CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Marcelo Echevarri

The Sublime and the Ecstatic in the Works of Werner Herzog

Bachelor's Thesis

Prague, 2020

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Marcelo Echevarri

The Sublime and the Ecstatic in the Works of Werner Herzog

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Mgr. Ondřej Váša, Ph. D.

Prague, 2020

Statement:

I hereby declare that the following thesis is my independent work and that all sources and literature that I have used have been duly cited. I agree for this thesis to be stored in the electronic database of the Charles University repository, and to be used for study purposes in accordance to copyright. This thesis was not used in order to obtain another or the same degree.

In Prague, 6th of August 2020. Marcelo Echevarri

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Ondřej Váša, Ph. D., for his guidance and advice. I would also like to thank my family for their support and Anna for her encouragement and advice.

Abstract:

This bachelor's thesis revolves around the concept of the sublime —and, for its relation to it, of the ecstatic— in the works of filmmaker Werner Herzog. It examines the historical concept of the sublime and presents an analysis of Immanuel Kant's sublime, as this is then related and compared to Herzog's own concept of the sublime. The thesis then investigates Herzog's methods towards constructing sublime films; relating these to Kant, Longinus, Edmund Burke and Caspar David Friedrich. Finally, it delves into the implications of Herzog's sublime; namely, ecstatic truth, and its relations and differences with Kant's consequence of the sublime experience; namely, the superiority of moral ideas.

Keywords:

Sublime, dynamically sublime, ecstasy, ecstatic truth, Kant, Herzog, Longinus, Friedrich.

Table of Contents

"A desolate day out of which all life had been drained.

In my hut, which is more and more empty,

the sublime and the ghostly have taken up residence

like siblings who no longer speak to one another."[1]

[1] Herzog, W., 2009. *Conquest of the Useless.* Harper Collins., p. 9.274.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I will delve into the works of acclaimed German filmmaker Werner Herzog, in order to analyse his conception of the sublime in his films from a (mainly) philosophical perspective. Moreover, I will delve into his method towards attaining said sublime and thus transporting the observer to what he denominates as the realm of the ecstatic truth.

My reasons for choosing this topic as my bachelor's thesis are various. Firstly, my long-time fascination for Werner Herzog's cinema. For many years now I have been profoundly interested in Herzog's films, his rather unorthodox methods and the themes and contents of his films, always revolving around extremes, tragedies, terror and eccentricities; be it in characters, stories or landscapes.

Herzog is well-known in the filmmaking world for stylising his documentaries. This means that he introduces into his non-fiction features scenes, dialogues and quotes, among other details, that are creations of his own and do not actually pertain to the factual truth of the documentary itself. He has argued countless times, that he does so in order to elevate the nature of the documentary to the realm of the ecstatic truth;[2] counterposing his documentary-making style with that of *cinema-verité.*[3] However, Herzog does not oppose *cinema-verité* as such, he uses it only as a substitute example to separate himself from the currents in cinema that he identifies as *cinema-verité.*[4] The manipulation of facts in his documentaries would be the first impulse to analyse Herzog's work, methods and objectives: what are the aesthetic or philosophical implications of this procedure? If Herzog sets himself against "cinema-verité", emphasizing that he is not simply lying, what would be the foundations and implications of his "ecstatic truth"?

[2] "I have, with every one of my films, attempted to move beyond facts and illuminate the audience with ecstatic truth. Facts might have normative power, but they don't constitute truth. Facts don't illuminate. Only truth illuminates." Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p.15.11.

[3] "*Cinéma-vérité* is fact orientated and primitive. It is the accountant's truth, merely skirting the surface of what constitutes a deeper form of truth in cinema, reaching only the most banal level of understanding. If facts had any value, if they truly illuminated us, if they unquestionably stood for truth, the Manhattan phone directory would be the book of books. Millions of established and verifiable facts, but senseless and uninspiring. The important truths remain unknown." Ibid. p. 15.10

[4] Ibid. pp. 5.54-5.56

Secondly, since one of the answers consists in Herzog's treatment of the sublime, I have utilised another of my points of interest (in the concepts of the sublime and ecstasy) and compared Herzog's ideas with the third *Critique* of Immanuel Kant.

I have found the relation between Kant and Herzog to be of great relevance, which definitely prompted me to work with this thesis' topic. Mainly for the reason that not only the structure of the sublime is very similar in both Kant and Herzog, but also because the similarities and differences between Kant's and Herzog's consequences of the sublime experience are highly interesting

In order to be able to present the thesis properly and argue clearly the aforementioned content of it, I will begin by outlining a brief biography of the German filmmaker, as some of his life experiences, such as his discovery of cinema, religious experiences and travels on foot provide insight and clues into his work and methods. Furthermore, so as to get acquainted with some of his more relevant works and his career. Thereafter, I will present a brief historical account on the concept of the sublime, in order to give a relevant background to the core concept of the thesis, focusing on Longinus —mainly for the relations it has with Herzog in more technical and stylistic matters— and Edmund Burke —for his conception of the sublime terror and for being somewhat of a predecessor to Kant's aesthetic judgments. Later on, I will delve specially into Kant's treatment of the sublime and the dynamically sublime, as it is, arguably, closely related to Herzog's own ideas and statements on the sublime, which will be analysed and confronted with regards to Kant.

Thereon, I will move forward by studying Herzog's method, his "architecture" of the sublime: how, practically speaking, does he transmit, or convey, a sublime experience in the observer. A general analysis of Herzog's themes will be presented, so as to establish a basis to his method; later on, I will delve into more practical matters such as his landscapes —and their relation to Romanticism, specially to C.D. Friedrich—, and his use of fabrication and stylisation in documentaries, in order to show how Herzog practically implements his "sublime" ideas.

Finally, I will present what Herzog's objective is: the "aftermath" to the experience of the sublime; what his final purpose is with regards to producing sublime films. Herzog states that he is trying to articulate the collective dreams of humanity and to transport [through a sublime experience] the viewer to the realm of ecstatic truth. These stances are quite obscure, and yet, they are paramount towards unveiling the purpose of Herzog's artworks, so these

will also be analysed in order to elucidate the purposiveness of the artwork, which, again, will be related to Kant's ideas of the dynamically sublime and its consequences.

Therefore, the main hypothesis of this bachelor's thesis is that there is a clear link and relation between Kant's argumentation of the sublime and its implications —although there are some relevant differences to this—, and Herzog's conception and articulation of the sublime and ecstatic truth in his works. Moreover, that there is an important relation in Herzog's works and beliefs with regards to Longinus, to Caspar David Friedrich and to Edmund Burke.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to accurately present and analyse the matters that will be dealt in the thesis, I watched —for the most part, re-watched— most of Herzog's films, especially the ones that will be treated in this work, and I conducted a thorough theoretical research, not only on Werner Herzog himself, but also on the philosophical and literary sources that are relevant towards elucidating the sublime in the works of Herzog and on his purpose of "illuminating the audience with ecstatic truth".

For this, I will be working with two critical books directly related to Herzog. First and most importantly, Paul Cronin's *Werner Herzog: A Guide For the Perplexed: Conversations with Paul Cronin* (Cronin, 2014); a series of interviews and conversations between Paul Cronin and Werner Herzog that spanned various years, and which cover most of Herzog's life and works up until the time of publication. This will serve as the main source for everything directly related to Herzog himself, his positions, opinions and stances on the relevant matters dealt in this bachelor's thesis, as it is arguably the best and most complete manuscript there is on Herzog; after all it can be said that it was written by both Herzog and Cronin.[5] Moreover, I will also work with *Werner Herzog: Interviews* (Ames, 2014), which comprises selected interviews on Herzog from the 1960s to the present. Apart from this, I will complement the material on Herzog with primary sources, his published manuscripts and writings —most of them poetical and quite metaphorical—, which will complement the two aforementioned books. Finally, regarding Herzog, various of his films.

On the other hand, as for the theoretical background relating to the sublime, I have studied some of the more relevant primary sources that constitute the inquiry on the sublime in philosophy. The main source will necessarily be Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (Kant and Pluhar, 1987), not only to define and present an analysis of the sublime, but also so as to establish the relation between Kant and Herzog regarding the sublime. Furthermore, Longinus' *On the Sublime* and Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* will serve as additional sources for the theoretical background on the sublime and for their relations to Herzog's methods. Arguably, Longinus' text on the sublime mirrors Herzog stylistically, in terms of his architecture of the sublime in specific

[5] "I live my life with as little reflection as possible, but recognise that this book is the only competent comment on my work out there, and that there is ever likely to be. In that respect, I'm glad it exists." Ibid., p. 18.110

cases; and Burke's sublime terror,[6] as mentioned earlier, clearly parallels most of Werner Herzog's themes in his films.

Furthermore, as a way to properly present the historical account on the sublime, I will complement said primary sources with Robert Doran's *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (2015), in order to provide insight into the historical evolution of the sublime and the more important characters that influenced it.

Finally, in order to clarify some of the more complex matters in the analysis of Kant's sublime, I will make use, apart from Doran, of Crowther's *The Kantian Sublime* (1989), and Henry Allison's *Kant's Theory of Taste* (2001).

[6] Burke, E., 1764. *A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful*. 4th ed. London: Robert Dodsley, James Dodsley, pp. 58-60.

3. WERNER HERZOG: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Werner Herzog was born in Munich in September 1942, during the apex of the second world war. Briefly after being born, his mother took him and his brother to Sachrang, a village in the mountains of Bavaria, close to the border with Austria. They lived there until Herzog was thirteen years old. At the time, he did not know anything about film, as he recounts, he saw his first film when he was eleven, a series of 16mm projections. There, he saw the powers of cinema and its ability to construct images, scenes and suspense, among others, and from that moment became fascinated by it.[7]

His family moved back to Munich, as said, when Werner was thirteen, and, as they were on the brink of poverty, they stayed at a room in a boarding house in the city. It was there that Herzog first met Klaus Kinski, [8] the man who would become one of his most regular actors and who would star in the films that made Herzog internationally famous.[9]

In many occasions, Herzog has stated that he turned to filmmaking as there was nothing else he could do, this was his only profession and calling in life. Interestingly, he ties this calling to filmmaking with a very short period of his teenage years in which he converted to Catholicism. As he himself states: "This became clear to me within a few dramatic months at the age of fourteen, when I began to travel on foot and converted to the Catholic faith. (…) Many adolescents of that age have instances of momentous decision-making, when something explodes with energy inside of them, though perhaps not with the intensity I experienced. There was a dramatic condensation of everything in my life at the time and a need to connect to something sublime, but my interest in religion dissipated and dwindled away fairly quickly."[10] Even more interesting is the fact that he not only ties his interest in filmmaking with his conversion to Catholicism, but more importantly, the apparent relation these two had on Herzog with regards to the sublime. It seems that it was this search for something "sublime", that propelled Herzog into the realm of filmmaking, and that would then become the central object of his very own films. Moreover, it is relevant to mention that at that time not only his quest for filmmaking began, but also his love for travelling on foot.

---

[7] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 7.51-7.52.
[8] Ibid., p. 16.35
[9] Films such as *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972) and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982). The latter being even nominated for a Golden Globe award.
[10] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, pp. 7.6,7.11.

To the point that he has defended travelling on foot against all forms of tourism,[11] as well as doing himself extensive journeys on foot[12], defending that all the existentially important things in life should be done on foot. As he explains, travelling on foot has a certain intensity, one is moving through a landscape when doing so, which is, according to Herzog, also tied to what he calls the landscapes of the mind[13], something which will also be discussed in detail in this thesis, as these are a critical part of Herzog's purpose.

Herzog's first film, *Herakles* (1962), inaugurated when he was twenty years old. This was the beginning of a fruitful and long career, still making films nowadays, more than half a century later. Herakles is a short film about bodybuilders and strongmen. There is nothing too impressive about this first film; the relevancy there was the fact that his career as a self-produced filmmaker was getting started. Six years later, and after having spent some time in the United States —earning money smuggling goods from Mexico—, he produced and directed his first feature film; *Signs of Life* (*Lebenszeichen*, 1968). It was nominated for a Golden Bear in the Berlin Film Festival and won a Silver Bear.

From then on, Herzog's fate as an independent filmmaker with international success was sealed. Moreover, even in *Signs of Life*, one can begin to see the most important and characteristic *herzogian* features, the ones that make his style and films unique, and most of which will be discussed in this thesis.

Werner Herzog is said to be the only filmmaker that has made at least one film in every single continent. With more than 65 films written and directed by himself —averaging more than one film per year—, he is one of the most prolific filmmakers alive. He has made films for television; documentaries, features; has staged operas, written books and poetry and has even acted in some movies. Further relevant details will be discussed later on, as well as a number of his films, which will be necessary in order to analyse most of what will be discussed in this bachelor's thesis. But, before we do so, given that the sublime is a core part of Herzog's works, let us present an analysis of said concept.

[11] "Tourism is sin and travel by foot is virtue." Ibid., p. 14.14.
[12] Ibid., p. 14.18
[13] Ibid., pp. 8.93, 9.67, 14.14,14.15.

4. THE SUBLIME

4.1. Brief history of the Sublime

The current term sublime derives from the Latin *sublimis*,[14] which in itself has its origins in what seems to be the first text written on the sublime: Longinus' *On the Sublime —Perì Hýpsous* in the original Greek—, supposedly written in the first century AD. It is commonly attributed to Longinus, although authorship is unclear and there are different hypotheses on possible authors.[15]

As for the sublime itself, different dictionaries give diverse definitions on it, most of them relating it to something extremely good or beautiful[16]. However, Oxford dictionary, apart from the definition relating it to beauty, defines the sublime as something "producing an overwhelming sense of awe or other high emotion through being vast or grand."[17] This definition is relevantly related to the historical sublime found in philosophy of art and aesthetics,[18] as it is the definition related to the most important intellectuals that devoted their thought on the sublime; namely, Longinus, Burke and Kant.[19]

Robert Doran (2015) explains how the sublime was first defined by Longinus, and how the concept has retained most of its original meaning since then. This is of importance, as he explains, because there seems to be a separation between Longinus' rhetorical sublime and Burke and Kant's aesthetic sublime.

Longinus' text deals with the sublime in a very stylistic manner, that is, analysing what constitutes great and bad writing, the different techniques and methods towards creating sublime writing, and the characteristics needed, be it in the writer as in the written text, in order to attain sublimity.

