Kantian Review, 23, 3, 349–372 © Kantian Review, 2018
doi:10.1017/S1369415418000183

Kant's Deduction of the Sublime

THOMAS MOORE
Brown University
Email: thomas_e_moore@brown.edu

Abstract
In the third *Critique*, Kant collapses his deduction of the universal validity of judgements of sublimity into his exposition of such judgements, a decision called into question by commentators. I defend Kant on this score, explaining how the exposition of judgements of sublimity serves as their deduction. Kant's key move is his claim that natural objects are not, strictly speaking, sublime. I argue that ideas of reason, on Kant's view, are the only truly sublime objects and show how this allows him to establish that the imaginations of all observers operate in the same way in experiences of sublimity.

Keywords: Kantian sublime, ideas of reason, deduction, Kant's aesthetics

1. Introduction

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*,[1] Kant distinguishes between two species of aesthetic reflecting judgement: judgements of taste, or beauty, and judgements of the sublime. The differences between the two are apparent at the levels of both phenomenology and explanation,[2] and, according to Kant, in respect to the objects with which each type of judgement deals. Phenomenologically, while judgements of taste follow upon a feeling of pleasure in the subject as the result of the harmonious free play of the faculties, judgements of the sublime involve a more complex negative pleasure generated by a momentary inhibition followed by a subsequent delight.[3] At the level of explanation, while judgements of taste involve an interplay between imagination and the understanding, judgements of the sublime involve a relation between imagination and reason (§27 5: 258). There is enough to distinguish the two types of aesthetic judgement here already, but Kant goes on to add what he calls 'the most important and intrinsic (*wichtigste und innere*) difference

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

between the sublime and the beautiful' (§23 5: 245), namely, the fact that whereas the latter involves an object which is purposive in its form in relation to the cognitive faculties, the former deals with objects which are contrapurposive in their formlessness.

These differences, in particular the last, lead to a glaring structural asymmetry between Kant's presentations of the two types of judgement. It is part of Kant's analysis of what is involved when we claim of some object that it is beautiful that we are thereby rationally entitled to demand assent from all possible human observers. Of course, whether or not we and others judge correctly and, therefore, whether or not our judgement agrees with any other particular observer's judgement is an empirical matter. Nevertheless, this does not undercut the fact, on Kant's view, that such claims purport to demand universal assent on the basis of some intersubjectively valid ground shared among humans.[4] Furthermore, such universal subjective validity is a feature which judgements of taste share with judgements of the sublime, as Kant makes clear in his opening gambits in the Analytic of the Sublime, the second division of the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgement*.[5] As might be expected from Kant, then, he sees it necessary to provide a deduction, that is, an explanation of the ground of whatever *a priori* claim is involved in a certain judgement, in this case the attribution of universal validity to a feeling of aesthetic pleasure, for both types of judgement.

However, the ways in which Kant provides his deductions in the two cases differ radically from one another. In the case of judgements of taste, long after his exposition of such judgements in the Analytic of the Beautiful, he returns to this topic beginning in §30 and provides the required deduction in §38 with his claim 'that we are justified in presupposing universally in every human being the same subjective conditions of the power of judgement that we find in ourselves' (§38, Remark, 5: 290). In other words, the universal validity of judgements of taste consists in the fact that we can justifiably assume that all observers have the same faculties of cognition, with the result that we can demand their assent to our own judgements of beauty.

By contrast, instead of providing a deduction for judgements of the sublime separately from his exposition of the sublime, as he did in the case of judgements of beauty, Kant says that 'our exposition of the judgements on the sublime in nature was at the same time their deduction' (§30 5: 280). His official reason for this difference is the distinction, already noted, between form and formlessness in the two types of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

judgement. Since a beautiful object is one whose form seems fitted, or purposive, in regard to our faculties of cognition in its ability to bring about their harmonious free play, while objects evocative of sublimity seem contrapurposive because of their apparent formlessness, Kant thinks that the ground of our pleasure in the case of the beautiful is, at least in part, found outside of the subject, whereas in the case of the sublime the ground of our pleasure is wholly within the subject, or so I shall argue. Furthermore, this distinction between the objects of the two judgements and, hence, between their respective deductions relates to a further interesting difference, namely, that while Kant thinks that we legitimately attribute beauty to objects of nature,[6] he thinks that we falsely attribute sublimity to natural phenomena.

In this essay, I propose to investigate further why Kant treats his deduction of the sublime differently from that of the beautiful. Several commentators have criticized Kant on this score, arguing that he owes us a separate deduction of the sublime in order to explain why certain natural phenomena, rather than others, provoke the relevant aesthetic judgement (cf. Guyer 1979, Westphal 1998). I shall argue below that these objections are misplaced, insofar as Kant has a theoretical justification for collapsing the deduction of judgements of sublimity into their exposition.

In section 2, I will outline in more detail Kant's own reasons for treating the deductions in the two cases differently and sketch some problems that supposedly arise in this context. In section 3, I will argue that the key to understanding Kant's position lies in his claim that sublimity is subreptively applied to objects of nature. Here, my goal is to explain why Kant does not think that any object of nature can be sublime and what he takes the proper object of this predicate to be. In this section, I argue for two claims. First, by attending to Kant's definition of the sublime object as that which is absolutely great, I argue that no particular object of nature has the boundlessness required to induce a feeling of sublimity. Second, I argue that ideas of reason themselves are the only things properly sublime on Kant's view. In section 3, I will explain why Kant thought that his exposition of these matters constituted a deduction of judgements of sublimity by focusing on the imagination. Since ideas of reason, in particular the idea of an infinite whole, are the objects of judgements of sublimity, we can expect *a priori* that, in the case of every human being, the imagination will fail to comprehend the entire sublime object. It is partially on this ground that we demand the assent of all in such judgements. Finally, I will return to the original question: why should the diagnosis of subreption constitute an adequate explanation of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

why, in contrast to Kant's treatment of beauty, the exposition of the sublime is itself a deduction? I will explain this with reference to the role of external objects in judgements of beauty, something noticeably absent in judgements of sublimity. My explanation of why Kant does not give a separate deduction of judgements of sublimity therefore constitutes an argument against recent commentators such as Emily Brady who seek to give nature an indispensable role in experiences of sublimity.

