Introduction to Cosmological Aesthetics through the Kantian Sublime and Nietzschean Dionysian

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Abstract: Can we associate Kant’s principle of transition (Übergang) in Opus Postumum with the Heraclitean logos given that both of them stand as reconciliatory principles or laws, which determine and define the natural forces and concepts of understanding? Construing Übergang as a cosmologic-aesthetic principle, it will be argued that this determination and definition take place and are regulated through human faculties of sense-intuition (Anschauung) and judgment (Urteilskraft). How and to what extent can Kantian Sublime and Nietzschean Dionysian be considered as the aesthetic theories representing the principle of transition? Answering these questions, this paper shall attempt to regenerate a cosmologic-aesthetic understanding of the transition between the macrocosmic forces and microcosmic (human) concepts.

1 Introduction

We do not have the complete versions of either Heraclitus’ peri phuseōs (On Nature) or Kant’s Übergang (Opus Postumum), and this paper is an attempt to present these within a systematic framework supplemented by Kant’s third Critique on one side, and Nietzsche’s writings on aesthetics and pre-Socratics on the other. In that sense, we must first presume and prove that Opus Postumum was Kant’s most pre-Socratic (not logical but cosmological) and especially Heraclitean book given its diverse and comprehensive content covering almost all fields of philosophy. Kant mentions, in Opus Postumum, a new discipline of thought, which aims at explaining the relation between metaphysical principles of natural science and concepts of physical moving forces1. In this process of transition, the concept of motion is the active cause on which all elements of experience rely2. Kant develops his cosmology as a thought analysing and defining the direction, time, quality, relation and modality of the types of the moving forces of matter. He attempted to systematically categorize and define these moving forces of matter in several books and other writings.

2 ibid, p.13
from his first published work, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*, to *Metaphysical Foundations of the Natural Science* and finally *Opus Postumum*.

As it is evident in the title, the building block of the paper is the fruitful comparison between the Kantian sublime and Nietzschean Dionysian since it is necessary to introduce a new theory on human understanding that is able to demonstrate the transitions between nature and art relating cosmology to aesthetics, and these theories will be proven to have done so. An elaborate understanding of the comparison between the Kantian sublime and Nietzschean Dionysian requires higher criteria and principles by which we can observe the affinities and transitions between nature and art, forces and concepts, physics and metaphysics. For both of them are not only conceptual – aesthetic but also dynamic – cosmological theories owing to their relation to nature and human nature at the same time. In Kant’s words, *sublime pushes human mind to apprehend the transition from the sensible stratum to the supersensible substratum* 1. It is also crucial to remember that both Nietzsche’s tragic Dionysian and Kant’s moral sublime attempt to show and set the rules for how we apprehend and understand nature and how the aesthetic concepts are essentially grounded on their transition from/to natural moving forces.

## 2. State of the Art

“What do the concepts **inner** and **outer** come from? And where do such concepts as **right**, **duty**, **freedom**, on the one hand, and **attraction**, **repulsion**, **space occupation**, on the other originate?” 2 Is there a relation or transition between these two sets of concepts?  

Almost all of the Pre-Socratic philosophers began to speculate from the level of *phusis* or *kosmos* and define the ethical, artistic and political concepts according to the dynamics and principles of the whole (*ta panta*). This was an attempt to explain the place and role of microcosmic human existence within a macrocosmic picture. Heraclitus, for example, did not use the categories of logic and “tended to describe the same thing (or roughly the same thing) now as a god, now as a form of matter, now as a

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rule of behaviour or *principle* which was nevertheless a physical constituent of things”¹. The multiple natures and definitions of his *logos* are down to its intermediary role between the different realms of thought (such as cosmology and aesthetics) and strata (microcosm and macrocosm). For instance, as Kirk writes, “The effect of arrangement according to a common plan or measure is that all things, although apparently plural and totally discrete, are really united in a coherent complex of which men themselves are a part, and the comprehension of which is therefore logically necessary for the adequate enactment of their own lives”². However, Kirk continues, “*logos* was probably conceived by Heraclitus at times as an actual component of things, and in many respects it is co-extensive with the primary cosmic constituent, fire”³. This point is very crucial in the discernment of *logos* from *phusis* or the a priori (or natural) moving forces of matter. It also supports our attempt to disprove the Kantian claim that the transition originates from the cosmological (or metaphysical) foundations of the natural science (or *phusis*) or the abstract representation of the moving forces (like fire) confirming, on the contrary, that cosmological foundations or the moving forces originate from the process of transition (or *logos*) to the aesthetic concepts of motion and concepts of *ethos*.