---

[14] "Late 16th century (in the sense 'dignified, aloof'): from Latin sublimis, from sub- 'up to' + a second element perhaps related to limen 'threshold', limus 'oblique'." Viewed 23rd June 2020. https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/sublime

[15] Longinus, Fyfe, W.H., and Russell, D. 1995. *On The Sublime*. London: Harvard University Press, p. 145-148.

[16] Viewed 23rd June 2020. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sublime

[17] Viewed 23rd June 2020. https://www.lexico.com/definition/sublime

[18] It is relevant to mention the different definitions, as the sublime must not be related directly to beauty, as will be argued in this thesis, and as has been extensively argued by the likes of Burke and Kant.

[19] As Robert Doran (2015) argues, these are the most important authors on the sublime; Longinus for establishing the concept, and developing what Doran defines as the "rhetorical sublime" (p. 9), and Burke and Kant for introducing what would then become the "aesthetic sublime" (p. 9), that would revive the concept and its widespread study with Derrida and Lyotard, in the 1970s and 1980s and onwards.

As Longinus puts it: "the Sublime [*hypsos*] consists in a consummate excellence and distinction of language, and that this alone gave to the greatest poets and prose writers their pre-eminence and clothed them with immortal fame. For the effect of genius is not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves [*ekstasis*]. Invariably what inspires wonder, with its power of amazing us, always prevails over what is merely convincing and pleasing. For our persuasions are usually under our own control, while these things exercise an irresistible power and mastery, and get the better of every listener. (…) a well-timed flash of sublimity shatters everything like a bolt of lightning and reveals the full power of the speaker at a single stroke."[20]

In this paragraph, we can already begin to see what will later become a constant in the description of the sublime experience; namely, a feeling of awe and astonishment, wonder and amazement, and of being transported out of oneself —ecstasy.[21] Moreover, as Longinus describes it, these feelings of wonder and amazement dominate us completely, exercising "an irresistible power and mastery" over us. All of these accounts by Longinus can be found, however varied and developed, in later authors such as Burke and Kant. This appears to be one of the reasons why Doran argues that Longinus' text not only introduces the sublime, historically speaking, but also has a "structuring effect on the modern discourse on sublimity."[22]

It is worth mentioning that Longinus' text would not have had the relevance it did, or the widespread fame, were it not for Nicolas Boileau, who translated the work into French in 1674, writing a preface to the edition, and translated the Greek *hypsos* to 'sublime'; which would then set the concept with that term for the future. From that moment, Doran argues, the term sublime "acquired a currency in the literary criticism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, achieving in a few years a European-wide fame."[23]

Before advancing on with Edmund Burke, it is relevant to mention that before him there were other philosophers and intellectuals of relevance that treated the sublime, and that,

[20] Longinus. 1995. *On The Sublime*. London: Harvard University Press. P1.
[21] The concept of ecstasy as pertaining to the sublime experience will be treated later on, for it has its relevancy in Herzog as it is the central part of his consequence to the sublime experience.
[22] Doran, R., 2015. *The Theory Of The Sublime From Longinus To Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 9.
[23] Ibid. p. 8.

without them and their writings, Burke and Kant's arguments on sublimity would probably have not existed.[24]

Firstly, the aforementioned Boileau, who not only popularized Longinus' sublime, but also introduced the Latinate "*sublimis"* as the standard term. Secondly, and most importantly, British writer John Dennis, who introduced, even before Burke, but not as extensively, what Burke would call the sublime terror. Dennis defined it as a kind of "delightful horror, a terrible joy", his experience travelling the Alps, and further stated that he felt "at the same time, that I was infinitely pleased, I trembled" (Dennis, 1693, pp. 133-34).

Dennis is clearly a precursor of Burke and Kant, a necessary one; for had he not introduced this connotation of horror and fear, mixed with delight and joy in the sublime, Burke probably wouldn't have introduced his sublime terror, crucial for the development of the historical sublime. Moreover, as Doran defends, Dennis served as the uniting bridge that separates Longinus and Boileau's "rhetorical sublime" and Burke and Kant's "aesthetic sublime",[25] giving it a unity and a coherence that otherwise would have lacked, to the detriment of the evolution of the sublime in philosophy.

Edmund Burke's treatment of the sublime in his treatise (Burke, 1764), introduces the first coherent analysis of the sublime, as contrasted with the beautiful and with judgments of taste. It is worth mentioning, that this was, later on, also analysed by Kant. However, Burke's account is of a more empirical nature. Nevertheless, this allowed for a very detailed explanation of the sublime experience, always resonating with the *longinian* sublime[26], which already made reference to the sublime experience as something producing awe, wonder and amazement.

The importance of Burke in the development of the historical sublime resides in two very precise matters; firstly, the aforementioned contrast between the sublime and the beautiful. This is the reason why I previously mentioned the two contrasting linguistic definitions of the sublime, one related to beauty and the other to an "overwhelming sense of awe". The fact that Burke separates the sublime from beauty is critical, for it poses the sublime not as a positive pleasure —category to which he ascribes beauty—, but as a removal of pain, which

[24] Ibid., p. 7.
[25] Ibid., p. 6.
[26]With which Burke was acquainted. The first English translation was written by John Hall in 1652. (Longinus, Fyfe, Russell. 1995, p. 155)

never becomes positive pleasure.[27] He defines the removal of pain (for example, surviving or escaping some imminent danger) as *Delight,* counterposing it to pleasure, which, according to him, is of a different nature.[28] This is crucial for the introduction of the second matter that garners Burke importance in the development of the sublime. The fact that he separated the sublime from the beautiful, and related the sublime to a removal of pain and not to a positive pleasure, allowed for the presentation of the sublime terror, relating the sublime to a feeling of terror or fear, something which is already hinted at with his distinction of positive pleasure and removal of pain previously mentioned.

Burke's sublime terror becomes in his treatise the main and most important form of the sublime.[29] Furthermore, it presents, I believe, a critical turning point in the historical sublime. Although, as mentioned earlier, Dennis introduces the notion of "delightful horror", and thus presents for the first-time what Burke later named sublime terror, it lacks the argumentation and elaboration of Burke's treatise. Therefore, the fact that the sublime, with Burke's treatise, not only is separated from its literary and stylistic context, but is also presented as coming from pain rather than pleasure, and argued and developed extensively —contrary to Dennis—, making it the central point of his inquiry, gives Burke a relevant place in the development of the historical sublime. Arguably, Burke's inquiry consequently leads to a growth and maturity of the sublime in philosophy, making it possible for the definite articulation of the sublime and the sublime experience and its consequences, that of Immanuel Kant.

4.2. The Kantian Sublime

The study of aesthetics has been present in Kant's philosophy throughout most of his life. Samely, within aesthetics, the study of the sublime is not a singular occurrence in Kant's works. He devoted large parts of his career on studying said matter, starting with his first

[27] "They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure." Burke, E., 1764. *A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful*. 4th ed. London: Robert Dodsley, James Dodsley, p. 238.
[28] Ibid., pp. 47-54.
[29] "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to fight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on any thing as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous." Ibid., pp. 96-97.

piece of writing on the sublime, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) and culminating it with his more mature and profound analysis of the sublime in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790).

Kant also treated the sublime in one of his last books, the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), as well as in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788); although the basis of this study will concentrate on his more detailed and complex opus regarding the sublime, the third *Critique.* The reasons are various; firstly, because it is a later work that, in a sense, surpasses the *Observations*. Moreover, because it is more profound and complex in its treatment, it is a more mature and developed writing, and, finally, since the treatment of the sublime with regards to the beautiful differs somewhat in the *Observations*, as opposed to the *Critique*. Originally, as Doran (2015) explains, Kant did not oppose the sublime and the beautiful, they were "merely differentiated". In contrast, in his *Critique,* there is a very clear and marked differentiation of the sublime and the beautiful, as happens with Edmund Burke's enquiry, as previously mentioned.

With regards to the *Anthropology* and his second *Critique,* the problem we encounter is mainly that in those works, the treatment of the sublime tends to be complementary to the central discussions. That is, that it is used while discussing and presenting other arguments. For instance, in the second *Critique*,[30] the sublime does have relevance, for Kant's moral philosophy is not complete without sublimity. As Doran puts it: "If the central question of Kant's moral philosophy is that of how we can rise above sensible determination (that is, achieve autonomy), the sublime, precisely as the transcendence of sensibility, has both a moral and an aesthetic significance."[31] Therefore, we can see the relevance of the sublime in the second *Critique,* but it is not the central point of the discussion, contrary to the analysis of the sublime found in the third *Critique.*

However, going back to the *Observations,* they are important, even if not paramount, as they introduce many of the ideas that Kant would later develop in his third *Critique;* namely, his initial distinction between the beautiful and the sublime from a moral perspective —although there is, as said, no absolute differentiation in the *Observations* between beauty and sublime, there is a moral distinction introduced by Kant; as well as many of the themes that will be

[30] The following, as said, can also be applied to the *Anthropology;* the central discussion does not involve the sublime as will be treated in this thesis and as was treated by Kant in his third *Critique.*
[31] Doran, R., 2015. *The Theory Of The Sublime From Longinus To Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 201.

paramount for Kant's sublime and especially the dynamically sublime, such as the relevance of respect and human dignity[32], which would then be tied to his idea of the superiority of moral ideas as a consequence to the feeling of the sublime.

Now, before analysing in profundity Kant's sublime as presented in his third *Critique,* it is necessary to present his initial distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, for it is necessary not to confuse these two aesthetic judgments as being related ontologically speaking; as said, there is a clear distinction in Kant's philosophy between beauty and sublime.

4.2.1. Beauty and the Sublime

Within Kant's thought, there are similarities and important differences between the judgments of the beautiful and the judgments of the sublime. Robert Doran (2015) explains and presents them quite precisely, establishing similarities in various areas; namely, that both the sublime and the beautiful are singular judgments, both are based on feeling, they are also reflective judgments, and both claim universal validity. As for the differences, these are divided into three categories: form, feeling and purposiveness. Let us then briefly analyse said similarities, and especially differences, so a presentation of Kant's sublime can be put forward clearly.

If we turn to Kant's comparison between the beautiful and the sublime[33], the first relevant matter we find is the division Kant establishes between the agreeable and the good with regards to the beautiful and the sublime. He explains how the liking for the beautiful and sublime does not depend on a sensation (which would be akin to the agreeable), nor does it depend on a "determinate concept" (as is the case with the good). Rather, these likings are connected to the imagination (the "power of exhibition") and thus still related to concepts, although indeterminately. Furthermore, "both presuppose that we make a judgment of reflection" (which goes back to the question of concepts, it is not a judgment of a universal, or a determinate concept, but rather individual, this means it is a judgment of *this* tree, rather than *a* tree as a universal concept). "This is also why both kinds of judgment are *singular* ones" [again, tied to the fact that they are judgments of reflection] "that nonetheless proclaim themselves as universally valid for all subjects" [that is, even if it is a singular reflective

[32] Ibid., p. 184.
[33] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., pp. 97-100.

judgment of a specific tree, this judgment claims that this specific tree has to be beautiful (for example) for everyone, universally, not just for me], "though what they lay claim to is merely the feeling of pleasure, and not any cognition of the object."[34] Thus, these singular reflective judgments are not claiming universal validity for the cognition of the object; rather, just for the feeling of pleasure (or pleasure/displeasure in the case of the sublime) that a specific singular object or event has produced in the mind.

This is of enormous importance, for it is the basis that allows (partially) the question of freedom within aesthetic judgments, and especially within the sublime. The fact that the judgment of the sublime is a reflective singular judgment, that only claims universal validity for the feeling of pleasure/displeasure it produces in the mind, separates the sublime from being determined (thus losing its freedom); from being a particular subsumed by a universal. The question of freedom in the sublime is of critical relevance, which is why the distinction Kant makes of the sublime not depending on a determinate concept is of such significance.

On the other hand, the differences between the beautiful and the sublime are of more relevance and complexity. The first difference to be found between these two would be the one regarding form. "The beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in [the object's] being bounded. But the sublime can also be found in a formless object, insofar as we present unboundedness, either [as] in the object or because the object prompts us to present it, while yet we add to this unboundedness the thought of its totality. So it seems that we regard the beautiful as the exhibition of an indeterminate concept of the understanding, and the sublime as the exhibition of an indeterminate concept of reason."[35]

The quoted passage is of importance, as it introduces a difference that is critical for understanding the form of the sublime. The beautiful, as Kant explains, is found in a bounded object[36], as it concerns the form of the object itself. This would appear to mean that the beautiful consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is generally found in limitlessness. Yet, this limitlessness, this unboundedness, is also tied to the thought of the totality that the unbounded object presents in the mind. Therefore, with regards to the sublime, Kant here presents three important matters that appear to be related between themselves: formlessness,

[34] Ibid., pp. 97-98.
[35] Ibid., p. 98.
[36] During the following pages, it will seem as if I am describing the sublime and the beautiful being qualities of an object. This is done solely for simplicity's sake, I am naturally still referring to the judgments reflecting the objects as beautiful and/or sublime, only ascribing those qualities to them.

unboundedness and finally totality.[37] The fact that the sublime is found in a formless object seems to infer in Kant the necessity for this formless object to be unbounded; however, in our mind, we perceive this unbounded formlessness as totality. The sublime, or, better put, reason, when regarding the sublime, demands totality in terms of magnitude of an object. For this feeling of totality to be possible, the object must appear formless for the fact that it presents unboundedness, limitlessness, even if in itself the object does have a form. What makes the object formless is the presentation of "unboundedness in the object".

The following difference between the beautiful and the sublime concerns feeling. Kant argues that the two are very different in kind, for the liking of the beautiful "carries with it directly a feeling of life's being furthered, and hence is compatible with charms and with an imagination at play. But the other liking (the feeling of the sublime) is a pleasure that arises only indirectly: it is produced by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger."[38] Moreover, he adds, with regards to the liking of the sublime, that it "is incompatible with charms, and, since the mind is not just attracted by the object but is alternately always repelled as well, the liking for the sublime contains not so much a positive pleasure as rather admiration and respect, and so should be called a negative pleasure."[39]

Therefore, the feeling of the beautiful is a positive pleasure, a simple pleasure that, as Kant mentions, "carries with it the feeling of life being furthered". However, the feeling of the sublime is a complex pleasure, a negative pleasure, for it produces not only attraction but also repulsion. Furthermore, Kant mentions that it contains "admiration and respect", which he again links to being negative pleasures. The fact that he identifies the sublime as being a complex/negative pleasure, continues in Kant the traditional idea, prominently found in Burke and earlier, although less developed, in Dennis (as has already been presented in this thesis), of the kind of pleasure the sublime is and of the relevant distinction between beauty and sublime.

