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Schopenhauer's Transformation of the Kantian Sublime

SANDRA SHAPSHAY
Indiana University

Abstract
Schopenhauer singles out Kant's theory of the sublime for high praise, calling it 'by far the most excellent thing in the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement', yet, in his main discussion of the sublime, he ridicules Kant's explanation as being in the grip of scholastic metaphysics. My first aim in this paper is to sort out Schopenhauer's apparently conflicted appraisal of Kant's theory of the sublime. Next, based on his *Nachlaß,* close readings of published texts and especially of his account of the experience of tragic drama, I offer a reconstruction of Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime which understands it – against prevailing scholarly views – as a *transformation of* rather than as a real *departure from* the Kantian explanation. Finally, I suggest that my interpretation of Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime has far-reaching consequences for a proper understanding of his views on freedom.

Keywords: beauty, freedom, Kant, Schopenhauer, sublime aesthetics

1. Introduction

Throughout his published works, Schopenhauer says relatively little about Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgement.[1] In his nearly book-length appendix to *The World as Will and Representation* (*WWR*), volume I, titled 'Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy', the philosopher devotes merely the last five pages to a discussion of the entire third *Critique*. But in this appendix, Schopenhauer does single out Kant's theory of the sublime for high praise, calling it '[b]y far the most excellent thing in the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement' (*WWR* I, 532).[2] Kant's theory of sublimity, Schopenhauer holds, is far more successful than his theory of beauty, for the latter only rightly gives 'the general method of investigation', whereas the former '[gives] not only … the general method of investigation, but also a part of the right way to it, so much so that, although it does not provide the real solution to the problem, it nevertheless touches on it very closely' (*WWR* I, 532).[3] The indebtedness of Schopenhauer's own theory of the sublime to Kant's, however, has been largely overlooked by commentators. For instance, in his brief treatment of this topic Hamlyn (1980: 113) attests that 'Schopenhauer takes over from Kant the distinction between the dynamically and mathematically sublime … but he disagrees with Kant's diagnosis of those cases'. Similarly, Jacquette (1996: 22) holds that 'despite adopting Kant's distinction between the dynamical and mathematical sublime, his theory of the sublime, making reference to the struggles and sufferings of will, is unlike Kant's'. In a much lengthier treatment of this subject, Vandenabeele (2003; 94–5) writes that 'Schopenhauer is often closer to Edmund Burke's theory of the sublime, than to Kant's … [for instance in] Schopenhauer's examples of the stronger degrees of the sublime – the sublime is, it seems, and contrary to Kant, more a question of intensification than of elevation'. And Janaway has argued for the view that Schopenhauer was predominantly influenced by Plato rather than by Kant in both his theory of the beautiful and the sublime (in particular, Janaway 1996: 39–61). In contrast to these commentators, Guyer has stressed some of the continuities between Kant's and Schopenhauer's aesthetic theories, but he does not do so specifically with respect to the theory of the sublime.[4] Unique among commentators, Young (1987: 100) suggests a more profound Kantian influence on Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime as follows:

> in being self-consciously aware of occupying the eternal standpoint one experiences a brief epiphany, a joyous moment in which the solution to the riddle of life is suddenly clear. The experience of the sublime is, we may say, an intimation of immortality, an experience which, as Kant puts it, makes us 'alive to the feeling of the supersensible side of our being'.

But Young does not offer a sustained analysis of what precisely Schopenhauer adopted, and where he departed from, the Kantian account of the aesthetically sublime; this is what I endeavour to do in this paper.[5]

The general scholarly neglect of the Kantian inheritance of Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime is understandable, however, due to the fact that in his main discussion of the sublime (§39 of *WWR* I), Schopenhauer frankly ridicules Kant's explanation as being in the grip of scholastic metaphysics. After acknowledging that he will retain the Kantian distinction between the mathematically and the dynamically sublime (as well as the terminology), Schopenhauer then proclaims: 'we differ from him [Kant] entirely in the explanation of the inner nature of that impression, and can concede no share in this either to moral reflections or to hypostases from scholastic philosophy' (*WWR* I, 205).[6]

It is my aim in this paper to sort out Schopenhauer's seemingly conflicted appraisal of Kant's theory of the sublime. I shall offer an interpretation of precisely what it was that he saw as so successful in Kant's theory – where it 'touches' on the 'real solution to the problem' – and where he saw it as going awry. On this basis, I shall argue for the novel view that Schopenhauer's own theory of the sublime is best understood as a transformation of, rather than as a real departure from, the Kantian explanation of the sublime, against the prevailing interpretations adumbrated above. In section 2, I will briefly discuss Kant's view of the sublime, before turning in section 3 to a careful analysis of Schopenhauer's theory. In the last section I shall argue, based on his *Nachlaß,* close readings of Schopenhauer's published texts and especially of his account of the pleasure we take in an experience of tragic drama (which he claims is the highest degree of dynamically sublime feeling), that Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime, despite his own protestations, should be interpreted as far more Kantian than commentators to date have acknowledged. I shall also suggest that this interpretation sheds considerable light on Schopenhauer's views on freedom.

2. Kant's Theory of the Sublime

As is well known, one of the driving aims of Kant's aesthetic theory is to account for the subjective universality of pure aesthetic judgements, both of the beautiful and the sublime (*CPJ* 128; 5: 244).[7] How best to interpret the claim to subjective validity remains a point of great scholarly controversy, but one might put the claim somewhat uncontroversially as follows: Kant holds that in pure aesthetic judgements, the subject justifiably expects or demands that if others were 'in one's shoes', they would or should similarly judge the object or phenomenon in question to be beautiful or sublime.[8] While Kant admired Burke's empirical-psychological account of the sublime, he believed that only a transcendental basis could explain this important logical feature of aesthetic judgements as a whole.

There are actually two kinds of subjective universality involved in *pure* judgements of taste for Kant, however. These may fruitfully be distinguished as (a) an intersubjective validity of the *experience* of the

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beautiful, and as (b) a quasi-objective validity concerning the *object* of the judgement. The first and more thematized in Kant's discussion involves a claim about other subjects: It is the demand/expectation that others would agree with one's judgement were they to 'stand in one's shoes'. That is to say, insofar as one's experience is suitably disinterested and thus one's judgement is not based on agreeable feelings (gratification, sentimentality and the like), one demands/expects intersubjective agreement with one's judgement of beauty (*CPJ* §§6 and 7). This is the kind of subjective universality for which Kant provides at least one deduction in the third *Critique*.

The second form of subjective universality concerns the *objects* of pure aesthetic judgements. It is the claim that the object one judges as beautiful is of a *beautiful kind*. Although the subject does not designate any objective property of, say, a rose in judging 'this rose is beautiful', one does make a quasi-objective claim about this rose, namely, that this is a beautiful object rather than a non-beautiful or even an ugly object. It seems that, on Kant's view, any object with a purposive form – which might be almost any object at all – could be experienced as beautiful provided that its mere representation is accompanied by disinterested pleasure in the subject. Unlike the first type of subjective universality – the expectation of universal intersubjective agreement – Kant does not hold that this second kind, a quasi-objective validity, attaches to judgements of the sublime. In other words, Kant does not believe that certain objects are *of a sublime kind*, for he claims that, strictly speaking, *only the mind* is properly sublime:

> we express ourselves on the whole incorrectly if we call some object of nature sublime, although we can quite correctly call very many of them beautiful; for how can we designate with an expression of approval that which is apprehended in itself as contrapurposive? We can say no more than that the object serves for the presentation of a sublimity that can be found in the mind. (*CPJ* 129; 5: 245)

Thus, a natural object may properly be called 'beautiful', for Kant, since the 'ground' of beauty is to be found in its purposive form. In other words, the ground of natural beauty lies in nature, outside of the subject. By contrast, the 'ground' of sublimity lies within the subject, in the human mind which reflects on the ideas of reason in the face of vast or hostile phenomena. Fearsome and formless 'objects' and phenomena tend to lead the mind to a consideration of its higher, rational vocation, but precisely which objects or phenomena are 'sublime objects' is not, strictly speaking, a proper question for Kant, as the true ground of sublimity lies within the subject.[9]

Notwithstanding this difference in the quasi-objective validity of these types of judgements, in both the pure *experience* of the beautiful and the sublime, Kant holds that there is a legitimate expectation of intersubjective agreement. But here too, less objectivity is to be found in the judgements of the sublime. The reason for this disparity derives from the fact that, for Kant, sublime experience involves a greater degree of 'culture' and feeling for moral ideas than is needed for that of the beautiful, and the subject should thereby (though perhaps only subconsciously) *expect* less universality in these judgements.[10] Regardless of the need for greater cultivation, the *foundation* for judgements of the sublime does not derive from cultural conventions; rather, it is to be found in all human beings of 'healthy understanding': in the faculties of imagination, reason and the 'predisposition' to a feeling for the moral ideas (*CPJ* 149; 5: 265). Ultimately, Kant concludes that the expectation that others will agree with our judgements of the sublime is legitimate, based on the shared human capacity for recognizing moral ideas, though weaker than that involved in judgements of the beautiful.

