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On the Experience of Sublime: An Examination between Western Sense of Sublime and Japanese *Kami* (神)

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Abstract

In this study, it has been tried to make an examination between a concept from western history of philosophy and aesthetics -the concept of sublime- and its counterpart (if not so counterpart, but the possible idea that holds the essential meaning and experience of the sublime in its sense) within the East-Asian intellectual and cultural world namely, *Kami* (神). In first chapter, the historical progress of the western sublime has been tracked and analyzed. The historical change of the notion of sublime in Western culture has been followed and investigated. Its aesthetical roots and connotations have been clarified. By this, the concept's relation with the concepts like nature, the self, and the relation between nature and self are problematized and taken into consideration. The accounts of sublime regarding the idea of excess, transcendence, a sort of withdraw-repel relation have been criticized in order to understand the specific emphasizes on the notion during its historical changes. In the second chapter, Japanese religion Shinto and its effects on the Japanese aesthetics have been investigated. By this investigation, the meaning and usages of the belief *kami* (and its connotation within metaphysics and ontology) are deconstructed regarding the notion of sublime in Japanese cultural and intellectual world. Through some semantic, etymological and grammatical analyzes, the examination reaches to the point where the connection between the western sublime and Japanese *kami* has been cleared. In the conclusion, the phenomenality within Japanese aesthetics has been revealed through the interrelation between *kami* and sublime.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Art, East-West Comparison, Japanese Culture, Phenomenology.

Yüce Deneyimi Üzerine: Batı Kültüründeki Yüce ile Japon *Kami* (神) Düşüncesi Arasında Bir İnceleme**Öz**

Bu çalışmada, spesifik olarak, Batı felsefe ve estetik tarihinden bir kavram ile -yüce kavramı- onun Doğu-Asya kültür ve düşünme dünyasındaki karşılığı olan (karşılığı olmasa bile, Batı'da kastedildiği anlamda yüce deneyimini ve bu deneyimin özsel anlamını taşıyan olası bir kavram) *Kami* (神) fikri arasında bir inceleme yapılması denir. İlk bölümde, Batı kültüründeki yüce kavramının tarihsel gelişimi izlenip analiz edilmektedir. Yüce kavramının Batı kültüründe geçirdiği tarihsel değişim takip edilip araştırılmıştır. Bu kavramın estetik, politik, etik, metafiziksel kökleri ve çağrışımları bu inceleme içinde açık kılınmıştır. Bu açık kılınma ile, yüce kavramının doğa, öz, benlik, kendilik gibi kavramlarla ilişkisi ve bu kavramların kendileri arasındaki ilişkiler de problematize edilerek ele alınmıştır. Yüce kavramının aşırılık, aşkınsallık, bir tür çekme-itme ilişkisi gibi düşünceler temelinde izah edilmesi, bu kavramın tarihsel gelişimi sürecinde geçirdiği değişimlerin daha iyi anlaşılması amacıyla eleştirel bir yorumlamaya tabii tutulmuştur. İkinci bölümde, Japon kültürüne ait olan Şinto dini ve bunun Japon estetiğine etkileri araştırılmıştır. Bu araştırma ile, *kami* inancının anlamı ve kullanım şekilleri (metafizik ve ontoloji içindeki çağrışımları ile birlikte) Japon kültür ve düşünme dünyasında yüce kavramının yerini bulmak açısından dekonstrükte edilmiştir. Bazı semantik, etimolojik ve gramatik analizler aracılığıyla, çalışma Japon *kami* düşüncesi ile Batı dünyasındaki yüce deneyimi arasındaki ilişkiyi açık bir şekilde gösterebileceği bir noktaya ulaşır. Sonuç olarak, Japon estetiği içindeki ilgili deneyim, *kami* ve yüce arasındaki karşılıklı ilişki aracılığıyla ortaya koyulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Estetik, Sanat, Doğu-Batı Karşılaştırması, Japon Kültürü, Fenomenoloji.

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Introduction

In one of his famous work, generally abbreviated as *Dialogue*, Heidegger hypothetically creates two, possibly imaginary subjects (the Inquirer and Japanese) and starts a conversation between them. Just almost right in the beginning that conversation, he made the Inquirer and Japanese say these lines:

J: Later, after this return from Europe, Count Kuki gave lectures in Kyoto on the aesthetics of Japanese art and poetry. [...] In the book, he attempts to consider the nature of Japanese art with the help of European aesthetics. [...] I: The name 'aesthetics' and what it names grow out of European thinking, out of philosophy. Consequently, aesthetic consideration must ultimately remain alien to East-Asian thinking. J: You are right, no doubt. Yet we Japanese have to call on aesthetics to aid us.³

It is just the beginning of the *Dialogue*. These remarks on the entry gives the reader some clue, more or less, on what the *Dialogue* is going to be about.⁴ But, there is still indeed a strange thing here. A kind of a role reversal. Heidegger does this on purpose.⁵ The Japanese says nothing about aesthetic consideration. Inquirer says that. There's nothing certain about the nationality of the Inquirer or the which continental way of thought is represented by the Inquirer, but it is reasonable to assume that, for the sake of the continuity of the opposition that was created with the remark of East-Asian and European above, the Inquirer is a Westerner [probably, Heidegger's himself]. So, the Inquirer, the Westerner makes a judgement about East-Asian thinking, about what is East-Asian.⁶ The Inquirer will lead, the Japanese will follow to complete in the beginning of the conversation.⁷ But in here, this structure is not interested in. What is interested in is the affirmation of the statement about the aesthetics is not a familiar notion for the East-Asian thinking and that aesthetics can help to that thinking in some ways. The Japanese thinks that East-Asian thinking needs aesthetics, or something from aesthetics. What does it need then, from this European-born notion?

J: Aesthetics furnishes us with the concepts to grasp what is of concern to us art and poetry. I: Do you need concepts? J: Presumably yes, because since the encounter with European thinking, there has come to light a certain incapacity in our language. [...] I: Do you seriously regard this incapacity as a deficiency of your language. J: Considering that the encounter of the EastAsian with the European world has become inescapable [...]⁸

The help is about conceptualization. Western culture, especially philosophy, tends to think in concepts and notions, or so the Japanese is told. There's an indication in the passage -and in the following one- that this

³ Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1971), 2.

⁴ It is going to be about how the East lacks of something and how West provides what is lack, and of course, by the very logic of exchange, about how the West will gain, in return, something really essential for itself, something that maybe it even is not aware of that it is missing. This gain will probably help West to think, to question and experience the meaning of Being better. For the ones who is familiar with Heidegger's works, this generic theme that is sometimes encountered is not something strange.

⁵ He wants to reader to think of a merge (merge between two into one), rather than an opposition of two. He wants to go beyond the duality of East-West. So, he takes the East's words (or that which should've been the East's words) and puts them on the mouth of West, and vice versa. The one who thinks and says that what word aesthetics is signifying is strange and non-familiar (alien) to the to the mentality and thought of East-Asian, is not the East-Asian one. That remark is not a statement of the Japanese. This is not a confession or an admit of a self-consideration, of a self-criticism.

⁶ This doesn't feel right. Why would a westerner make a statement about a characteristic of eastern thinking so intuitively, especially when there's an easterner is present on the scene? It feels almost like a crossing the line, stealing a role, a textbook of being over one's head, a self-righteous disrespect. Even though the statement is true (which the easterner confirms in the next line), it is still, so to speak, not the westerner's place to say it. But, still, it happens. Westerner says out loud what the Easterner should've said. And the Easterner affirms it. What is being affirmed is not just the context (about being alien) but the beginning structure of domination, hierarchy between the sides. It is the classic alfa-beta distinction that it is already boring without being even really started.

⁷ One asks about how the real conversation might have been, for an alternative, see; M. F. Marra, *Essays on Japan: Between Aesthetics and Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 56-77.

⁸ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 2.

need of conceptualization is essentially related with the interaction between East and West. East needs the concepts and conceptual thinking of the West mainly because there is a contact between East and West. If there were no connection or interaction between these two, then there would be no need for this conceptualization in East. So, one might say that, East needs these concepts and everything that comes along with them to understand the West. But this West is no longer a geographical or locational place in a far distance continental, but rather, especially after the WWI and the postmodern globalization of the world, it is the West within the East, within Japan. These concepts are crucial and critical for Easterners to understand the process of Americanization or Westernization of the East.⁹ And the Western tendencies towards the fields like Comparative Philosophy or Fusion Philosophy are mainly the deed or interest in understanding about Easternization or Asianization (or Yogaization) of the West.¹⁰ This horizon of phenomenality in the East was available to be named “transcendental hermeneutics”.

Transcendental Hermeneutics can perhaps fairly be termed an East-West ‘hybrid’, drawing as it does for example on Nishida-Takizawa insights on the one and on those of Kuyper-Dooyeweerd on the other. Even so, we would suggest that [...] a ‘hybrid’ is something ‘new’ and carries its own identity. There is distinct meaning in the position of Transcendental Hermeneutics, and we see that multifaceted meaning as something that has emerged through wrestling with certain issues associated with East-West dialogue.¹¹

So, the borrowed, transferred concepts and conceptualization does not only work on the level of intellectual, cognitive and linguistic process, but it is also (and more essentially) related to the phenomenality of phenomenology and understanding of Being. That is the sub-meaning and sub-reason the Inquirer utters the sentence which includes deficiency and incapability. The inquirer wants the Japanese to not see the absence of concepts as a lack or a fault on the way of thinking about art and poetry, but also (maybe more than this) wants the East to preserve its own essence. The inquirer tacitly wants the East not to be assimilated and absorbed by the Western concepts and conceptualization. This is related with Heidegger’s general criticism towards the mainstream Western philosophy. He doesn’t like that Western philosophy relies on its concepts to think something. Concepts or terms, for Heidegger, are only useful when what they are saying (or wording) is being dug up repeatedly.

⁹ For a study, see; C. Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 230-254 and 277-293.

¹⁰ For a study, see; C. Campbell, *The Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Cultural Change in the Modern Era* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18-30 and 145-160. In any ways, there is a need and that need should be fulfilled or met. So, a new ground for comparative and fusion philosophy comes into existence, this ground was present more than ever for Heidegger.