The final distinction between these two is the most important of the three, and the one that really sets apart the sublime from the beautiful. This difference regards purposiveness. To put it simply, the distinction Kant makes here is that the beautiful can and is found *in* nature

[37] Doran, R., 2015. *The Theory Of The Sublime From Longinus To Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 211.
[38] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., p. 98.
[39] Ibid.

—an object in itself can be beautiful—, so "the object seems as it were predetermined for our power of judgement"[40]. This means, according to Kant, that the beautiful (independent natural beauty that is), "carries with it a purposiveness in its form"[41]; whereas the sublime (in nature) appears in its form "contrapurposive for our power of judgment"[42]. "We see from this at once that we express ourselves entirely incorrectly when we call this or that object of nature sublime, even though we may quite correctly call a great many natural objects beautiful; for how can we call something by a term of approval if we apprehend it as in itself contrapurposive? Instead, all we are entitled to say is that the object is suitable for exhibiting a sublimity that can be found in the mind."[43]

Thus, the sublime is not found in nature, for the fact that it is a negative pleasure, something that arouses in us not only pleasure but also pain, and therefore pertains only to the mind. Moreover, as Kant explains, the sublime does not lead to "particular objective principles and to forms of nature conforming to them"[44], as does the beautiful; therefore, it cannot be found in nature itself, but only in the mind. It is a transcendence of sensibility. This is also why Kant argues that our feelings of the sublime are aroused by nature in its "chaos", "ruleless disarray" or "devastation", rather than its order.

Therefore, the beautiful is purposive in itself, there is a purpose, objective principles to which it conforms, whereas the sublime is counter-purposive in itself, for it does not conform to "forms of nature", rather, it is purposive for the mind when it feels said sublimity. Making the sublime a "contrapurposive purposiveness", for the fact that it is not, as said, purposive in itself, but it accompanies with it a purposiveness of the mind[45], namely, transcendence of sensibility, the feeling of superiority of moral ideas that follows the feeling of sublimity.[46]

This critical distinction, that marks the final separation between the beautiful and the sublime, serves as the path that leads to the proper analysis of the sublime, for there is no possible analysis of the sublime in nature itself, but only a study of the "sublimity of the

[40] Ibid., pp. 98-99.
[41] Ibid., p. 98.
[42] Ibid., p. 99.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] "…hence involves consciousness of a subjective purposiveness in the use of our cognitive powers." Ibid., p. 105.
[46] This matter (the feeling of superiority) will be dealt with when regarding the consequences to the feeling of the sublime in Herzog (ecstatic truth), as compared to Kant's (the aforementioned superiority).

mind"; that is, how the mind is moved (Kant uses the German *bewegt*) in a particular way *by* nature so that it feels sublimity and it is elevated.[47]

It is important, now that a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime has been presented, and that Kant's sublime has been introduced, to further investigate the core matters of the sublime in Kant's third *Critique.* The most relevant matter at hand, is Kant's distinction within the sublime of two types of sublime experience: the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime.

4.2.3. The Mathematically Sublime

The first thing Kant explains, when discussing the mathematically sublime, furthers the idea of the sublime being found only in the mind[48] and not in nature. As he presents, the sublime is something "absolutely large", "large beyond all comparison"[49]; therefore, we cannot compare it with anything. For, as he explains, if we determine something to be large or small, there is a comparative found in our judgment. We are establishing said judgment by a *logical* comparison to something else. This can be the case of beauty, which, as can be found in specific objects of nature, can be large or small depending on those objects' measure. Yet, with the sublime, being absolutely large, this cannot occur. Thus, with the impossibility of logical estimation of magnitude, of comparativeness in nature, comes also the impossibility of the sublime in nature: "Suppose we call something not only large, but large absolutely, in every respect (beyond all comparison), i.e., sublime. Clearly, in that case, we do not permit a standard adequate to it to be sought outside it, but only within it. It is a magnitude that is equal only to itself. It follows that the sublime must not be sought in things of nature, but

[47] Doran (2015, p. 215) presents a concise linguistical analysis of the terms "sublime", "to be moved" and "elevation", that clarifies greatly their significance and implications for Kant's arguments: "with regard to the translation of the Greek term *hypsos*, the German term for sublimity, *das Erhabene*, is misleading linguistically when rendered with the Latinate "sublime." *Das Erhabene*, which is actually a much closer approximation of Longinus's *hypsos*, would be more faithfully translated by "elevation." Indeed, the verbal form, *erheben*, is generally translated with a form of "to elevate" in modern English editions of Kant's works. Like *hypsos*, *das Erhabene*, as a metaphor, is not generally applied to objects, but rather to the mind or to human expression (language, art) as a term of praise ("lofty words," "elevated sentiments," and so on). Its literal use (that is, for objects) often involves rather banal observations, such as "elevated platform," and the like. It is thus not surprising that Kant finds improper or even unseemly the idea of using *das Erhabene* to refer to objects." To add to this, there is a relevance in the fact that *hypsos* is more related to elevation; for it is also linked to *ecstasy*, as will be argued later, which refers to being transported out of oneself.

[48] This is valid also for the dynamically sublime. Kant is merely furthering the argument while introducing the mathematically sublime. I understand he does this for simplicity's sake, as the argument seems to be easier, clearer, when regarding the mathematically sublime (totality in magnitude), rather than the dynamically sublime (power).

[49] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., p. 103.

must be sought solely in our ideas."[50] As can be seen here, the argument is clear; if we cannot seek the standard outside of it, that is, in nature, we can only find it within it, that is, in our ideas. Kant furthers this argument by explaining that "nothing that can be an object of the senses is to be called sublime"[51]. By being absolutely large —the sublime— and thus not being able to compare it with anything else in nature, it cannot be an object of the senses, for the senses themselves cannot grasp something absolute. It seems that the argument Kant is putting forward is that only what exists within nature can be an object of the senses; the mathematically sublime, being contrary to what exists in nature, for being absolutely large, cannot then be an object of the senses. Thus, he follows this reasoning by stating that there is an inadequacy produced by the imagination with regards to reason, for the one "strives to progress towards infinity", while the latter "demands absolute totality as a real idea"; which in itself —this inadequacy—, arouses "in us the feeling that we have within us a supersensible power." Kant finalises the argument by stating that "*Sublime is what even to be able to think proves that the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense.*" [52] Hence, with this analysis of the sublime, more specifically, the mathematically sublime, Kant introduces the idea that there is a supersensible power within us, and that the sublime, necessarily, pertains to it directly.

Now, the most important matter regarding the mathematically sublime, which concerns magnitude and totality, is not the fact that a comparison cannot be made, for, as said, one cannot compare something absolutely large to something else. It is a bit more complicated than a simple comparison; the critical relevance of the mathematically sublime is that, being absolutely large, a *logical estimation of magnitude* cannot be made. That is, one cannot estimate the magnitude of natural things that produce a feeling of sublimity by means of numerical concepts,[53] for these progress towards infinity and such an estimation is merely logical. The estimation of magnitude must be aesthetic, that is, "determined subjectively", for, in a logical estimation of magnitude there cannot be a maximum (absolute *largeness*, totality, as is the case of the mathematical sublime), whereas in an aesthetic estimation of magnitude there can, which, when judged (subjectively) as "the absolute measure", "it

[50] Ibid., p. 105.
[51] Ibid., p. 106.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., p. 107

carries with it the idea of the sublime." [54] Thus, the aesthetic estimation of magnitude is intuitive, and it can judge something as an absolute measure, rather than a relative one.

Kant, for this, gives various examples of things that can be judged as mathematically sublime —that is, that when judged subjectively are regarded as absolutely large and thus as sublime for the mind. He mentions, in nature, "shapeless mountain masses" or the "gloomy raging sea"[55], as well as St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and, interestingly, the pyramids[56], which he uses in order to introduce the argument of distance: that is, that for it to be possible to judge the pyramids as mathematically sublime, there needs to be a proper distance between the pyramid and the observer, in order to be able to apprehend it in its entirety. This seems to be a short example that nevertheless appears to be valid for any other kind of situation in which one judges something as sublime.

Regarding the purposiveness of the mathematical sublime, Kant makes clear, once again, that there is no objective purposiveness in a pure judgment of the sublime, for "our judging is not based on a purposiveness of the form of the object"[57]; rather, it is only purposive subjectively. In order to explain and demonstrate this, he goes back to the aforementioned supersensible power in us, and to the inadequacy of the imagination and what reason demands of an aesthetic estimation of magnitude.

The sublime in itself is indeed contra purposive (as has been presented earlier); yet, when estimating a magnitude aesthetically, Kant explains that reason demands "comprehension in *one* intuition", not even excluding the infinite: "Reason makes us unavoidably think of the infinite as given in its entirety (its totality)". "But to be able even to think the infinite as a whole indicates a mental power that surpasses any standard of sense." "If the human mind is nonetheless to be able even to think the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible"[58]; so it is then this supersensible power that allows us to "comprehend in one intuition" even the infinite, the absolutely large in its totality. Thus, Kant furthers, [mathematical] sublimity is encountered when the intuition "carries with it the idea" of infinity in its totality. The problem with this is that the imagination, when faced with a situation of this kind, "fruitlessly applies its entire ability to comprehend"[59] "a

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., p. 113.
[56] Ibid., p. 108.
[57] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., p. 110.
[58] Ibid., p. 111.
[59] Ibid., p. 112.

given object in a whole of intuition", so it "proves its own limits and inadequacy"[60]; and so it is referred to reason, in order for the imagination to be harmonized with reason's ideas. Moreover, it is this inadequacy, according to Kant[61], that necessarily leads to the aforementioned supersensible power of the mind. The fact that by this inadequacy, we find in us a supersensible vocation, leads to a feeling of respect[62]. Furthermore, the fact that we are able to comprehend something as a whole, according to Kant, "is an idea enjoined on us by the law of reason", and, therefore, "the feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own vocation". [63] As it appears, Kant seems to be arguing that the feeling of respect that comes from the experience of the mathematically sublime stems from acting, through our supersensible vocation (discovered from the inadequacy of the imagination), according to the law of reason.

I believe this is where we can find the subjective purposiveness of the sublime, in our supersensible vocation harmonizing the inadequacy of the imagination, thus conforming to the law of reason within us.

In the following passages, Kant clarifies this, and the purposiveness of the sublime, very succinctly: "Hence our inner perception that every standard of sensibility is inadequate for an estimation of magnitude by reason is [itself] a harmony with laws of reason, as well as a displeasure that arouses in us the feeling of our supersensible vocation, according to which finding that every standard of sensibility is inadequate to the ideas of reason is purposive and hence pleasurable." "This is precisely what makes the aesthetic judgment itself subjectively purposive for reason, as the source of ideas, i.e., as the source of an intellectual comprehension [compared] to which all aesthetic comprehension is small, and the object is apprehended as sublime with a pleasure that is possible only by means of a displeasure."[64]

4.2.4. The Dynamically Sublime

The dynamically sublime is more akin to the historical sublime introduced by Longinus and then developed by Dennis and Burke. It relates to might[65] (power) rather than totality, and requires fear as a *conditio sine qua non* for its possibility. This is the reason why it is close

[60] Ibid., p. 114.
[61] Ibid., p. 113.
[62] "The feeling that it is beyond our ability to attain to an idea that is a law for us is RESPECT." Ibid., p. 114.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., pp. 115, 117.
[65] In Greek, *dýnamis* translates as 'might', 'power'.

to Burke's sublime terror. Finally, it will be mostly the dynamically sublime that will have its main presence in Herzog's sublime.

Now, Kant begins his analysis of the dynamically sublime by explaining that "when in an aesthetic judgment we consider nature as a might that has no dominance over us, then it is *dynamically sublime*."[66] Moreover, Kant goes on to explain that, in order for something to be considered dynamically sublime, is must arouse fear; going so far as to say that nothing in nature that does not arouse fear can count as might for aesthetic judgment.

More importantly, Kant goes on by stating that indeed, it must arouse fear, but it mustn't make us afraid. For the moment we are afraid, or we believe our lives are in danger "we flee from the sight of an object that scares us, and it is impossible to like terror that we take seriously".[67] This stance appears to be related to the previous lines in which Kant states that dynamically sublime is "nature as a might that has no dominance over us", for if we are afraid of something it does have dominance over us. Fear in the sense of being afraid, overwhelms the person and does not allow for an aesthetic judgment of the sublime, as there is something —being afraid— that in the mind seems to be more pressing and urgent, something that holds all of our attention and does not give us the freedom to properly experience the sublime. This seems to hold true also for the mathematically sublime, and, for instance, for any aesthetic judgment, Kant just mentions it when discussing the dynamically sublime as it encompasses within it an element of fear. Furthermore, Kant adds —noting the importance of fear in the dynamically sublime— on nature judged as sublime, that "the sight of them becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place."[68]

When regarding the dynamically sublime, which, as said, involves might, power, the most important thing in itself, for Kant at least, seems to be the feeling it produces in us when we experience it: "Consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power, hurricanes with all the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean heaved up, the high waterfall of a mighty river, and so on. Compared to the might of any of these, our ability to resist becomes an insignificant trifle."[69]

---

[66] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., p. 119.
[67] Ibid., p. 120.
[68] Ibid., p. 120.
[69] Ibid.

As with the mathematically sublime, the first thing Kant introduces is our own limitation. Our inability to resist the might of such great natural powers. Yet, this limitation leads, as was the case previously, to an overcoming, this time of a different kind, although still related: "We like to call these objects sublime because they raise the soul's fortitude above its usual middle range and allow us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of a quite different kind, and which gives us the courage [to believe] that we could be a match for nature's seeming omnipotence."[70]

Then, the situation encountered with the dynamically sublime, is in terms of structure, the same as that of the mathematically sublime. First we are faced with an inadequacy within us, such that is arouses displeasure, that then is encompassed by reason and leads to a feeling of superiority over nature itself; a feeling that is pleasurable and that, as was the case earlier, leads us to a transcendence of sensibility, to moral consciousness, for we find in us a supersensible vocation that is superior to nature and the senses in any and all cases, and that is in harmony with the law of reason, therefore being ultimately a feeling of superiority of our moral ideas over nature itself.[71]

What follows moving forward is a brief analysis and argumentation on the sublime regarding religion and God. Although these matters do not pertain directly to the scope of the thesis, they are of interest. Mainly, the argument Kant presents is that a sublimity of religion cannot be found if God's might inspires in us reverence, dread and fear, as is the case with anything else that pertains to the dynamically sublime. He explains that the feeling that should arouse in us when beholding God's might, power and even wrath is, as we have seen earlier, none other than respect. Once again, we can see the importance of respect for Kant, and its connection to the sublime, in both its kinds.