Although Kant theorizes these important differences between judgements of the beautiful and judgements of the sublime, he holds that they are alike in being reflective (rather than determinative), disinterested, singular, based on feeling (specifically, the feeling of pleasure, though in judgements of the sublime pleasure is mixed with displeasure), and in making a valid claim to intersubjective universality.

It is by way of contrast with judgements of beauty that Kant first introduces his theory of the sublime. Essentially, there are three major differences between the phenomenology of the beautiful and the sublime on Kant's view, involving (1) the experience of purposiveness or contra-purposiveness, (2) the nature of the feeling experienced (i.e. whether it is wholly pleasurable or mixed with pain) and (3) the tenor of the process at work in the aesthetic experience (i.e. consisting of a relative calmness or turbulence of the mind). It is in these three differences, I will argue in the following sections, that the Kantian inheritance in Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime is quite striking.

First, the beautiful (paradigmatically in nature) concerns the forms of objects and their apparent purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) for our faculties of cognition, whereas objects called sublime (again, paradigmatically but not exclusively in nature[11]) appear 'formless' and 'limitless' (*CPJ* 128; 5: 244). Objects experienced as beautiful are in a way 'fitted' to our cognitive capacities, they are *as if designed* to spark in us a pleasurable free play of the imagination and understanding, while 'objects' experienced as sublime appear contra-purposive (*zweckwidrig*) for our cognitive faculties (in the case of the mathematically sublime) and contra-purposive for our bodily existence (with respect to the dynamically sublime).

Second, Kant describes a qualitative difference in the feeling experienced in the beautiful and the sublime. In the former, there is a feeling of the 'promotion of life', which Kant characterizes as a positive pleasure, whereas in the sublime one experiences a 'momentary inhibition of the vital powers' followed by an 'all the more powerful outpouring of them' (*CPJ* 128–9; 5: 244–5). In contrast to the pleasure of the beautiful, then, 'the satisfaction in the sublime does not so much contain positive pleasure as it does admiration or respect, i.e., it deserves to be called negative pleasure' (*CPJ* 129; 5: 245). Kant thus continues in the eighteenth-century tradition of understanding the sublime as a mixed sentiment as opposed to the beautiful, a wholly pleasurable experience, and further analyses the sublime into the two aforementioned categories, the mathematical and the dynamical, in order to distinguish the source of the pain involved. In the mathematically sublime, a subject is *cognitively* frustrated and humbled by objects that are too vast to comprehend, and whose appearances '[bring] with them the idea of its infinity' (*CPJ* 138; 5: 255). In the dynamically sublime, the subject feels *bodily* and/or *existentially* threatened qua sensible being. Yet for the experience to be properly aesthetic, the subject must perceive the phenomenon as fearful but from a vantage of safety in order to perceive disinterestedly, a *sine qua non* of aesthetic experience for Kant (*CPJ* 143–4; 5: 260–1).[12]

Further, Kant holds that the pleasure in the sublime is analogous to the moral feeling of *admiration* or *respect*: 'the feeling of the sublime in nature is respect (*Achtung*) for our own vocation, which we show to an object in nature through a certain subreption (substitution of a respect for the object instead of for the idea of humanity in our subject)'. In this way, Kant explains, the feeling of the sublime in nature 'makes intuitable the superiority of the rational vocation of our cognitive faculty over the greatest faculty of sensibility' (*CPJ* 141; 5: 258).

But how does this feeling make the superiority of our rational vocation intuitable? It seems that it does this in cases of the dynamically sublime by leading the imagination to entertain situations where we stand our ground against fearful, potentially crushing natural phenomena, revealing that even though we are finite beings, nature does not have dominion over us qua morally self-legislating beings. In cases of the mathematically sublime, the feeling of cognitive frustration leads the imagination to entertain the idea that nonetheless we are the kinds of beings who strive for totality, to push the limits of our finite understanding as far they can go.

Tied up with this difference in the nature of the pleasure experienced is a third, phenomenological difference. The experience of the beautiful is described as a 'calm contemplation' (*CPJ* 131, 141; 5: 247, 258), whereas the experience of the sublime is portrayed as a rather tumultuous process within the mind. For instance, Kant analyses the subject's experience (in the mathematically sublime) as consisting in the following process. In an encounter with, say, a vast, towering mountain range, the subject strives to take in the entire 'object', but cannot. She experiences pain at the recognition of her cognitive limitations when faced with such a formless, limitless thing. In cases of the dynamically sublime this pain derives from aesthetically experiencing fearsome phenomena, such as a raging storm at sea, which reveal our existential frailty. But these recognitions of the subject's cognitive and existential *limitations* in turn awaken 'a feeling of a supersensible faculty' (*CPJ* 134; 5: 250) within us, the faculty of reason, in its two dimensions, cognitive and moral. And this felt recognition counters the initial, painful feeling of human limitation with a feeling of pride in our rational nature. The actual process at work need not be *explicit* to the subject, for judgements of sublimity are based on feeling, not discursive thought, but Kant believes that his analysis brings to conceptual clarity, and accounts for, why we would experience both pleasure and pain in experiences of sublimity rather than sheer terror or cognitive frustration, both of which would yield aversion to rather than delight in objects judged sublime.

The important bridging functions played by aesthetic feelings, between the phenomenal and the noumenal realms, between nature and freedom, between the first and the second *Critiques*, is brought out most clearly in the following four passages. In the first two, Kant makes it clear that in the experience of the mathematically sublime, the experience of free play between the imagination and reason awakens this feeling akin to respect

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for our supersensible, rational nature (*CPJ* 141; 5: 257). It bears quoting these passages at length, for, as I will argue in section 3, echoes of these recur in Schopenhauer's explication of the phenomenology of the sublime:

> [*A*] [E]ven to be able to think the given infinite without contradiction requires a faculty in the human mind that is itself supersensible. For it is only by means of this and its idea of a noumenon … that the infinite of the sensible world is completely comprehended in the pure intellectual estimation of magnitude under a concept … (*CPJ* 138; 5: 255)

> [*B*] [O]ur own limitation in the immeasurability of nature and the insufficiency of our capacity to adopt a standard proportionate to the aesthetic estimation of the magnitude of its domain … [nonetheless allowed us to find] in our own faculty of reason another, nonsensible standard, which has that very infinity under itself as a unit against which everything in nature is small, and thus [we] found in our own mind a superiority over nature (*eine Überlegenheit über die Natur*) itself even in its immeasurability … (*CPJ* 145; 5: 261)

In the case of the dynamically sublime, Kant describes in the following two passages how the free play between the imagination and reason awakens a similar feeling of respect for our supersensible *moral* nature:

> [*C*] Bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens … make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature. (*CPJ* 144–5; 5: 261)

> [*D*] The irresistibility of [nature's]… power certainly makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical powerlessness, but at the same time it reveals a capacity for judging ourselves as independent of it and a superiority over nature (*eine Überlegenheit über die Natur*) on which is grounded a self-preservation of quite another kind than that which can be

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> threatened and endangered by nature outside us, whereby the humanity in our person remains undemeaned even though the human being must submit to that dominion. In this way, in our aesthetic judgment nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because *it calls forth our power* (*unsere Kraft*) *(which is not part of nature) to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial,* and hence to regard its power (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to these things) as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment. Thus nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature. (*CPJ* 145; 5: 261–2; emphasis added)

Susceptibility to this insight into one's cognitive and moral vocation, i.e. susceptibility for recognizing the 'faculty in the human mind that is itself supersensible (*übersinnlich*)' and our moral 'power (*unsere Kraft*) (which is not part of nature)', accounts for the pleasure taken in an experience of what would otherwise be either purely frustrating or existentially humbling. The transcendental story that Kant thus tells in order to explain the subjective universality of judgements of the sublime involves a predisposition for intuitively recognizing that part of us stands 'outside' of nature, as it were, both cognitively and morally. Cases of both the mathematically and the dynamically sublime allow us to *feel* (though not strictly speaking to intuit or know) that in addition to our status as natural beings, there is something 'exalted' in ourselves. And one may justifiably expect others to agree with one's pure judgements of the sublime insofar as all somewhat cultivated human beings of 'healthy understanding' share (a) the faculty of the imagination and (b) a susceptibility for feeling their own supersensible nature.[13]

To recap, then, there are three phenomenological differences between the experience of the beautiful and the sublime in Kant's aesthetic theory. (1) Beautiful objects are experienced *as if* fitted to our cognitive capacities, while sublime phenomena are experienced *as if* not fitted to our cognitive capacities (in the mathematically sublime) or indeed as if *hostile* to our finite selves (in the case of the dynamically sublime). (2) The feeling of the beautiful is a wholly positive pleasure, a kind of 'feeling at home' in the world, whereas the sublime is a mixed positive and negative pleasure in which one does not feel 'at home' in the sensible world, but rather one gains a sense that one's ultimate 'home' is in a world which transcends the sensible. (3) While there is a phenomenological process at work in the experience of the beautiful – a harmonious, back-and-forth free play of the imagination and understanding – this process is far less turbulent than in the sublime and does not involve the awakening of a feeling of our supersensible nature.