This means that the Easterner needs Westerner’s notion of aesthetics and the terms, concepts that come along with it for two main reasons: (1) to understand how the Western think over the art and poetry and (2) to understand what happens to East’s understanding of art and poetry with the effects of the interaction with West. So, does this mean that East doesn’t need West’s conceptualization and concepts to philosophize (or philosophically examine) its own artistic, intellectual and cultural history where such an interaction is lack? Of course not. This is the reason this transition of conceptualization from West to East was (and still is) specifically important for the East. Because it is not just about borrowing some words and terms related to art and aesthetics from relevant intellectual fields of Western culture, but rather this transition held the possibility of a new horizon of hermeneutics and phenomenology in the East. Because this conceptualization of West is not only entitled with producing concepts and specialized terms but a whole new understanding of reality for the East. What West offered to the East in that interaction was more than just its concepts and methods of conceptual thinking. It offered a whole new mentality of phenomenality (or phenomenology). With every little concept and terminological thinking that is given by West to East, the phenomenological understanding of the meaning of Being also is being transferred piece by piece to East. By its every sociological, artistic, aesthetic, aesthetical, medical, anthropological, economical etc. terms and concepts which are adopted by the East, Western sense of phenomenality of Being (or its historical understanding and process of ontology one might say) has found itself on a new ground with another kind of meaning of Being, namely in the East’s sense.

¹¹ H. Inagaki and J. N. Jennings, *Philosophical Theology and East-West Dialogue* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2000), 136. Also see; 20-26.

At first, words may easily appear to be terms. [...] The terms are like buckets or kegs out of which we can scoop sense. [...] Words are not terms, and thus are not like buckets and kegs from which we scoop a content that is there. Words are wellsprings that are found and dug up in the telling, wellsprings that must be found and dug up again and again, that easily cave in, but that at times also well up when least expected. If we do not go to the spring again and again, the buckets and kegs stay empty, or their content stays stale.¹²

Therefore, this means that, if the East decides only to borrow the terms and concepts from the West and have no linguistic, intellectual and philosophical examination of them, then these terms would go out of use and be insignificant through time, eventually. But, if they decide to pay a heed to what the term or concept is really saying in the West, and approach to the term in according to this (including its historical change in meaning throughout time), then this would enrich the philosophy and be more suitable for the transaction of the terms, concepts from West to East.¹³ The concept that will be investigated here is the *sublime*. It is chosen, because it is one of the perfect examples of “in-between” terms. It is essentially related to art, aesthetics, ethics, theology, ontology, metaphysics and lastly, phenomenology. In here, the investigation will be threefold. In first phase, the historical process of the sublime in West will be examined. In second, the counterpart of the sublime in East-Asian, especially in Japanese, [すうこう (suuko): lofty, sublime, noble; 崇高 (chónggāo): majestic, sublime; 神々しい, (kōgōshii): heavenly, sublime] and how the Western idea of sublime is received in East-Asia will be evaluated. In third and last phase, the comparison and interaction between East and West regarding the notion of sublime will be taken into consideration. In all these three phases, the phenomenological and hermeneutical sense of the notions will be emphasized in order to gain a better understanding of the state of East-West dialogue in this matter. And also, as a result of this recognition and comprehension, a deeper aspect on phenomenality of phenomena would be taken further into the discussions on the experience of the self, the nothingness, Being and the “Als-Struktur”. If the sublime, when it’s not only about the aesthetics of the sublime or the artistic value of it, can be carried into a kind of “phenomenology of sublime”, then maybe some new possible horizons or a horizon of phenomenology and phenomenality can manifest, as it is implied blurrily in Japanese idea of sublime and its relation with *kami*.

1. The Sublime in the West

Since it is one of the important terms, well-interested and well-examined, within the Western philosophy, it is rather easy to track down the historical progress and process of the word (or, in Heideggerian sense, what is speaking through the word). The sublime designates -as a both noun and adjective- a quality and on some degree quantity of excellence, the condition of greatness of a magnitude, an absolute highness of something exalted, elevated state of transcendence and so on.¹⁴ Of course, sublime might also be a mood or

¹² Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row Pub., 1968), 128-130.

¹³ For one to adopt some terms and concepts, one first should know and be aware of what those terms and concepts are. And this “knowing” or “being aware of” doesn’t only happen in the linguistic and intellectual level, but as a necessary consequence, it happens (maybe more) on the ontological or phenomenological level. This was the outcome of the linguistic turn in West, and also fundamentally indicated within the famous “language is the house of being” remark. So, the transaction within the field of art or aesthetics, does not only happen in that field, but it has echoes in phenomenology, ontology and metaphysics. One of the easiest ways to understand the inner state of this interaction between East and West is to track down the process of specific concepts and terms which are both essential to different fields in West, namely like aesthetics and phenomenology, art and ontology, or aesthetics and metaphysics and examine the counterpart process of that term when it is adopted (with a translation or as a term untranslatable) in the East. That way, it would be clearer to follow the issue on the phenomenological sense.

¹⁴ Even though it is sometimes hard to define the sublime in a precise way, it is somehow generally easy enough to pinpoint it. It can be related to an aesthetical category related to beauty and ugliness; a literacy form of expression as in rhetoric, a quality of a severely extraordinary and splendid thought or deed; a magnificent and spectacular state of nature; a fundamental aspect of

condition of an experiencing subject or mind. Watching whales coming to the surface of the ocean to breathe or witnessing a human sacrificing his/her own life in order to save others' in a "now or never" situation in a split-second can be a sublime thing.¹⁵ Or, contrary, this notion of sublimity might be something that doesn't have its roots and source in the subject or the experiencing mind, but in the object, event itself. When Blake wrote "the roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man",¹⁶ he was probably thinking something related or similar to this non-subjective perspective or object-substance relation regarding the sublime. And miracles, by their very definition, are generally sublime in themselves.

1.1. Longinus

The intellectual and cultural history of the sublime generally starts with a work from Roman-era Greek world 1st century AD., namely Περὶ ὕψους [Peri Hupsos]. The authorship of the work is on debate,¹⁷ but the name and the authenticity of the author of the work is not a matter of interest for this investigation for now. Because there is a bigger problem. It is the in the title of the work and its translation into other European languages. Translation of the Greek word ὕψους [Hupsos] into English as *sublime* might be etymologically understandable. But on the semantic level, there seems to be a problem. The problem is about the dominant context and the subject of the text and whence of the title.

It is not only that the traditional translation of the title *On the Sublime* is misleading, as most translators admit, but the Greek word *hypsos* is almost equally so. It was used by other critics [...] to mean grand manner or style. [...] The subject of our treatise was well expressed by Welsted long ago when he entitled this translation *On the Sovereign Perfection of Great Writing*. [...] The author himself also contributes to the confusion [...] because [...] when he deals with some particular source of great writing, or some particular aspect of it, he writes as if that particular aspect or cause were greatness itself and the whole of it.¹⁸

So, it seems that the problem of the Longinus (the supposedly author of the work of Περὶ ὕψους) is not precisely what the sublime as such or sublime itself is, but rather what makes a speech or writing so extraordinarily good and great that it feels like it has some sublime aspects to it. It is not directly about what the sublime is, but about how a speech or a discourse can be sublime. Therefore, some translators avoid the translation of ὕψους as *sublime* and choose the word *great* or *perfection* instead. Other translators prefer the word "sublimity" for the translation. The sublimity, for Longinus, is about oratorical and rhetorical ability and excellence regarding to creating a mesmerizing affection on the audience.¹⁹ As a mode of speech, while having directives,

awe within the inner structure of spiritual or transcendent phenomena; august and lofty characteristic of a person; eminent and ethel essence of religious experience; a confusing, seemingly supernatural and paranormal events; mesmerizing and enchanting artworks and so on.

¹⁵ For more examples, see; P. Shaw, *The Sublime* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-2.

¹⁶ W. Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Boston: John W. Luce and Company, 1906), 15.

¹⁷ For a summary of authorship and date discussions, see; (1) G. A. Grube (Ed.), *On Great Writing (On the Sublime)* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), xvii-xx.; (2) A. Russell (Ed.), *"Longinus" on the Sublime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), xxiv-xxxiii.

¹⁸ Grube (Ed.), *On Great Writing (On the Sublime)*, xi-xii.

¹⁹ See; T. M. Costelloe, "The Sublime: A Short Introduction to a Long History", in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. T. M. Costelloe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4. It is about pure ecstatic feeling (*ekstasis*), utmost wonder (*thaumasion*) and absolute astonishment (*ekpléksis*) that the orator creates over the hearer. It is "the" amazement moment (*kairos*) that can be count as the crux of the verbal intoxication or trance that is created by the speech. Therefore, the sublime that Longinus talks about is not a methodological device to persuade the audience with systematical, step by step conviction but rather it is a mean or instruction to a didactical discourse of domination which strikes the audience so suddenly and so profoundly that the reason and logical justification judgements fall behind of the context of what is happening during the astonishment. It is the whirlwind or the

it doesn't have a definitive form or a decisive formula, so even though it is crucial for the determination of the result of the discourse (failure or success), it is not something essentially teachable.²⁰ Although, there are still sources for the sublimity to be achieved, namely five of them,²¹ these sources are not a concern for this examination.²² There is also a religious-mystical aspect in work indeed, which can be traced and present in the state of *ekstasis*.

Here *ekstasis* is explicitly related to an experience of the divine as a momentary transcendence of the human condition. [...] Thus the idea of the "sublime" as an aestheticized terror at the limit of the sacred has its roots in the Greek terms Longinus uses to describe the experience of sublime intensity. Although Longinus does at times suggest that *hypsos* puts us in touch with the gods or the divine, his vision is largely "secular" or parareligious, [...]²³

So, sublimity of a speech or discourse for Longinus is not only related to a mastery of verbal and intellectual enchantment which is so extreme and extraordinary that the listener's reason can't keep up with or function for a second, but it is also related to a state of getting in touch with a divinity. So, the sublimity (for the listener) is not only about a sound reason failing to function on something that it has the potentiality to function on because of a sense of alienation and exaltation, but it is also about the impossibility of the reason to comprehend that experience. It is like the incomprehensibility of the divine knowledge, the majesty of the God with human intellect. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways", declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55: 8-9).²⁴ The sublimity is, for Longinus, as a mode of rhetoric, still about a practiced, educated, well-thought mastery of oratory and moving the audience. But in its core, it also has a transcendent and divine aspect.

In formulating the concept of sublimity as the experience of transcendence, specifically as domination-exaltation, Longinus effects both a demystification and a remystification: he transforms an experience rooted in the religious or the mystical realm, as evidence by his use of *ekstasis* (a term with strong religious, even biblical, resonances), into a protoaesthetic experience of intensity, as indicated by the use of such terms as "awe," "astonishment," "wonder," "ecstasy," "amazement" – terms that apply equally well to both secular-aesthetic and religious contexts. [...]²⁵

thunderbolt (metaphors of the Longinus) which -that if the orator is genius enough [and if has a noble and intellectual mind] to create it in a moment during the speech- might make all the facts about the arguments and propositions in the content something collateral and non-essential, somewhat insignificant details. It is what has the potentiality of bringing "the dazzle moment" into the scenery.

²⁰ See; Shaw, *The Sublime*, 12-19.

²¹ About these sources, see; M. Heath, "Longinus and the Ancient Sublime", in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. T. M. Costelloe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17-20.

