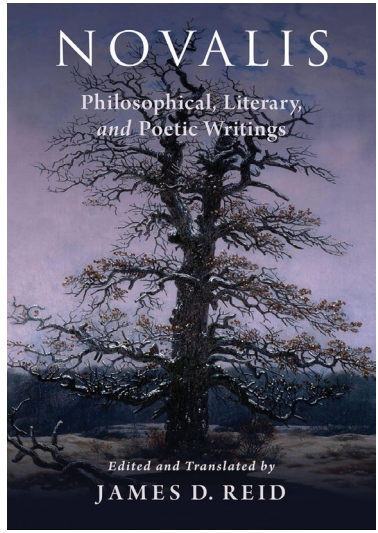
***Novalis. Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings*. Edited and translated by James D. Reid. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024. ISBN: 9780197574041. 568 pp.**

Introduction



To witness the untimely death of what could have been an incomparable love is a transformative experience.[1] It brings into greater relief the radical precariousness of life, and the world reasserts itself as a mystifying and perennially open question. "What are we in this wretched world/With faith and love to do?"[2] asks the poet who watches the once brilliant light abruptly extinguish, finding himself yet inextricably bound to a condition that necessarily demands his active involvement. Life and death are given over to us together as a task. And the task, it seems, is to romanticize the world.[3]

[1] Novalis tragically lost his first fianceé, Sophie von Kühn, in 1797.

[2] Reid, J., ed., 2024. *Novalis: Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings.* New York: Oxford University Press, p. 496. Reid offers two excellent translations of the hymn 'Sehnsucht nach dem Tode'. The first is rhymed and metered in order to preserve poetic form (quoted), while the second offers a more literal translation. The original German reads, "Was sollen wir auf dieser Welt/Mit unsrer Lieb' und Treue."

[3] "The world must be romanticized… When I give the commonplace a higher meaning, the ordinary a mysterious aspect, the known the dignity of the unknown, I romanticize it…" ibid., p. 138.

Novalis (1772 – 1801) is a thinker whose philosophical merit has perhaps not been sufficiently appreciated in the western canon. Associated with the *Frühromantik* movement and historically esteemed chiefly as a tragic poetic figure, it is not until relatively recently that he has begun to attract the attention of scholars as a formidable philosophical thinker in his own right. James D. Reid's *Novalis: Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings* offers anglophone readership not only the most comprehensive translation of his work to date, but also pieces together the mosaic of a sophisticated worldview that appreciates the interconnectedness of everything we come to find meaningful and calls for us to engage more carefully therewith. For Novalis, life is not unlike art, the two weaving into and reflecting each other in a magical symbiosis. To live poetically is to live authentically, directing the zephyr on which elevated thought carries us not merely into clouds of abstraction, but equally and more properly into the soil from and upon which life issues and actually unfolds. "The task of romanticizing the world is at once aesthetic and *practical*: art is not there merely for the sake of disinterested contemplation but serves as a vehicle for the construction of a better way of life."[4]

The beautiful life is the product of artistic moral activity. Situating Novalis more firmly into the discourse promises to expand the horizons of both the literary and philosophical terrain. Those interested in pursuing such a project will find Reid's volume to be an indispensable resource for their personal and professional edification.

Enlightened Romanticism

The Romantic movement has sometimes been cast as a reaction to the Enlightenment program. As the story goes, the inordinate amount of privilege afforded to the faculty of reason and its attendant rational processes overlooks many of the features of humanity that constitutes what it uniquely is; passion, sentimentality, valuation, and anything that resists convenient discursive categorization were, under the Enlightenment project, sacrificed or at best conceived of as the handmaidens of our higher faculties. Such prejudicial tendencies required a counterbalance to represent all that had ostensibly been left out of the conversation, and the Romantics sought to provide it.

[4] Ibid., p. xxvi.

It is probably now uncontroversial to say that such reactionary readings are scarcely more than a fraction of the whole story. For it is only too clear that the early Romantics were not only well-versed in the philosophy of the day, but also drew great inspiration therefrom. The influence of Kant's aesthetics and Fichte's idealism is readily apparent in the works of the early Romantics, Novalis himself a critical reader of both and an ardent student of the latter.[5] Perhaps the most important continuity we can see between Enlightenment and Romantic philosophy is the central concern of *Bildung*. For example, the notion that beauty is the symbol of morality and therefore can be instrumental in developing our moral sensibilities is undoubtedly one of the principal motivating insights for Romanticism as such,[6] as is the conviction that it is our deepest vocation to elevate ourselves both personally and socially.[7] Enlightenment and Romanticism are, therefore, better conceived as productive interlocutors rather than antagonistic competitors. In any case, whatever forms our philosophical systems might take, whatever our preferences or ideological commitments, we stand ever in a world that demands practical activity, and it is morally incumbent upon us to cultivate ourselves in such ways as to fully discharge our ethical and humanistic commitments.