Recall Schopenhauer's aforementioned assessment that Kant had *only* indicated the right *method* in his investigation of the beautiful (*WWR* I, 532). The correct method is the largely *subjective* method of investigating the elements in human nature which, when stimulated in a certain way, prompt us to judge an object as beautiful (*WWR* I, 530). With this method, Schopenhauer believed that Kant 'was able to render a great and permanent service to the philosophical consideration of art and the beautiful', by pointing to a path different from the empirical, largely objective investigations of Aristotle, Burke, Winckelmann, Lessing and Herder among others (*WWR* I, 529–30). But he believed that Kant had missed the mark by fixating on the *judgement* of the beautiful rather than on the 'beautiful object of perception' and the subject's direct experience thereof (*WWR* I, 531). By contrast, Schopenhauer was highly impressed with Kant's account of the sublime, claiming that it not only points out the correct method, but 'touches on' the 'real solution' to that problem. In his *Studienhefte* entry on the third *Critique* (1808–11), Schopenhauer was clearly moved by Kant's theory of the sublime, writing: 'How true and fine is what he says about the sublime (*Wie ist was er vom Erhabnen sagt so wahr und schön*)!' He qualifies this appraisal only as follows: 'only a few things in his language and the fatal faculty of reason are to be overlooked (*nur einiges in seiner Sprache und die fatale Vernunft ist zu übersehn*)'. Further, Schopenhauer suggests that Kant should have utilized the understanding he gained into the experience of the sublime to understand the same of the beautiful: 'If only he had seen that the beautiful is only something indirectly sublime (*Hätte er doch eingesehn daß auch das Schöne nur ein mittelbar Erhabnes ist*)!'[14] Although Schopenhauer offers few other explicit appraisals of Kant's theory of the sublime, in the next section I shall reconstruct Schopenhauer's full and rich engagement with it from the Kantian elements that survived in Schopenhauer's own theory of the same.

3. Schopenhauer's Account of the Sublime

Before turning to my interpretation of Schopenhauer's transformation of the Kantian sublime, it will be useful briefly to situate Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime within his account of aesthetic experience as a whole. For Schopenhauer, normal, everyday perception is in the service of the 'will to life' (*Wille zum Leben*), generally egoistic striving. Reminiscent of Hume's idea that the intellect is the 'slave of the passions', ordinary perception is the 'slave of the will'. In service to the will to life, ordinary perception individuates things in the world by their particular place in time and space, and in relation to the subject, requiring that the subject be conscious of herself as a discrete body with particular desires of her own (*WWR* I, 187). This kind of ordinary perception is contrasted in Schopenhauer's philosophy with another way in which persons may perceive the world, one in which egoistic strivings are set aside for a while. In aesthetic experience, the subject loses her sense of individuality in the contemplation of the object, and thus throws off the instrumental character of perception for at least a short time: '[we] forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject … [and] no longer consider the where, the when, the why and the whither of things, but simply and solely the *what*' (*WWR* I, 178). Schopenhauer analyses aesthetic experience into two correlated and jointly necessary components, one objective and the other subjective. The objective side consists in the 'intuitive apprehension of the Platonic Idea' (*WWR* I, 199), which is an objectification of the will at a particular grade (something like a natural kind).[15] The subjective side of aesthetic experience, on the other hand, consists in the subject's temporarily forgetting his or her own particular interests (to survive, to procreate, to attain happiness, etc.). This change in the subject consists in 'the deliverance of knowledge from the service of the will, the forgetting of oneself as individual, and the enhancement of consciousness to the pure, will-less, timeless subject of knowing that is independent of all relations' (*WWR* I, 199).[16] Schopenhauer describes aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful in negative terms, as a cessation of suffering, 'a painless state' (*der schmerzenslose Zustand*), as 'peace' (*Ruhe*) or the 'Sabbath of the penal servitude of willing' (*den Sabbath der Zuchthausarbeit des Wollens*) (*WWR* I, 196), rather than in more positive terms as satisfaction, fulfilment or joy.

In a manner similar to that of Kant, Schopenhauer introduces his discussion of the sublime by way of contrast with the experience of the beautiful. With respect to the beautiful, say, in the paradigmatic case of engagement with graceful trees or colourful flowers, the objects as it were *invite* one to aesthetic contemplation (*WWR* I, 201), for they lie between those which are hostile and those which are 'agreeable' to the will. On either pole (hostility or attraction to the individual's will) the will-less contemplation of the object is more difficult to achieve because a person may be moved either to flee from the object or to use it to gratify one's bodily desires. The objects of aesthetic contemplation in the feeling of the sublime lie at the antipathetic end of the spectrum: they bear a 'hostile relation to the human will in general, as manifested in its objectivity, the human body. They may be opposed to it; they may threaten it by their might that eliminates all resistance, or their immeasurable greatness may reduce it to nought' (*WWR* I, 201). In broad strokes, sublime pleasure, on Schopenhauer's account, results when a person is able to achieve calm contemplation of an object *despite* the fact that it appears threatening to the person's bodily or psychological well-being. As in Kant's account of sublimity, however, a person may not actually *be afraid* in aesthetic experience as this would destroy its prerequisite, will-less contemplation of the object. But in the manuscript remains, Schopenhauer disagrees with Kant's claim that we must 'find ourselves in safety' and may not actually *be in danger* in an experience of the sublime (see Kant quotation [*C*] above). On the contrary, though a person might actually be at risk in an experience of the sublime for Schopenhauer, it is only necessary that a subject *turn her attention away* from the actual relationship of the threatening object to her individual self, in order to experience it as sublime.[17] In short, sublime experience results when a person first acknowledges the vastness or the fearsomeness of the object, but nonetheless *disregards* the threat posed *to him or herself* and instead contemplates the ideas in it *despite* the potential or actual threat (*WWR* I, 201).

Thus far, it might sound as though the pleasure arising in the experience of the sublime coincides with that of the beautiful – calm tranquillity in will-less contemplation – and that the main difference in the experience is the aetiology of this contemplation. Indeed prominent commentators have read it in just this way. For example, Janaway (1996: 58) stresses the similarity of the beautiful and the sublime, seeing the 'truly unifying notion in Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory … [as] that of tranquil, will-less contemplation, a state of non-identification with the striving, suffering, bodily individual that one is'. In fact, Schopenhauer explicitly downplays the differences between the two forms of properly aesthetic experience – the beautiful and the sublime – claiming that 'it is only a special modification (*nur eine besondere Modifikation*) of this subjective side which distinguishes the sublime from the beautiful' (*WWR* I, 209). But his official pronouncement understates the complexity of his own view of sublime experience and its difference from that of the beautiful. Actually, there are two major phenomenological

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differences between the beautiful and the sublime on Schopenhauer's account:

(1) The beautiful is characterized by a *loss* of self-consciousness whereas the sublime is characterized by *two moments of self-consciousness*.
(2) The beautiful is characterized as wholly pleasurable, whereas the sublime is characterized as mixed with pain.

I shall focus my discussion on what I see as the first difference, which is more controversial, and propose to draw out the full picture of these phenomenological differences by carefully reconstructing them from Schopenhauer's rich discussion of the sublime in §§39–41 of *WWR* I, and from discussions of the experience of tragedy as the 'highest degree' of the feeling of the sublime (specifically, the dynamically sublime) in *WWR* II, chapter 37.