Minar, restating Gigon’s argument on *logos*, confirms that it is the *common* (not only cosmological) law through which all things, motions and concepts are defined and altered: “Gigon has shown very well that in the prologue, reflected fairly completely in fragments 1 and 2, Heraclitus plays on the meaning of Logos and establishes three characteristics of it. It is true, all things come to be in accordance with it, and it is “common”⁴. On the other hand, like Kirk, he rejects any interpretation in terms of pure (scientific) cosmology. This definition of *Logos* as the common principle is thus similar to our “principle of transition” given that it does not claim any primary source for the transition. This is also because it stands as a common principle (neither purely metaphysical nor sensible) that determines the rules and ways of defining the apprehensible forces and intelligible concepts. Therefore, the Heraclitean *logos* differs from the Kantian Übergang according to which the transition begins from the metaphysical or cosmological foundations of motion, due to the fact that while the former claims to be common, communicative, primary, self-

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² ibid, p.187  
³ ibid, p.188  
sufficient and comprehensive, the latter is derivative, secondary and dependent albeit is also common and comprehensive. Waterfield confirms this definition of logos as the common and communicative principle arguing, “it (Logos) comes from the world at large, and is presumably what entitles Heraclitus to describe the world as ‘wise’ in Frag.4. The whole world is intelligent and alive, and speaks to the wise man subtly, communicating its inner nature and enabling him to model himself on it. The best I can do to encompass most of the range of Heraclitus’ meanings is ‘principle’.”

Consequently, Heraclitus uses logos as the principle which sustains the relation between the divine (natural) law and human life and secures the continuity of the orientation of nomos and ethos in the cosmic law by way of regulating the apprehensibility and application of the moving forces of matter through the generation of intelligible concepts. It is not a static comprehensible principle but an ec-static (beyond or out of static) and apprehensible aesthetic principle. Logos is the active mediating principle of motion that communicates human inner and outer senses and finds expression in pure and manifold concepts of understanding. It represents the regulatory essence of both the moving forces beyond time and space, and their transition into concepts through human judgment. It is both the cosmic force of balance that motivates life and the aesthetic principle that regulates the judgment we make on that motivation.

**The Principle of Transition and Kant’s Opus Postumum**

But before arriving at the purity of the cosmologic-aesthetic understanding and Heraclitean logos, we need to answer the following questions. Why do we need this transdisciplinary approach for a better understanding of both Nature and human arts? Why is aesthetics more related and applicable to cosmology than other divisions of metaphysics? One of the arguments we can follow is that cosmology, unlike ontology and theology, is not solely metaphysical but has to relate to physics for the completeness of its conceptual representations. In the Critique of Pure Reason, for instance, Kant defines the cosmical concepts as following: “In regards to the fact that these (cosmological) ideas are all transcendent, and, although they do not transcend appearances as regards their mode, but are concerned solely with the world of ‘sense’ (and not with noumena), nevertheless carry their

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2 Prior to Kant, Wolff and Leibniz define cosmology as a division of metaphysics together with natural theology, psychology and ontology
‘synthesis’ to a degree beyond all possible experience,…we can with perfect propriety designate them ‘cosmical concepts’”¹.

Therefore, any cosmological argument must also refer to the physically sensible moving forces and/or their apprehensible metaphysical foundations, and in that sense, it must also be demonstrated with reference to the way these forces are apprehended.

On the other hand, human sense-intuitions, understanding and judgment are the primary faculties regulating the transition from the phenomenal appearance of forces into intelligible concepts, which is necessarily an aesthetic process². Hence, the inherent relation between aesthetics and cosmology also derives from the proposed view that aesthetics does not solely investigate the appearance of physical objects but must extend its focus in active as well as passive human understanding, sense-intuitions (Anschatung) as well as sense-perceptions (Empfindung)³. The source of any aesthetic concept or judgment related to nature as a whole lies in the way the cosmic forces communicate human inner and outer senses, and hence any aesthetic judgment or concept must also be demonstrated with reference to the way we apprehend the moving forces in nature. This is because the transition occurs only when the moving forces do not exceed the intellectual or intuitive capacities of human mind. Reciprocally, human sense-intuitions and understanding are unable to apprehend and conceptualise any motion beyond their imaginative capacity.

This paper is founded on an elaborate reading of Kant’s Opus Postumum in order both to explore the essential motivation which drove Kant to write a last comprehensive magnum opus (after having completed his critical philosophy) and, by doing so, to show the essential link between his aesthetics and the idea of Übergang (transition from the metaphysical principles to physics) which was chosen by him to be the title of this last work. For this work contains not only his dynamical theory of matter that defines motion within the natures of space and time, and the advanced