²² It is important to see that the notion of sublime -in its historical process, has an aspect of literacy and oratory. Because this aspect of the understanding of sublime constructs the secular (wrong choice of words, *non-transcendent* would be more fit maybe) and aesthetical perspective of it. But, for Longinus, the sublimity is much more than an adequate, well-educated mastery of oratory.

²³ R. Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 43.

²⁴ *Holy Bible: New International Version* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001). Therefore the sublime is created by, or the occurred through the *εγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα* [*megalophrosunēs apêchēma*], and the greatness of the soul which has the ability to carry or bring out this sublime, has this ability from the touch or experience of the divinity. In the state of ecstasy, during trance, human intellect falls into abeyance, it stays paralyzed, so it becomes available for divine inspirations and possessions. As the word *ecstasy* indicates, it is "put out of its place". It is the unique interaction of what is natural with what is supernatural (wrong choice of opposition words, maybe sacred and ordinary would be a better suit). In the idleness of the soul in its ecstatic state, there is something astray and suitable for sacred visions and guidance of gods, taken over the control of the mind. The vouchsafing of the gods' directions does not only show the way back (out of ecstasy) but also the truth and true essence of reality and phenomena. That's why, these visions of truths are something incomprehensible on an ontological or metaphysical level (not only on the level of cognitive or intellectual) for the ones who don't have the experience of them.

²⁵ Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant*, 12.

It can be said that even though Longinus main concern was aesthetical in a strict sense, this doesn't mean that it was something irreligious. Therefore, the link, the bridge between aesthetics and ontology has been constructed.²⁶ So, this means that, for the phenomenology, just like the phenomenality of religious experience is different from the phenomenality of other ordinary, everyday phenomena (Marion's idea of saturated phenomenon might be recalled here),²⁷ then the phenomenality of aesthetic experience (as it is understood by Longinus) should be different from the phenomenality of other ordinary, everyday phenomena, because even though it is aesthetical, it is still something religious, metaphysical and transcendent. What is aesthetical seems to be both normal and paranormal, both sacred and profane, both natural and supernatural. So, can it be said that it is also both immanent and transcendent?²⁸

The sublime's distinctiveness lies, at least, in the way greatness makes us feel overwhelmed, small, and insignificant in comparison, because we find it so difficult to take in those qualities, while also feeling uplifted. [...] It is this feature that gives way [...] to some kind of metaphysical aspect in the experience.²⁹

But of course, this is not the whole picture or the story of the sublime. In historical process, connotations, usages, relations, associations and emphasized sub-meanings of the word and the notion attached to it have changed. Especially in favor of the secularized aesthetic understanding and theory. It became something more related to language, aesthetical style, subject's faculty of judgement, subjective feelings and emotions and less related to metaphysics, ontology and religious experience.³⁰ So, it can be said that after N. Boileau

²⁶ What is aesthetical is not only related to how a thing or a phenomenon appears, but also what that thing and phenomenon is. In here, there's a fine line between aesthetics and ontology/metaphysics/theology. This line does not strictly separate the two fields, but rather acts as a transparent, permeable membrane which enables a true neighborhood between these two.

²⁷ See; J. Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Christina Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 18-47.

²⁸ Maybe, but for this, the examination will have to continue further. The Greek word ὕψους [Hýpsous], is etymologically related to words ὕψος [hýpsos: height] and ὑψί [hýpsi: "aloft, on high]. And these [which is also related to the root of the words and prefixes like (English) *super, summit, hyper-, supra-, soprano, over*, (German) *über*, (French) *sur-* etc.] spring from the relation between opposite meanings of Proto Indo European *upér* ("over, above"), and *upo* ("under, below"). That's why, even though they seem to have similar construct, it is possible for *sublime* and *subliminal* to have two opposing directions, while one points upwards, the other one points downwards. In this construct, *sub + limen* (limen meaning *lintel, threshold, sill* and related to the word *limit*), these two words (*sublime* and *subliminal*) is actually not pointing toward two opposing directions, but the same location-limit relation in different positions. This situation is best understood with the analogy of shamanic understanding of three-worlds which is connected to each other with an *axis mundi*, namely upper world, middle world and underworld. From the perspective of the middle world (where humans live), the sublime does not designate a phenomenon above the upper threshold. It designates the phenomenon which is "just" under the upper threshold. Therefore, the sublime is both natural and supernatural. If it were to designate something above the upper threshold, then it would be impossible for the sublime to be something natural. It would be something all supernatural (which then probably would lose its ability to be designated directly). But also, if it were to designate not the "just" under of the upper threshold, but the general under of it (which is basically the middle world), then it would be hard to see it as something partly supernatural, but it would be just natural. Then the sublime would be nothing particular and significant for aesthetics and metaphysics. And the *subliminal* (as a psychological term) designates what's under the lower threshold, namely what is below the conscious perception and awareness. If it were something above the threshold, then it would be *supraliminal*, namely part of the conscious perception and therefore, there would be nothing sort of "sub-", unconscious or non-awareness about it. And if it were so deep under the lower threshold (and not just the below of it), then it would be something undetectable all together, impossible to know and talk about. So, it can be said that, no matter which part of the three-world, near the lines, worlds get in touch together. It is almost like, near the lines, they touch together and mix with each other. Near the lines (limits), it is both upperworld and middle world, or both middle world and underworld. So, the sublime is indeed related to being high and aloft, but it is related to being high and aloft as long as that highness and being aloft have something to do with a threshold or a limit. The sublime is not something very, very, very high and aloft. But it is a thing that is so high almost to the limit. The metaphysical side of the aesthetics of sublime is thought in this way. The phenomenality of sublime is thought in this way.

²⁹ E. Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4.

³⁰ The emphasize became less on the metaphysics, transcendent, supernatural and more on the natural, profane and immanent. This change in the emphasize, especially in the 18th century Europe and Britain, is related to emergence of the modern philosophy, or more precisely, subject-oriented and agent-based philosophy. This epistemological turn in philosophy has changed the manner of approach to the notion of sublime. It extends. It extends broadly, both on the field level (poetry, architecture, literature,

carried the Longinus's text into British culture with his translation in 1674, four main things happened to the notion of sublime: (1) The sublimination of nature and natural phenomena; (2) broad expanding of scope and content; (3) becoming related to a mixing of opposing and different emotions, tastes and senses (especially internal sense in a Lockean context); and (4) the conceptual and intellectual disposition towards the idea of "empirical sublime", namely, sublime of actual objects themselves: "This influence is clear in discussions of the sublime, as one of the principles of taste, and it is through a consideration of sublime objects and qualities that we see a notable shift from style to materiality."³¹ Alongside with more famous names in the same era (like Kant or Burke), these names were the actors that sublime was investigated more than ever have been or ever will be.³² But there is still a bigger picture. What happened was not just shaping an intellectual interest or trend, but rather creating main approaches that will turn into traditions (by partly differing from Kantian one) within the research field that includes anything related to aesthetics, especially, regarding the discussion on the source or origin of the sublime.

The first was an exclusive focus on the experiential, although the confusions between cause and affect are if anything intensified here. This approach understands the sublime in terms of a set of qualities which are presumed to be internal to a variety of objects that summon up in some shape or form notions of elevation or grandeur. [...] The second approach attends to the affect: in this case causes, such as grand objects in the world, are relegated by the attempt to describe mental effects. [...] Attention shifts, therefore, from the object to our mental processes which react to or register those qualities delineated by the first approach. [...] The third approach turns to the analytic of the sublime itself in an attempt to understand how the analytic produces its object for enquiry, and by extension the mental affect. Here attention to the discursive production of the sublime tends to diminish the importance of both qualities of external object and affective reactions to them [...]³³

These three approaches constitute the formative structure where the sublime is examined within. With this structure, investigations and examinations on the sublime become more systemized, epistemologically criticized and philosophically thematized.³⁴ So, the notion of sublime in the 18th century was indeed a start off, but the paradigm shifts that 20th century brought (with phenomenology and postmodern thought) was still ahead. So, it's better for now to continue to follow the historical progress of the idea of sublime.

1.2. Burke

Without a doubt, one of the most influential names about the sublime theory in 18th century was E. Burke. His *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* dated 1757 was a

mathematics etc.) and on the content level (natural and ordinary phenomena like heroic humans, animals, torrents, volcanoes, earthquakes alongside supernatural forces and events like gods, demons, spirits, witchcrafts).

³¹ Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, 15. Thinkers like J. Dennis (on mixed emotions), J. Addison (on imagination, primary pleasures, difference between the beautiful, the grand, the novel (the uncommon) and sublime of external objects), J. Baille (on magnitude, uniformity, uncommonness and natural world); A. Gerard (function of association, material and objective elements of the sublime, difference of sublimity between nature and art) and others shaped the intellectual interest towards the sublime in the 18th century. See; Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, 13-22.

³² For an extensive study on this names and matter, see; S. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1950).

³³ A. Ashfield- P. Bolla, P. (Ed.), *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 9.

³⁴ Moreover, what Enlightenment did to the western philosophy, these approaches did to the idea of sublime. Thanks to these approaches and names that built it, there's just not an *aesthetics of sublime* but also a *philosophy of sublime*. Of course, this philosophy of sublime was still insufficient for the phenomenology of sublime, because it thought over the sublime within the horizon of subject-object dichotomy. The famous dichotomy that Kant tried to overcome but supposedly failed; that the German Idealism thought it managed itself to surpass it; that the early phenomenology was still not done struggling with it.

path breaking work³⁵ regarding the idea of sublime.³⁶ With Burke, this approach or mentality was not entirely abandoned, but with the emphasize on the natural sublime (sublime in natural phenomena themselves, which was a main acceptance as an idea within the tradition that Addison, Burnet and Dennis belonged to), Burke, at first, was a kind of the actor who combines the different traditions in Britain together.³⁷ But the problem was still severe: Where does the sublime come from? What is the origin of the sublime? Is it some kind of divinity, the words, the ideas, the subject, the objects, sense impressions, how the objects are sensed and felt, or something else? Burke was interested in these questions with a manner of an empiricist. His emphasize on the psycho-physiological elements³⁸ when examining the idea of sublime made his inquiry probably more secularized (even though the God is not fully out of the scene), scientific and philosophized than any other his contemporaries.³⁹ So, what is the sublime for Burke? This is an impossible question to be answered right away, because it can be said that the whole *Enquiry* is built upon the ambiguity of the sublime. But still there are some things that are for sure. The political and ethical connotations aside, the sublime, for Burke, at first, is something that creates the feeling of terror and horror. It is about encountering something that can absolutely destroy what stands on its way. This sense of horror is so magnificent and grand that anything is insignificant, unimportant and small compared to it. At least, this is how that horror and terror make a human feel when the gaze of the human catches that horror. It is almost the humiliation of the non-excess in front of the excess.⁴⁰ It moves the soul at the same time it paralyzes it. And it does both of this with horror and delight.⁴¹ That's why, it is the best choice to approach his work as an example of experimental psychology.⁴² Another aspect of the experience of the sublime is that it calls the soul of the spectator to gaze upon and watch, but it seems like it guarantees no safety in case of getting too close. It occurs thanks to the safe distance between the source of the terror and spectator. "When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delight-

³⁵ E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³⁶ Burke was indeed one of the members of the traditions above. But he was the one member who was closest enough to go beyond the horizon and ground where those traditions operate on and within. Especially after Baillie's work, the emphasis regarding the idea of sublime has shifted from inherent qualities of objects and divine towards the function of language and linguistic features. The source of the sublime was mainly related to the language which was attached to the explanation or expressing of the phenomenon.