Loss of self-consciousness in the beautiful

With respect to the beautiful, Schopenhauer claims that we 'let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present' (*WWR* I, 178). Thereby, '[w]e *lose* ourselves entirely in this object [of contemplation]' (*(man) sich gänzlich in diesen Gegenstand verliert*) (*WWR* I, 178; emphasis original). Alongside the loss of any sense of individuality, however, Schopenhauer also describes the experience of the beautiful as involving a 'self-consciousness' (*das Selbstbewußtseyn*) of the knower, not as individual, but as *pure, will-less subject of knowledge*' (*WWR* I, 195). What I believe Schopenhauer has in mind here is that the remaining self-consciousness in the experience of the beautiful should be interpreted as a sense of being detached from one's embodied existence. It is, in other words, a sense of oneself as a perceiver *per se*, but not any particular embodied perceiver. One might call this experience '*as if* disembodiment',[18] *as if*, because this *sense* of oneself does not accord with the full reality of the situation: According to Schopenhauer's epistemology, the person who enjoys an experience of the beautiful must have a particular body equipped with sense organs in order to experience anything at all. And so Schopenhauer hyperbolizes when he describes this experience as truly 'will-less', given that a necessary condition for human experience of any kind is having an individual body. Nonetheless, the subject's *consciousness* of herself in experiences of beauty is one in which she feels 'as if' she were a disembodied perceiver, inasmuch as her perception is (temporarily) not operating in the service of her own particular will.[19]

It is important to note that, in the self-consciousness that remains in the experience of the beautiful, *the fact that* one's perception is no longer in

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the service of the individual's will is *not itself present to mind*. In other words, while the temporary liberation of the subject from her individual, daily concerns and strivings is constitutive of the experience of the beautiful, a second-order consciousness of this liberation is not a conscious facet of the experience. Rather, the concerns of the individual will simply vanish from the subject's mind, without a struggle, leaving no conscious residue of the fact that they have vanished at all. Accordingly, in §39 Schopenhauer affirms that

> [w]hat distinguishes the feeling of the sublime from that of the beautiful is that, with the beautiful, pure knowledge has gained the upper hand without a struggle, since the beauty of the object, in other words, that quality of it which facilitates knowledge of its Idea, *has removed from consciousness* (*aus dem Bewußtseyn entfernte*), without resistance *and hence imperceptibly* (*unmerklich*), the will and knowledge of relations that slavishly serve this will. What is then left is pure subject of knowing, *and not even a recollection of the will remains* (*keine Erinnerungen an den Willen nachbleibt*). (*WWR* I, 202; emphasis added)

By contrast, in his description of the experience of the sublime, Schopenhauer alludes to a second-order consciousness both of liberating oneself and having been liberated from the will and its cares; this second-order consciousness is accompanied by the feeling of 'exaltation' (*Erhebung*) above the will (*über den Willen*). Presumably, this feeling of exaltation, of being metaphorically 'above' the cares of the will, must also include a background consciousness of the shackled state. In fact, Schopenhauer adumbrates, without clearly distinguishing, these two moments of self-consciousness in his discussion of the phenomenology of the sublime in the following passage:

> with the sublime, that state of pure knowing (*jener Zustand des reinen Erkennens*) is obtained first of all by a conscious (*bewußtes*) and violent tearing away from the relations of the same object to the will which are recognized as unfavourable, by a free exaltation, accompanied by consciousness, beyond the will (*ein freies, von Bewußtseyn begleitetes Erheben über den Willen*) and the knowledge related to it. This exaltation (*Diese Erhebung*) must not only be won with consciousness, but also be maintained, and it is therefore accompanied by a constant recollection of the will, yet not of a single individual willing, such as fear or desire, but of human willing in general, in so far

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> as it is expressed universally through its objectivity, the human body. (*WWR* I, 202)

I propose the following gloss of this passage. Schopenhauer's experience of the sublime consists of a process that involves three distinct moments, two of which involve self-consciousness. The three moments succeed each other in the subject's mind in the following order. (1) *The conscious act of self-liberation*: the subject is *conscious that* she is freely *liberating* herself from the threatening relationship of the object to her individual will – this is what Schopenhauer implies by the statement that aesthetic contemplation is won by *ein freies, von Bewußtseyn begleitetes Erheben über den Willen*; (2) *aesthetic tranquillity*: after having achieved this liberation and exaltation above the will, she enjoys the will-less contemplation of the object and experiences the '*as if* disembodiment' constitutive of experiences of the beautiful; but in order for the experience to remain one of the sublime rather than transferring over into that simply of the beautiful, there is a further moment in sublime experience, (3) *consciousness of the fact of liberation:* the subject must additionally become conscious of herself as having been liberated – and now as being *exalted above* the pressures of the individual will. Further, this consciousness of being exalted above the will needs to be maintained by a continuous 'recollection of the will'.[20] Thus, the two moments of self-consciousness come in moments 1 and 3, namely, (a) the consciousness of oneself as *in the process of liberating oneself* from the pressures of the will to life, and (b) the consciousness of oneself *as having achieved this liberation,* i.e. of being now exalted above the will to life. This second moment of self-consciousness needs to be maintained by a 'continual recollection' (*steten Erinnerung*) of the will, but not of the individual's own will, for a recollection of this will would be tantamount to anxiety and would destroy the will-lessness necessary for having aesthetic experience at all. So the question then arises: how can there be a constant recollection of the will that does not overturn truly aesthetic experience of the sublime by replacing it with actual fear?

Schopenhauer resolves this problem by making a distinction between the recollection of the individual will and the recollection of human willing in general (*das menschliche Wollen überhaupt*). In order to persist in sublime experience, rather than switching to an experience of the beautiful – either by *losing* self-consciousness of one's liberation from the will or falling out of aesthetic experience entirely by becoming anxious or afraid for one's individual self – the subject needs to be reminded that the object being aesthetically contemplated is a threatening sort of object to humankind in general. Perceptually understanding the ideas in 'objects' or phenomena such as raging storms at sea (the objective side of aesthetic experience) serves to keep that thought present to mind. So long as the subject attends only to the relationship between these ideas and humankind rather than to himself personally, and manages to persist in contemplation of those ideas while feeling self-consciously elevated over his individual will, as Schopenhauer's theory explains it, he will remain in an experience of the sublime.[21]

To recap, whereas the 'state of pure knowing' (*der Zustand des reinen Erkennens*) is a necessary condition for all aesthetic experience, on Schopenhauer's view, it is evidently not sufficient for sublime experience. The additional necessary and truly distinguishing features of the feeling of the sublime (*das Erhabene*) are, first, the conscious process of liberation from – exaltation over – the pressures of the will (*ein freies, von Bewußtseyn begleitetes Erheben über den Willen*) and, second, the recognition *that* one has achieved such exaltation above the will. The etymological relationship between *das Erhabene*, *die Erhebung* and *das Erheben* more clearly attests to this than the English counterparts ('the sublime', 'exaltation' and 'elevation').

What we learn from sublime experience: the twofold nature of consciousness

In Kant's aesthetic theory, the mathematical sublime affords a felt recognition of our supersensible nature – reason in its *theoretical* vocation; the dynamical sublime affords a felt recognition of our supersensible nature – reason in its *moral* vocation. Likewise, on Schopenhauer's theory, one also gains cognitive insight into our nature as supersensible beings via aesthetic feeling, though Schopenhauer does not put it in these Kantian terms.

As I reconstruct it, on Schopenhauer's account we gain two sorts of cognitive content from sublime experience. First, and explicit on his view, we perceive the Platonic Ideas: the essential features of the phenomenal world. The second sort of cognitive content, however, is not fully fleshed out in Schopenhauer's writings; it enters the picture only in high degrees of the mathematically and dynamically sublime, and is gained by the two aforementioned moments of self-consciousness in this aesthetic experience. Schopenhauer holds that in such experiences we gain an immediate but only felt understanding of what he calls 'the twofold nature of [the subject's] consciousness' (*WWR* I, 204) (*die Duplicität seines Bewußtseyns*).[22]

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This twofold nature consists at once in (a) the *feebleness* of the human individual qua natural being (who is 'helpless against powerful nature, dependent, abandoned to chance, a vanishing nothing in the face of stupendous forces' (*WWR* I, 205), as well as (b) the *powerfulness* of the subject qua supersensible being, that is, as the 'eternal, serene subject of knowing', who 'himself is free from, and foreign to, all willing and all needs, in the quiet comprehension of the Ideas', and who 'as the condition of every object is the supporter of this whole world' (*WWR* I, 205).[23]

I suggest that there are two distinct forms of the subject's 'powerfulness' that the subject experiences in the sublime on Schopenhauer's view. I shall refer to these as 'Elevation 1' and 'Elevation 2', both of which have their Kantian counterparts:

> *Elevation 1 (E1)*: *the subject's sense of having the power to resist the demands of the will to life*.

E1 is the sense of oneself as having negative freedom, that is, the ability not to be determined by the pressing demands of bodily existence. In Kantian terms, this negative freedom – the ability to resist the pull of inclination – is accompanied by positive freedom (autonomy), that is, the ability to act in accordance with and from the moral law. Although Schopenhauer explicitly repudiates the categorical imperative, his theory of the sublime does, nonetheless, embrace the view that nearly all human beings are capable of actively resisting for a time the demands of egoistic striving in order to contemplate aesthetically. Sublime experience offers precisely a felt, self-conscious recognition of this ability. In addition, his ethical writings maintain that many can also exercise negative freedom in order to act compassionately, and even a few saints can lead a purely ascetic life of complete detachment from the will to life. These instances where negative freedom becomes evident, however, are in tension with the many places in Schopenhauer's writings where he seems to advocate for hard determinism and proclaims that the feeling of freedom is illusory.[24] I shall return to this tension in what follows.

> *Elevation 2 (E2)*: *the subject's sense of her existence as transcending the phenomenal world*.

E2 is the sense that, in addition to being part of nature, one is also part of the 'in itself' of the world of representation. This feeling that one is part of the 'in itself' of the world of nature is common to Kant's and

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Schopenhauer's theories of the sublime, but it is explicated in different ways. For Kant, both the mathematical and dynamical sublime afford a felt recognition of one's supersensible, rational nature (see especially Kant passages *A* and *D* above). For Schopenhauer, the mathematical sublime affords a felt recognition of one's status as transcendental subject – as the epistemological supporter of the entire world of representation. In addition, the experience affords a sense of being 'one with the world', i.e. being one with the world as it is 'in itself'.