It is worth noting here that my discussion does not attempt to prove the success of Kant's deduction of the sublime. I discuss only the role of the faculty of the imagination, because objections to Kant's deduction have focused on whether he has reason to suppose that everyone's imagination is affected by ideas in the same way. I will argue that, at least if we accept the limitations Kant places on intuition, he is justified in assuming this. However, to vindicate the universal validity of judgements of sublimity adequately, I would also have to argue that we can know *a priori* that the faculty of reason operates the same in all observers and, in particular, that reason produces the same sorts of ideas in all cases. Kant clearly assumes the common operation of reason on moral grounds, but I do not pause to assess whether he is justified in this view in the confines of this essay.[7]

2. Problems for Kant's Account

Kant divides his discussion of experiences of sublimity into the mathematical and the dynamical sublime. He describes both as involving the interaction between a formless, or boundless, object and our faculties of cognition. A case of the mathematical sublime typically arises when a vast object, paradigmatically a natural formation such as a mountain range or ocean, leads theoretical reason to demand of imagination that it comprehend the entirety of a formless object in a single intuition (§26 5: 254). For reasons I will explain later, a truly sublime object outstrips the imagination's powers of comprehension, the process which unifies the manifold of intuition apprehended by imagination (FI §VI 20: 220). As a result, we experience pain at imagination's failing, coupled, however, with pleasure at the realization of imagination's attempted conformity to reason's demand for completeness (§27 5: 257–8). In this respect, imagination is purposive for our 'supersensible vocation' (§27 5: 257). Similarly, in the case of the dynamical sublime, when threatening natural scenes, such as overhanging cliffs or stormy oceans, portend our physical destruction, we experience a pain, coupled with a pleasure attaching to our realization that such natural forces have no dominion over our practical reason, which is free in its moral capacity from any physical determination.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

An aesthetic judgement on the sublime, moreover, has a claim to universal validity 'in regard to every subject' (§23 5: 244). This last detail demands a deduction, or justification, and Kant believes he provides one in the exposition of experiences of sublimity. He explicitly gives a reason why no separate deduction of judgements of the sublime is needed:

> It will serve as an answer to this that the sublime in nature is only improperly so called, and should properly be ascribed only to the manner of thinking (*Denkungsart*), or rather to its foundation in human nature (*der Grundlage zu derselben in der menschlichen Natur*). The apprehension of an otherwise formless and non-purposive object merely provides the occasion for becoming conscious of this, which in this way is **used** in a subjectively purposive way, but is not judged to be such **for itself** … Hence our exposition of the judgements on the sublime in nature was at the same time their deduction. (§30 5: 280)

What, then, are Kant's reasons for thinking that objects of nature are only 'improperly' called sublime, in contrast to natural objects of beauty, whose aesthetic predicate correctly applies? As has been noted (cf. Westphal 1998: 39–40), Kant gives four interrelated reasons. First, sublimity concerns formless, or limitless, objects, in contrast with the natural forms which invoke the pleasures of beauty (§25 5: 250). Second, objects of nature which usually provoke feelings of sublimity do not lead 'to particular objective principles and forms of nature corresponding to these' (§23 5: 246). Here, Kant is explicitly contrasting natural scenes provocative of the sublime with natural beauty. Because of the purposiveness of the form of the latter in respect to our cognitive faculties, we are led to think of nature as the intentional product of an agent on an analogy with art. This, in turn, 'invites profound investigations into the possibility of such a form' (§23 5: 246). Chaotic scenes usually associated with the sublime, however, do not lead by themselves to such an investigation of nature on account of their contrapurposiveness. From this, Kant claims 'that the concept of the sublime in nature is far from being as important and rich in consequence as that of its beauty' (§23 5: 246).

A third reason Kant gives for denying sublimity to objects of nature is that the sublime is that which is 'absolutely great' or that 'in comparison with which everything else is small' (§25 5: 250). Since any object of nature, no matter how large, can be deemed small in comparison to a larger unit of measure that encompasses, say, two objects the size of the first, no such object can be sublime. Fourth, Kant says that objects of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nature evocative of the sublime do not elevate the mind, but cause pain by violating the imagination (§26 5: 256), whereas what is sublime, properly speaking, results in a pleasant feeling.

Commentators have challenged each of these reasons given by Kant to explain why no separate deduction is needed. Here, I will outline two of the strongest objections. The first objection is that it is not clear in what sense certain natural phenomena are formless. *If* Kant's claim is that formless objects cannot be, properly speaking, sublime, and *if* natural objects are not formless in the requisite sense, then the criterion of formlessness by itself cannot exclude natural objects from being sublime. There are, in fact, two good reasons to think that natural objects typically involved in feelings of sublimity are not formless. First, just like purposive natural beauty, objects which invoke a feeling of sublimity interact with our cognitive faculties, specifically imagination and reason, in a distinctive way. As a result, it seems that such objects have to have a certain order, or *form*, which makes them suitable to evoke sublimity. It is not just any case of apparent formlessness which succeeds in invoking the sublime, after all. One might even go so far as to say that the particular *apparent* formlessness of such objects is itself the form required for the relevant experience to arise (cf. Guyer 1979: 267). Second, it is not even clear that objects typically provocative of the sublime are *apparently* formless. They are finite, have definite boundaries, and can (in some cases at least) be perceived as unitary objects (cf. Westphal 1998: 40).

The second objection to Kant's conflating the exposition and the deduction of judgements of sublimity is that it is unclear whether he has explained all that he needs to explain in his exposition for it to amount to a deduction. A deduction should legitimize an assumption about the common operations of the cognitive faculties at play in producing a certain aesthetic response. As has been mentioned, in the case of the sublime, the faculties in question are imagination and reason. Kant indicates why we are justified in assuming a common operation of reason among human observers when he appeals to its predisposition to the feeling for practical ideas involved in practical reason's generating the moral law, a capacity which he thinks is shared universally among rational beings. As he says in §29, the ground for assuming others' necessary assent to a judgement on the sublime 'has its foundation in human nature, and indeed in that which can be required of everyone and demanded of him along with healthy understanding, namely in the predisposition to the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e., to that which is moral' (5: 265).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As I have already noted, whether or not Kant actually establishes that reason operates in the same way among all observers is a question I will not pursue. For the purposes of the objection under consideration, it suffices to note that he clearly bases part of his deduction on the common operation of reason. But it appears as if Kant gives no ground for assuming a common operation of *imagination* among human observers, an essential component of the aesthetic response to the sublime. Put differently, why should we think that everyone is equipped with the same imaginative limitations such that the same vast natural phenomena which dumbfound the imagination of one observer will likewise afflict that of any other? This objection has been raised by Guyer, and several commentators follow him in considering it to be a significant obstacle to Kant's account.[8]

In light of these difficulties, any account of why Kant does not provide a separate deduction for judgements of the sublime has to meet several explanatory desiderata. First, it has to explain how the four reasons listed above for denying objects of nature sublimity are supposed to work. Second, it has to clarify what exactly Kant thought was the proper object of sublimity. These two points together will answer the first problem listed above, namely, the question of the sense in which the sublime object is formless. Third, the account should indicate where in his exposition Kant completes the second half of his deduction of the sublime, i.e. where he points out a relevant shared operation of imagination in the case of the sublime that justifies a demand for universal assent. This addresses the second problem above. And fourth, we must return to the original question and examine why an object's form, or lack thereof, indicates whether or not a deduction is needed separately from an exposition. These are the tasks I aim to complete in the following sections.