³⁷ See; Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, x-xi.

³⁸ For an examination of Burke's emphasize on the physiological elements, see; R. Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and Burke's Sublime", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45, 4 (2005): 323-341.

³⁹ See; Shaw, *The Sublime*, 49-50.

⁴⁰ It is the phenomenological possibility of the always haunting death in flesh inside the forceful storms and raging seas. It is the feeling of existential nothingness that the human will turn into once the source of that horror reaches and touches the human, if it can. The sublime, when it is found in the natural phenomena, is found near something terrorize. But this horror is not alone. It creates something alongside itself. Human mind creates something when looking in the face of some horror. It creates the sense of awe. So, the sublime is not just something that pushes away, but also pulling in. The horror binds the mind to itself and the mind is hypnotized by it. It is the fear experience near a cliff where the horror of the height and the possibility of falling is accompanied with the "can't help but looking down" state in astonishment and amaze. It is both the repulse and embrace of the very same thing. It is both the repel of and withdraw towards the same thing. It is a calling or a beckoning that happens with a sense of horror. Sublime is, on the logical sense, something contradictory to itself.

⁴¹ A delight, pleasure and awe which is born from horror or terror. On a material level, of course the sublime is related to elements like infinity, vastness, magnitude, magnificence etc.; and on a cognitive level, the nerves, senses, impression, perceptions etc. but since Burke was an empiricist and he was well aware that the origin of the sublime can't be presented or proved with neither reason alone nor the sense perceptions and impressions and observations.

⁴² Shaw, *The Sublime*, 53.

ful.⁴³ One might interpret this distance from danger as the fictionality of the danger. The horror or the danger works as a source for sublimity only if it is far enough. So, does this mean that the danger is not real but fake?⁴⁴ But of course, the sublime might be well related to the survival instinct itself, similar to relation between the alfa and the beta in an animal pack (or as the Burke evokes, the “I” shrinking into the minuteness its own nature).⁴⁵ And it can also be something fully aesthetical, which means, even during the absolute emergency of danger (without regarding a flight chance or not) the sublime can emerge on the last minutes of life.⁴⁶ Sublime is the phenomenologically enjoyable presentation of the apocalypse.⁴⁷ This is the overwhelming aspect of the sublime. It is “the mind so entirely being filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it”⁴⁸; or the so absolute extension of the consciousness that mind overwhelms by the experience of its own power; or object being so vast and limitless that it breaks the barrier of subject-object relation (subject understanding and comprehending the object by fathoming, measuring and reframing it cognitively, but since there is a limitlessness, the object can’t be construct as an object) and the construction process of both subject and object is interrupted so it can even be an object but stays as an shapeless, formless, almost *substanceless*, incomprehensible bulk of absoluteness; or it can be something related to the desire of self-annihilation.⁴⁹ No matter which it is, it is an overwhelming phenomenality that is nothing sort of an ordinary.⁵⁰ So, sublime is kind of useful and functioning as a psychological-physiological defense mechanism for the self-preservation and personal-intellectual progress.⁵¹ One of the main differences is that in

⁴³ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 36-37.

⁴⁴ There are two paths now here. They are interconnected. First one is about the “real”. The real should not be understand in a metaphysical and ontological context. It should be thought within an epistemological context, especially with the theme of “ideas being faint images of impressions” in a Humean sense. Secondly, there is no need for Burke to answer this question. Because it is obvious and evident that if the danger is really fake, then the sense of sublime is altered. So, the danger should be close enough to be not fake, but distant enough for sublime to thrive, without the survival instinct of flight take the charge. So, there is no decisive difference and border between these two. That’s why the sublime is something both aesthetical and existential.

⁴⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 122-123.

⁴⁶ One of the best examples for this is in the movie titled *2012* directed by Roland Emmerich where the old monk stares into the tsunami on the peak of the Himalayas while he is ringing a gong, moments before the waves reach where he stands. Actually, remarks of him in one of the interviews are very suitable for the notion of sublime within Burke’s mind. Emmerich talks about the possible way of presenting the apocalypse as something enjoyable. But these words can easily fit to the idea of sublime itself. Jason Solomons’ interview with Roland Emmerich within the “Director’s Chair” on Guardian.co.uk. Interviewer: There the world was ending, people would be destroyed in buildings, the freeways were collapsing and I was having a hell of a good time watching it. That must be a very strange kind of dichotomy for you to balance between entertainment and apocalypse. Emmerich: It’s really intense and interesting when you make it too incant intense, it’s not enjoyable anymore but it has to be enjoyable otherwise people leave the theater, so it’s a very fine line.”

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80-8sysq1Yo>] Accessed: 2020.10.05.]

⁴⁷ This analogy is more fit when one talks about the sublime in the paintings, poetry and art. Alongside this, the sublime held the possibility of a different kind of subjectivity and was a clear case of excess. It is an excess over the cognitive limits and empirical understanding. Ideas like angels, devils, heaven, hell, eternity, infinity can create a sense of sublimity, because even though humans do not have a direct or immediate experience of them, their influence on human life is profound and fundamental. The sublime excesses the possibility of episteme and knowledge, but still they effect the way human mind understands.

⁴⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 53.

⁴⁹ For a study with possible explanations regarding this subject matter, see, T. Furniss, *Edmund Burke’s Aesthetic Ideology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵⁰ Under the weight of this overwhelming, extraordinary, uncommon and humiliating excess of natural, Burks thinks that in sublime there is something that makes human put things in perspective, (throughout being resentful in the beginning) make them humble and tolerant, free from egoism and pride.

⁵¹ For an examination of these physiological functions, see; V. L. Ryan, “The Physiological Sublime: Burke’s Critique of Reason”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62, 2 (2001): 270-273. Hence his idea of sensation of negative pain (as the sensation attributed to the sublimity) is related here. This kind of merge between ethical and aesthetical was common in 18th century thinkers in Britain, and of course, Kant was a major example for this kind of unifying disposition. But this ethical aspect is no use for now. For the sake of the comparison here (between the Western *sublime* and Japanese *kami*, the sublime’s relation with beauty will be passed

sublime, humans submit to what they admire, and in beauty, they love what submits to them.⁵² There are more aspects to differences between sublime and beauty, but these aspects and differences are not the concern of the examination here now, since there is enough data and perspective gathered from Burke.⁵³

1.3. Kant

The last name from 18th century who will be examined here is of course Kant, especially his third *Critique*.⁵⁴ There is another famous work of his⁵⁵ which is also interested in the sublime (especially in the first part), where he is in a more similar line with Burke from a point of view of a social psychology,⁵⁶ but the third *Critique* is the real place that he adds something essential and significant to the theory of sublime. His main issue with the beauty and sublime was related to something else, namely approach of analysis to them, which for Kant, was problematic.

A species of aesthetic magnitude is indeed called ‘sublimity,’ but in a rather older and narrower sense, as meaning ‘grandeur,’ ‘splendor,’ ‘loftiness.’ Hence both this “sublimity” and that “aesthetic magnitude” are treated cognitively, as beauty is. Kant rejects this cognitive analysis⁵⁷

For Kant, the critique of judgement was deeply connected with other two critiques, so the cognitive approach to the notion sublime was both lack and inappropriate to explain the sublime. And empiricist accounts were also problematic (just like Burke’s) because since remarks and statements about the sublime claim a sense of necessity and universal validity, there is a need for an a priori principle in them, the empirical observations and judgements are not enough of fit to account this a priori condition and modality of aesthetic judgement (namely, sublime).⁵⁸ Empirical accounts just give the contingent propositions and remarks about what is, not what ought to be. So, it can be said that, at first, what Kant did to the epistemological sphere of rationalism and empiricism, he also did to the philosophical and aesthetical accounts of the sublime.

Kant, moreover, agrees with Burke in concluding that the sublime is a source of pleasure, albeit of a strictly negative kind. But where Burke links sublime delight with the psychological relief at having survived and managed a life-threatening experience, Kant looks towards more rarefied horizons. Here again we must keep in mind the rigorously transcendental nature of Kant’s philosophy: [...] for knowledge, in the strict sense, is derived not from the world of experience but rather from the a priori conditions of experience.⁵⁹

for now. But it would be enough to say that, even though their similarities and common features (like their immediacy, their relation with passions and irreducibility of some of their components to human experience) Burke was set off the differentiate these two for good (which was not a common opinion in his era). While beauty was a social quality, in its tenderness and affection, humans willingly set a relation with it and keep it near themselves; sublime is fearful. Within the relation with sublime, there is pain, terror, violence and forcefulness. Sublime dwells on large, grand and terrible phenomena, whereas beauty is associated with generally small and pleasing things.

⁵² See; Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 103. It should also be noted that while sublime is masculine, beauty is feminine. See, Shaw, *The Sublime*, 57-60.

⁵³ Compare with E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵⁴ I. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1987).

⁵⁵ I. Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, ed. Patrick Frierson, Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11-64.

⁵⁶ For an examination of the work, see; S. M. Shell, “Kant as Propagator: Reflections on Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, 3 (2002): 455-468.

⁵⁷ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, lxiii-lxix.

⁵⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 125.

⁵⁹ Shaw, *The Sublime*, 79.

Throughout this kind of formative structure, Kant's interested in the sublime also starts to examine the sublime with its relation to the idea of beauty.⁶⁰ They both don't depend on a sensation, both are singular judgements and both exclusive to their own. And for their differences, (although these differences and similarities are not a concern for the main comparison), beauty is more related to the form of the object, whereas the sublime is related to the formlessness (or where the magnitude of the form is so severe and excess that it's beyond the ability of perceiving such form) and totality of this formlessness; beauty to quality, sublime to quantity; beauty arises directly, sublime indirectly; beauty to a positive pleasure, sublime to negative pleasure (since the mind is not just withdrawn but also repulsed).⁶¹ Alongside this, for Kant the most important difference between the sublime and the beauty is.