However, the more interesting thing of his argumentation with regards to God is the final paragraph in which Kant sums up the dynamically sublime; there, he hints at the discovery of God's existence, or at least God's sublimity by means of our experience of the sublime: "Hence sublimity is contained not in any thing of nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of our superiority to nature within us, and thereby also to nature outside us (as far as it influences us). Whatever arouses this feeling in us, and this includes

[70] Ibid.

[71] This is, then, Kant's principal consequence to the sublime experience, namely, said moral consciousness, superiority of our moral ideas. Later on, we will compare this to Herzog's consequence to the sublime experience. (Ibid. pp. 120-121).

the might of nature that challenges our forces, is then (although improperly) called sublime. And it is only by presupposing this idea within us, and by referring to it, that we can arrive at the idea of the sublimity of that being who arouses deep respect in us, not just by his might as demonstrated in nature, but even more by the ability, with which we have been endowed, to judge nature without fear and to think of our vocation as being sublimely above nature."[72]

It is relevant to mention, as both Doran (2015) and Crowther (1989) point out, that for Kant, the most sublime is none other than our supersensible vocation, i.e., moral consciousness.[73] They both base their arguments on an analysis of the second *Critique,* and also try to explain how being the ultimate expression of sublimity a moral law, it can also be aesthetic. I believe the latter has been explained at length in the past pages, and a profound analysis of the former matter would require an in-depth inquiry into the second *Critique,* which does not pertain directly to this thesis and which, as said, has already been treated gracefully by both Doran and Crowther. Nevertheless, we will delve, as aforementioned, into the consequences of the sublime in Kant with regards to Herzog's own sublime, so this matter of our supersensible vocation will be treated again later on, for it is, as said, the consequence to the sublime experience in Kant.

Now, the following section regarding the sublime might seem quite controversial. In it, Kant delves into the possibility of judging something as sublime. He does not believe that sublimity is possible for everyone, rather, only for "cultured" people, those receptive to ideas and whose moral ideas are developed. As he himself notes: "It is a fact that what is called sublime by us, having been prepared through culture, comes across as merely repellent to a person who is uncultured and lacking in the development of moral ideas. In all the evidence of nature's destructive force, and in the large scale of its might, in contrast to which his own is nonexistent, he will see only the hardship, danger. and misery that would confront anyone forced to live in such a place."[74]

Even so, Kant defends that this does not mean that the sublime has been produced in nature, but that it is founded in human nature: "in something that, along with common sense, we may require and demand of everyone, namely, the predisposition to (…) moral feeling."[75]

[72] Ibid., p. 123.
[73] Kant even makes that somewhat clear with the last line of the previous quoted paragraph.
[74] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., p. 124.
[75] Ibid., p. 125.

Finally, he asserts that this "is what underlies the necessity —which we include in our judgment about the sublime— of the assent of other people's judgment to our own." Given that the sublime is a feeling, when we demand such assent, such feeling, under the "subjective presupposition" of "moral feeling in man. And so we attribute necessity to this [kind of] aesthetic judgment as well." [76] This is of extreme importance for Kant, for it means, according to him, that this necessity "reveals an a priori principle in them", taking these judgments out of "empirical psychology" and into "transcendental philosophy", for having a priori principles at their basis. [77]

Going back to the purposiveness of the sublime, Kant makes clear that there is no inherent purpose in it, and clarifies its subjective purposiveness by stating that "in this reflection of the aesthetic power of judgment, by which it seeks to elevate itself to the point of being adequate to reason, we present the object itself as subjectively purposive, precisely because objectively the imagination, [even] in its greatest expansion, is inadequate to reason (the power of ideas)."[78]

Kant insists on this as he tries to emphasize the fact that we cannot make aesthetic judgements if they are not pure. Thus, he states, "we must not take for our examples such beautiful or sublime objects of nature as presuppose the concept of a purpose. For then the purposiveness would be either teleological, and hence not aesthetic, or else be based on mere sensations of an object and hence not merely formal."[79]

The question of the purity of the sublime —which is itself related to that of purposiveness— is of extreme importance. For Kant, as said, aesthetic judgments, especially of the sublime, *must* be pure; yet, as Allison (2001, pp. 336-8) contends, this makes it extremely difficult for Kant to present the possibility of a judgment of the sublime in the fine arts. As he argues, Kant is not denying the possibility of sublimity for fine art, he is mostly disregarding it in his philosophical analysis in favour of "crude nature", as it is unmixed in terms of purposiveness with regards to sublimity, therefore "attempting to preserve its *aesthetic* character". (Ibid.) This is why, Allison continues, the presence of fine art in Kant's *Critique* is minimal, and it is why the mention of St. Peter's Basilica and the pyramids is nearly incidental; for —even though Kant does believe there can be sublimity in art—, it is in crude

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., pp. 129, 130.
[79] Ibid., p. 130.

nature, "where one's liking can more easily remain uncontaminated by any thought of purpose." (Ibid.)

All of the above goes back to the freedom of the sublime, which, in turn, leads to the aforementioned relation of the moral good as being sublime. Kant contends that: "Aesthetic purposiveness is the lawfulness of the power of judgment in its *freedom*. [Whether we then] like the object depends on [how] we suppose the imagination to relate [to it]; but [for this liking to occur] the imagination must on its own sustain the mind in a free activity. If, on the other hand, the judgment is determined by anything else, whether a sensation proper or a concept of the understanding, then the judgment is indeed lawful, but it is not one made by a free power of judgment."[80] Thus, it is, according to Kant, actually impossible to make an aesthetic judgment of the sublime without the mind in its freedom. This explains why the sublime must not only be contra purposive in itself but also not depend on determinate and objective concepts, as it would negate the possibility of a sublime judgment.

Hence, Kant concludes that the moral law in its might (sublimity), is the "object of a pure and unconditioned intellectual liking", which means that, from an aesthetic perspective, the liking is not positive but negative, for its contra-purposiveness and the aforementioned reasons; but that, from the intellectual side, is positive and linked to an interest, therefore purposive. Thus, an aesthetic judgment of the "good that is intellectual and intrinsically purposive (the moral good)", is a judgment not of the beautiful, but of the sublime. [81]

It is worth noting, even if it is not absolutely and explicitly stated by Kant, that there is a necessity for posterior contemplation when a cultured person has judged something as sublime. The fact that it is something for people that have developed ideas, and the fact that after the imagination's inadequacy reason takes the reins in a sublime experience, means that a posterior contemplation of the recent experience is necessary, for without inquiring into our own experience a posteriori, we cannot realise what we have actually experienced. One cannot "lose himself" into the sublime experience, into feeling such displeasure and pleasure, amazement, agitation, enthusiasm, and so on, if he is analysing what he is experiencing the moment he is experiencing it. There needs to be a first instance in which one experiences said feeling of the sublime, and then a second instance in which through said contemplation one is able to judge and recognise the experience as sublime. There

[80] Ibid., p. 131.
[81] Ibid.

cannot be, obviously, a proper judgment of an experience during the course of said experience; first, it has to finish. The feeling of the sublime would effectively disappear if it left no space for a posterior meditation upon said feeling.

The Kantian sublime has been treated at length, so as to present a proper analysis on it, in order for it to be easier to correlate him with Herzog, and to have a clear picture as to the sublime in itself, thus making the analysis of Herzog's sublime more coherent and grounded.

Therefore, in the following pages I will introduce the sublime in Herzog, starting with his relation and parallels to the Kantian sublime. I will also dwell on Herzog's architecture of the sublime, that is, how he constructs films that can be judged as sublime, referencing not only Kant, but also Burke and Longinus, and finally, what are the consequences of the sublime experience in Herzog and how they relate to Kant's consequences.

5. THE SUBLIME IN HERZOG[82]

5.1. Herzog and Kant

Werner Herzog, although a very practical, poetical and non-philosophical person in his explanations and writings, is however well-acquainted with the great thinkers on the sublime. In his essay "*On the Absolute, the Sublime and Ecstatic Truth"*[83]*,* Herzog not only talks about his ideas on the sublime and ecstatic truth, which will be analysed alongside other texts and compared with Kant[84] and others, but he also directly cites both Kant and Longinus,[85] showcasing a knowledge, or at least an awareness, of said matters.

As for the definition of the sublime, Herzog provides his own definition, which, however, is akin and related to the historical definition of the sublime: "Start with its Latin origin: *sublimus*, meaning uplifted, lofty or elevated. A door has a threshold down below and a raised lintel, the horizontal support overhead. It is elevated above us as we walk through the door. It is beyond us and outside us and larger than us, yet not wholly abstract or foreign."[86] As can be seen, it is referencing elevation as its main and principle definition, which is the actual definition of the original Greek term *hypsos,* as well as the definition of the German *erheben,* even if Herzog quotes the Latinate *sublimus.* As for the final part of the definition, it is worth mentioning not to take said words as a philosophically technical definition, rather as a more practical and poetical one. However, "beyond us and outside us and larger than us, yet not wholly abstract or foreign", does strike a semblance to both Kant and Longinus. The first three (beyond us, etc.) are paralleled with the absoluteness of the sublime, the totality Kant mentions when describing the sublime experience as apprehending

---

[82] It is worth mentioning that Herzog's thought cannot be interpreted as Kant's. That is, Kant's thoughts on the sublime are clear, well-presented and based on a solid philosophical discipline. On the other hand, Herzog is a filmmaker, and in terms of clarity of ideas, although there is a coherence to his thought, and contradiction is seldom found in his stances, his beliefs and arguments have never been presented in a structured manner, even less so in philosophical terms. Therefore, the task at hand is to elucidate from his stances and works the philosophical arguments behind them.

[83] The text was originally delivered as a speech in Milan the 3rd of June 2007 after a screening of *Lessons of Darkness.* The quoted text is a publication originally from ARION in 2010, translated by Moira Weigel and which can be found on Herzog's website: https://www.wernerherzog.com/complete-works-text.html#1

[84] This has been mentioned already; however, it is relevant to stress that the comparison between Herzog and Kant will mainly focus on Kant's dynamically sublime, as it is more akin in terms of its contents and characteristics to Herzog's sublime. The reason for the presentation of the analysis of the mathematically sublime in the previous section is basically that it is extremely difficult to present a clear picture of Kant's sublime without analysing all of the sublime, as both kinds share many characteristics, and without the earlier explanation some of the arguments that will be presented, it would not make sense.

[85] Herzog, W., 2010. *On The Absolute, The Sublime And Ecstatic Truth*. ARION, pp. 9,10.

[86] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 7.14.

the absolutely large in its entirety.[87] It is true that Herzog talks about it being "outside us", which can seem as if it were something independent and maybe even something that could be found in nature, this however is not the case. It does seem to be this way, but when one studies Herzog's stances regarding the sublime and the ecstatic truth, one finds constant mentions to the mind (landscapes of the mind[88]), making (sublime) films in order to articulate the collective dreams of humanity[89], and other related ideas that always refer to our inner selves and our discoveries of truths and revelations within ourselves. Mostly everything found in Herzog's films, as per his own saying, is trying to reveal something within us or human nature in general; his films (like Kant's sublime) are never about the actual outside natural world, rather, they use the natural world as a means to incite something [sublimity] within us. As Herzog himself puts it: "This is one reason why so many people around the world seem to connect with my films, which represent the universal visions buried within us all."[90] "I am seeking some insight into human nature. There's nothing exceptional about this; most painters and writers with any skill are working away at the same thing. It isn't that I'm particularly inventive, only that I am able to awaken certain feelings and thoughts inside of you. I can see, on the horizon, unpronounced and unproclaimed images. I can sense the hypnotic qualities of things that to everyone else look unobtrusive, then excavate and articulate these collective dreams with some clarity."[91]

There is something important about this previous quote as it resonates with some of the arguments and qualities of the sublime as argued and analysed by Kant. As Kant himself explains in the third *Critique* (and as has been presented earlier), nothing in nature can be called sublime, sublimity can only be found in the mind; and it is in our encounter or engagement with the natural world, that something in nature incites or produces said feeling of sublimity *inside* us; therefore the object of nature is never sublime. Similarly, here Herzog states that he "senses" certain qualities in "things that to everyone else look unobtrusive"; that is, in Kantian terms, he experiences a feeling of sublimity from specific natural phenomena and tries to present said "unobtrusive" things in a manner that might produce a sublime experience in the viewer. In this, I believe, he is trying to universalise the sublime

[87] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., pp. 107-111.
[88] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, pp. 8.93, 9.67, 14.14,14.15.
[89] "The images in my films are your images too. Somehow, deep in your subconscious, you find them, dormant, lurking, like sleeping friends; they correspond with the inner landscapes inside us all and strike directly into the soul of man." Ibid., pp. 8.92, 8.93.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., p. 8.94.

experience through his films, which is partly mirrored in his stance about articulating the collective dreams of humanity; although this is more closely related to the ecstatic truth and the consequences of the sublime experience.

Now, the very first thing that was analysed regarding Kant's sublime was the difference he (and for that matter the historical sublime too) finds between the beautiful and the sublime. In the same manner, Herzog is not one trying to intentionally produce beautiful films; actually, there is a certain contempt in Herzog for films crafted with the intention of only being "beautiful". As he himself explains: "My dislike of perfectionists behind the camera – people who spend hours setting up a single shot – has been an eternal source of conflict with cameramen over the years. I once watched with great impatience as a world-famous cinematographer spent five hours lighting a scene that would have taken me five minutes. Peter Zeitlinger [his cinematographer] is always trying to sneak "beautiful" shots into our films, and I'm forever preventing it. (…) Things are more problematic when there is a spectacular sunset on the horizon and he scrambles to set up the camera to film it. I immediately turn the tripod 180º in the other direction."[92]

For him, the purpose of filmmaking is not that of creating beauty; moreover, for Herzog, trying to focus one's attention on the crafting of beautiful images for a film, only deters the filmmaker from seeing what is really important, namely, the images and stories that can ignite a sublime experience on the viewer so that he is elevated towards some kind of revelation. He does try to construct images, and adds music and edits with a specific intention or purpose, yet, this purpose is never towards creating beautiful cinema; rather, I would argue, towards creating sublime cinema.