It is here where a close and comprehensive engagement with Novalis's writings is instructive. For permeating the pollinating aphorisms, fragmentary reflections, and creative verses and narratives is a project of integration – a holistic enterprise which suggests a unity of the parts and the whole in a way that respects and harmonizes both. As Reid deftly puts it:

> A vision of philosophy itself that fails to organize the whole of life, both its everyday objects and the ideals that grant us a view, if only through a glass darkly, of a better way of life is a sterile exercise in abstraction... As hard as we try to compartmentalize our visions and labors, we find ourselves crossing boundaries everywhere, if only with a blinkered sense of what lies on the other side.[8]

When read collectively, the image that begins to emerge in Novalis's corpus is a philosophy that is sensitive to these designs, recognizing the

[5] Ibid., p. xiv.
[6] Kant, I., [1790] 2007. *Critique of Judgment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 178.
[7] Breazeale, D., ed., 1988. *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 137.
[8] Reid, J., ed., 2024. *Novalis: Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings*, ibid., p. xxxv.

possible problematics of atomization, abstraction, and sterility, and seeking to offer an organic, practical, and robust vision of life lived as a work of art. It is perhaps somewhat ironic, then, that most volumes on Novalis on offer until now have presented a somewhat *dis*integrated representation of what is arguably his cohesive philosophical vision. The anglophone researcher or student has so far had to make due with edited collections that situate Novalis's thought in disjunctively political, literary, or historical contexts.[9] The present volume, by contrast, is the first and only to demonstrate the thematic continuity and cohesiveness of a lifelong project in which there is necessary and perpetual intercourse between our artistic, philosophical, scientific, political, religious, and moral concerns – to bring together what cannot properly be thought separately. "To become a human being is an art."[10] And if art and life are one, so too are poet and philosopher.

Life as a *Bildungsroman*

The inclusion of fresh translations of both of Novalis's unfinished novels alone makes this volume an invaluable resource; but more importantly, they illustrate the synergy between artistic creation and lived experience. It is not just poetic analogy to imagine life as a story in which the subject is the principal author. As Novalis remarks in an unpublished fragment, "Life should not be a novel given to us, but rather one made by us."[11] When we take fictive creative narrative seriously, it translates to actual moral activity. Novalis's creative works, therefore, should be read in the context of an ongoing effort to come to terms with themes that occupy his thought over the course of a lifetime. And the reason why these themes are recurrent is because, in truth, life is an ongoing education, an exercise in *Bildung*.

Reid's translations of *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* are distinguished firstly because of their sensitivity to both the literary and philosophical subtleties in the language itself, and secondly

[9] For example, Beier (1996) places selections of his more publicly recognized works alongside Schlegel's and Schleiermacher's writings in an enlightening edited volume dedicated to the early Romantics' political thought; Donehower (2007) helpfully pieces together something of a biographical sketch with an assortment of sundry documents and journal entries; Stoljar's (1997) impressive but far less comprehensive edited volume has been perhaps the standard collection until now that frames Novalis's work as a distinctly philosophical enterprise.

[10] Reid, J., ed., 2024. *Novalis: Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings*, ibid., p. 150.

[11] Ibid., p. 154.

because of how they situate the novels in the overarching narrative of Novalis's philosophical interests. For example, consider the rendering of the the term *Lehrlinge* in the title of the first manuscript. In contrast to the translation offered in Manheim's popular edition of the same work, wherein the term is rendered as *novices*,[12] Reid's decision to render it as *disciples* seems to more adequately capture not just the suggestive nature of the word itself, but the characterization in the novel as well. To wit, the novel presents a set of characters all of whom are clearly astute and sufficiently competent to navigate sophisticated subject matter, which certainly does not betray the connotations of inexperience one hears in the word *novice*. Consider the following passage:

> Billig stellt der Künstler die Tätigkeit obenan, denn sein Wesen ist Tun und Hervorbringen mit Wissen und Willen, und seine Kunst ist, sein Werkzeug zu allem gebrauchen, die Welt auf seine Art nachbilden zu können, und darum wird das Princip seiner Welt Tätigkeit, und seine Welt seine Kunst.[13]

Reid renders the passage thusly:

> It is fitting that the artist ranks activity above everything else, for his essence is action and production, combined with knowledge and will, and his art is to be able to employ his instrument for everything, to reproduce the world in his own way, and hence the principle of his world is activity, and his world is his art.[14]

