

Abstract

The present research explores firstly, the history of the sublime from Longinus to Kant, secondly, it focuses on a close reading of Kant's pre-Critical treatise on the sublime, i.e. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, it then brings the latter text in a dialogue with the discourse of sublimity and the theories of major figures in the history of the sublime as far as they have been a source of influence for Kant's pre-Critical account. Finally, it briefly explores the development and transformation of the sublime from *Observations* to the *Analytic of the Sublime* in the *Third Critique*, aiming at showing the contributions the Critical Philosophy has had to Kantian aesthetics. The current literature on the sublime usually undertakes either a historical-chronological approach towards Kant's predecessors, or treats Kantian sublime as the major focal point hence downgrading other theories of sublime preceding that of Kant already by 1764. Accordingly, it proves both illuminating and necessary to try to locate Kantian sublime within the historical context, in order to both find out Kant's specific contributions to the discourse of sublimity and to evaluate other theories of the sublime until the time of Kant. Moreover, another question addressed by this research is the influence and impact of Kant's moral theory for and on his aesthetics. The sublime is a pivotal element of Kantian aesthetics which reveals how Kant's moral theory has developed from 1760s to 1780s, from a theory close to British moral sense theorists to one with a priori grounds, based on Kant's pure practical reason; moreover an analysis of the sublime in the light of its relation to moral feeling helps us view the pre-Critical text not as superficial or peripheral to the *Third Critique*, but as independently crucial to Kant's philosophy. To answer these issues, we have first explored the history of the sublime as far as it has functioned as a source of inspiration for Kant, i.e. the sublime in Longinus, Boileau, Addison, Shaftesbury and Burke. A brief sketch of Hutcheson also paves the way to address the issue of Kant's moral theory's development. Next, we have explored *Observations* in some detail, bringing it then in a dialogue with the aforementioned accounts in order to explore the novelties of Kantian sublime. In the appendix to this text we have treated the Critical sublime, then compared it with the pre-Critical one. Consequently, we have concluded our research by the contention that Kantian aesthetics is essentially interwoven with Kantian ethics, the developments of the latter of which guiding the development of the former. Moreover, we have come to the understanding that Kantian sublime could be viewed to have more similarities with the Longinian sublime as it is usually thought, and less affinities with Burkean sublime. We have the contention that such an approach provides us with a more comprehensive picture of any aesthetics, especially Kantian aesthetics which goes hand in hand with Kantian ethics for which the developments of the sublime is a very clear example. This will help any future research have a deeper understanding of pre-Critical aesthetics; hence see it for what it is worth.

Keywords: true/false sublime, noble sublime, moral feeling, moral sense theory, mathematically/dynamically sublime