3. Kant's Diagnosis of Subreption

In this section, I will argue that once we properly understand why natural objects cannot be sublime and that ideas of reason are the only objects Kant considers, strictly speaking, sublime, we can address the two worries raised in section 2. First, understanding ideas of reason as the proper objects of judgements of sublimity will allow us to see what kind of formlessness is at play in such judgements. Second, as I will discuss in section 4, the fact that such ideas are the objects of judgements of sublimity gives us a way to see how Kant could argue that the faculty of imagination operates in the same way in every observer in experiences of sublimity.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the previous section, we saw four reasons why Kant denies sublimity to natural objects. He emphasizes throughout the Analytic of the Sublime that objects of nature are only improperly called sublime. A few quotations will serve to make this clear. After saying that we express ourselves incorrectly by calling objects of nature sublime, he writes 'We can say no more than that the object serves for the presentation of a sublimity that can be found in the mind; for what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason … (*trifft nur Ideen der Vernunft*)' (§23 5: 245). Later, after defining the sublime as that which is absolutely great, Kant remarks that 'it is a disposition of the mind (*Geistesstimmung*) resulting from a certain representation occupying the reflective judgement, but not the object, which is to be called sublime' (§25 5: 250). And I have already cited the passage, found in §30 in the context of Kant's explanation of why a separate deduction of the sublime is not needed, where Kant explains that the sublime is properly ascribed only to a 'manner of thinking, or rather to its foundation in human nature'. And more evidence can be adduced for this claim (cf. §26 5: 256, §28 5: 264). Clearly this point is important for Kant's purposes and should be taken seriously.

Furthermore, Kant explains that we falsely attribute sublimity to natural phenomena, of either vast or fearsome appearance, by a subreption, or imputation of a concept suited to a rational idea to a feature of nature: 'Thus the feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own vocation, which we show to an object in nature through a certain subreption (substitution of a respect for the object instead of for the idea of humanity in our subject)' (§27 5: 257). Kant's explanation here of what happens during subreption is confused and needs to be unpacked. As Guyer has pointed out (2005: 160), it seems that respect directed to one's faculty of reason is a necessary feature of experiences of the sublime. This is because such experiences involve a 'mixed' phenomenology which includes pain at the failure of one's sensible nature, coupled with a pleasure incited by a realization of one's rational powers.[9] If respect were directed at a natural object instead of at reason, it is unclear how this distinctive phenomenology, in particular its pleasurable component, could arise. Furthermore, in a passage in the *Critique of Practical Reason* which we must regard as expressive of Kant's considered view of respect, Kant denies that respect can be directed towards objects at all: '*Respect* is always directed only to persons, never to things. The latter can awaken in us *inclinations* and even *love* if they are animals … or also *fear*, like the sea, a volcano, a beast of prey, but never *respect*' (5: 76). He later clarifies what he means here by 'persons', when he says that respect is directed 'strictly speaking to the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

law that [a person's] example holds before us' (5: 78). It is also interesting to note that Kant gives the sea and volcanoes as examples of objects which we cannot respect, the very sorts of objects which we typically regard as sublime in our subreptive judgements thereof. For these two reasons, then, it seems that respect cannot be directed towards natural objects in any experience of sublimity, subreptive or not.

Nevertheless, Kant describes the subreption in question as a misdirection of respect from reason to the natural object. Based on a literal reading of this passage, Clewis argues that Kant does not hold subreption to be a necessary feature of the sublime since, if it were, we would never respect, and hence never recognize, the idea of human freedom and supersensible rationality that is a part of the dynamical sublime (Clewis 2009: 78). I agree that subreption is not a necessary feature of sublime experiences, but I disagree with the reason for this put forward by Clewis. If he is right, then subreption blocks any respect directed towards our supersensible nature. However, as I have suggested, it is precisely when respect is so directed, whether consciously or unconsciously, that the particular phenomenology of the sublime arises. Without respect being directed towards our own capacity of reason, it is unclear where the pleasurable aspect of sublime experiences comes from and what we are to make of Kant's official view that respect can never be directed towards a sensible object. If this is right and on the reasonable assumption that we never impute sublimity to any object without an experience of sublimity constituted by this phenomenology, Clewis's view yields the result that subreption is impossible. This is because, according to him, subreption is incompatible with the role of respect necessary for the feeling of sublimity which provides the only occasion to impute sublimity in the first place.

Moreover, Clewis cites with disapproval Guyer's claim that experiences of the mathematical and dynamical sublime necessarily involve a recognition of reason's power over our sensible nature precisely on the grounds that, if Guyer is right, subreption would be impossible.[10] Here it is important to keep in mind the distinction between the phenomenology of sublimity and Kant's explanation of the causes of such phenomenology. The theoretical explanation of experiences of sublimity that Kant is giving makes use of respect for reason as a necessary condition of such experiences. As Abaci (2010) rightly points out, the truth of this account does not imply explicit consciousness of such respect. With this distinction in place, we can see how Kant can maintain the theoretical innovation that respect directed towards reason is a necessary condition of experiences of sublimity, given their distinctive phenomenology, without

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

holding that pre-Critical theorists, given over to attributing sublimity to natural objects without mention of reason as they were, never had a genuine experience of the sublime.[11]

We must conclude from all of this that Kant's language in his description of the relevant subreption is misleading. In the passage, he confuses the role of respect in the phenomenology of sublimity with the predication of sublimity itself. Thus, in explaining why we falsely call certain objects of nature sublime, he says that we regard them with respect. However, as I argued above, for any subreption to take place at all here, respect must be directed at something other than what we falsely take to be the sublime object. We can avoid confusion on this score if we distinguish between, on the one hand, a feeling of respect towards our faculty of reason which is, indeed, necessary in any experience of the sublime and, on the other, the predicate of sublimity. Kant's diagnosis of subreption, although awkwardly expressed, clearly is the view that we incorrectly apply the predicate of sublimity to objects of nature, sublimity proper belonging to another type of object, notwithstanding the respect that must be directed towards reason to occasion the need to apply that predicate in the first place. Although any sublime experience, on Kant's view, requires respect directed towards reason, the facts that this respect often goes unnoticed and that natural formations typically incite such experiences mislead observers to attribute the predicate to natural objects.