To further the point, it is relevant to recall the previous quotes in which Herzog repeatedly references that he awakens feelings and truths within us, in our minds, etc. He refers to the landscapes in his films as not physical landscapes, but as landscapes of the mind[93]: To put it shortly, as per Kant's explanation, the beautiful is found in the object of nature, the sublime in the mind of the person. Everything in Herzog's films is referring not to the actual natural objects, as said before, but to the mind. Every part of his films is directed to the mind, not to the object. Thus, again, he is not trying to showcase any kind of objective natural beauty,

[92] Ibid., p. 13.12.
[93] Ibid., p. 9.67.

not even some kind of abstract beauty; he is trying to awaken feelings inside us, precisely the same qualities the Kantian sublime has.

In terms of Kant's description of our feelings of the sublime being aroused by nature, not in some specific order but in nature's "disarray", "chaos" and "devastation", the parallels with Herzog's films are endless. Most, if not all of the natural components of Herzog's films are presented in their chaos and devastation. For instance, *Lessons of Darkness* revolves around the burning oil fields in Kuwait, with images that are nothing other than pure devastation and danger. *Aguirre*'s principal landscape is the Peruvian jungle, with all its chaos, disarray and looming danger: the rapids, the Indians, the wild animals, etc. *Into the Inferno* (2016) revolves around different active volcanoes in the world. He has even described nature in general as "overwhelming lack of order" in Les Blank's documentary *Burden of Dreams* (1982).[94]

Kant describes various feelings associated with the sublime experience, namely, the feeling of being humbled by the might and power of nature, which is related to the first part of the structure of the sublime experience (especially the dynamically sublime); the inadequacy, the initial limitation within us that is then overcome by our supersensible vocation, which itself produces a feeling of admiration and respect. Now, the last part of Herzog's explanation of nature in Les Blank's documentary, encompasses these feelings in very few words.

"We in comparison to the articulate vileness and baseness and obscenity of all this jungle, we in comparison to that enormous articulation, we only sound and look like badly pronounced and half-finished sentences out of a stupid suburban novel, a cheap novel. And we have to become humble in front of this overwhelming misery and overwhelming fornication, overwhelming growth and overwhelming lack of order. Even the stars up here in the sky look like a mess. There is no harmony in the universe. We have to get acquainted to this idea that there is no real harmony as we have conceived it. But when I say this, I say this all full of admiration for the jungle."

If we compare Herzog's view on nature with regards to the sublime, which is how he portrays it in his films, to several of Kant's descriptions and analyses on the dynamically sublime, we

[94] "The trees here are in misery and the birds are in misery. I don't think they sing; they just screech in pain … It's a land that God, if he exists, has created in anger. It's the only land where Creation is unfinished. Taking a close look at what's around us, there is some sort of harmony. It is the harmony of overwhelming and collective murder (…) [of] overwhelming lack of order."

will find that the similarities are striking, albeit the former is more poetical and the latter more complex and philosophical.

Let us compare Herzog's first three sentences of the previous quote, with the following passage (previously quoted in this thesis) from Kant's dynamical sublime: "Consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky (…) and so on. Compared to the might of any of these, our ability to resist becomes an insignificant trifle." As can be seen, the similarities are striking.

As said, Kant states that the sublime experience arouses in us feelings of admiration and respect. In the same manner, Herzog says in the final line of the previous quote that what he says, he says "full of admiration for the jungle." It is, I believe, not direct admiration for the jungle as an individual being, as an independent thing he admires. Rather, it is the admiration he feels in himself when he experiences the jungle. It is the same case with the sublime in general, as Kant in various occasions reiterates that when we call this or that object of nature sublime we are mistaken. In this same way Herzog is noting said feeling of admiration for the jungle.

I say this conscious of the fact that his literal words describe an admiration for the jungle *itself;* nevertheless, given the previously stated, namely, that most of Herzog's stances on nature and on nature in his films[95] make reference not to the object itself but to the mind, it makes perfect sense that in philosophical terms the meaning of his words is not that of admiration for the jungle itself, but of an admiration aroused by the feeling the jungle produces in him; exactly as is the case with Kant's sublime.

Arguably, one of the most important parts of Kant's dynamically sublime is his explanation on how the dynamically sublime experience first humbles us to the might of nature, only to then produce in us a feeling of superiority over nature, an overcoming of nature.[96] In his essay on the sublime, Herzog directly mentions and quotes Kant regarding precisely this matter: "However, we also gain our ability to have ecstatic experiences of truth through the Sublime, through which we are able to elevate ourselves over nature. Kant says: The irresistibility of the power of nature forces us to recognize our physical impotence as natural

[95] "I never present literal landscapes in my films. What I show instead are landscapes of the mind, locales of the soul." Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 9.67.
[96] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., pp. 120-121.

beings, but at the same time discloses our capacity to judge ourselves independent of nature as well as superior to nature."[97]

Here he is relating the sublime to his concept of ecstatic truth, which pertains to the consequence of the sublime experience. There are similarities and differences to this —the consequences of the sublime that is— between Kant and Herzog, although this will be treated later on. The relevant matter here is his direct relation to Kant, the fact that he quotes Kant's passage on the overcoming of nature through an experience of sublimity.

Ultimately, for Kant, the overcoming of nature in the dynamically sublime, "calls forth our strength (which does not belong to nature), to regard as small the [objects] of our [natural] concerns: property. health, and life"[98]; thus, the experience of sublimity leads even to an overcoming of the fear of death itself. In the same manner, Herzog talks about said feeling when describing the "ecstasy", or sublimity, of ski jumpers: "And for me, the greatest flyer of all was Walter Steiner, a Swiss, who in complete ecstasy actually almost sailed to death every time. (…) I think wanting to become a ski jumper and world champion is an adolescent dream. Behind it lies a more profound dream: the dream of flying. We are bound too much by gravity, and I think it weighs on almost all human beings that we are unable to fly. *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* is a film about the fear of dying and overcoming the fear of dying. It's a film about the moment when you're sliding down the ramp—a moment when nobody can stop you, not even God can slow you down or stop you."[99] "Ski jumping is not just athletic. It's a mentality—that is, how one has already overcome death."[100]

The complicated matter at hand, is that Kant's text deals with the sublime experience in crude nature, whereas Herzog's is found in his films. This is probably why the thought of Herzog differs to some degree to that of Kant. Although the structure of the sublime appears to be the same for the both, Herzog's is a different kind of sublime. In the same way that Kant differentiates between the mathematically and the dynamically sublime, here we have to differentiate between Herzog's sublime and Kant's as having differences in kind; namely, that Herzog's is a sublime in art, and Kant's is a sublime of nature.

As said, the main reason for this is that Herzog creates the sublimity in his films, through specific methods (many of which relate to Kant, as well as other philosophers such as Burke

[97] Herzog, W., 2010. *On The Absolute, The Sublime And Ecstatic Truth*. ARION, p. 9.
[98] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., p. 121.
[99] Ames, E., 2014. *Werner Herzog*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, p. 139.
[100] Ibid., p. 41.

and Longinus). Mostly, the differences between Herzog's and Kant's sublime are found in their consequences to the sublime experience. However, in order to analyse and reveal how Kant's and Herzog's sublime differ, first we must turn to Herzog's architecture of the sublime experience; that is, how Herzog attempts to construct sublimity in his films. For, doing so, we will be able to present the consequences of the sublime experience in Herzog more clearly, so that we can then oppose them to those of Kant.

5.2. The Architecture of the Sublime Experience: Herzog's Method

"The collapse of the stellar universe will occur, like creation, in grandiose splendour."[101]

Herzog's sublime —in terms of how he attempts to construct it in his films— revolves, generally speaking, around fabrication and stylisation. In the very beginning of his essay on the sublime, Herzog first mentions sublimity as constructed by him with a fabricated quote in *Lessons of Darkness*. In the essay, he explains why he decided to begin the film with an invented quote: "Why am I doing this, you might ask? The reason is simple and comes not from theoretical, but rather from practical, considerations. With this quotation as a prefix I elevate [*erheben*] the spectator, before he has even seen the first frame, to a high level, from which to enter the film. And I, the author of the film, do not let him descend from this height until it is over. Only in this state of sublimity [*erhabenheit*] does something deeper become possible, a kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual. Ecstatic truth, I call it."[102]

As a side note, a critical thing to consider from this quote, is that Herzog is stating that the necessary condition for said "ecstatic truth" is sublimity. Taking into consideration that the ultimate goal for Herzog —as will be presented later—, is to take the viewer to the realm of ecstatic truth, he needs to deliberately try to construct sublimity in his films. Thus, the relevance of his methods towards doing so, and the proof that all of Herzog's film are crafted so that the viewer can experience sublimity.

Now, going back to fabrication and stylisation. I believe this to be one of the paramount methods Herzog uses to construct sublimity in his films —alongside other general themes

[101] (Quote attributed in the film to Blaise Pascal. Years later, Herzog acknowledged that the quote was indeed his, and that he had fabricated it for a specific reason). *Lessons of Darkness (Lektionen in Finsternis)*. 1992. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Germany: Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.
[102] Herzog, W., 2010. *On The Absolute, The Sublime And Ecstatic Truth*. ARION, p. 2.

and his landscapes, as will be presented later on. That is, that when he does not find in the factual reality of nature, in the given phenomena, what he needs in order to create films that could incite a sublime experience, he fabricates said missing things. This can be seen from the aforementioned quote by Pascal, but there are countless examples. In his defence, Herzog contends that inventing things in his films, especially in his documentaries, is never deception or lies, rather, a way to intensify what he is trying to convey; a way to elevate, to arouse sublimity in the audience.

For instance, in *Lessons of Darkness*, the very first scene after the fake Pascal quote is accompanied by a "voiceover that speaks of 'A planet in our solar system with wide mountain ranges enshrouded in mist.' What I actually filmed were little heaps of dust and soil created by trucks as they drove through the desert. Those mountain ranges were no more than a foot high. Like many things in my films this isn't a lie, just an intensified form of truth."[103]

It is true that this kind of fabrication and stylisation in his documentaries seems to point to a premeditated intention, a kind of pre-established purpose in Herzog. This would seem to partially trump his similarity and accordance to Kant's sublime, as the sublime has no objective purpose and its subjective purposiveness comes later, with the discovery of our supersensible vocation. However, the first thing to consider is that, as said, Kant states that the sublime in itself cannot be objectively purposive, but that does not mean that a person cannot have an individual purpose of achieving sublimity or creating something sublime. The individual's intention —Herzog's in this case— is outside the sublime experience itself.

Either way, it is clear that there are actually no premeditated intentions in Herzog when it comes to fabrication. There are cases in which he invents scenes for his documentaries for which he has no explanation as to why he is doing so. For example, when making *Echoes from a Sombre Empire* (1990) —a documentary on the CAR's dictator Jean-Bédel Bokassa—, Herzog invented both the beginning and the final scene; with regards to the latter, he explains: "By the time we got there, almost every animal in the zoo had starved to death; we found only a leopard, a hyena and –the saddest thing I have ever seen– a chimpanzee addicted to cigarettes, thanks to the drunken soldiers who had taught it to smoke. In the film you see Goldsmith looking at this creature. He says something like, "I can't take

[103] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 15.22.

this any longer," then asks me to turn off the camera. "Michael, I think this is one of the shots I should hold," I answer back from behind the camera. "Only if you promise this will be the last shot in the film," he says. The nicotine-addicted animal was real, but this dialogue and my use of the animal was a scripted invention. (…) There was something momentous and mysterious about the chimp, and filming it in the way I did elevates *Echoes from a Sombre Empire* to a deeper level of truth."[104]

Earlier in the page, he makes a comment on the first scene of the documentary, in which he states: "There is no symbolism here and I can't explain it fully, but I know these images belong in the film. There is, incidentally, no clear-cut symbolism in any of my films. I've never thought in such terms."[105]

As can be seen, this points to a non-purposive approach with regards to fabrication in his films. To put it more clearly, it appears to be the case that Herzog does not plan ahead, in a premeditated manner, what he is going to fabricate, invent or stylise in his films. It seems to be something that he decides to do in the very moment and without a clear idea as to what it means or symbolises. This is of relevance, as for him, these moments are the ones that are key to elevate; that is, to arouse sublimity in the audience.

With regards to fabrication and stylisation, it is quite striking that Herzog quotes Longinus as a kind of philosophical defence for doing what he does. In his essay on the sublime, he quotes a passage from Longinus (P9) in which the author is quoting Homer:

> "Blared round about like a trumpet the firmament vast and Olympus;
> Shuddering down in the depths, the king of the dead, Aïdoneus,
> Sprang from his throne with a shuddering cry, for fear the earthshaker, Poseidon,
> Might soon splinter asunder the earth, and his mansions lie open,
> Clear to the eyes of immortals and mortals alike all uncovered,
> Grim and dreary and dank, which the very gods see with abhorrence."

With regards to this passage Herzog states the following: "Longinus was an extraordinarily well-read man, one who quotes exactly. What is striking here is that he takes the liberty of welding together two different passages from the Iliad[106]. It is impossible that this is a

[104] Ibid., p. 15.21.
[105] Ibid., p. 15.20.
[106] Namely, *Iliad* 21.388 and 20.61-65.

mistake. However, Longinus is not faking but, rather, conceiving a new, deeper truth. He asserts that without truth and greatness of soul the sublime cannot come into being."[107]

Therefore, Herzog contends that Longinus himself, the historical "father" of the sublime, defends these kinds of fabrications and stylisations for the sake of creating something that can arouse sublimity. In order to support Herzog's arguments on this regard, we must turn to Longinus' own stances on these matters. Longinus himself defends something that is very akin to Herzog's own fabrications. The first inkling of a defence of fabrication, especially linked to Herzog's "theft" of Pascal's identity, we can find it in the following stance: "Another road that leads to sublimity. (…) Zealous imitation of the great prose writers and poets of the past. That is the aim, dear friend; let us hold to it with all our might. (…) Was Herodotus alone Homeric in the highest degree? (…) above all others Plato, who drew off for his own use ten thousand runnels from the great Homeric spring. (…) Such borrowing is no theft; it is rather like the reproduction of good character by sculptures or other works of art."[108]

While it is true that the similarity is subtle, as Longinus here is mostly defending the imitation of the great authors, there is still a semblance to Herzog's principles of fabrication and stylisation. Nevertheless, if we turn to another stance by Longinus, we will find that indeed the similarities are abundant: "Weight, grandeur, and urgency in writing are very largely produced, dear young friend, by the use of "visualizations" (*phantasiai).*" "That *phantasia* means one thing in oratory and another in poetry you will yourself detect, and also that the object of the poetical form of it is to enthral, and that of the prose form to present things vividly, though both indeed aim at the emotional and the excited." "However, as I said, these examples from poetry show an exaggeration which belongs to fable and far exceeds the limits of credibility, whereas the most perfect effect of visualization in oratory is always one of reality and truth. Transgressions of this rule have a strange, outlandish air, when the texture of the speech is poetical and fabulous and deviates into all sorts of impossibilities." "What then is the use of visualization in oratory? It may be said generally to introduce a great deal of excitement and emotion into one's speeches, but when combined with factual arguments it not only convinces the audience, it positively masters them."[109]

[107] Herzog, W., 2010. *On The Absolute, The Sublime And Ecstatic Truth*. ARION, p. 10.
[108] Longinus. 1995. *On The Sublime*. London: Harvard University Press. P13.
[109] Ibid., P15.