[.] then the distinction in question comes to this: (Independent) natural beauty carries with it a purposiveness in its form [.] On the other hand, if something arouses in us, merely in apprehension and without any reasoning on our part, a feeling of the sublime, then it may indeed appear, in its form, contrapurposive for our power of judgment, incommensurate with our power of exhibition, and as it were violent to our imagination, and yet we judge it all the more sublime for that.⁶²

For Kant, the sublime has a characteristic of contra-purposive for the faculty of judgement. It means that the sublime makes human mind to question the direct relation between the sublime and the faculty of judgement. The sublime feels like the faculty of judgement is not where it belongs to. Sublime questions and tries to break the frames of that faculty of mind.⁶³ So, it can be said that in the end of the day, the sublime is essentially related to reason and imagination, not the ocean or storms.

For what is sublime, in the proper meaning of the term, cannot be contained in any sensible form but concerns only ideas of reason [.] Thus the vast ocean heaved up by storms cannot be called sublime. The sight of it is horrible; and one must already have filled one's mind with all sorts of ideas if such an intuition is to attune it to a feeling that is itself sublime, inasmuch as the mind is induced to abandon sensibility and occupy itself with ideas containing a higher purposiveness.⁶⁴

This is where the remark of *supersensible power* enters the scene. Sublime is the proof and result that "the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense."⁶⁵ Since it can posit a totality of infinity, otherwise a contradict concept for understanding and mind, within the aesthetical judgement.⁶⁶ Nature is *erhaben* because

⁶⁰ For an examination of this relation, see; Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant*, 209-219. Kant focusses on the similarities and differences between beauty and the sublime. This focus of Kant, namely the analytic of the sublime, points that both beauty and sublime, as being under the scope of aesthetic judgement, claim a kind of "ought" in universality and necessity, even though they are neither of reason nor understanding. This "ought" is a kind of possible agreement on necessity and universality under the directions of common sense.

⁶¹ See; Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 97-98.

⁶² Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 98-99.

⁶³ It doesn't sit well with human's reason or comprehension. It feels like it is an outrage, a rebellion, a revolt to the faculties which work on the sublime. The sublime provokes a disturbance the faculty it occurs within. The sublime is inadequate for the reason, sensibility and imagination. The sublime threatens the imagination and reason by showing their insufficiency on establishing and comprehending what's standing before them in their face. The sublime *unrests* the mind. And this is where Kant agrees with Burke, although their path differs from here on (one going to the empirical one, and the other transcendental one, but they will meet back on the morality and emotional contours regarding the sublime again). Of course, this is not a real threat because the sublime originates from a kind of failure of the imagination (failure to recognize the forms of what otherwise seems or appears "formless" or failure to recognize the faults of what otherwise appears great and so attribute absolute greatness to it). This failure of the imagination is later compensated with assertion by reason with the notion of infinity and maybe other related concepts.

⁶⁴ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 99.

⁶⁵ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 106.

⁶⁶ This is the case when the subject matter is the mathematical sublime (which is one of the two modes of sublime, the other being dynamical sublime). And as for the dynamical sublime, this is where Kant gets close to Burke, because it is where the moral character development gets in touch with the discussions on sublime. In the dynamical one, there is an estimation of general

it *erhebt* human imagination, in a way that the human mind experiences its own sublimity which is elevated even above nature.⁶⁷ This subject-oriented, agent-based interpretation and understanding of dualistic nature (humans and nature apart)⁶⁸ interpretation was a general characteristic for the Enlightenment era philosophy, and Kant was a major representative of this manner of thought.⁶⁹ And his remarks on the pyramids (even though they remind the emphasize Burke made on distance) and St. Peter's Basilica can be put aside for a moment. And even his elucidations of the relation between the sublime and the morality can be set aside for future use.⁷⁰ It is being as neither entirely materialist nor idealist sense but a structural necessity as an outcome of the operation of reason, imagination and mind. Moreover, the sublime, for Kant, occurs on the brink of the experience of transcendentalism. Through the notion of sublime, the mind realizes that there are limits to understanding and comprehension, but not to reason. Sublime is the proof that reason can go beyond and above the sensual and empirical existence.⁷¹ It is the power of the reason in the face of an impossibility. It is the dawn of the subject that one sees in the sublime.

1.4. The Romantic Sublime

After the 18th century, there comes the 19th. The era of, regarding to the notion of sublime, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Schiller, other Romantics and so on. Even though it is crowded, it is rather simple to track down and understand what 19th century thought about the sublime. This is mainly because, they can all be understood from their perspective towards Kant's thoughts on sublime, and from their perspective towards Kant's philosophy itself. For example, when Schopenhauer talks about the sublime in his work,⁷² it almost feels like he rearticulates the remarks of Kant.

But these very objects, whose significant forms invite us to a pure contemplation of them, may have a hostile relation to the human will in general. [...] 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. [...] He may comprehend only their Idea that is foreign to all relation, gladly linger over its contemplation [...] In that case, he is then filled with the feeling of the sublime.⁷³

These words are very similar in essence with what Kant said in the third *Critique*. There is again the sense of repel (this time, through tension) and withdraw at the same time. There is again the threat. There is again the paralyzing experience of the imagination and reason (this time, through the will). There is again this transcendentalism of the sublime. So, it seems like this is the Kantian notion of sublime being adapted to the philosophy

concerns like health, property, power etc. The sublimity in the nature is not out of fear but because nature brings out the strength of human mind and reason on sight. Compared to nature, human concerns are really small, but despite of this smallness, nature does not have a dominance on humanity (and generally the opposite dominance is present), so it makes human think of their highest principles.

⁶⁷ See; Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 121.

⁶⁸ For a criticism of Kant's understanding of nature, see; Y. Lee, "Kant's Theory of the Sublime in Nature and His Concept of Nature", *Filosofiska Notiser* 3, 1 (2016): 25-33.

⁶⁹ Kant's differentiation between two modes of sublime, namely the mathematical one and the dynamic one is not important detail for the examination here. And his explanation of the performance of imagination (regarding taking in a quantum intuitively and the acts of apprehension and comprehension) is also not essential for now.

⁷⁰ For an examination of the relation between morality and sublime in Kant, see; J. Rayman, *Kant on Sublimity and Morality* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

⁷¹ Shaw, *The Sublime*, 88-89.

⁷² See; A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne Vol I. (New York: Dover Publications. Inc., 1969), 200-212.

⁷³ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 201.

of Schopenhauer. The most discernable and important difference between Kant and Schopenhauer is related to the differentiation between the beauty and the sublime. Even though here is again the talk of beauty and sublime together, this time they are not exclusive. They have their differences (like beauty not being related to that tension, but sublime is, they differ from each other by the addition)⁷⁴ but they are not really different things from each other. They are continuous under the roof of the will. “There is a slight challenge to abide in pure knowledge, to turn away from all willing, and precisely in this way we have a transition from the feeling of the beautiful to that of the sublime. It is the faintest trace of the sublime in the beautiful, and beauty itself appears here only in a slight degree.”⁷⁵ So, under right conditions and circumstances, the beauty and the sublime are transferrable to each other. A sublime thing can also be something of beauty and vice versa.⁷⁶

For another famous name of 19th century, F. Schiller, the situation is similar. In his two works (*On the Sublime*⁷⁷ dated 1793 and *Concerning the Sublime*⁷⁸ dated 1801, second one is more detailed than the first one), the sublime is related to the interaction between the nature and the self. Throughout this interaction and the sublime, the rational aspect of the human prevails.⁷⁹ The differences related to the notion of sublime between Schiller and Kant are based on the differences of their conceptualization aesthetics, nature and art and theories of these.⁸⁰ Regarding the sublime, the most distinctive differentiation from Kant is probably not in the conceptual definition but in the emphasize on the secondary associations, in which one can say that Schiller makes more emphasize on the independence from sensuous or physical nature of human.

Rather than emphasizing the kind of dual admiration we see in Kant, Schiller brings out the superiority of rational freedom as it exhibits itself above sensuous nature [...] Schiller’s ideas accordingly reflect Kant’s views in a general way, and underline how the ‘superiority’ we feel in the sublime is not to be understood as a form of power over external nature. Rather, it is a feeling of independence from our own sensuous or physical nature in the moment we discover our rational, free self as a distinct capacity.⁸¹

So it can be said that Schiller and Schopenhauer are both followers of Kant’s understanding of the sublime, where one reshapes in into his own understanding of will and reality,⁸² the other one takes it into an artistic and aesthetical interpretation with changing the emphasizes. It was Schiller’s this aesthetical and artistic interpretation of the sublime that the 19th century’s romantics took into consideration. Sublime became a major interest in artistic dimension, especially in literature and poetry. With the philosophical ground paved by Kant and Schiller, the sublime takes a turn in the manners of romantics. While in Kant and Schiller, the

⁷⁴ For explanations, see; Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 202.

⁷⁵ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 203.

⁷⁶ See; P. Gordon, *Art as the Absolute: Art’s Relation to Metaphysics in Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 161-170. This unity between them is also related to how Schopenhauer thinks of Kantian distinction between noumenal and phenomenal world, and his thoughts on the noumenal one and the notion of thing-in-itself. Still, it can be said that, the sublime for Schopenhauer is darker and more unsettling than Kant’s (although, this is again probably because of the pessimistic attitude of Schopenhauer’s philosophy itself).

⁷⁷ F. Schiller, “On the Sublime”, in *Essays*, ed. Walter Hinderer, Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993).

⁷⁸ F. Schiller, “Concerning the Sublime”, in *Essays*, ed. Walter Hinderer, Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993).

⁷⁹ There is theoretically sublime and practically sublime (they more or less correspond to the mathematical and dynamical one in Kant), and there is the mention of fear again. There is the talk of mixing feelings of melancholy and joyousness. Schiller seems like he talks about the same sublime that Kant had talked about, just in different terminology. It’s like Schiller is talking in an aesthetical and artistic way on the ground that Kant created philosophically.

⁸⁰ See; Shaw, *The Sublime*, 96.

⁸¹ Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, 91-92.

⁸² For an examination of the relationship between the will and the sublime, see; J. Kirwan, *Sublimity: The Non-rational and the Irrational in the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 67-84.

main emphasize was on the subject, the agent, the reason, freedom and morality of it, in the romantic sublime, the emphasize shifts to the celebrating and appreciating the nature, both rural and wild aspects of it. This shift can be seen as a turn from subject to nature itself (nature being valued independent of the humanity and human life),⁸³ but it can also be seen as a merge or an intertwine between subject and the nature. The dualistic understanding which was dominant in Kant was less effective and accepted in romantics. There is a mesh, a harmony, a holistic combine between the subject and the nature in romantics. “As such, the self is situated in a relationship of interdependence with nature, not determined by it or seeking power over it, but dwelling in nature, with imagination and emotion deeply affected by natural places and events.”⁸⁴ Of course, there can be exceptions both in the emphasize and attitude (like in Wordsworth emphasizing the enrichment of the imagination of the self⁸⁵ and in Coleridge, the sublimity becomes more of a feeling than a concept⁸⁶) but this doesn't change the general characteristic essence of the 19th century romanticism.