In an example of a high degree of the mathematically sublime, for example, Schopenhauer evokes this felt understanding of what I have called 'Elevation 2':

> If we lose ourselves in contemplation of the infinite greatness of the universe in space and time, meditate on the past millennia and on those to come; or if the heavens at night actually bring innumerable worlds before our eyes, and so impress on our consciousness the immensity (*die Unermeßlichkeit*) of the universe, we feel ourselves reduced to nothing; we feel ourselves as individuals, as living bodies, as transient phenomena of will, like drops in the ocean, dwindling and dissolving into nothing. But against such a ghost of our own nothingness, against such a lying impossibility, there arises (*erhebt sich*) the immediate consciousness (*das unmittelbare Bewußtseyn*) that all these worlds exist only in our representation, only as modifications of the eternal subject of pure knowing (*nur als Modifikationen des ewigen Subjekts des reinen Erkennens*). This we find ourselves to be, as soon as we forget individuality; it is the necessary, conditional supporter of all worlds and of all periods of time. The vastness of the world, which previously disturbed our peace of mind, now rests within us; our dependence on it is now annulled by its dependence on us. All this, however, does not come into reflection at once, but shows itself as a consciousness, merely felt, that in some sense or other (made clear only by philosophy) we are one with the world, and are therefore not oppressed but exalted by its immensity. (*WWR* I, 205)

I shall reconstruct the moments of mathematically sublime experience adumbrated in this passage in order to bring out the way in which such sublime experience affords a sense of exaltation in the second sense (E2). In this passage, first, the subject loses herself in contemplation of vast phenomena. Thus far, Schopenhauer describes only the experience

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proper to the beautiful. But, then, the ideas the subject perceives – the immensity of the universe and the infinitesimal smallness of human beings within it – disturb her insofar as they awaken a feeling of her own insignificance, threatening to overturn will-less aesthetic contemplation. Yet, insofar as the consciousness arises in the subject that 'all these worlds exist in our representation', herein lies the transition to the sublime. If the subject forgets her individual frailty and instead begins to feel her power qua epistemological subject, then she can make a conscious transition to the sublime. Insofar as she does, then she experiences a feeling of exaltation (E2): a felt recognition of her transcendence of the phenomenal world, both as transcendental subject and as part of the 'in itself' of the world of representation. She comes to feel that, qua subject, she is 'the condition of every object', 'the supporter of this whole world': the entire world of representation depends on the subject. Further, she feels that she is 'one with the world, and [is] therefore not oppressed but exalted by its immensity'. Being 'one with the world' here means being part of the 'in itself' of the world, in addition to being an infinitesimal part of the natural world.

In this description of the phenomenology of high degrees of the mathematically sublime, there is a pronounced echo of Kant's explanation of the painful pleasure involved in such experiences. There is the 'immeasurability' of the aesthetic object, the painful recognition of the subject's own limitations, but also a pleasurable-prideful recognition of the subject's own supersensible status – as part of the in-itself of the world – which contrasts with our apparent humiliation as natural beings.

In contrast with Kant's account, which makes use of our theoretical-rational vocation as a source of our prideful elevation, on Schopenhauer's account the subject's limitations are construed more existentially than cognitively: encounters with vast nature instil in us a sense of our smallness and existential insignificance. Our frustration does not arise, as it does on Kant's account, from our inability to grasp the totality of the representations. Instead, for Schopenhauer, we are reduced to *Nichts* by the sheer vastness (in space and time) of the universe. But, similar to the Kantian account, confronted with this painful recognition, there arises nonetheless a pleasurable recognition of the subject's own status as 'beyond' nature. For Schopenhauer, the subject is 'beyond' nature qua epistemological supporter of the entire world of representation and as 'one with' the in-itself of the world. And while this 'merely felt' consciousness of the subject's epistemological power and ontological status is 'made clear only by philosophy', nonetheless, he holds, it is responsible for the sense of exaltation we experience in what would otherwise constitute a depressing experience of our own individual insignificance.

Just a few paragraphs before, Schopenhauer describes a way in which we may become aware of this 'twofold nature of consciousness' – both as insignificant speck in and exalted 'beyond' nature – in high degrees of the *dynamically* sublime. But we need to examine volume II, chapter 37, On the Aesthetics of Poetry, where he offers a lengthy discussion of tragedy, in order to get the full story. In this chapter, he writes:

> Our pleasure (*unser Gefallen*) in the *tragedy* belongs not to the feeling of the beautiful, but to that of the sublime; it is, in fact, the highest degree of this feeling. For, *just as at the sight of the sublime in nature we turn away from the interest of the will, in order to behave in a purely perceptive way*, so in the tragic catastrophe we turn away from the will-to-live itself. (*WWR* II, 433; emphasis added)[25]

On the Kantian explanation, in the experience of the dynamically sublime, it is the subject's felt consciousness of her supersensible moral nature that is responsible for the exalted pleasure in the face of existentially fearsome natural forces (passage *D* above). In the *Studienhefte* Schopenhauer provides a revealing gloss on this very same passage from Kant, writing:

> 'if it were a question of our highest principles' – not merely then, but also without such hypothesis we become aware that our person is subject to such colossal forces as chance can bring against us, and in this way there is awakened a consciousness other than our personal one, and this other consciousness lies outside the sphere of chance and nature.[26]

In this early entry, Schopenhauer has not yet broken from Kant's moral philosophy entirely. He agrees that the sublime awakens a consciousness of the subject's power '*to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial*' if our highest moral principles demanded that we act in such a manner. And Schopenhauer agrees that a situation in which our inclinations came into conflict with our highest principles could indeed awaken a recognition of this negative freedom. But he believes that other occasions may also awaken this recognition. For Schopenhauer, a consciousness of our negative freedom (to renounce the goods of life) *need not* be brought about by recognition of a moral law; rather, it may be brought on by an experience of tragedy, both real and dramatic. A serious engagement with tragic drama, for instance, confronts us with terrible truths about the world: its cosmic injustice, the worthlessness of human pursuits and the tremendous, undeserved suffering endemic to human existence. Insofar as one is able to contemplate as sublime these ideas – which are profoundly threatening to human willing in general *à la* Hamlet – one gains the felt recognition that one does indeed have the power to turn one's attention (at least for some length of time) away from the will to life. That is, one gains a sense of one's negative freedom (what I have referred to as E1).

The echoes of Kant's account of the dynamically sublime come out even more clearly in the following passage in which Schopenhauer offers his most extensive explanation of tragic pleasure:

> The horrors on the stage hold up to him [the spectator] the bitterness and worthlessness of life, and so the vanity of all its efforts and endeavours. The effect of this impression must be that he becomes aware, although only in an obscure feeling, that it is better to tear his heart away from life, to turn his willing away from it, not to love the world and life. Thus in the depth of his being the consciousness is then stirred that for a different kind of willing there must be a different kind of existence also. For if this were not so … then *how would it be possible generally for the presentation of the terrible side of life, brought before our eyes in the most glaring light, to be capable of affecting us so beneficially, and of affording us an exalted pleasure*? (*WWR* II, 435; emphasis added)

In this passage, one sees Schopenhauer's clearest description of E1: the sense of exaltation deriving from a felt recognition of one's ability to detach from the will to life. Note that Schopenhauer describes this insight in highly active terms: the subject becomes aware that it is better 'to tear his heart away from life', 'to turn his willing away from it', 'not to love the world and life'. Schopenhauer here describes an insight into one's negative freedom. While he has a far different understanding than Kant concerning the nature of this freedom, since he repudiates the notion of rational self-legislation via the moral law, it is nonetheless autonomy in the sense of the power to resign ourselves from the goods of life and thus to enjoy a 'different kind of willing' and a 'different kind of existence' from the natural one characterized by the will to life.