Furthermore, we should not assume that whatever respect is directed towards in an experience of sublimity thereby merits application of the predicate of sublimity. In particular, for the reasons I have given, respect must be directed towards human reason to produce the pleasurable component of the phenomenology. Nonetheless, I will argue below that ideas of reason, not the faculty of reason itself, are properly speaking sublime. Seeing that the object of respect comes apart from the sublime object in this way gives us room to see how the relevant subreption, understood as a misplacement of the predicate of sublimity, can coexist with respect's being directed towards reason.[12]

With this doctrine in the background, we can now assess the four reasons given by Kant and listed in the previous section that objects of nature are not properly called sublime. The reasons given, recall, involve sublime objects' formlessness, the inability of chaotic natural objects to yield objective principles, the absolute greatness of sublime objects and the pain, not accompanied by sublime pleasure, induced by natural objects typically associated with the sublime. Notice that two of these reasons,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the first and the third, refer to features of sublime objects, while the second and fourth reasons invoke aspects of natural objects. To understand Kant's argument, it is important to realize that not all of these reasons for denying sublimity to nature involve features of natural objects.

As noted, a common objection to Kant's claim that sublime objects are formless is that natural objects evocative of this aesthetic response are not literally without form. They are bounded, finite and have some shape. This is supposed to be an objection to Kant's exclusion of objects of nature from the sublime, because it is supposed to assimilate such objects more closely to the case of natural beauty, which does have a form and, says Kant, has its predicate correctly applied. However, this observation of the finitude of natural objects really serves to bolster Kant's claim, since he is explaining why *objects of nature* are not suitably called sublime. The premises that sublime objects are formless and absolutely great, that is, are meant to support the conclusion that natural objects are not sublime. To see how, consider the criterion of absolute greatness met by sublime objects. If sublime objects are, in fact, absolutely great, then it follows that no particular natural object, which will have definite boundaries and can always be considered small in comparison with a greater object (cf. Crowther 1989: 90), can be sublime. So when Kant calls sublime objects formless, he precisely does not mean that natural objects are formless. While certain natural formations can certainly provoke an experience of sublimity because of the way in which they sometimes *appear* formless, they are not literally formless and are, therefore, not strictly speaking involved in feelings of sublimity which involve such formlessness. This point, missed by commentators, is the response to the first major difficulty posed in section 2.

A similar misunderstanding afflicts Westphal's objection to Kant's fourth reason above, namely, that natural objects associated with the sublime are destructive of the imagination and, hence, painful, whereas sublimity involves pleasure. Westphal points out that, even though sublime objects are contrapurposive for productive imagination, they are purposive for the mind as a whole in revealing the role of reason and, therefore, pleasant. As I am about to argue, though, the only intentional objects directly involved in feelings of the sublime are rational ideas, such as that of an infinite given whole or of the idea of humanity. Westphal's point applies to these notions, since they reveal imagination's inadequacy and, at the same time, reason's powers to transcend the limitations of human sensibility. However, objects of *nature* which prompt reason to these ideas are

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

by themselves merely contrapurposive for imagination and, hence, only painful. This reading explains several of Kant's remarks about the contrapurposiveness of natural objects. In §26, Kant asks rhetorically, '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.?' (5: 256). And in §23, he says:

> Thus the wide ocean, enraged by storms, cannot be called sublime. Its visage is horrible; and one must already have filled the mind with all sorts of ideas (*mit mancherlei Ideen*) if by means of such an intuition it is to be put in a mood for a feeling which is itself sublime, in that the mind is incited to abandon sensibility and to occupy itself with the ideas that contain a higher purposiveness. (5: 245–6)

To be sure, Kant often speaks of natural phenomena as 'formless', as in the above quotation about the shapelessness of mountains. But, as I have argued, we have strong reasons to believe he does not mean this literally, not the least of which is that he says that the sublime is absolutely great, a criterion not met by natural objects. We have to understand such language, then, metaphorically, perhaps referring to the tendency of certain natural scenes of disorder to provoke the mind to certain rational ideas on account of imagination's inability to comprehend certain sights of nature in one intuition. When Kant suggests the formlessness of natural objects, then, we should understand this as a second-hand formlessness derivative of the authentic formlessness possessed by the rational ideas that some scenes of natural chaos evoke. Put differently, a feature actually had by some rational ideas is projected onto the natural objects which sometimes provoke those ideas and these natural objects are then said to have this feature when one is speaking loosely.

Given that such natural objects, then, are not the direct bearers of the predicate of sublimity, the question remains what exactly is. I have already indicated that I believe only ideas of reason are properly sublime, and I will now make clear why this is so. There has been widespread confusion in the literature concerning what exactly Kant takes to be sublime. I identify at least three common suggestions. Some commentators suggest that sublimity is attributed by Kant to rational ideas, such as that of the moral vocation of humanity,[13] others mention reason itself,[14] while still others suggest that the very feeling accompanying sublime experiences deserves the title.[15] This confusion is understandable, as Kant himself seems to suggest each of these various possibilities at times.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As indicated, I agree with commentators who take the first option, namely, that rational ideas are sublime. However, whereas previous commentators have simply assumed one of these three options and often seem to conflate them, I will give an argument for the option in question.