For the Romantic poets, the fearsome and disorienting effects of the sublime signal our more vulnerable position in the order of things, and at the same time provide an occasion for grasping the self as connected to something beyond itself: not merely as an individual, but as part of a larger whole. [...] The Romantic sublime thus extends Kantian ideas, bringing out the metaphysical dimension [...]⁸⁷

With the essential turn in the sublime here, the talk of divinity also comes back to the scene, especially with Coleridge, but as one can guess, it mainly does not have a metaphysical or ontological character, but a poetic one. The sense of the subject being an essential part of the nature gives way to a more secularized mystic, pantheistic, pagan interpretations of phenomenality in nature, mainly through an aesthetical and artistic articulation. This sense of divinity creates the sense that the sublime is the one which is always the other, always beyond. It is the other side of the boundary, whatever that boundary is. It can be the horizon of the poet's creativity, it can be the horizon of the interrelation between nature and the human. It can be the trace of what is inhuman in the human. It is the sense of transcendental of phenomenality in both natural (commonplace and the wild) and cultural space. 19th century romantics indeed welcome and embrace the sublime as the unrepresentable peak of the art and aesthetics.

1.5. Postmodern Sublime

After the 19th century, minor paradigm shifts in the intellectual and cultural world seems to have no essential interest in the sublime. In art theories, the discussion on the sublime has continued within the perspective of the aesthetical. But in the philosophical environment, there was no substantial examination at all. This situation has changed with the emergence of postmodern culture and attitude. But even in postmodern

⁸³ See; M. Budd, *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 90-106.

⁸⁴ E. Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, 100. Moreover, the sublime in romantics was a correction of the previous, philosophical mistake. The Kantian notion of sublime was problematical in a sense that, while the sublime expresses something that is an excess for the self or the subject, but still being explained with a manner of centering the subject. While the sublime goes beyond the limits of the self, but still trying to understand the experience of it on the ground of the self. This was the problematic that the romantics most paid heed. Without a doubt, the experience of the sublime can be a human-centered experience. But human-centered and subject-based are not same. With this regard, romantics do not share the subject-oriented mentality when the sublime is thought, even though the humanistic aspect and component of the nature-self relation is also important.

⁸⁵ See; Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, 102-105.

⁸⁶ Shaw, *The Sublime*, 104.

⁸⁷ Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, 107.

mentality, it seems like the sublime attracts to direct interest, but it is being criticized alongside of romantic and modern ideas that the postmodern worldview seems to deconstruct, radicalize and negate.

As far as sublimity is concerned, whilst postmodernism retains the Romantic feeling for the vast and the unlimited, it no longer seeks to temper this feeling through reference to a higher faculty. The postmodern condition therefore lays stress on the inability of art or reason to bring the vast and the unlimited to account. In what amounts to a retreat from the promise of enlightenment, its dream of freedom and transcendence, the postmodern affirms nothing beyond its own failure [...]⁸⁸

So, the postmodern attitude seems to attack the unrepresentability, autonomy, ineffability and incomprehensibility, identity of the sublime.⁸⁹ There is no more belief in the excess of the limits. It is kind of like in the past, Sunday church services were where a true believer may meet and sense the sublime in a religious way. Even though the Sundays are not that uncommon and rare, the church was the house of God. But now, the church is an architectural place. It is still the house of God as a culture code, but there is no excess of sublimity in it. So, for the postmodern mentality, the sublime is just an empty maneuver that was once thought to be necessary and transcendent. But now, while the ideas like, beauty as a substance,⁹⁰ necessity and transcendent are under attack by the postmodernity, the examination of the sublime turns into a deconstruction of the limit, more precisely, a limitless limit, a limit that is but doesn't exist.

Kant's brief discourse on the *parergon*, which itself functions as a *parergon* or supplement to the core of his argument, is shown by Derrida to be central to both the formation and the deformation of the sublime. The *parergon*, in other words, is that which cannot be thought within the terms of the system since it discloses the fundamental point of contradiction on which the system is founded; it renders the sublime both possible and impossible. It follows that the transcendental dimensions of the sublime, its manifestation of the supersensible, for instance, are never more than 'quasi-transcendental' [...] For Derrida, the Kantian sense of the beyond is therefore an illusion, the by-product of a philosophical system.

The postmodern thought (J. Derrida especially) found the problematic that the romantics overlooked and gladly accepted, not as a problematic but as a way of poetic exaltation. At first look, it seems like the same kind of argument that German Idealism had pointed towards the Kantian noumenal world, is pointed by the postmodern thought to the romantic sublime. The postmodern thought has shown that, the sublime, let alone being the excess and going beyond all, is a component of an interplay of thoughts and words. It exists as long as it provides a functionality in the text or understanding. Sublime exists because it fulfills a mistake, it covers a missing in the line of the thought or the text. It is not a necessary outcome of the mind but a product of a biased philosophy, a screenplay or a textual supplement of a systematic understanding.⁹¹ Of course, if there is a talk

⁸⁸ Shaw, *The Sublime*, 115.

⁸⁹ For an examination of Adorno's metaphysical remarks on the awareness of non-identity of the sublime in artwork, see; K. Gritzner, "Adorno, the Sublime and Live Performance", *European Legacy* 21, 7 (2016): 635-640.

⁹⁰ While in traditional philosophy, it is accustomed to see the relationship between the beauty and the sublime, in postmodern art and aesthetics, the ugly becomes a reference point too, for a study, see; M. Kuplen, "The Sublime, Ugliness and Contemporary Art: A Kantian Perspective", *Con-Textos Kantianos: International Journal of Philosophy* 1 (2015): 123-133.

⁹¹ See; J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington, Ian McLeod (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 37-80. The sensation of the beyond is not based on the sensation of beyond at all. It is a beyond within. But, it is also can't be within, because the limit is a limitless. This is the deconstruction of in and out, inside and outside, interior and exterior. The impossibility of the conceptual differentiation of these opposing elements makes the notion of sublime a kind of an intellectual hoax. It is a hoax that creates a useful idea of limit and order. Sublime is the hand-made proof that, the limit exists. Since the sublime is the beyond, it should be beyond of something, therefore the line or the boundary or the limit. The sublime becomes the limit. Thanks to the sublime, this side of the line is understandable, logical, rational, reasonable, and other side of the line can stay belong to the sublime. It is the fake but/and functioning line that separates between chaos and order, between unmeasurable and measurable, between being and nothing, between present and non-present, between existence and non-existence, sensible and unsensible (or supersensible). Sublime is set to become the horizon of the phenomenality of the aesthetic experience, which links this experience

of postmodern sublime, then the name Lyotard must be mentioned (he is also the last name to be examined regarding western sublime). His interpretation on Newman's abstract painting *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* put aside (it more or less examines the sublime within the horizon of Derridean notion of limit and boundary),⁹² Lyotard criticizes the Kantian notion of sublime⁹³ for the absurd endeavor to use it as a mean to reconcile between the intelligible and the sensible, the theoretical and the practical, the transcendent and the immanent, the material and the immaterial, form and the content.⁹⁴ Moreover, he criticizes the attitude of selling this mean as an ultimate or absolute point, by relying on it being an event indeterminate.

In terms of what Paul Hamilton calls 'the tense logics of the sublime', our judgement of this event 'is always one of what "will have been", future-perfect, never one which provides a rule for the present'. This is where Lyotard departs from Kant, for it is the purpose of the 'Analytic' to submit the sublime to the discipline of reason, which always arrives, belatedly as it were, to pronounce its judgement. But with the postmodern sublime, judgement is kept open and the specificity of the event is sustained.⁹⁵

This openness seems like more suitable for the characteristics of sublime. In the experience of the sublime, there is no finalized, no destined ends. That's why it is an event more than it is a concept or feeling.⁹⁶ With this new interpretation of the indeterminate characteristic of the sublime, Lyotard moves further away from Kantian idealist and reason-based understanding of it.⁹⁷ Since the mind can't perform on the notion of sublime in its entirety (the sublime can't fully be subjected to the mechanisms and functions of the mind), reading the relation between the mind and the sublime becomes paradoxical. Because the sublime matter is something immaterial, an-objectable, because for the sublime to happen, to occur, the process of constructing object should be seized or interrupted in the mind. It is something disruptive for the mind, it generates a crisis every time it tries to occur.⁹⁸ But it is nonetheless valuable because it resists the mainstream and dominant sphere of rationality and logic-based appropriation.⁹⁹ For Lyotard, there is a political aspect of the discussion on the sublime as well (throughout its relationship with aesthetics and the notion of terror), but this aspect can be disregarded here since it doesn't hold a substantial importance for this investigation.¹⁰⁰ Also Lacan's psychoanalytic elucidations on sublimation and therapeutic practices bearing resemblances in their theoretic and hypothetic ground with Lyotard's notion of sublime are not within the scope of this investigation, although it is true that

much more transcendent than just aesthetical. Sublime is the impossible limit (or the boundless boundary) itself that gives the meaning to the sublime itself. But, until the postmodern examination of it. The impossible possibility of the sublime deconstructs the sublime itself. The traditional sublime collapse into itself by the very same power that constructed it in the first place.

⁹² For a study on this subject matter, see; D. Cunningham, "How the Sublime Became 'Now': Time, Modernity and Aesthetics in Lyotard's Rewriting of Kant", *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy* 8, 3 (2004): 556-564.

⁹³ For his examination of the relevant sections of Kant's third Critique, see; J. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. E. Rottenberg (California: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁹⁴ For an examination, see; G. B. Pierce, "Introduction: The Sublime Today: Aesthetics and the Postmodern Mediascape", in *The Sublime Today: Contemporary Readings in the Aesthetic*, ed. Gillian B. Pierce (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 1-4.

⁹⁵ Shaw, *The Sublime*, 123-124.

⁹⁶ See; H. J. Silverman, "Lyotard and the Events of the Postmodern Sublime", in *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (New York: Routledge, 2016), 222-229.

⁹⁷ See; C. Klinger, "The Concepts of the Sublime and the Beautiful in Kant and Lyotard", *Constellations* 2, 2 (1995): 213-218.

⁹⁸ J. Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 140.

⁹⁹ See; Shaw, *The Sublime*, 129-130.

¹⁰⁰ For a study on this subject matter, see; M. Drolet, "The Wild and the Sublime: Lyotard's Post-Modern Politics", *Political Studies* 42, 2 (1994): 264-270.

his analyses deepen and variate the theory of sublime.¹⁰¹ This emphasize on the emptiness is a major theme both in Lacan and in Žižek through a Hegelian conceptuality on nothingness and lack.