Despite these crucial differences in what dynamically sublime experiences reveal about moral freedom via aesthetic feeling, one can see Schopenhauer's account of the dynamically sublime as following the broad lines of Kant's theory: aesthetic recognition of our human vulnerability in the presence of potentially crushing forces leads to the feeling that we have a power within us, namely, negative freedom to resist the pull of inclination, and to resign ourselves from the goods of life. In Kant, this includes the power to act in accordance with and from our highest principles. For Schopenhauer, the moral law does not enter the picture; but he does describe the sense in which one has a power to detach from egoistic willing, and to *will differently*, thus taking on a different manner of existence altogether. And this felt recognition of transcendental-moral freedom constitutes the *source* of the exalted, sublime pleasure we take in the experience of tragedy, transforming what would otherwise be experienced as humbling, depressing and crushing into an experience that is difficult yet ultimately exalting and pleasurable.[27]

In his *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will* Schopenhauer vouchsafes the *possibility* of such moral freedom, that is, the possibility of choosing what one wills between two diametrically opposed options. And he argues for the compatibility of moral freedom with a causally determined phenomenal world by virtue of Kant's distinction between the empirical and intelligible character, a doctrine to which Schopenhauer in his own words 'entirely subscribes' (*FW* 82; 73). But in this essay he defends the *actuality* of moral freedom based on the 'perfectly clear and certain feeling of *responsibility* for what we do', i.e. 'a feeling that rests on the unshakable certainty that we ourselves are the *doers of our deeds*' (*FW* 93; 83). On my interpretation of Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime, the feeling of elevation experienced, especially in high degrees of the dynamical sublime (E1), provides *another kind* of experiential evidence for the existence of transcendental-moral freedom in his system. In fact, it is one of the rare places in Schopenhauer's system where one can perceive that moral freedom is operative in the phenomenal world. The other kind of experience is renunciation of the will to life entirely. Renunciation is, for Schopenhauer, typically accompanied by great personal suffering and is the type of experience modelled dramatically by certain tragic heroes. Schopenhauer is clear that this renunciation 'by no means results from suffering with the necessity of effect from cause'. Rather, for Schopenhauer, it provides a case where 'the will remains free. For here is just the one and only point where its freedom enters directly into the phenomenon' (*WWR* I, 395). On my interpretation, Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime actually offers another experience which provides evidence for moral freedom as 'entering' into the phenomenon.

So it is rather odd, in the midst of this discussion of the twofold nature of consciousness in the highest degrees of the feeling of the sublime, that Schopenhauer writes that, while he retains Kant's distinction between the mathematically and the dynamically sublime, 'we differ from him entirely in the explanation of the inner nature of that impression, and can concede no share in this either to moral reflections or to hypostases from scholastic philosophy' (*WWR* I, 205). How ought we to make sense of this apparent repudiation of the Kantian explanation, in the middle of a phenomenological description of the sublime which sounds remarkably Kantian, and given its allusions to transcendental moral freedom?

Where Schopenhauer parts ways from Kant is in the demotion of the faculty of reason in this story. Our exalted status in Kant has crucially to do with the faculty of reason. This is not the case for Schopenhauer. For the latter, it is not reason that is responsible for our ability to detach ourselves from the will to life. And it is not reason which links us to the supersensible. What plays this role in Schopenhauer's thought is much more obscure: it is our status as part of the will qua thing in itself, in addition to our status as appearance. Exactly how it is that the human being can (a) contemplate aesthetically in a sublime response (actively detaching herself from egoistic striving for a time), (b) will compassionately rather than egoistically and (c) deny the will to life altogether (in an ascetic way of life), remain ineluctably *mysterious* on Schopenhauer's account. One thing is clear: For Schopenhauer, these activities do not have to do with pure practical reason. Schopenhauer's transformation of the Kantian sublime consists largely of a transfer of individual moral freedom to the groundlessness of the will qua thing in itself. Insofar as we are part of the in-itself of the world, by virtue of our intelligible characters, we partake in its freedom, despite the fact that as representations we are determined by the principle of sufficient reason. A full consideration of the relationship between the intelligible character and the will qua thing in itself and the place of aesthetic and moral freedom in Schopenhauer's thought as a whole lies beyond the scope of this paper, but I would like to highlight that my interpretation of Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime brings these thorny issues to the

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fore.[28] When one sees just how closely Schopenhauer follows the Kantian story in his theory of the sublime, one sees that the sublime – as in Kant – affords a felt recognition of the subject's negative freedom. But Schopenhauer parts ways from Kant in the demotion of reason in an account of this feeling. Thus, in excising the role of reason in this story, the ultimate source of this felt power to turn away from the goods of life becomes, for better or worse, *more obscure* on Schopenhauer's account of the sublime than it is in Kant's. On my interpretation then, Schopenhauer's very Kantian theory of the sublime reveals significant tensions between his aesthetics and his philosophy of nature and underscores the lack of explanation he gives for how such negative freedom operates. Schopenhauer frankly refuses to adopt any kind of individual, causal story here insofar as doing so would constitute a misapplication of the principle of sufficient reason beyond the bounds of sense. Notwithstanding this refusal to explain the operation of negative freedom in the phenomenal world, the feeling of the sublime does attest to the fact that human beings have negative freedom insofar as this aesthetic experience shows that we have the power *to detach ourselves* from the will to life, at least for a short time. Indeed, the sublime is one of the very few places in his system which affords such insight.[29]

Conclusion

One of the main aims of this paper has been to show that Schopenhauer offers a transformation of, rather than a significant departure from, the Kantian sublime. For both Kant and Schopenhauer, high degrees of the mathematical sublime afford a consciousness of the supersensible side of the subject. For Kant, this supersensible side derives from our status as rational beings; for Schopenhauer, it derives from the subject's status as the epistemological supporter of the world of representation and as 'one' with the 'in-itself' of the world qua will. In addition, for both philosophers the dynamical sublime affords a feeling of the subject's freedom from sensible determination, what I have referred to as 'negative freedom'. In summary, I suggest that we make sense of these Kantian echoes by seeing Schopenhauer as redistributing the locus of these two forms of human exaltation above nature.

For Kant, it is our susceptibility to feeling the idea of our *supersensible cognitive and moral nature – located in our faculty of reason* – that awakens in us the pleasurable feeling of our power in the face of cognitively and existentially threatening phenomena. In the experience of the sublime, we gain a *feeling* that this part of us exists which, while it does not constitute knowledge of the way things are 'in themselves', nonetheless helps to bridge the gulf between nature and freedom via aesthetic feeling. This rational self which stands outside of nature gives us the moral law, and in the sublime we have the feeling that we may indeed resist nature – that freedom is real and efficacious in nature – if duty required this of us. It is only this last element of Kant's account of the sublime – the invocation of a supersensible faculty of *reason* – which strikes Schopenhauer as a hypostasization reminiscent of scholastic philosophy.[30] It is the invocation of a noumenal rational self – what Schopenhauer refers to in the *Studienhefte* as Kant's invocation of 'the fatal reason' (*die fatale Vernunft*) – which is 'to be overlooked' (*zu übersehn*). Although Schopenhauer could have put the 'intelligible character' in the place of this hypostasization, he refrains from doing so. Instead, we are left with a vague invocation of our unity with the 'in-itself' of the world as will. This is all that Schopenhauer believes he is entitled to, given that by the time of *WWR* he objects to any notion of 'causality through freedom' as incoherent.[31]

Notwithstanding this refusal to put any 'thing' in the place of reason, the basic lines of the Kantian story are maintained in Schopenhauer. In both accounts, the experience of the sublime involves (a) a tumultuous process, in which (b) the subject, in the perception of vast or threatening objects, feels threatened and powerless, but then feels (c) triumphant over precisely these objects or phenomena, and this exalted pleasure in the experience of high degrees of the sublime is (d) explained by virtue of the subject's consciousness of an exalted *power* in the subject. The key difference is that Schopenhauer redistributes the work done by reason in Kant's metaphysical-moral picture. Our sense of elevation over the natural world in Schopenhauer's story comes from feeling ourselves as transcendental subjects and as part of the world as it is in itself. The key difference then is that Schopenhauer assigns the role of reason in its theoretical vocation to the transcendental epistemological subject; and assigns the role of reason in its moral vocation to our status as part of the will qua thing in itself.

Reading Schopenhauer's account of the sublime in this way makes sense of why he would praise Kant's account of the sublime as '[b]y far the most excellent thing in the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement' (*WWR* I, 532), and why he was so moved by Kant's theory as to write: 'How true and fine is what he says about the sublime (*Wie ist was er vom Erhabnen sagt so wahr und schön*)!', while simultaneously making sense of why he would claim that 'we differ from him entirely in the explanation of the inner

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nature of that impression, and can concede no share in this either to moral reflections or to hypostases from scholastic philosophy' (*WWR* I, 205). Insofar as the 'explanation of the inner nature' of the sublime in Kant makes use of the '*fatale Vernunft*', Schopenhauer 'differs from him entirely', but insofar as this hypostasized faculty is expunged from the view, he thus retains the Kantian insight into the explanation of the sublime which he believes 'touches on it [the solution] very closely' (*WWR* I, 532).

There are two main issues with which I have not grappled in this paper. The first is why Schopenhauer suggests that Kant should have seen the beautiful as an 'indirect sublime', thus utilizing the great understanding he evinced with respect to the experience of the sublime in order to understand that of the beautiful: 'If only he had seen that the beautiful is only something indirectly sublime (*Hätte er doch eingesehn daß auch das Schöne nur ein mittelbar Erhabnes ist*)!'[32] I would like to hazard briefly the following explanation. Although I have argued that Schopenhauer theorizes significant phenomenological and cognitive-content differences between these experiences, nonetheless, he views the beautiful and the sublime as occupying opposite poles on a continuum of will-less perception of ideas. In both experiences, the subject enjoys will-less contemplation, but one arrives at and maintains this will-less contemplation with some difficulty in the case of the sublime, and in the case of the beautiful one simply slips into the will-less state, without self-consciousness. As I have argued, the self-consciousness in the case of the sublime affords additional cognitive content concerning the twofold nature of the subject, content which is lacking in the experience of the beautiful. However, these aesthetic experiences are much more on a par in Schopenhauer's theory than they are in Kant's aesthetic theory.