A simple consideration based on what has been established already in this section should indicate that certain rational ideas, such as the idea of an infinite whole or of humanity in its noumenal freedom, deserve the title of sublimity. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant explains that by an idea of reason he means a concept which can never be exhibited in experience. As he says, 'no actual experience is fully sufficient for' (A311/B367) an idea of reason, because 'nothing congruent to it can ever be given *in concreto*' (A327/B384). That is, an idea of reason, such as 'the absolute whole of appearances', to use Kant's example, is the concept of something which can never be encountered in experience, at least in its entirety. Such ideas have claim to be indeterminate and literally formless, qualities required by Kant of the sublime, as we have seen. The idea of an infinite whole cannot be exhibited in experience and is, hence, indeterminate, not to mention formless, in the sense of boundless, because it is the idea of something which can always be extended further. The idea of humanity expresses a moral vocation undetermined by sensible nature and is indeterminate and formless in that sense.[16] As I will now argue, the other two candidates for sublimity mentioned above are not suited for the job.[17]

There is one striking passage which might be taken to indicate that the experience, or feeling, associated with sublimity is itself the sublime object. In a passage previously quoted in full from 5: 246, Kant talks about 'a feeling which is itself sublime'. However, textual evidence for this view is thin, and it is unclear how the overall aesthetic feeling in question can have the requisite boundlessness and absolute greatness required by the sublime object. In addition, this view would involve telling a story about how a feeling, which is presumably in reaction to something sublime, is induced in reaction to itself. For these reasons, I think this is the least plausible candidate for sublimity. Now I will explain why I think reason itself fails to fit the bill.

To be sure, in many passages Kant suggests that the faculty of reason itself is properly sublime, as when he calls the sublime object our 'manner of thinking' (§30 5: 280), a 'disposition of the mind' (§26 5: 256) and founded 'in human nature' (§30 5: 280). One holding that reason itself is sublime could argue that, although rational ideas, with their boundlessness, are necessary for an experience of sublimity, when we realize that

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the pain caused by imagination's inability to accommodate them indicates the demands made by reason, we feel a negative pleasure directed towards reason itself, which is therefore deemed sublime. Furthermore, reason itself is boundless in the way required by the sublime object, in its capacity to operate on rational ideas themselves infinite in scope. Kant himself, in fact, admits that reason is infinite in this way when he says, 'Even a faculty for being able to think the infinite of supersensible intuition as given (in its intelligible substratum) surpasses any standard of sensibility, and is great beyond comparison' (§26 5: 255). Here the faculty, in its capacity to entertain rational ideas infinite in scope, is itself infinite.[18]

The main difficulty with this view, however, is that it fails to make clear why Kant argues that the sublime object is infinite in scope, since, as we will soon see, the infinitude of reason does not play a direct role in Kant's exposition of sublimity. This is so because, as I will argue in the next section, ideas of reason are necessary features of an experience of sublimity, because it is *their* infinitude which dumbfounds the imagination and which Kant exploits to complete his deduction of judgements of sublimity. According to the view about the sublime object which I am rejecting here, one would have to say that, although indefinite ideas of reason are themselves necessary for an experience of sublimity (for the reasons I give below), they really serve merely to direct our gaze to the true sublime object, namely, reason itself. It is then because Kant has already said that the sublime object is infinite in scope that one has to appeal to the passage above to explain in what sense reason is infinite. However, this account leaves obscure *why* Kant thinks that the sublime object is infinite, since the only role infinity and boundlessness play in the account is at the level of ideas of reason. My account, by contrast, explains both why Kant thinks that the sublime object is infinite and offers an equally plausible candidate for this type of object. It is merely as a by-product of the fact that ideas of reason are infinite that Kant attributes this same property to reason itself in the passage at 5: 255.

To summarize this section, I have argued that Kant gives adequate justification for thinking that no objects of nature are sublime, but that his theory awards this title to ideas of reason instead. In the process, I have defended Kant against one criticism of his justification for the diagnosis of subreption. We still need to understand how he establishes a common operation of the imagination among possible aesthetic observers. It is to this issue that I now turn.[19]

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4. Kant's Deduction and the Imagination

Given that Kant takes his exposition of the sublime also to be its deduction, a question arises concerning on what grounds we legitimately impute to other observers assent to our judgements on the sublime. Clearly, the shared faculty of reason in both its theoretical and practical aspects has a role to play in this account. This point is made by Kant in a passage already quoted from §29 of the Analytic of the Sublime, where he points to our right to assume a shared 'predisposition to the feeling for (practical) ideas' (5: 265) amongst humans. A more difficult question concerns the other half of Kant's deduction, namely, the grounds on which a common operation of the imagination can be claimed. This is, as previously noted, a challenge raised by Guyer. Given that both imagination and reason are involved in feelings of the sublime, what grounds does Kant give us to assume that the powers of any individual's imagination match those of any other's, so that we may legitimately demand universal assent in our judgements on the sublime? It certainly seems possible that a natural scene evocative of the sublime to one individual should fail to provoke that same aesthetic response in another, perhaps due to a difference in the imaginative powers of each. The key to understanding this part of Kant's deduction is to see that ideas of reason, rather than natural objects, are necessary components of an experience of sublimity. In the case of the mathematical sublime, for instance, the relevant idea is that of an infinite given whole.

Kant's deduction of a universally shared operation of the imagination can be found in §§25 and 26. At the beginning of §26, Kant distinguishes between mathematical (or logical) and aesthetic estimation of magnitudes, explaining that the former involves a definite measure of greatness 'by means of numerical concepts', whereas the latter is estimation 'in mere intuition (measured by eye)' (5: 251). The magnitude of any numerical measure used in mathematical estimation, furthermore, must itself be judged in comparison with another measure, with the result that the smallest basic unit used in any mathematical estimation is itself judged aesthetically.

An important difference noted by Kant between mathematical and aesthetic estimation, furthermore, is that for the former, there is no greatest magnitude, since whatever unit one is using to measure can be extended to infinity; however, for aesthetic estimation, there is a greatest magnitude, namely the largest which can be grasped in a single intuition. If, moreover, this greatest aesthetic magnitude is judged as *absolutely* great,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

defined by Kant as that which is 'great beyond all comparison' (§25 5: 248), then the idea of infinity is invoked. This is clear from Kant's comment that 'the infinite … is absolutely (not merely comparatively) great. Compared with this, everything else … is small' (§26 5: 254). In the previous section, Kant claims that the sublime is that which is absolutely great, and he connects this with the idea of infinity when he explains that when the greatest aesthetic magnitude is judged to be absolutely great (i.e. infinite), a feeling of sublimity is provoked: 'and about this I say that if [the greatest aesthetic magnitude] is judged as an absolute measure, beyond which no greater is subjectively (for the judging subject) possible, it brings with it the idea of the sublime' (§26 5: 251).