Now, Longinus' visualizations are very much alike Herzog's stylisations. For one, Longinus states that visualizations in both poetry and oratory aim towards inciting emotion and excitement in the reader. In the same way, Herzog contends that his stylisations are not mere lies, but a form of intensified truth that elevates the audience, that fills them with feeling. Moreover, Longinus separates the use of visualizations in poetry and oratory, explaining that the effect of it in poetry is to exaggerate and enthral, to exceed the limits of credibility. Whereas its effect in oratory is to arouse emotion and excitement so as to transmit reality and truth, but mastering the audience. The parallels here with Herzog's features and documentaries —respectively— are striking. For his stylisations in his feature films (*Aguirre,* in this example) introduce the same effects Longinus mentions of poetry:

"By the time Aguirre is standing on the raft staring into the face of a monkey, the surreal qualities and fever dreams of the jungle have infiltrated his fantasies. What we see on screen might be a delirious hallucination. Even the way the soldiers die is done in an operatic way. Ursúa's wife has been wearing a blue dress throughout the film, but when she walks into the jungle – presumably never to be seen again – suddenly she's wearing a beautiful golden royal gown, in perfect condition, though everything around her is rotting away. Logic plays no part in such things; grandiose stylisations have taken over. When audiences see the brigantine up in the tree they wonder if it really is there or if it's just a fantasy of the soldiers. The image might appear unreal to us, but for those on the raft – who have long since lost their sense of reality – it doesn't seem so strange. For that scene I wanted a slightly stylised feeling, so we waited for the heavy atmosphere that emerges during the rainy season, when ominous clouds appear about an hour before it starts to pour with rain."[110]

And many of his stylisations in his documentaries mirror Longinus in terms of the effect of visualizations in oratory. In fact, the constant problem with Herzog's documentaries is that one cannot tell where the fabrication, the exaggeration or the stylisation is. Everything seems absolutely credible, real and true. Longinus talks about visualization in oratory, as said, as a means to produce emotion, yet maintaining in the audience the belief of factual truth so as to master them. We can clearly see this in Herzog. For instance, Roger Ebert —acclaimed film critic and a friend of Herzog— said something very akin to this in a letter addressed to

[110] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 9.63.

Herzog in which he mentions precisely this type of stylisation in *Bells From the Deep* (1993)[111]:

"There were the people who lived near a deep lake, and believed that on its bottom there was a city populated by angels. To see it, they had to wait until winter when the water was crystal clear, and then creep spread-eagled onto the ice. If the ice was too thick, they could not see well enough. Too thin, and they might drown. We heard the ice creaking beneath them as they peered for their vision. (…) These people, and their intense focus, and the music evoking another world (as your sound tracks always do) held me in their spell, and we talked for some time about the film, and then you said, 'But you know, Roger, it is all made up.' I did not understand. 'It is not real. I invented it.' I didn't know whether to believe you about your own film. (…) I understand this. What must be true, must be true. What must not be true, can be made more true by invention."[112]

Ebert completely believed what he saw in *Bells From the Deep*; the emotion introduced in the scenes held him "in their spell"; these emotions, introduced through fabrication, accompanied the factual truth (which in this case was the simple folk tale of there being a city underneath the lake) in a way that, as Longinus puts it, the audience was not only convinced, it was positively mastered.

Adding on to fabrications and stylisations as methods towards the construction of the sublime, we find another semblance between Longinus and Herzog. In books 17 and 18 of *On the Sublime*, Longinus talks about figures and figures of inquiry and interrogation. In these chapters, Longinus contends that figures produce the desired effect —that is, arousing sublimity— when they conceal precisely the fact that they are figures. In the same manner, Herzog tends not to reveal where his fabrications and stylisations have been introduced in his films.[113]

It is thus clear, that for Herzog, fabrications, stylisations, are a clear path towards arousing sublimity in the viewer, a way to elevate the audience; yet this is not the only method he

[111] A documentary regarding faith, religion and superstition in Russia.
[112] Ebert, R., 2007. *A Letter to Werner Herzog: In Praise of Rapturous Truth.* https://www.rogerebert.com/interviews/a-letter-to-werner-herzog-in-praise-of-rapturous-truth#:~:text=Dear%20Werner%2C,the%20World%2C%22%20to%20me.&text=It%20is%20a%20letter%20to,about%20films%20but%20about%20lives.
[113] Although the most famous of them are now well-known due to them being explained mostly in Cronin's book, most of the others are not. Either way, the relevant matter is that in the films themselves, the presence of fabrications is not revealed or discovered by the audience. The fact that the audience later on might discover said inventions does not trump the possibility of sublimity during the film.

uses towards constructing sublimity in his films. As we will see, there are other clear themes he uses in order to do so.

Before moving on to the sublime landscapes in Herzog, it is important to present the general themes Herzog makes use of in his films that can be considered traditionally sublime and part of his method towards constructing sublimity.

If we turn to Herzog's *oeuvre* as a whole, we will find constants and repetitions in themes, types of landscapes (although this will be reviewed separately) and types of characters — both in his features and documentaries. Herzog himself, when confronted with said common themes simply acknowledges them, almost as if they were coincidental, denying any specific intention towards doing so. It seems to me, that by trying, as one of his main intentions, to construct sublimity in his films, he tends to encounter what historically has been considered sublime. Thus, the repetitions in themes and characters.

The first thing to note, as a general theme to his films, is that most, if not all, relate in terms of content to what Burke named the sublime terror, mentioned elsewhere in the thesis. The sublime terror, partially similar to Kant's dynamically sublime, is based on the idea, presented by Burke, that nothing arouses sublimity as strongly, powerfully and efficiently as fear, as terror. "Indeed terror is in most cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime."[114] Anything that incites terror or fear, Burke contends, is prone to arouse sublimity.

In terms of nature, oceans, volcanoes, the jungle, mountains and deserts, have always been considered dangerous, places of fear and terror; samely, these have always been places used to describe sublime nature. Burke, for instance, mentions the ocean, as compared to a plain of land (Burke, 1764, p. 97), as a place of terror, and, therefore, as possibly sublime.

Regarding the use of terror as a path towards sublimity, I believe most of Herzog's films have that element of fear and terror to them. I am not going to delve into what can be considered fearful or terrifying from a psychological perspective, but it is clear that in general terms, anything that is a potential danger to us, or a force of might (as Kant explains) can be considered fearful. If we were to review one by one, the more than 65 films Herzog has made, we would find a principal element of fear and/or terror in each and every one of them. To give some examples: *Fata Morgana* (1971), with its inhospitable, endless deserts

[114] Burke, E., 1764. *A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful*. 4th ed. London: Robert Dodsley, James Dodsley, p. 97.

and mirages; *Land of Silence and Darkness* (1971)[115]; *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972), its murderous jungle, Indians and Aguirre himself; the terror, isolation and burdened existence of Kaspar Hauser (*The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser,* 1974)[116]; *Into the Abyss* (2011), on death row and the inmates awaiting unavoidable death; *Ballad of the Little Soldier* (1984), a film about the terror of the war, and the children that are part of it; the looming danger of *La Soufrière*[117] (1977) and the volcanoes of *Into the Inferno* (2016). The terror and fear in Herzog's films are ever-present. Be it natural terror, the violent danger of its characters, the inner terror that tragedies like *Land of Silence and Darkness*, *Lessons of Darkness* or *Echoes from a Sombre Empire* arouse within us. Even the titles to most of his films suggest a danger, a terror within them.

The constant themes, as can be seen, of extremism, danger, madness, fear, and murderous nature make Herzog's films related and akin to the sublime terror in Burke and, as mentioned previously, to Kant's dynamically sublime. In a kind of introduction to his book, Cronin details extensively (p. 5.40-5.43) Herzog's characters and situations related to fear and danger, and finalises it by stating: "Reinhild Steingröver[118] tells us that both nature and culture are presented in Herzog's work as "inescapably hostile realms." Werner can do nothing but try to elude the potential menace nonetheless."[119]

Now, apart from fabrication and stylisation —already analysed and presented—, and the aforementioned themes used by Herzog —which, as said, relate to Burke's sublime terror— in order to construct sublimity in his films; the other most important thing to consider in his architecture of the sublime are landscapes.

For Herzog, landscapes are vital, not only for himself, but especially for his films: "For Ingmar Bergman, the starting point of a film seems to be the human face, usually that of a woman. For me, it's a physical landscape, whether a real or imaginary or hallucinatory one.

[115] "The film is about the terror of sometimes not being able to make ourselves understood, and our subsequent isolation." (Cronin, 2014, p. 9.32).
[116] Its original title in German is "*Every Man for Himself, and God against all."*
[117] A film about the impending horror of the explosion of a volcano in the island La Soufrière and the only man who refused to evacuate it.
[118] Professor of German and Film Studies at the University of Rochester.
[119] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 5.43.

I know that by staying in one place I'll never find what I'm looking for. The search is unremitting."[120]

Herzog's landscapes are not only the starting point of his films, but they also encompass most of the elements of what can be considered sublime in them. Most of his landscapes can be classified into what has been traditionally considered sublime. The sublime, as presented by Kant is mostly, or most purely, found in nature; and for that matter, Herzog's films are rarely based in urban areas, most of them are found in the danger and chaos of nature. When the setting is that of an urban area or a city, it is a destroyed or inhospitable one, so as to keep in them the aforementioned element of terror as the basis of the film; as is the case of *Bad Lieutenant* (2009), set in post-Katrina New Orleans, or a segment of *Lo and Behold* (2016), which revolves around the people to whom the technological urban areas, with their radio frequencies and waves everywhere cause serious illnesses, and thus have to escape to isolated nature to avoid death.

For Herzog, landscapes have been vital since the very beginning of his filmmaking career. Even in his first feature film, *Signs of Life,* there is a very precise landscape —that, incidentally, seems, with how he describes it, to have aroused a sublime experience in Herzog himself— that becomes the pivotal point of his film, and which connected it to a short story by Achim von Armin, inspiring him to make said film. As he himself explains: "While in Greece, riding a donkey on Crete, I stumbled across the Lasithi Plateau. I was travelling over a mountain pass and looked down into a valley. Beneath me lay ten thousand revolving windmills; it was a field of spinning flowers gone mad. The squeaking noise alone was astonishing. My heart stood still and I had to sit down. "I have either gone insane or have seen something very significant," I said to myself. It turned out these frenzied windmills were real, pumping water for irrigation. I knew as I stood there I would return one day to make a film, and years later this cosmic image became a pivotal one in *Signs of Life*. My attention has always been drawn to the screams that emanate from certain images, and if something cries out so loudly and insistently, I respond. Had I never seen the windmills, I wouldn't have made the connection between this unimaginable ecstatic landscape and the von Arnim story, which I read later on."[121]

[120] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 7.18.
[121] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 8.22.

There are two very relevant things in this quote; firstly, how Herzog explains the call of the landscape. “The screams that emanate from certain images.” It seems as if the landscapes he chooses for his films scream at him so that he captures them. This parallels quite clearly with the second matter of relevance: the language he uses to describe said landscape, akin to the sublime.

If we turn to Longinus, he explains how one of the effects of the sublime is to “transport the audience out of themselves”, for which he uses the term *ekstasis* (ecstasy). Samely, here Herzog is talking about an “unimaginable ecstatic landscape”. A landscape that, like the sublime, transports us out of ourselves. Moreover, going back to how he describes the landscapes he uses, those loud and insistent screams and cries, it is important to clarify that landscapes, as he says, take a hold of Herzog[122], as if obligating him to use them, they master him, in the same way the object of the Longinian sublime, as has been said, “is not to persuade the audience, but to positively master them”. There is nothing else to do for Herzog than to present those landscapes in the same way he has experienced them, to present them in the screen with all their sublimity.

It is worth mentioning, that for Herzog, landscapes not only have the physical importance of being the beginning, the initial path towards creating a sublime film, and of being always landscapes that contain what has traditionally been sublime —as we have mentioned, volcanoes, oceans, mountains, glaciers, deserts; extreme landscapes, nature as a might as Kant would put it with the dynamically sublime. In Herzog’s craft, landscapes play other very important roles. Firstly, they never are simply landscapes in the physical sense. As has been mentioned repeatedly, landscapes for Herzog relate to something within us and to the human condition. They are landscapes of the mind and landscapes of the soul as he calls them. Moreover, this ties Herzog directly, as per his own saying, to Caspar David Friedrich. Finally, landscapes, along fabrication and stylisation, is what allows Herzog, not only to construct sublimity, but to achieve the final outcome —the consequence—, the purpose to his architecture of the sublime; namely, ecstatic truth.