Although Kant views both the experience of the beautiful and sublime as disinterested, they each involve the free play of different faculties: imagination and understanding (in the case of the beautiful) and imagination and reason (in the case of the sublime). In addition, for Kant there are discontinuities with respect to the quasi-objectivity and subjective universality of the judgements of the beautiful and the sublime. In the above comment from the *Nachlaß*, I believe Schopenhauer is lamenting that Kant had underestimated the similarities between these experiences.

Another contested interpretative issue in Schopenhauer scholarship which I have only briefly treated in this inquiry is his 'solution' to

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the problem of tragedy: why do people who do not welcome and enjoy scenes of terrible suffering in real life seek out those scenes and enjoy them in tragic drama?[33] This problem touches directly on Schopenhauer's theory of the sublime, for as cited above, he holds that '[o]ur pleasure (*unser Gefallen*) in the *tragedy* belongs not to the feeling of the beautiful, but to that of the sublime; it is, in fact, the highest degree of this feeling' (*WWR* II, 433). While scholars have investigated the relationship between tragedy and the sublime in Schopenhauer, insofar as they have not appreciated that his account of the sublime pleasure of tragedy forms part of a sustained dialogue with Kant's theory of the sublime, they have not recognized that the source of the pleasure taken in tragedy derives from a felt recognition of the subject's own exalting power of negative freedom. If my arguments here are successful, I believe my interpretation of the Schopenhauerian sublime also sheds light on this interpretative problem.[34]

Email: sshapsha@indiana.edu

Notes

1 The Göttinger Universitätsbibliothek records show that Schopenhauer borrowed the third *Critique* (2nd edn) in 1811 (Deussen in Schopenhauer (1911–41): XVI, 106), and he wrote copious notes and reflections on the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (3rd edn, Berlin, 1799) in 1809–18 (*Handschriftlicher Nachlass*, II, *Studienhefte*, 287–98). In published works Schopenhauer references the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement in the context of his own aesthetic theory in book III of *The World as Will and Representation*, I, in the Kantian appendix to *WWR* I, in supplementary chapters in vol. II, and briefly takes it up again in his late work *Parerga and Paralipomena*, ch. 20. *The World as Will and Representation* (*WWR)*, I and II, are in vols. I and II of Schopenhauer (1911–41). For the *Handschriftlicher Nachlass* (*HN*): Schopenhauer (1966–75); trans. (*MR*) in Schopenhauer (1988). In addition, references to Schopenhauer (1841/1999) will be of the form *FW* followed by pagination from the 1841 edn, then by that of the translation, which contains the former in its margins.

2 Schopenhauer (1859/1966); hereafter, *WWR* followed by volume and page numbers in parentheses; German original from Schopenhauer (1911–41). Schopenhauer's early (dissertation) version of *The Fourfold Root* is abbreviated to *EFR*.

3 'Bei weitem das Vorzüglichste in der Kritik der ästhetischen Urtheilskraft ist die Theorie des Erhabenen: sie ist ungleich besser gelungen, als die des Schönen, und giebt nicht nur, wie jene, die allgemeine Methode der Untersuchung an, sondern auch noch ein Stück des rechten Weges dazu, so sehr, daß wenn sie gleich nicht die eigentliche Auflösung des Problems giebt, sie doch sehr nahe daran streift.' (Deussen I, p. 630).

4 Guyer 1996b. In a more recent paper, Guyer focuses largely on the discontinuities between Schopenhauer's and Kant's aesthetic theories, but again without significant reference to their theories of the sublime: '[Schopenhauer] has transformed Kant's idea of the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgement into the idea of a literal release from painful self-interest through cognition, Kant's conception of the aesthetic ideas as that with which the mind plays in art into that which the mind knows in art, and

Kant's conception of the genius as the one who can both more freely play with ideas than others yet communicate a sense of that free play to others into the conception of one who more readily knows than others and can communicate that knowledge and its ensuing benefit to others' (Guyer 2008: 174).

5 I should note, however, that Bryan Magee does speak of Schopenhauer as 'us[ing] the Kantian term "the sublime" for a sub-class of "the beautiful"' (1997: 164).

6 By 'hypostases', Schopenhauer would have likely meant a reification of what is merely an idea (a similar usage to that of philosophers today). In the Meyers Konversations-Lexikon (4th edn, 1885–92) e.g. one finds the following definition: '*Hypostase* (griech.), die Grund- oder Unterlage von etwas … *hypostasieren*, etwas als gegenständlich existierend denken, zur Substanz machen; *hypostatisch*, gegenständlich, substantiell, wesentlich'.

7 All citations to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* are from Guyer and Matthews's trans. in Kant (2000), followed by the Akademie volume and page number.

8 I am endeavouring *not* to take a stand here on how to interpret the 'claim of taste' (to use Paul Guyer's felicitous phrase), i.e. as a rational expectation or ideal prediction (Guyer 1997), as a moral claim (Rogerson 1982) or as a non-moral 'ought' as Miles Rind (2000) and Henry Allison (2001) have urged. I believe that nothing in my interpretation of Kant's theory of the sublime rests on settling this complex issue.

9 Emily Brady (forthcoming) has offered an interpretation of Kant's theory of the sublime that downplays this asymmetry between judgements of beauty and sublimity, however, by highlighting the causal role played by sublime objects and their particular qualities (such as vastness, massiveness, great force and threateningness) that occasion the play of the mental faculties.

10 Accordingly, Kant writes 'There are innumerable things in beautiful nature concerning which we immediately require consensus with our own judgment from everyone else and can also, without being especially prone to error, expect it (*erwarten können*); but we cannot promise ourselves that our judgment concerning the sublime in nature will so readily find acceptance by others. For a far greater culture, not merely of the aesthetic power of judgment, but also of the cognitive faculties on which that is based, seems to be requisite in order to be able to make a judgment about this excellence of the objects of nature.' Notwithstanding, one may legitimately demand that others of a 'healthy understanding' (*mit dem gesunden Verstande*) agree with one's pure judgements of the sublime. *CPJ* 148–9; 5: 265–6.

11 There is considerable scholarly controversy on whether Kant dismisses the possibility of pure judgements of sublimity with respect to art. On the one hand, Kant does claim in sections §§23 and 26 that artefacts may not be objects of *pure* judgements of the sublime (see esp. §26, 5: 252–3), but may only be made with respect to 'raw nature'. But this claim conflicts with many of Kant's explicit examples of apparently pure sublime experience which involve manmade creations such as St Peter's Basilica in Rome and the Egyptian Pyramids (§26, 5: 252). Crowther (1989) holds that there is certainly theoretical space in Kant's theory to accommodate pure sublime experience of works of art (see esp. ch. 7 for a reconstruction of a specifically artistic form of sublimity out of Kantian materials). For other attempts to reconstruct a Kantian theory of sublime art see Pillow (2000) and Wicks (1995). Recently, Abaci (2008: 248) has cast some doubt on whether such reconstructions fit with central tenets of Kant's aesthetic theory, arguing that because of the creative-intentional nature of works of art 'no work of art qua a work of art can exactly fit into the unique phenomenological structure that Kant proposes for the experience of the sublime, that

is, unlimitedness of human rational freedom being made sensible, in a free, indirect, and negative fashion, by the limitedness of human sensibility in estimating great objects that have no purposive forms or by the limitedness of human physical power in resisting overwhelmingly powerful objects'. Schopenhauer departs significantly from Kant's project to lay out the conditions for 'pure' judgements of the beautiful and the sublime – indeed his focus is not on aesthetic judgements at all, but rather on aesthetic experience. And he finds such experience in encounters with nature just as well as with art. With respect to the sublime, Schopenhauer's examples come from nature as well as art, such as tragedy which sparks the highest degree of the feeling of the dynamically sublime (as will be treated later in this paper).

12 Zuckert (2003: 218) encapsulates this distinction quite nicely: 'Kant thus suggests, *contra* Burke, that the feeling of the sublime can be grounded not only in our desire to live, but also in our desire to know.'

13 For a more detailed discussion and defence of reading Kant's theory of the sublime along these lines, see Guyer (1996a: esp. chs. 6 and 7). Allison's interpretation of the Kantian sublime in (2001) does not differ significantly from Guyer's, except that Allison sees the sublime as more 'parergal' to Kant's central preoccupation with giving an account of pure judgements of taste. Guyer, by contrast, emphasizes the importance of free play in both judgements of the beautiful and the sublime, and thus sees a greater unity between Kant's account of these two types of aesthetic judgement than does Allison. This particular dispute, however, does not bear substantively on my reconstruction of Kant's account of the sublime here.