The sublime, therefore, as presented by Žižek, ought not to be conceived as a transcendent “Thing-in-itself” beyond the field of representation, but rather as an indicator of the traumatic emptiness, the primordial lack. [...] Žižek gathers support for his thesis by turning to the work of the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, whose critique of the Kantian sublime [...] is directed precisely at the false distinction between the sensible and the supersensible. [...] For Hegel, in short, the sublime is ‘an object whose positive body is just an embodiment of Nothing’. [...] Žižek stresses, with a glance to Lacan, that the sublime object is merely the embodiment of this lack.¹⁰²

With this last emphasize, the milestones of the historical progress of the sublime in the western culture has been completed. It is for sure that there are lots of names and thoughts are overlooked and not even mentioned, and even the ones that are mentioned here are just looked over superficially. An examination deeper than the one which is being conducted here would need a bigger study than an article. Besides, for a possible comparison of the eastern correspond, the scope and the extent of the examination of the western sublime is more than enough. Now it’s time for to continue to the next phase, namely the sublime in the east.

2. The Sublime in the East Asia

When the title is said “in the EastAsia”, the first thing to do is to decrease the scope of the examination. Because while it is possible to track and follow the historical progress of the sublime in the philosophical path in the west, the situation within the east and east-Asia is different from it. It is not “a” philosophical tradition” but “several” and vast philosophical teachings, and the whole east-west differentiation itself is problematic in many ways¹⁰³ so the examination here should be confined within only Japanese aesthetics and its Chinese roots. In Japanese aesthetics, the word that is been used for the sublime (with its connotations in Kantian and Western tradition) comes from the Chinese崇高 (chónggāo) which means *majestic, sublime*. The Chinese characters in here seems to in line with the western denotations, 崇(chóng) meaning *esteem, honor, revere, venerate* and 高 (gāo) meaning *high, tall, lofty, elevated*. In Japanese Kanji, the すうこう (suuko) is used for this Chinese word. This Japanese word すうこう (suuko) signifies something similar, meaning being lofty, sublime and noble. These are the words that’s been used when one wants to talk about the sublime in a philosophical manner. But of course, it is one thing to talk about something, and it is another to mean something. The *suuko* might indeed be the grammatically and semantically correct translation, equivalent of the western notion of sublime. But this is not about finding the correct equivalents, but rather a deconstructing of the seemingly equivalent or non-equivalent words and their meanings. Because since the sublime is something related to nature and self and the relationship between these two, then it is a question of how (or if) the western idea of human and nature differs from the eastern one. The Indian¹⁰⁴ and Buddhist influences and interactions¹⁰⁵ should also be kept in mind here. It has been generally thought that the tradition of L o-Zhuāng (老莊) Taoism’s naturalistic

¹⁰¹ His poststructuralist mentality which examines the sublime object as something that points to a substantial emptiness, to something beyond of the signified really enriches the theory of sublime, especially when it is adapted within a Freudian principle of pleasure, which also binds Lacan’s remarks to Burke’s physiological-psychological elucidations and Kant’s transcendental components that build sublime.

¹⁰² Shaw, *The Sublime*, 138-139.

¹⁰³ V. S. Harrison, *Eastern Philosophy: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-4.

¹⁰⁴ For an examination on sublime in Indian thought, see; V. Mishra, *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁵ For the interaction, see; K. Matsuo, *A History of Japanese Buddhism* (Kent: Global Oriental Ltd., 2007).

and non-human centered accounts of nature and human (which has been widely acknowledged in east-Asia) is opposed to the western anthropocentric understanding of nature-human relationship where the human is thought as something essentially distinct from natural world. So, the Taoism is generally thought with impersonalized and depersonalized self which is deeply embedded with the emphasize on the substantiality of the nature. Whereas the western understanding glorifies the individuated personhood and characteristic idiosyncrasy and uses this peculiarity within the discourse of human's dominance over the nature. Of course, it is still possible to find exceptions and exceptional readings that doesn't fit well into these generic assumptions and judgements.

Such a natural and yet still ethical individuation can be glimpsed in the work attributed to the ancient Chinese thinker Zhuāngzǐ (莊子), the *Zhuāngzǐ* and in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. According to standard readings, this is a hopeless strategy to the extent that Kant is concerned with the person's transcendence and Zhuāngzǐ with its natural immanence [...]. Instead of advocating a hidden affinity, a critical reading of both reveals that Kant's *third Critique* goes beyond his more typical complicity with the anthropocentric domination of nature and that the *Zhuāngzǐ* does not eliminate individuality and the human in its skeptical challenging of conventional human perspectives and concern with dào (道) and tiāndì (天地, heaven and earth, or "nature"). Between Kant and Zhuāngzǐ there is an open or empty space for considering individuality in the context of the natural world.¹⁰⁶

These unorthodox readings may help to find and construct new interpretations within traditional history of philosophy, and even the theory of sublime itself.¹⁰⁷ It is true that Kant's philosophy, aesthetics and thoughts on sublime is anthropocentric and reason-based, but it is also true that the nature has a substantial place within the nature-human relationship. That's why he is important and well-respected within The line that differs between the holistic and the fragmental understanding of reality is not always so decisive and determinate.¹⁰⁸ But this non-decisive line points towards something important for the essence of the sublime. If the human is an intrinsic part of the nature, and the ontological reality of the nature is in itself immanently, then what is the sublime? If there is no excess, no line for sublime to transcend, then what is the meaning of the experience of the sublime? If there is no transcendental structure that will shape the characteristics of the sublime, then will it mean that there is no difference in phenomenality between sublime's being experienced and the experience of non-sublime?¹⁰⁹ If the duck's behavior of quacking and flapping around wildly for twelve hours in 27 November 1944 in Freiburg im Breisgau was not something paranormal or possible because of the transcendental aspect of the reality and nature, and for a Chinese and Japanese or an east-Asian, the behavior of the duck would be quite in normalcy and within the parameters of the reality of nature itself,¹¹⁰ then what

¹⁰⁶ E. S. Nelson, "China, Nature, and the Sublime in Kant", in *Cultivating Personhood: Kant and Asian Philosophy*, ed. Stephen R. Palmquist (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2010), 333-334.

¹⁰⁷ It doesn't really hold an importance how valid or how true their general argument, as long as they are fruitful in a phenomenological way, because it is always possible to find specific fragments and paragraphs that will fit the argument and justify it, if the researcher wants to. Besides, (about the example on Kant and Zhuāngzǐ), although the general characteristic of enlightenment era, where the subject and reason are glorified, Kant indeed cherish the nature and human's relation with it regarding the sublime.

¹⁰⁸ Of course, this situation is also related to, not only what are the East Asian teachings and philosophies are, but how the East Asian thoughts and ideas are received in the West, for a study regarding this subject matter, see; E. S. Nelson, *Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Early Twentieth-Century German Thought* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 13-42.

¹⁰⁹ For a related study, see; X. Jie, "On the Lost of Sublime in Classical Idea of Harmonious", *Journal of Fuyang Teachers College (Social Science)* 3 (2003): 48-49.

¹¹⁰ See; P. S. Hsiao, "Heidegger and Our Translation of the Tao Te Ching", in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 93-94.

will the sublime excess? What will the sublime go beyond of?¹¹¹ There is no western sublime in the east-Asian mentality. But there is still a sublime. But, how?

[..] what is sublimity in art? In the West perhaps it is most often suggested by extent-the capacity in a thing for exacting awe. And it is precisely here that we must divest ourselves of everything but the Japanese point of view if we would find anything sublime in their art. [...] For, I fancy, the sublimity of Japanese art consists in its perfection. I agree that, in a western mind, this is somewhat of a shock at first view. [...] For it is entirely true that the Japanese care little for mere bigness without symmetry, form or color [...] Every one is familiar with the fact, that, where an art object consists of a number of similar units, the Japanese will produce only one of them, leaving the impression of the whole to the mind. Perhaps no loftier emotion is ever evoked in the Japanese mind than by the quiet contemplation of, let us say, a cherry-grove in full and perfect blossom. Here is no expression of extent or awe, no thrill, only pure and perfect beauty. [...] The perfection of the whole, and of each tiny petal as well, is sublime to the Japanese, and he had been transported for a brief space to the heavens where such completeness has its habitat. And if the contemplation of these perfect things has carried him to, let us say, the Twenty-Seventh Heaven, he has at least reached thereby the sublimest altitude human thought has yet achieved. It is questionable whether the thrills of awe we in the West associate with sublimity can do more.¹¹²

The sublimity as the sublimity in the perfection. At first, for the western mind, this seems like a romantic or aesthetical idea that has no phenomenological or ontological value. But on the contrary, this aesthetical and artistic idea can possibly be present because of its phenomenological ground. There is a transportation without the transcendence. There is not a going beyond, but there is going somewhere else. But this “else-ness”, this “other-ness” is not built on an identity and selfness as a substance-based phenomenality. It is based on the nothingness, emptiness, void that the tao (道) is. The sublime is indeed something contradictory. But it is contradictory only on the land where the meaning of the sameness and difference builds itself through the substance and metaphysics of presence, like the western traditional philosophy. But for east-Asia, the situation is different. The east-Asian phenomenality doesn't build itself on the metaphysics of presence. The Tao is not sublime because it goes beyond what is present. On the contrary, it constructs the phenomenality of the presence according to the nothing, the void, the emptiness it itself is.¹¹³ What the Tao is (even this “is” is problematic, since it presupposes an understanding of the phenomenality) the Being is shaped accordingly to it. The essential non-essence of the sublime is related in itself with the Tao.¹¹⁴ The Tao is the melting point of the transcendent and immanent where they merge into together. Therefore, although the sublime is something immanent in the perfection, it still has the sense of transcendentalty as the transportation to the phenomenality where that perfection belongs to. There is indeed a sublimity in the cherry-blossom trees. And there is also an aesthetical beauty in the cherry-blossom trees. These two maybe are related to each other or maybe not, but still the perfection of the tree evokes the sublime. It is the sublime of the perfection in nature, but it is also the sublime of the whole nature and perfection belong to, which this is nothing other than the nature (if the otherness is understood in the East Asian sense). There is still a sense of exaltation, elevation (hence the transportation) but this exaltation is not exactly a phenomenological realization (since it is already real) but it is more of a sensing the nature as it is. It is the encountering with the magical/hidden sublime of the emptiness

¹¹¹ These questions clarify that the sublime in a transcendent system has to be different from the sublime in an immanent system. *The sublime in the absolute immanency*. Even though if it is both immanent and transcendent, the question still remains: *The sublime in the absolute limitlessness*. How can there be the sublime where there is no *parergon*? To be more precise, how can there be the sublime where there is no *ergon-parergon* relationship or differentiation? Within the western tradition and mentality, one inclines to answer that it is impossible, therefore there can't be any sense of sublimity in east-Asian worldview. And from the western perspective, that would be right.