Now, the fact that Herzog’s landscapes are *inner* landscapes is a critical matter, for, as he explains, he is not trying to portray the landscape as a mere accessory or background for the film; the landscape plays a vital role in the narrative. “These are the embarrassed landscapes

[122] “The visionary aspects of the desert landscape that had taken hold of me were much more powerful than any ideas I had brought with me, so I junked the story, opened my eyes and ears, and filmed the desert mirages.” (Cronin, 2014, p. 8.50)

of our planet, the kinds of images that appear throughout my work, from *Fata Morgana* to *Lessons of Darkness* and beyond."[123] "I never present literal landscapes in my films. What I show instead are landscapes of the mind, locales of the soul. Just as there is no such thing as background music in my films, landscapes aren't picturesque or scenic backdrops as they are in Hollywood, nor merely representations of physical space. Most directors exploit landscapes only to embellish what is happening in the foreground (…). For me landscapes are active members of the cast, like the desert in *Fata Morgana* and the burning oil fields of Kuwait in *Lessons of Darkness*. During the opening credits of *Signs of Life, the camera holds* for an unusually long time on a single image of a mountain valley in Crete, allowing audiences to climb deep inside the landscape. The jungle of *Aguirre* is never some lush, beautiful environment there for decoration, as it might be in a television commercial. It's a representation of our most intense and forceful dreams, our deepest emotions and nightmares. With its madness and confusion, the place becomes a vital part of characters' inner landscapes, taking on almost human qualities."[124] "Regarding landscapes in general, what I am looking for is a decent place for human beings, a place that measures up to humanity."[125]

The relevance here lies in the fact that the landscapes are a part of the story as much as the characters, the music or the narrative itself. They are not only physical spaces, but representations of ourselves, our inner dreams and conditions. Herzog's landscapes are not only the externalization of the characters' insides, but also of ourselves. As he himself says, and as has already been quoted in this thesis: "The images in my films are your images too. Somehow, deep in your subconscious, you find them, dormant, lurking, like sleeping friends; they correspond with the inner landscapes inside us all and strike directly into the soul of man."[126]

And it is this, their being inner landscapes, that bridges Herzog with Friedrich. "While almost everything about romanticism is foreign to me, Caspar David Friedrich is someone I do have great affinity for. In his paintings *The Monk by the Sea* and *The Wanderer Before the Sea of Fog*, a man stands alone, looking out over the landscape. Compared to the grandeur of the

[123] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 8.64.
[124] Ibid., p. 9.67.
[125] Ames, E., 2014. *Werner Herzog*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, pp. 19-20.
[126] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 8.93.

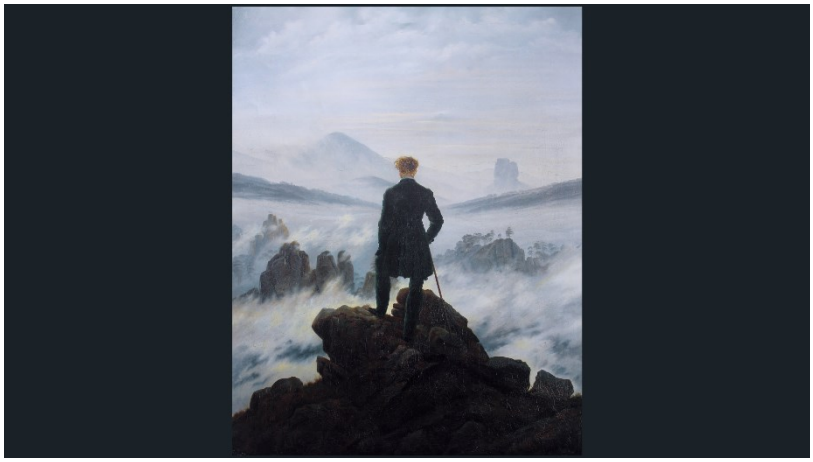
environment surrounding him, he is small and insignificant. Friedrich didn't paint landscapes per se, he revealed inner landscapes to us, ones that exist only in our dreams. It's something I have always tried to do with my films."[127] "Landscapes can be "staged" to the extent that they are properties of our souls. That connects me to Caspar David Friedrich, who tried the exact same thing, with other means and in a different time, of course. The question was always: How can we represent landscapes of the soul?"[128]

When seeing a painting by Friedrich, one always finds a kind of endless horizon. A vast, infinite stretch of land, sea, or sky, confounded. And then, almost as an accident, a human figure, always giving their back to us, observing, contemplating the vastness, the infinity. In a landscape like that, we are insignificant, overpowered by nature. And yet, the paintings always have a religiosity to them, the minuscule observer seems to be in profound meditation, contemplation, or maybe even sublimity. First overpowered by the infinite vastness of nature, its might and power, to then realise that, to some degree, he is superior to that, the horizon is but an extension of himself, of what he is.

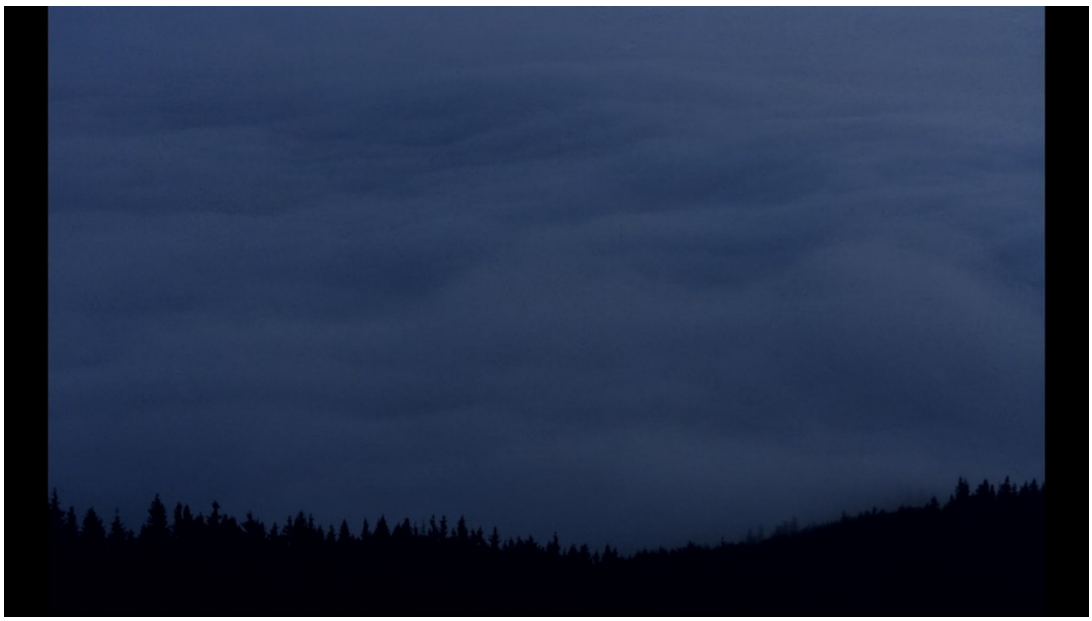
In order to see the direct parallels between Herzog and Friedrich, apart from the quotes above, in which Herzog makes clear his affinity towards the German painter, it is necessary to include a side by side presentation of some of Herzog's frames from his films, with some of Friedrich's paintings. The relevance is striking; not only regarding the content of the image, but also in form, colour, composition, etc.

Hias, the prophet of *Heart of Glass* (1976), contemplating a sea of fog. The semblance is striking if compared to Friedrich's famous *The Wanderer Before the Sea of Fog* (1818):

[127] Ibid., p. 11.6.
[128] Ames, E., 2014. *Werner Herzog*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, p. 117.

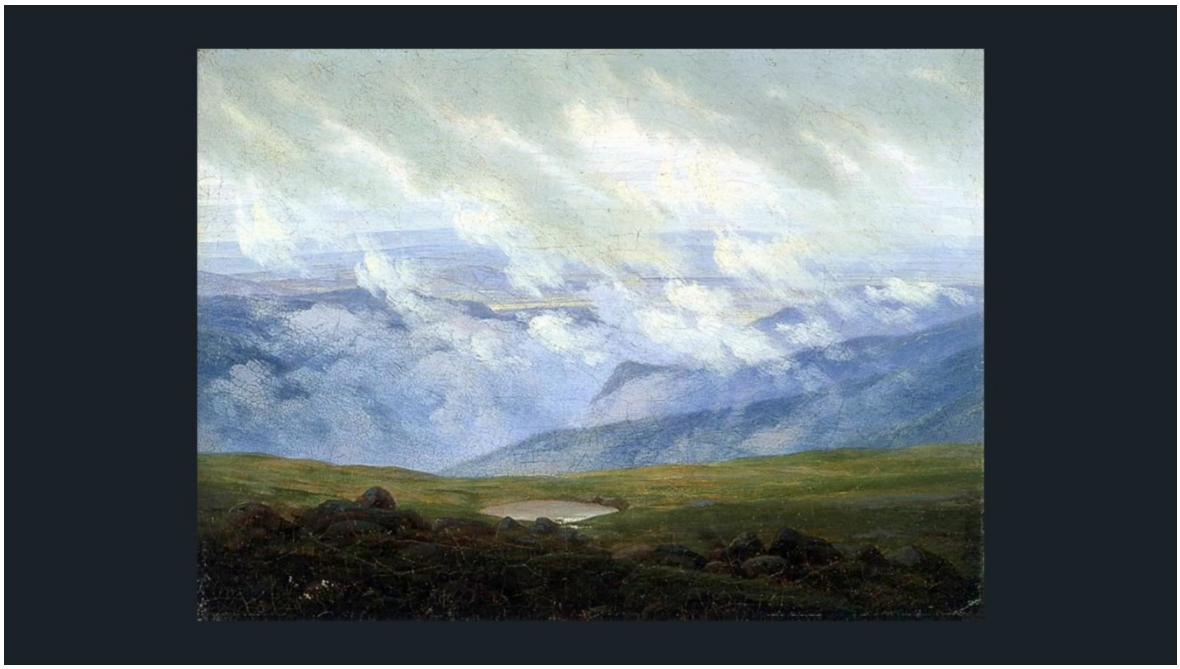


Obviously the images are not exactly the same, however, there is a clear semblance between them. What actually encompasses, in Herzog, Friedrich's painting, are the other frames from the same scene, which complete the image of Hias observing the sea of fog:



Fog and clouds are a constant theme in Friedrich's paintings, samely, we find a very similar aesthetic, as can be seen in the images above, in Herzog's films. Let us present another example of two paintings by Friedrich that clearly resemble the above images:

Giant Mountains Landscape with Rising Fog (Friedrich, 1820)



Drifting Clouds (Friedrich, 1820)

Still in *Heart of Glass*, we find, towards the end of the film, various scenes that seem to be taken directly out of Friedrich's paintings. Many of which are so strikingly similar that seem actual paintings by the German master. Let us compare them:

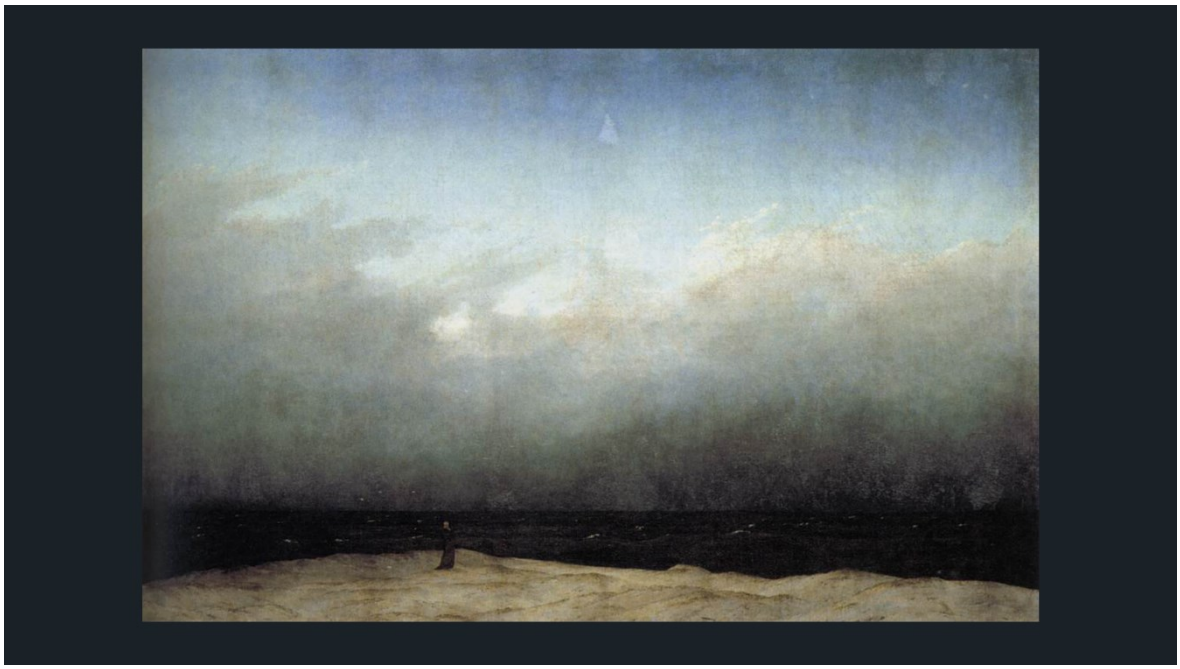
Heart of Glass (1976)

Das Eismeer (1823-1824)

Heart of Glass (1976)

Felsenriff am Meeresstrand (1824)

Furthermore, we find one more image from the film, that mirrors Friedrich directly, and that intends to arouse the same feelings and emotions —sublimity, ecstasy— in both artists:



The Monk by the Sea (1808-1810)

We could give the same name to both Herzog's image and Friedrich's painting. The similarity is nearly exact, with the difference that Herzog's character is standing on the edge

of a cliff, overlooking, not only the sea but also the abyss. Which gives the image, in my opinion, another layer of fear and sublimity that goes beyond even Friedrich's painting.

These kinds of landscapes are not only present in Herzog's *Heart of Glass;* if we turn, firstly to *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974), and secondly, to *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979), we will find similar landscapes to these ones. As said, the semblances are striking.

The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser (1974)

Plowed Field (1830)

Nosferatu (1979)

Two Men by the Sea (1817)

Day (Friedrich, 1821)

Finally, it is worth including some images from *Nosferatu* that indeed resemble Friedrich very much, and that remind us of his most well-known paintings like the aforementioned *The Monk by the Sea* or *The Wanderer Before the Sea of Fog.* These images mirror Friedrich consistently for their composition, form, colour and content. We keep seeing people giving

us their backs, either contemplating the vastness of nature, or moving away, towards the infinite horizon.

I believe Herzog's architecture of the sublime, i.e. his methods, have been extensively developed, as well as his parallels and similarities not only to Kant, but also to Longinus, Burke, and just recently, to Caspar David Friedrich.

Now, we mentioned earlier that it is precisely Herzog's fabrication and stylisation, alongside his general themes (fear, terror, tragedy, etc.) and his landscapes, that allow him to construct sublimity, so that the audience can experience it when watching one of his films. The final question that arises, maybe the most important of all, is the following: what is Herzog's

purpose towards creating sublimity? Why does he need, why does he want to create sublime films through the aforementioned methods? What are the consequences to his sublime experience?