14 *HN* II, 289; *MR* II, 320.

15 The ontological status of the Ideas remains a problematic issue in Schopenhauer scholarship. The Ideas seem to lie in a metaphysical no-man's-land between the will (qua thing in itself) and the world as representation. On the one hand, Schopenhauer holds that the Ideas are timeless and changeless by virtue of their being the most immediate 'objectivization' of the will. On the other hand, insofar as the Ideas are objects of perception (by the artist and by the subject of aesthetic experience in general), this would seem to place them squarely in the world of representation. It should also be noted that music constitutes an exceptional case within the arts for Schopenhauer: Through absolute music one gains an insight into the nature of the will itself, in a way that bypasses the phenomenal world and the Ideas altogether.

16 The source of art, for Schopenhauer, is this disinterested, perceptual understanding of the world available most reliably to the genius. The artistic genius is able to see the essential in things (what Schopenhauer terms the 'Platonic Ideas') by contemplating the world will-lessly and then employing artistic technique to crystallize these insights into a work of art. The work of art facilitates an understanding of Ideas for non-geniuses (who are capable of seeing the Ideas in nature as well, but with far less frequency or acuity), provided they approach the work of art disinterestedly.

17 Accordingly Schopenhauer writes: 'It is not true that we must be safe and secure, for even at the moment of actual danger and destruction our consciousness can ascend to the sublime (*kann unser Bewußtseyn zum Erhabnen emporsteigen*). This is presented by the tragedy which moreover belongs to the dynamically sublime (*welches übrigens auch zum Dynamischerhabnen gehört*), a feeling which is stimulated in the spectator, although he is safe and secure' (*MR* II, 321; *HN* II, 289).

18 I am indebted to Curtis Bowman for suggesting this helpful phrase.

19 How it is even possible within Schopenhauer's metaphysical system for an individual's intellect *not* to operate in the service of the individual's will – i.e. how aesthetic experience is possible at all – is a question raised and illuminated by Neill (2008: 179–93).

20 This feeling of exaltation varies in degree depending on the strength of the threat and thus the difficulty of the exaltation over its relationship to the will (*WWR* I, 202).

21 On this point I am indebted to the very helpful explanation of sublime experience in Neill (2012: 11). In this paper, Neill aims to reconstruct how Schopenhauer can consistently hold that sublime experience is will-less, yet is still experienced as 'uneasy' (which seems precisely and paradoxically to engage the individual will). Neill urges us to read Schopenhauer as holding that the experience of the sublime requires maintenance because 'this kind of experience depends on the subject's maintaining focus on the relations of the Idea instantiated by the object in question to "human willing in general", without sliding back into perception of it as an individual thing that is potentially or actually threatening to the individual subject'. Without a focus on the relationship of the Idea to human willing in general, 'aesthetic experience of the sublime will be impossible: will-less cognition, if it has been attained at all, will simply collapse back into fear'. Neill and I differ in our analysis of the sublime, however, in two main ways: first, he does not stress the difference in the presence of self-consciousness in the experience of the sublime vs. the relative absence of self-consciousness in the experience of the beautiful; and second, we diverge in our interpretations of the sources of pleasure and pain in the experience of the sublime. I interpret these sources along Kantian lines: pain derives from the felt recognition of our own limitations as subjects; and pleasure derives both from calm contemplation as well as from a feeling of pride in our power as subjects. By contrast, Neill reads the pain as deriving from the *precariousness* of the aesthetic experience in the sublime (this is the reason why there is a need for *maintenance* of this aesthetic state and what makes the experience an *uneasy* one as opposed to that of the beautiful) and pleasure as deriving solely from will-less contemplation (as in the experience of the beautiful).

22 For a less explicitly Kantian reading of this 'twofold nature of consciousness', see Young (1987: esp. ch. 7; and 1992).

23 Sublime experience affords the subject an only *felt* recognition of the twofold nature (*Duplicität*) of the subject's consciousness, and also of the ultimate unity of these two consciousnesses. Before Schopenhauer wrote *The World as Will and Representation* he referred to the consciousness of oneself in the will-less, aesthetic state as the 'better consciousness' (*das bessere Bewußtsein*), but dropped this terminology by the time of his main, published work. In a recent study, Novembre (2011) convincingly traces the concept of the better consciousness back to Schopenhauer's encounter with the notion of the *absolute Besonnenheit* in Fichte's lectures on the 'Facts of Consciousness and the *Wissenschaftslehre*' in Berlin in 1811–12. But it is important to note that Schopenhauer never believed, contra Fichte, that the subject could have an 'intellectual intuition' of herself 'in herself' (an intuition of the unity of apperception) (see *WWR* I, 278n., for a clear statement of this inability). Instead, for Schopenhauer, the insight into the double nature of consciousness and unity could only be intuitively recognized and felt by the subject during certain aesthetic experiences. In addition, Schopenhauer held that this double nature of consciousness could be conceptually clarified and grounded (but not entirely) by his metaphysics.

24 For most of Schopenhauer's Prize Essay, he agrees with Spinoza that the self-consciousness of freedom of the will is illusory. At the end of section IV, however, he offers a rather surprising reversal of his position, writing that he 'entirely subscribe[s] to Kant's distinction between the empirical and intelligible character' which grounds the 'compatibility of human freedom with necessity' (*FW* 82; p. 73). For Schopenhauer, the intelligible character is the will qua thing in itself as it appears in a particular individual; he characterizes it further as an extra-temporal act of will (*Willensakt*) which appears in

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the world as representation as the empirical character (*WWR* I, §55). His ultimate position in the Prize Essay is that, by virtue of the freedom of the will qua thing in itself, namely, its independence from the principle of sufficient reason, and its near identity with the intelligible character of each individual, it is possible for an individual to act 'out of empirical character'. Although Schopenhauer speaks as though this 'entrance' of transcendental freedom into the phenomenon comes about only in the denier of the will-to-live, as I shall suggest in what follows, it takes place in the subject of sublime experience as well.

25 Some commentators have interpreted Schopenhauer as holding that the pleasure we take in the experience of tragedy is merely 'analogous' to, rather than identical with, that of the dynamically sublime. Indeed, in the continuation of the above-cited passage, Schopenhauer writes that the pleasure we take in tragedy is 'analogous to that of the dynamically sublime' insofar as the effect of tragedy 'raises us above the will and its interest, and puts us in such a mood that we find pleasure in the sight of what directly opposes the will' (*WWR* II, 433). But I think it wrong to conclude from this passage that Schopenhauer does not identify the pleasure in tragedy with that of the dynamically sublime, for there are many places in which he does actually *identify* the pleasure in tragedy with that of the dynamically sublime. Thus, 'our pleasure in the tragedy belongs not to the feeling of the beautiful, but to that of the sublime; it is, in fact, the highest degree of this feeling'. Also, in the *Nachlaß* in a passage quoted earlier in another context, Schopenhauer writes, 'It is not true that we must be safe and secure, for even at the moment of actual danger and destruction our consciousness can ascend to the sublime (*kann unser Bewußtseyn zum Erhabnen emporsteigen*). This is presented by the tragedy which moreover belongs to the dynamically sublime (*welches übrigens auch zum Dynamischerhabnen gehört*), a feeling which is stimulated in the spectator, although he is safe and secure' (*MR* II, 321; *HN* II, 289). In these passages it is clear that Schopenhauer actually *identifies* the pleasure in tragedy with the feeling of the dynamically sublime, and does not merely claim that these feelings are analogous. Thus, I would explain his use of 'analogous' above as a way of expressing that the experience of tragedy involves the pleasure in the *dynamically* rather than in the *mathematically* sublime.

26 *MR* II, 321; HN II, 289.

27 For my interpretation of Schopenhauer's solution to the problem of tragedy see Shapshay (2012). For competing interpretations see Neill (2003 and 2012).

28 For a fuller treatment of Schopenhauer's views on freedom see Neill and Shapshay (2012).

29 For when one presses on Schopenhauer's account of how sublime experience is even possible, he seems to make sublime phenomenology not only *revelatory of* but also *made possible precisely by* transcendental freedom. This is due to the fact that for Schopenhauer, the intellect must actively *free itself* from its service to the will-to-life in order to contemplate threatening sorts of things aesthetically, acting thus 'out of empirical character' – something which should be impossible based on the deterministic story that Schopenhauer tells about the world as representation.

30 In his early manuscripts, Schopenhauer wrote that the ideas of reason in Kant's philosophy were relics of scholasticism: 'I consider the Kantian Ideas to be solely the main themes of scholasticism' (*MR* I, 414).

31 In Schopenhauer's original dissertation version of the 'Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason' (1813/1997), however, he still held on to a broadly Kantian 'causality through freedom' view (see *EFR* §§45 and 46).

32 *MR* II 320; HN II, 289.

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33 For a sense of recent positions on this controversy see Neill (2003), Vandenabeele (2008), and Shapshay (2012).

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