¹¹² J. L. Long, “Is There Sublimity in Japanese Art?”, *The Art World* 2, 4 (1917): 323.

¹¹³ For an artistic explanation of this, see; P. Nina, “Value and Beauty of Impermanence: Buddhist Philosophy Through Japanese Aesthetics”, *Вестник Пермского Университета: Философия. Психология. Социология* 2, 26 (2016): 11-13.

¹¹⁴ See; G. Sircello, “How Is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, 4 (1993): 544-547.

which is the nature as such.¹¹⁵ It is not about going beyond or above the nature, or going somewhere else beside nature, but it is *finally reaching* the nature itself.

This phenomenality of the relation between sublime, perfection and the nature is probably best explained in the Japanese understanding of *Kami*. Kami are the sacred powers, local gods, deities, phenomena and the divine spirits that are highly respected in the Japanese non-religious religion Shinto. Shinto itself literally means “the way of the kami”.¹¹⁶ They can be the part of the natural forces, natural habitats, landscapes, villages, events and spiritual beings. They are worshipped in Shinto. Their world, namely shinkai (神界) is not separated from the nature that humans live in. It is both valid and non-valid to assert that kami are supernatural. It is valid because it is hidden within the nature from the humans. It is invalid, because this supernaturality does not consist on something other than the nature that humans live in. They can die and rot like human beings. They are not omnipotent, invincible or immortal. It can be said that kami are the anthropomorphizing of the animistic powers of natural phenomena, spiritual powers, beings, events and etc.¹¹⁷ There are kami of mountains, rivers, lakes, wind, fire, thunder, tree, water, rock, etc. There are eight million of them (which is another way of saying they are infinite), they are present everywhere (abide in organic and inorganic matter, natural disasters) and they have their classifications.¹¹⁸ Since it is the main components of the Shinto, there are lots of other philosophical and religious aspects to kami, which can't be covered in here fully.¹¹⁹ But the importance of the kami for the examination here regarding the sublime is related the kami being the source of the natural awe, numinous feelings and ephemeral sacredness.

Perhaps overriding all these is the view of this world and life as paramount and alive, with the inherent vitality of the kami as a spiritual force that permeates the world, giving life to it and upholding and protecting those that live in it. The notion of quite what a kami is has always been hard to define. Traditionally anything that inspired a sense of awe (that is, which expressed through its nature some special quality or sense of vitality) could be seen as a kami, or as the abode of a kami. Thus rocks and trees, especially those of strange or striking shape, might be regarded as abodes or manifestations of the power of kami [...]¹²⁰

So, sensing the Kami is sensing the awe that belongs to the extraordinary phenomena. This moment, this event, is the experience of the sublime in Japanese aesthetics. Its extraordinary character does not come from its uncommonness. It is that thing makes the human stare at and stand in wonder in front of the cherry blossoms. It is as pure as the sublime gets in Japanese art. It is the sublimity of *yūgen*. It is not something related to vastness or the magnitude. It is the sense of completeness. It is being aware of the Kami residing. And for the dreadful events:

In ancient usage, anything whatsoever which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power or which was awe-inspiring was called kami. Eminence here does not refer merely to the superiority of nobility, goodness or meritorious deed. Evil and mysterious things, if they are extraordinary and dreadful, are called kami.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ For the explanation of this magical sublime and its place within Japanese aesthetics, see; B. C. Walsh, “A Modern-Day Romantic: The Romantic Sublime in Hayao Miyazaki’s Creative Philosophy”, *Comparative Literature: East & West* 3, 2 (2019): 180-191.

¹¹⁶ I. Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 23.

¹¹⁷ See; S. Yoneyama, *Animism in Contemporary Japan: Voices for the Anthropocene from post-Fukushima Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 111-157.

¹¹⁸ See; M. Ashkenazi, *Handbook of Japanese Mythology* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 29-35.

¹¹⁹ For a study of these aspects, see; R. J. Davies, *Japanese Culture: The Religious and Philosophical Foundations* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2016), 39-60.

¹²⁰ Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan*, 25.

¹²¹ D. Holtom, “The Meaning of Kami”, in *Japanese Religions: Past and Present*, ed. Ian Reader, Esben Andreasen & Finn Stefánsson (Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 1995), 77.

So, in Japanese aesthetics, the sublime is less about repel-withdraw relation between the self and the nature and more related to being petrified or stand aghast against the phenomenon which is occurring. But this petrify happens because of an awareness, of a recognition, an acknowledge of what truly occurs, what the phenomenon is. This is where the aesthetics of the sublime in Japan art shows its phenomenological or ontological aspect. Because while Kami are the spiritual things that living among humans, just hidden in nature, they are not understood as being metaphysically different from natural beings like rocks, shrines, rivers, animals, humans.¹²² What is supernatural and divine is what is natural. What is spiritual is what is natural, and what is natural is what is real, and what is real is what kami is. So, the sublime becomes the realness of the reality. It becomes the naturalness of the nature. It becomes sensing the Being as such and the ever-becoming phenomena itself. It is not the representation of the unrepresentable in the western sense. It is catching the glimpse of the true phenomenality of the Being (and/or Nothing). This is the real reason why the western inquirer in the beginning said that there is an unfamiliarity, alienation between the aesthetic consideration and the Asian thinking. It is indeed an unfamiliarity, but only in the western sense. East-Asian thought is indeed alien to the ways that are used by the western thought to think about the aesthetics. Western thought thinks about the aesthetics by differentiation. It differs what is aesthetic from what is religious, what is phenomenological, what is ethical and what is real. It then tries to unify and combine them. For this unification and combining, it needs its concepts and terms. But east-Asian thought is alien to this process. Because it doesn't think about what is aesthetical separately from what truly occurs or happens. This means that east-Asian thought is not unfamiliar with the idea of aesthetics, but it is indeed unfamiliar with the considering the phenomenality of the aesthetic and the phenomenality of the reality or nature itself apart from each other. For the east-Asian thought, these are well interconnected and well intertwined.¹²³

Conclusion

Now the relation between the aesthetics and the phenomenality became clearer through the relationship between kami and the sublime. In Japanese aesthetics and phenomenology, the sublime is divine. But it is not divine in the sense of traditional western divine-secular or divine-natural duality. It is divine in the sense that it reveals the true nature of the nature, or to be more precise, nature as such. This phenomenality of the nature, or the kami, or the sublime, is best present in the Japanese Zen Gardens. In the sight of the Zen Gardens, one catches the sense of what's really happening in the phenomenality of the nature, world, whole Being itself. This is a phenomenological and ontological occurring, as much as it is an aesthetical and artistic one. Because when kami dies, its residing place loses its vitality. When the kami of a river dies or leaves the river, the river dries out eventually. When the kami of a mountain dies or leaves the mountain, the mountain will disappear

¹²² J. W. Boyd and R. G. Williams, "Japanese Shinto: An Interpretation of a Priestly Perspective", *Philosophy East and West* 55, 1 (2005): 34-37.

¹²³ And if there were any difference between them, they would be not ontological or phenomenological, which means that, there would be no difference at all. This would seem contradictory to the western thought. That's why just like the western aesthetical consideration is hard to grasp for the east-Asian thought, east-Asian understanding of intertwinedness, or the be more precise, the coalescence of the phenomenology and aesthetics seems incomprehensible or at most like an artistic and literate interpretation, to the western comprehension. It is by the ways of comparative and fusion philosophy that these mutual inapprehensible aspects will lose their incoherence and nonsensical and turn into fertile grounds that the other can enrich its own perspectives to the subject matter. Who knows, maybe the times where the dialogue between Western and East-Asian will enable something out of a single source, just like Heidegger wanted it to happen, and a combination of these two for the solution of word's riddle, just like Nietzsche imagined the future, will come sooner than it is believed to be. It is for sure that it is closer than ever, thanks to the comparative and fusion studies within the philosophy and relevant fields.

throughout time, or maybe more abruptly. So, the kami are essentially related to both metaphysical and physical aspects of the phenomena. It is what really happens in all phenomenology: “Then suddenly it dawned on me – so this is what Shinto holds as divine! No a text or dubious miracles or what someone maybe said or a particular structure but the actual phenomena of the world itself.”¹²⁴ This is the phenomenality of the sublime in the aesthetics. With kami, it is what actually occurs in the world. Therefore, this means that kami and the sublime experience of it manage to set a true phenomenality of the phenomena. This also means that the aesthetics of the sublime sets it. This is a new characteristic for the phenomenality of the aesthetics, which is never encountered in the western thought or theories. So, it can be said that there is no direct similarity between western notion of sublime and the east-Asian understanding of sublime, even though they have resemblances. To go further from this non-similarity and resemblances, one needs to examine deeply how the kami operate and act and how this operations and deeds shaped and create the phenomena and the sublime itself. But, this kind of investigation is well above my own resources and capabilities as a researcher living in nowhere near east-Asia (or, for that matter, nowhere near western world for the full examination of the comparison between them also). So, I kindly wish my fellow researchers from Japan and east-Asia to take up this task make an extensive study regarding this issue.

One last thing to say about the sense of sublimity in Japan is that there is a linguistic trace for this relation between kami and the sublime as well. In Japanese, there are other words than 崇高 (chónggāo) and すうこう (suuko) to articulate the sublime with different connotations. Even though they are not used very often, they still exist when one wants to talk about the sublime. There are rippa 立派 (りつぱ) meaning lofty, magnificent); kōketsu 高潔 (こうけつ) meaning noble, lofty, unsullied. There are also kōmai 高邁 (こうまい) meaning outstanding, exuberant. All these words, even though they are not interchangeable with the 崇高 (chónggāo) or the すうこう (suuko) most of the time, still say something essentially related to the sublime. But alongside this, there are other words related to the notion of sublime, which are probably closer to that notion any of these words above in the phenomenological sense. It is kōgōshii 神々しい, which means *heavenly, sublime, divine, solemn, divineness*, which depends on the usage within the sentence. It can also be written as 神神しい. And there is こうごうしい (kougoisui) which means *empyreal, sublime, empyrean, saintly, angelic, saint-like, sainted, angelical, beatific*. Both words which basically mean “sublime” are a derivation of the word *Kamigamishi*, which, if literally translated, means: *Kami-ish (Kami-like)*. This is the perfect word to sum up the essence of the sublime in the east-Asia. It is the perfect word to present the inner relation between the sublime and the kami. More correctly, this is the phenomenality of the sublime, just like it is godness-ish, just like it is Kami-ish.

¹²⁴ J. K. Nelson, *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine* (London: University of Washington Press, 1996), 26.

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