With this rendering, especially of the second and third clauses, the philosophical reader's attention is drawn to the activity involved in bringing together parts in order to create a whole.[15] In this case, it is creative activity that is constitutive of the artist proper, and it is a small step to recognize that the artist is an analogue for the cultivated individual as such. The theme of synthesis and the concern about practical activity can be tracked throughout all of Novalis's writings included

[12] Manheim, R., ed., 2005. *Novalis: The Novices at Sais*. New York: Archipelago Books.
[13] Novalis., 2013. *Gesammelte Werke*. Altenmünster: Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck, p. 30.
[14] Reid, J., ed., 2024. *Novalis: Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings*, ibid., p. 357.
[15] Mannheim has it translated, "It is fitting that the artist should set activity uppermost, for his essence is to act and create with knowledge and will, and his art is ability to use his instrument for every purpose, to reproduce the world in his own way; therefore the principle of his world is activity and his world is his art." Manheim, R., ed., 2005. *Novalis: The Novices at Sais*, ibid., p. 97. Notice Reid's use of nouns and the insertion of the verb 'combined', which brings together more strongly the relationship between the constituent parts.

here, polished or otherwise. *The Disciples at Saïs* is thus in many ways illustrative of the blossoming holistic philosophy that Novalis never abandoned developing, and so its inclusion makes for a more complete anthology.

Arguably, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* is and was intended to become Novalis's magnum opus. The very premise of the project exemplifies *Bildung*, as we join the namesake protagonist on a journey of diverse experience and reflective learning toward becoming a fully integrated human being. Reid's translating talents are here on full display, as the work boasts dense philosophical passages, technical poetic verses, and fantastic narrative prose in order to present not just a work of art, but an articulation of a way of life. One such passage insightfully demonstrates:

> "Die Poesie will vorzüglich," fuhr Klingsohr fort, "als strenge Kunst getrieben werden. Als bloßer Genuß hört sie auf Poesie zu sein. Ein Dichter muß nicht den ganzen Tag müßig umherlaufen, und auf Bilder und Gefühle Jagd machen. Das ist ganz der verkehrte Weg. Ein reines offenes Gemüt, Gewandtheit im Nachdenken und Betrachten, und Geschicklichkeit alle seine Fähigkeiten in eine gegenseitig belebende Tätigkeit zu versetzen und darin zu erhalten, das sind die Erfordernisse unserer Kunst..."[16]

Reid's translation reads:

> "Poetry," Klingsohr continued, "wants to be pursued chiefly as a rigorous art. As mere enjoyment it ceases to be poetry. A poet must not run around pointlessly all-day hunting images and feelings. That is the wrong way entirely. A pure and open mind, agility in deliberation and contemplation, and the ability to mobilize all of one's capacities into a mutually animating activity and to maintain them therein, these are the requirements of our art..."[17]

In this superbly rendered passage, we find again expression of an artistic and philosophical holism. To become a poet – to become human – demands one not merely to amuse with fanciful images or afford free reign to *patho*logical inclinations, but to gather oneself and concentrate the powers thereof into productive activity that breathes life into an otherwise inanimate world. Nature and subject, ideal and real, come

[16] Novalis, 2013. *Gesammelte Werke*, ibid., p. 234.
[17] Reid, J., ed., 2024. *Novalis: Philosophical, Literary, and Poetic Writings*, ibid., p. 438.

together to transcend themselves and generate an intelligible whole.

These excerpts illustrate that, as Reid suggests, "Despite superficial appearances of disorganization, the patient interpreter is likely to find a coherent vision of the world crystallizing across [Novalis's] diverse reflections and literary and poetic writings."[18] Life and fiction, it turns out, are really only different media for the same kind of story – the story of poetic activity.

Conclusion

With translations that are duly faithful to the original German and at the same time thoughtfully rendered in a sonorous way that makes the text incredibly readable, helpful footnotes that enhance the text, context, and the reader's understanding thereof, and an erudite and motivating introductory framing piece, Reid has registered a volume that is invaluable to any researcher or student interested broadly in the western philosophical tradition and narrowly in German intellectual history. But more than that, it respectfully makes the case for taking seriously on his own terms a figure who deserves interdisciplinary scholarly attention as someone who synthesized and anticipated pivotal themes in modern philosophical discourse. The world is, after all, worth romanticizing, and we should always be grateful to have a devoted partner in our "shared movement toward a beloved world."[19]

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[18] Ibid., p. xviii.
[19] Ibid., p. 116.

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