I now turn to the 'watershed' (Crowther 1989: 95) passage of these sections, where Kant explains how the operation of the imagination is dumbfounded in an attempt to synthesize an absolutely great magnitude. Kant distinguishes between two activities of the imagination in intuiting a given magnitude: apprehension and comprehension. Apprehension involves taking up into imagination successive sensible intuitions, while comprehension reproduces these intuitions alongside one another in memory, enabling a series of perceptions. Kant diagnoses imagination's failing when confronted with an absolutely great magnitude as a failure of aesthetic comprehension:

> There is no difficulty with apprehension, because it can go on to infinity; but comprehension becomes ever more difficult the further apprehension advances, and soon reaches its maximum, namely the aesthetically greatest basic measure for the estimation of magnitude. For when apprehension has gone so far that the partial representations of the intuition of the senses that were apprehended first already begin to fade in the imagination as the latter proceeds on to the apprehension of further ones, then it loses on one side as much as it gains on the other, and there is in the comprehension a greatest point beyond which it cannot go. (§26 5: 251–2)

It is when comprehension fails in this way that a sublime experience ensues. As apprehension proceeds to infinity in mathematical estimation, aesthetic estimation becomes impossible because of this failing of comprehension. But, as Kant says, the voice of reason demands totality 'for all given magnitudes … hence comprehension in **one** intuition, and it demands a **presentation** for all members of a progressively increasing numerical series, and does not exempt from this requirement even the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

infinite (space and past time), but rather makes it unavoidable for us to think of it … as **given entirely** (in its totality)' (§26 5: 254).

Thus, as I have argued, reason is provoked by the presence of an aesthetically greatest magnitude to demand of imagination comprehension of an infinitely given whole. The failure of imagination to accomplish this task results in a displeasure accompanied, however, with a pleasure in the realization that a faculty of the mind, reason, is capable of making such a demand, which requires the thought of an infinite given whole in the first place. As Kant says, 'But what is most important is that even being able to think of it as **a whole** indicates a faculty of the mind which surpasses every standard of sense' (§26 5: 254). This further explains why no natural object can be sublime, on Kant's view: it is precisely because something truly sublime, namely the infinite, cannot be given in intuition that Kant says sublimity is not predicated of objects of nature.

And now we can see how Kant's deduction proceeds with respect to the imagination. We are justified in assuming a common operation of the imaginative faculties in judging of a sublime object precisely because what prompts an experience of the sublime is the idea of an infinitely given whole itself (at least in the mathematical case), and it is a logical impossibility that imagination should be able to comprehend such an idea. In other words, provided a sublime object, i.e. a relevant idea of reason, is present, imagination will in principle fail in comprehending this object. It is on the legitimate assumption of the common operation, *in this case a failing*, of the imagination that Kant tries to establish the claim that any judgement of sublimity passed on the sublime object has universal validity. I think a parallel account can be given in the case of the dynamical sublime, where the relevant rational idea is that of humanity in its rational capacity which remains undetermined by sensible nature.

A further important question remains, however. What exactly is the role of objects of nature in an experience of sublimity? Put differently, on what grounds does Kant claim that everyone's imagination is stimulated by the same natural scenes to an experience of sublimity? On the account of Kant's deduction just offered, judgements of sublimity have universal validity only when passed on objects which are properly speaking sublime, namely, rational ideas. This is so because only such objects guarantee the same operation of the imagination in all observers: imagination's failed comprehension. This entails that natural objects are not necessary components of sublime experiences, since such experiences rely only on a relevant idea of reason being present to the mind.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Furthermore, we can have no guarantee that the same natural objects will provoke the relevant rational ideas in all aesthetic observers. However, this should not concern us, since the deduction purports to establish the universal validity of judgements passed on sublime objects and, as we have seen, objects of nature are not sublime.

It may be noted that this puts my view in stark contrast with one recently put forward by Emily Brady. In her work on Kant's theory of the sublime, she argues against what she sees as the 'self-regarding' interpretation of the Kantian sublime which relegates external objects to the status of mere triggers of the experience of sublimity. She does this by suggesting that, for Kant, external natural objects are necessary conditions on experiences of the sublime.[20] Brady attempts to back this claim up by appeal to the mixed phenomenology of experiences of the sublime. On her view, the shapelessness of natural objects is required to generate the pain at imagination's failure which, in turn, allows us to take pleasure in our rational activities. This is so because, as she argues, Kant's diagnosis of subreption claims that natural objects are not properly called sublime in virtue of their formlessness, sublimity being properly attributed to something with form (cf. Brady 2012: 101, 2013: 80). Moreover, Kant is clear that formlessness is required to foil the imagination's efforts at comprehension, thereby setting in motion the mixed phenomenology of the sublime. Therefore, according to Brady, such experiences require objects of nature to present formlessness to the imagination. As I have argued above, though, such an account misunderstands the reasons for Kant's denying sublimity to natural objects. Kant's actual argument is that no object of nature is sublime because the sublime object is absolutely great and, in this respect, formless, whereas natural objects are finite and with a form. Natural objects, then, cannot serve to sustain the mixed phenomenology of the sublime, as Brady suspects, since they are not formless, and can at most trigger a rational idea which is formless in the relevant sense.

My account has several additional interpretative advantages over that offered by Brady. First, while there is no direct textual evidence to suggest Kant thought natural objects play an indispensable role in experiences of sublimity, there are passages suggestive of sublime experience completely divorced from nature. I am thinking in particular of Kant's exclamation of '*Duty!* Sublime and mighty name …' (5: 86). Here it seems that Kant countenances the case of sublime experience provoked by contemplation of the moral law and the duties required by it. Certainly, there is no suggestion that natural objects need play a role in such a case. Second, as I have outlined, my account offers an argument for the common operation

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the imagination among aesthetic observers, namely, its failure to comprehend rational ideas, required for Kant's deduction of the sublime. On Brady's view, we cannot attribute to Kant a plausible argument for the universal validity of judgements of sublimity since natural objects on her view are necessary conditions of such judgements and yet which natural objects trigger an idea of reason to interact with imagination remains an empirical matter. Third, as I will shortly make clear, my account justifies Kant's decision to collapse the deduction of judgements of sublimity into their exposition. On Brady's view, it remains opaque why Kant did not deliver a separate deduction.[21]