5.3. The Aftermath of the Sublime Experience: *Ecstatic Truth*

Since the very beginning of this thesis, we have been hinting at the ecstatic, and more precisely at the "ecstatic truth". Different mentions and arguments have been made regarding it; however, it is now the appropriate moment to delve into the last part of the thesis, that directly concerns the ecstatic: the consequence, the aftermath of the sublime experience in Werner Herzog.

Now, what is ecstasy? Herzog himself provides a very accurate definition, coherent with the origin of the term: "The word comes from the Greek "*ekstasis*", meaning "to step outside oneself," like the mediaeval mystics did, experiencing faith and truth in an ecstatic, visionary form."[129]

If we go back to Longinus, we will find that one of the principal effects of his sublime experience was ecstasy. One of the most important effects of the sublime, Longinus explains, is to transport the audience out of themselves, that is, to arouse a state of ecstasy in them; in order to elevate the audience, to master the audience. Now Longinus does not analyse further the consequences of said experience, apart from explaining precisely the aforementioned mastering of the audience and fully convincing them of what is being transmitted by way of arousing sublimity in them.

Kant, on the other hand, does indeed delve quite diligently into the consequence of the sublime experience. As has been explained earlier, when analysing Kant's sublime, for Kant, the consequence of the sublime experience is the overcoming of nature, realising, after first feeling inadequate by way of the imagination, that we are indeed above nature, for we discover a supersensible vocation in us. Said supersensible vocation is none other than the moral law; which means that for Kant, the consequence to the sublime experience leads to the discovery of the superiority of our moral ideas, "sublimely above nature." With this idea

[129] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 10.16.

Kant also —as mentioned earlier— hints at the possibility of arriving at the idea of God and its sublimity. Let us present, again, Kant's statement regarding this matter:

"Hence sublimity is contained not in any thing of nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of our superiority to nature within us, and thereby also to nature outside us (as far as it influences us). Whatever arouses this feeling in us, and this includes the *might* of nature that challenges our forces, is then (although improperly) called sublime. And it is only by presupposing this idea within us, and by referring to it, that we can arrive at the idea of the sublimity of that being who arouses deep respect in us, not just by his might as demonstrated in nature, but even more by the ability, with which we have been endowed, to judge nature without fear and to think of our vocation as being sublimely above nature."[130]

Even if there is no explicit mention of ecstasy in Kant, it does appear, by way of his explanations, that his sublime experience, through ecstasy, leads to a stepping outside our sensible selves; this is because the sublime experience in Kant, as has already been explained, leads to a transcendence of sensibility, to the discovery of moral consciousness, of the superiority of our moral ideas.

However, for Herzog, that does not seem to be the consequence to the sublime experience. If we go back to a previously quoted passage by Herzog, from his essay on the sublime, we will find that for him, the consequence of sublimity is ecstatic truth. "Only in this state of sublimity [Erhabenheit] does something deeper become possible, a kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual. Ecstatic truth, I call it."[131]

The most relevant thing to understand with Herzog, is that for him, ecstasy is the passage, the path from the sublime and towards truth. This is why, in the previous quote, he mentions sublimity as the necessary condition for *ecstatic* truth. The experience of the sublime, according to Herzog, takes us, through ecstasy, towards "a deeper stratum of truth"[132]. And in order to reach that truth, almost anything is allowed. This is the reason why he defends so vehemently his stylisations and the use he makes of terror, tragedy, his landscapes, music and editing. For him, as has been said, these methods are not counterfeit or lies, they are a means to create sublimity, "a means of making possible an ecstatic experience of inner,

[130] Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co., p. 123.
[131] Herzog, W., 2010. *On The Absolute, The Sublime And Ecstatic Truth*. ARION, p. 2.
[132] Ibid., p. 9.

deeper truth. Just as it's not fakery when Michelangelo's *Pietà* portrays Jesus as a 33-year-old man, and his mother, the mother of God, as a 17-year-old."[133]

Herzog contends that dwelling in the merely factual trumps all possibilities of sublimity and thus of ecstatic truth, as one gets lost in a myriad of facts that have only normative power: "how important, really, is the factual? Of course, we can't disregard the factual; it has normative power. But it can never give us the kind of illumination, the ecstatic flash, from which Truth emerges. If only the factual, upon which the so-called cinema-verité fixates, were of significance, then one could argue that the verité —the truth— at its most concentrated must reside in the telephone book —in its hundreds of thousands of entries that are all factually correct and, so, correspond to reality."[134]

The ultimate consequence of the sublime experience for Herzog is finding, through ecstasy, said inner, deeper truth; which for him, is none other than revealing who we are, uncovering what the human condition is. He never explicitly delves into the question of the human condition, but he has repeatedly stated that he is trying to uncover it, to reveal it; that is, basically the inner truth he strives to find. Which is also why he is so adamant in his explanation of the origin of the term 'truth': "The word for "truth" in ancient Greek is "*aletheia*," derived from the verb "to hide." This is a negative definition, meaning to bring something out of hiding and make it visible, and is actually a very cinematic concept because when you film something, there is a latent image on the celluloid; only when you develop that celluloid does the image emerge for all to see. My work in cinema strives for the same: to make visible those things that are latent in us."[135]

In an interview with Roger Ebert, Herzog links the use of extreme characters with his inquiry into the human condition as the ultimate purpose of his works: "I am curious about our human condition. As you would understand the very nature of physical matter by putting it under extreme temperature, pressure, or radiation, similarly human beings would reveal their nature under extreme conditions. The Greeks have a proverbial saying I always liked: "A captain only shows during a storm." Ordinary lives are the ones we lead, but they are not really a fertile soil for movies."[136]

---

[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., p. 7.
[135] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 15.9.
[136] Ebert, R., 2008. *Werner Herzog: "Tell me about the iceberg, tell me about your dreams." https://www.rogerebert.com/interviews/werner-herzog-tell-me-about-the-iceberg-tell-me-about-your-dreams*

Going back to landscapes, and his constant mentions of them not being actual landscapes but really inner landscapes or landscapes of the mind; the other very important matter regarding these, apart from their relation to Friedrich, is the fact that, as Herzog mentions, these landscapes, as well as his films in general, strive to tell us something about the human condition, about "the soul of man".

Moreover, Herzog tells us, as has already been mentioned earlier, that he is trying to "articulate the collective dreams" of humanity, which ultimately is the same as his stances on ecstatic truth. The realm of ecstatic truth is not something particular and individual, it is a universal. "This is one reason why so many people around the world seem to connect with my films, which represent the universal visions buried within us all."[137]

Therefore, for Werner Herzog, the purpose of creating sublime films, thus arousing sublimity in the audience —elevating them—, is that through ecstasy, they are transported out of themselves, out of the world of the factual, towards the discovery of inner, deeper truths. In some sense, towards discovering themselves by discovering human nature.

Thus, the similarities with this regard between Herzog and Kant seem apparent. Although their final conclusions are not the same, the path that leads to the final consequence of the sublime experience is very similar. In both of them the sublime experience has a precise effect of transcendence, of ecstasy. In Kant it is a transcendence of sensibility that leads to the discovery of the superiority of our moral ideas; and in Herzog, it is a transcendence of the factual, that leads to the discovery of our inner truths, of our collective dreams, of the universal images buried within us all.

I have, for the most part, not answered what exactly are those inner truths and collective dreams, what is the precise message and content of the ecstatic truth. The reason I haven't done so is mainly that this is not the central object of this thesis. I have preferred to focus more on the whole of Herzog's architecture of the sublime, rather than delving too deeply in the content of the ecstatic truth, as, in my opinion, it was more beneficial to the scope of this thesis to arrive simply at what the general implications (ecstatic, inner, deeper truths) of Herzog's sublime are.

To some degree, I have decided to respect Herzog's contempt for complex philosophical analyses of his works, especially with regards to his stances about the ecstatic truth and the

[137] Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber, p. 8.93.

implications of his sublime; as these are matters that are very difficult to answer, with no clear outcome, and that are best left to the realm of poetry, literature and cinema.

6. CONCLUSION

I have found, along the study and development of this thesis, clear parallels between Kant's sublime (especially the dynamically sublime) and Werner Herzog's sublime. As has been explained, both differentiate and separate the sublime from the beautiful; both of them present the sublime with very similar descriptions; being both German, they use the German *erheben*, which as has been said, is more akin to the original sense, that is, elevation. In both Kant and Herzog we find that they introduce an aspect of universality to the sublime; for Kant one of the characteristics of the aesthetic judgments of the sublime is that of subjective universality, having universal validity; and for Herzog too, the films he creates, sublime films, represent, as he says, "the universal visions buried within us all".

Moreover, Kant explains that nature that incites sublimity —here we find parallels with Burke too—, is nature in its "chaos, disarray and devastation", giving examples of dynamically sublime nature such as "threatening rocks", volcanoes and the "boundless ocean". In the same manner, Herzog's presentation of nature is, samely, one of chaos and devastation; such as the jungle, deserts, volcanoes or Antarctica.

Kant talks, in the first part of the experience of the dynamically sublime, about our feeling overpowered and overwhelmed by nature, and yet, the consequent reaction is the overcoming of nature —realising that, due to our supersensible vocation, we can disregard nature's might as greater than us— and the overcoming of our "natural concerns: property, life, and health." Samely, Herzog quotes Kant in his essay on the sublime about overcoming nature, and talks about the sublimity of sky flyers, who, in their ecstasy, overcome even the fear of death.

Finally, both Kant and Herzog strain the importance of the mind, of our inner selves and not the actual objective physical nature. Kant regards the judgment of the sublime not in nature itself, but in the mind of the person. Certain natural phenomena arouse sublimity in the mind. Similarly, Herzog's references to his films, his landscapes and his purposes, all of which stem from trying to construct sublimity in them, refer not to the external world, but to something inside us. This is made clear with all his stances on him representing our inner landscapes, articulating the collective dreams of humanity and revealing, by arousing sublimity and through ecstasy, our inner, deeper truths.

I have also presented and analysed some of the most important methods that Herzog uses towards constructing sublimity in his films; his architecture of the sublime experience. I have found three main methods that he uses towards this; the first one being his use of fabrications and stylisations in his films and documentaries. That is, inventing, exaggerating and manipulating the factual reality in his documentaries so as to produce something that can be judged sublime. I have also related these methods with many of Longinus' arguments, found in his *On the Sublime.* The second method I analysed, are his general themes, present in all of his filmography; themes that are akin to Burke's sublime terror and to Kant's dynamically sublime. These themes are always ones based on terror, tragedy, fear, danger, eccentricity and various other extremes; all of which pertain to the intention of arousing sublimity through might and fear, as is the case with Kant's dynamically sublime.

The final method I presented was that of his use of landscapes in order to construct sublimity. Landscapes that, again, are characterised by arousing fear, danger and so on; and that, furthermore, are not merely physical landscapes, but *inner* landscapes. For that, they are closely related to C.D. Friedrich's paintings. This is the reason why I have also presented a comparison between some of Friedrich's paintings and some of Herzog's scenes from various of his films.

The final chapter of the thesis concerned Herzog's consequence of the sublime experience. The main part of which concerns ecstasy, as a means to revealing our inner truths, uncovering the human condition. Many arguments and stances that have been relevant for this final part of the thesis, have been present all along the rest of the work; such as the concept of ecstasy and ecstatic truth, Herzog's inner landscapes and Kant's consequences of the sublime, namely, the superiority of our moral ideas, which I have used in order to compare them with Herzog's own consequences.

I have found, regarding this, that although the final destination of the sublime experience seems to be different between Kant and Herzog —for the former arrives, as said, at the superiority of our moral ideas; and the latter at the revelation of our collective dreams and inner truths—; their paths towards said destination are clearly mirrored. In both of them, the sublime experience arouses, through ecstasy, a transcendence. In Kant's case a transcendence of sensibility, and in Herzog's case a transcendence of the factual reality we inhabit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allison, H., 2001. *Kant's Theory Of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ames, E., 2014. *Werner Herzog*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Burke, E., 1764. *A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful*. 4th ed. London: Robert Dodsley, James Dodsley.

Cronin, P., 2014. *Werner Herzog: A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin*. 1st ed. Faber & Faber.

Crowther, P., 1989. *The Kantian Sublime: From Morality To Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Doran, R., 2015. *The Theory Of The Sublime From Longinus To Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ebert, R., 2007. *A Letter to Werner Herzog: In Praise of Rapturous Truth.* https://www.rogerebert.com/interviews/a-letter-to-werner-herzog-in-praise-of-rapturous-truth#:~:text=Dear%20Werner%2C,the%20World%2C%22%20to%20me.&text=It%20is%20a%20letter%20to,about%20films%20but%20about%20lives.

Ebert, R., 2008. *Werner Herzog: "Tell me about the iceberg, tell me about your dreams."* https://www.rogerebert.com/interviews/werner-herzog-tell-me-about-the-iceberg-tell-me-about-your-dreams

Herzog, W., 2010. *On The Absolute, The Sublime And Ecstatic Truth*. ARION.

Herzog, W., 1999. *Minnesota Declaration.* Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis. https://www.wernerherzog.com/complete-works-text.html

Herzog, W., 2009. *Conquest of the Useless.* Harper Collins.

Longinus. 1995. *On The Sublime*. London: Harvard University Press. P1.

Kant, I. and Pluhar, W., 1987. *Critique Of Judgment*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co.

FILMOGRAPHY

Aguirre, the Wrath of God. 1972. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans. 2009. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Ballad of the Little Soldier. 1984. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Bells from the Deep. 1993. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Burden of Dreams. 1982. [film] Directed by Les Blank. Flower Films Production.

Echoes from a Sombre Empire. 1990. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Encounters at the End of the World. 2007. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Even Dwarfs Started Small. 1970. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Fata Morgana. 1971. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Fitzcarraldo. 1982. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Grizzly Man. 2005. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Heart of Glass. 1976. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Into the Abyss. 2011. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Into the Inferno. 2016. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Land of Silence and Darkness. 1971. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

La Soufrière. 1977. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Lessons of Darkness. 1992. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Little Dieter Needs to Fly. 1997. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World. 2016. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Nosferatu the Vampyre. 1979. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Signs of Life. 1968. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

Stroszek. 1977. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser. 1974. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.

The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner. 1974. [film] Directed by W. Herzog. Werner Herzog Filmproduktion.