We still might wonder how natural objects trigger experiences of sublimity, as they often do. An answer to this question has been suggested above in the thought that when a natural object exceeds the greatest aesthetic magnitude in intuition, for instance when an observer is confronted with a mountain range extending as far as the eye can see or an ocean stretching to the horizon, the idea of absolute greatness, i.e. infinity, is brought to mind. Kant suggests how this might happen at the end of §26. His account seems to involve the movement of the mind from a particular natural object to ever vaster and vaster stretches of nature *ad infinitum*. When a vast mountain range is observed, the mind sees that it can serve as the unit of measure for a larger stretch of nature, which, in turn, measures an even larger stretch. The description of Kant's that suggests this idea is as follows:

> Examples of the mathematically sublime in nature in mere intuition are provided for us by all those cases where what is given to us is not so much a greater numerical concept as rather a great unity as measure (for shortening the numerical series) for the imagination. A tree that we estimate by the height of a man may serve as a standard for a mountain, and, if the latter were, say, a mile high, it could serve as the unit for the number that expresses the diameter of the earth, in order to make the latter intuitable; the diameter of the earth could serve as the unit for the planetary system so far as known to us, this for the Milky Way, and the immeasurable multitude of such Milky Way systems, called nebulae, which presumably constitute such a system among themselves in turn, does not allow us to expect any limits here. (§26 5: 256)

Of course, it remains an empirical matter, on this theory, precisely what natural conditions lead the mind to the idea of nature as an infinite given

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

whole. Kant seems to recognize this in §29 when he says that, in contrast to judgements of taste, 'we cannot promise ourselves that our judgement concerning the sublime *in nature* will so readily find acceptance by others' (5: 264, emphasis mine). As I have argued, though, once rational ideas are provoked by certain natural scenes, Kant has an account to offer of on what grounds the universal validity for judgements of the sublime rests.

5. Conclusion

Finally, we must return to the original question, namely, how does the claim that objects of nature are not properly called sublime, whereas some can correctly be called beautiful, support Kant's decision not to provide a separate deduction for judgements of the sublime? The answer lies in the claim that the forms of individual natural objects, since not literally formless, are not of the right sort, namely boundless, to enter into an experience of sublimity. As a result, when expounding his theory of the sublime, Kant need advert only to the involvement of certain ideas provided by reason with the imaginative faculty itself. Since these faculties can be assumed, or so Kant argues, to operate in the same way in every aesthetic observer, such an exposition also serves as its deduction.

In the case of judgements of taste, by contrast, where the exposition adverts to the direct involvement of natural forms in the experience of beauty, a separate deduction regarding solely the common operation of the faculties may have seemed to Kant to be needed. In other words, because the exposition of the sublime involves only mental faculties, he saw no need to return to the operation of these same faculties to provide a separate deduction. Since judgements of beauty have a partial ground outside of the observer, in the forms of objects, he needed to emphasize that it is the interaction between such forms and *human mental faculties* which grounds the claim such judgements make to universal validity and he provided this emphasis in a separate deduction.

In conclusion, once we see why Kant thought that natural objects are not strictly speaking sublime, we need not attribute to them any necessary role in experiences of sublimity. Instead, rational ideas are necessary conditions of experiences of sublimity. This explains why Kant collapses his deduction into the exposition of the sublime. Furthermore, my account explains how Kant argued that the imaginative faculty operates in the same way in all observers, at least in the case of experiences of sublimity: it is in principle impossible for anyone's imagination to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

comprehend rational ideas such as that of an infinite given whole. My account stops short of claiming that the deduction is successful, simply because doing so would require assessing Kant's claim that human reason also operates in the same way in all observers, a task for another time. Interestingly, however, insofar as it is unclear whether Kant can justify the claim that imagination operates in the same way among observers in judgements of taste, which require imagination's *successful* functioning, and insofar as I am right that Kant does have a principled reason for imagination's common *failure* in judgements of the sublime, we have more reason to expect that Kant's deduction of the latter is successful than that his deduction of the former is.

Notes

1 In this article, all references to Kant's text are from the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (*CPJ*, Kant 2000; FI = First Introduction), unless otherwise noted. Parenthetical references to Kant's writings give the volume and page number(s) of the Royal Prussian Academy edition (*Kants gesammelte Schriften*), which are included in the margins of the translations. Additional English translations are from Kant 1997 for the second *Critique* and Kant 1998 for the first. I would like to thank the many people who have given me feedback on this essay. In particular, thanks are due to Paul Guyer, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Charles Larmore, Robert Clewis and two anonymous referees of this journal who offered extremely helpful suggestions.

2 Here, I am referring to Paul Guyer's distinction between the analysis and the explanation of an aesthetic judgement. The former presents the content of a judgement of taste, e.g. its claim to universal agreement, the latter presents the conditions that bring about pleasure in an aesthetic object and, hence, produce the aesthetic judgement. See Guyer 1979: 68.

3 See chiefly §23 5: 244–5, where Kant characterizes the pleasure involved in judgements of the sublime thus: 'the satisfaction in the sublime does not so much contain positive pleasure as it does admiration or respect, i.e., it deserves to be called negative pleasure'. Cf. §27 5: 258

4 See the Second and Fourth Moments of the Analytic of the Beautiful for Kant's exposition of this view.

5 See §23 5: 244. Both types of aesthetic judgement are judgements 'that profess to be universally valid in regard to every subject'.

6 See §23 5: 245, where he says that 'we can quite correctly call very many [objects of nature] beautiful'.

7 I thank Reed Winegar and an anonymous referee for pressing me to make this point clear.

8 Guyer 1979: 265–6, Crowther 1989: 127; and cf. Clewis 2009: 138. Of course, one might argue that Kant's deduction of judgements of taste, if successful, discharges the obligation of proving a common operation of imagination among human observers, because such judgements involve the imagination and the understanding. Kant would, then, need to address only the common operation of reason to give a deduction of judgements of sublimity. However, in the case of taste, imagination and understanding are in harmony and both operate successfully. In the case of the sublime, by contrast, imagination fails in its task. So, even if Kant shows the common success of imagination

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the case of taste, he still needs to provide grounds for a common *failure* of imagination in the case of the sublime. I show how Kant does just this later in this essay.

9 Cf. 4: 401n. and 5: 76 for definitions of Kant's notion of respect.

10 Ibid. See also Clewis (2010: 168) for the claim that it is too strong to suggest that the subject is aware of his freedom during an experience of the sublime. See Guyer 2005: 160. Abaci's rejoinder is in Abaci 2010.

11 Many thanks to an anonymous referee for asking me to address this point in more detail.

12 We need not, therefore, attribute any inconsistency in beliefs to subreptive observers, since they are not always aware that respect is directed towards reason or, if they are, may still think the predicate fitting to natural objects. Once again, I thank an anonymous referee for bringing this point to my attention.

13 Clewis 2009: 60, Crowther 1989: 82. In conversation, Clewis has suggested to me that what is properly sublime, on Kant's view, may be indeterminate between reason, ideas of reason and the experience itself. Although Kant's text is not definitive on this point, I find the view that he had no particular kind of object in mind as meriting the predicate of sublimity or that he thought the matter indeterminate *prima facie* unsatisfactory. It is an obvious question which we should expect a complete theory of the sublime to answer. As I argue below, ideas of reason fulfil the criteria of being sublime and the deduction requires seeing such ideas as sublime, giving us indirect evidence for a view which Kant does not explicitly state.

14 Cf. Crowther (1989: 91), where he says that our moral being and supersensible being are sublime. I take these locutions to indicate the faculty of reason. Guyer (1979: 267) also identifies 'human reason' as sublime, although he suggests that certain ideas of reason are properly considered sublime (Guyer 2005: 160). Cf. also Abaci (2008: 240), where he says that 'what is truly sublime is … our own supersensible capacity'. However, in his later response to Clewis, Abaci states, without flagging a change in his position, that 'ideas of reason [are] … judged to be sublime, through judgments of sublimity' (Abaci 2010: 171). Clearly, there is great confusion on this score in need of sorting out.

15 Allison (2001: 311): 'What is actually liked in the experiences of the sublime is, rather, the *feeling* of one's supersensible nature that is occasioned by the perception of such objects as stormy oceans … *And as the true referent of this liking, it is also what is properly deemed sublime*' (emphasis mine).

16 Of course, rational ideas are not formless in the sense of being chaotic. The moral law given by reason, for instance, has a form. For my purposes here, it suffices for a rational idea to be formless if it cannot be exhibited by any of our sensible faculties. Since an infinite whole cannot be given in experience or comprehended by the imagination, it is formless in the sense relevant to experiences of the sublime. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for asking for clarification on this point.

17 Here, I want to flag a recent debate concerning the sublime object. Guy Sircello (1993) has questioned whether any coherent theory of the sublime can be given at all. This is because most theories focus on the idea that experiences of sublimity present an object which is epistemologically inaccessible. However, theories about the sublime purport to yield epistemological access to the sublime object. Moreover, sublime experiences must be experiences of *something*, that is, an existing thing. Yet, if so, it is not clear how to attribute the feature of epistemological inaccessibility to it, since 'it is impossible to have any kind of experiences at all that presents an object or realm that is *in no way* epistemologically accessible' (Sircello 1993: 547). Forsey (2007) asks whether Kant's theory can circumvent this worry since he does not think sublimity attaches to objects of experience at all, but instead turns inwards to objects of thought. So, as I have interpreted Kant above, the question arises of what it means to experience an idea of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

reason which is not accessible to sensation. Would not such experience imply that the sublime object is not epistemologically inaccessible after all? Kant's own answer would most likely appeal to the metaphysics of transcendental idealism and our dual nature: while ideas of reason are inaccessible to our sensible nature, experiences of sublimity nevertheless give us insight into our non-sensible nature and it is this part of us which has access to such ideas. However, developing this line of thought is beyond the scope of this article, which is primarily concerned with exegesis and not with whether or not his theory is ultimately coherent in all its details.

18 This is the idea behind Shakespeare's line in *Hamlet,* Act II, Scene 2: 'What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty.'

19 Here I want to note an interesting consequence of my view for a recent debate concerning whether or not Kant allows artworks to be sublime. In a recent exchange, Robert Clewis (2010) and Uygar Abaci (2008) present compelling cases for and against, respectively, the possibility of the artistic sublime. Abaci argues that two features of art in particular prevent it from being sublime: the intentionality, as opposed to contrapurposiveness, required on the part of the artist and the fact that even natural scenes usually provocative of the sublime must be represented as beautiful in an artwork. More generally, Abaci argues that the proper context of the sublime is nature, since experiences of the sublime always involve a dichotomy between nature and reason. Clewis responds by adverting to the significance of ideas of reason in Kant's theory. In particular, since ideas of reason are, strictly speaking, what elicit the sublime and if, as I have argued above, such ideas are the only proper objects of sublimity on Kant's view, there is no reason why an artwork cannot excite the mind to such an idea. In fact, Abaci canvasses such a possibility in his original paper. He considers the view that, since what is properly sublime is found in the mind, the distinction between art and nature cannot be established based on the role any external object plays in the experience and, hence, sublimity might apply to both art and nature, albeit improperly in both cases. Abaci calls this line of thought 'tempting' (2008: 239) but dismisses it on the ground that it removes sublimity from its proper context in nature. This line of thought, though, is the consequence of my own view and, I believe, the correct way to understand Kant on this issue. Abaci's objection to it dismisses the diagnosis of subreption which, I have argued, should be given its full due. Once this is realized, we can see why each side in the debate seems appealing. On the one hand, only ideas of reason can be sublime, so art cannot be. On the other, though, art might provoke us to an idea of reason in the way that nature sometimes does and might be given the title of sublimity in an act of subreption.

20 She does not put the point explicitly in this way, but I take it that is what she means by saying that 'the qualities that give the impression of formlessness in natural objects play an important causal role in the experience or such experiences simply would not occur' (Brady 2012: 101).

21 Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that I respond to the sort of view put forward by Brady.

References

Abaci, Uygar (2008) 'Kant's Justified Dismissal of Artistic Sublimity'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 66 (3), 237–51.

—— (2010) 'Artistic Sublime Revisited: Reply to Robert Clewis'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 68 (2), 170–3.

Allison, Henry (2001) *Kant's Theory of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Brady, Emily (2012) 'Reassessing Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature in the Kantian Sublime'. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 46 (1), 91–109.
—— (2013) *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Clewis, Robert R. (2009) *The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
—— (2010) 'A Case for Artistic Kantian Sublimity: A Response to Abaci'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 68 (2), 167–70.
Crowther, Paul (1989) *The Kantian Sublime: From Morality to Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Forsey, Jane (2007) 'Is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65 (4), 381–9.
Guyer, Paul (1979) *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
—— (2005) *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kant, Immanuel (1997) *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
—— (1998) *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
—— (2000) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sircello, Guy (1993) 'How is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51 (4), 541–0.
Westphal, Kenneth (1998) 'Kant on the Sublime'. In Michael Kelly (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 37–41.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press