2 For a further discussion on the aesthetic character of the principle of transition from the sensible substratum to intelligible substratum, see section XI of Kant’s First Introduction to Critique of the Power of Judgment, where he explicitly shows the systematic foundations of his philosophy
3 The German concept Anschauung refers both to notion, idea and intuition, and to outlook and appearance; in other words, it is the human faculty that reconciles the metaphysical and phenomenal existences of man by way of initiating an immediate and spontaneous transition between the phenomenal and noumenal consciousness. Anschauung is a developed and active faculty when compared to Empfindung which refers to passive immediate sensation or literally ‘finding yourself affected’
version of his philosophy of natural science, but also his arguments for the
phenomenal validity of the metaphysical foundations (or the essential
unity of the theoretical and practical reason), his teachings on the aesthetic
human faculties of judgment and Anschauung (sense-intuition), and the
discernment of the transcendental philosophy from Platonic idealism
carrying it to a rather cosmological level, i.e. Kant’s insertion of the
concept of cosmotheoros. Cosmotheoros, as a principle, is “a basis in idea
for all the unified forces which set the matter of the whole of cosmic space
in motion”\(^1\), and as a person, he is the one “who creates the elements of
knowledge of the world himself, a priori, from which he, as, at the same
time, an inhabitant of the world, constructs a world-vision
[Weiβbeschauung] in the idea”\(^2\). That is why it would not be inappropriate
to characterize the incomplete (but rich and innovative) Opus Postumum,
as the continuation of both Kant’s theory of the sublime and reflective
judgment from the third Critique, and his underlying motivation to
integrate his physics, aesthetics, ethics and metaphysics into a single
philosophical viewpoint like in the philosophical – cosmological systems
of Pre-Socratics. For only in Opus Postumum, Kant began questioning the
validity of the dichotomies between object and subject, matter and form,
phenomenon and noumenon, phusis and ethos, nature and reason, world
and God\(^3\). For only there he mentioned the necessity of an all-
encompassing a priori principle (of transition) from which all these
oppositions derive and through which they exist in unity and balance. This
system is itself the demonstration of the unity and relation of our pure
intuitions of motion, space and time and the conceptual structure of our
thought processes, of the primitive laws of nature and our aesthetic, ethical
and political concepts. But since the process of transition is an aesthetic
process based on the human senses, intuitions and judgments, the
argument will follow that in order to explicate Übergang, we need to
reconcile cosmology, as the oldest branch of philosophy that deals with the
ways the forces of motion affect human life, with aesthetics, as the
youngest branch of philosophy examining how we sense, intuit and judge
the form and motion of matter. Therefore, in the last analysis, Übergang
becomes rather a cosmologic-aesthetic principle similar to the Heraclitean
logos. In that, while the agitating forces condition human perception and
thus conceptualisation, equally and simultaneously, the same forces
acquire their meaning and thus definition in the very same process of

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University Press, p.82
\(^2\) ibid, p.235
\(^3\) Even though this issue will comprehensively be discussed throughout the paper, it will
be elaborated specifically in the section where I discuss Heraclitean logos and
Heideggerian critique of conventional metaphysics
transition. Since this process is itself the determinant of the rules of the acts of cognition, the logical self-consciousness is not the determining act but the determined product of this very process.

The aforementioned arguments must also be confirmed by a discussion of the commentaries of pioneering scholars of Kant on *Opus Postumum* like Förster, Tuschling, Guyer, Mathieu and Zammito. In general Kantian philosophy, cosmical concepts cover the *synthesis* of noumena and phenomena as they can only accomplish their transition from appearances through human senses, and thus through the *aesthetic* understanding. Nevertheless, on the general spectrum of the first *Critique*, Förster notes, “the fundamental a priori determinations of a “nature in general” were the proper subject of this book, not the systematic unity of an empirical science”\(^1\). This is also valid for *Opus Postumum*. But then, what is new in the latter? Why did Kant feel the need to write a post-critical *Opus* when everyone was convinced of the completeness of his philosophical system after the third *Critique*? Kant’s answer is that he found a new principle, which would bridge his system of nature and the systems of pure understanding and reason. This new principle, I argue, is not a logical but a “cosmological” principle. It is not just transcendental (at least in the sense of its use in the first *Critique*) because it tries to justify its existence through the empirical intuitions activated by the moving forces. Tuschling is right when he says Kant is not content with his transcendental deductions in the first *Critique*; according to the new principle however, the concept of an object of possible experience begins to point at the universality of the experience. Förster too agrees that transition is the principle according to which basic forms and concepts can be thought within an all-encompassing system\(^2\).

In the first *Critique*, as Tuschling puts, Kant’s argument was that “the apprehension of the manifold of an empirical intuition can only be an intuition of a particular something (of apparent objects) because it is necessarily related to those concepts by which an object is thought… because all existence, as existence of possible or actual contents of experience and objects of a cognizant subject, is subject to the conditions of conceptual synthesis or unity of thought”\(^3\). This can also be verified by Kant’s argument that for the achievement of pure concepts of

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\(^2\) ibid, p.115

understanding, and not just concepts void of content governed by mere logical forms, the rules or conditions under which the objects are in harmony with the concepts must be determined a priori through empirical intuition and power of judgment. The metaphysical foundations of the natural science provide sense and meaning to the empty concepts of understanding. However, Kant slightly alters this line of argument in Opus Postumum where he recognizes that apprehension and the formation of the empirical intuition are themselves subject to a priori rule or principle that all life “belongs to a single cosmic, dynamic system.” So, Tuschling rightly questions the possibility of a priori being of an object of empirical intuition without the apprehension of the process of its relation to the cosmological system: “Kant must also explain perception and how it is possible, not only with respect to its form seen as subject to a cosmological system of forces or primordial matter.”

Opus Postumum also launches a new theory of aesthetics based on a new a priori principle introducing the mediating character of the power of reflective judgment and the crucial role of motion and moving forces in the determinative concepts of understanding and regulative ideas of reason. This new theory begins with the picturing of the concepts of understanding as a whole or from a cosmological level, and this new aesthetics is beyond Kant’s theory of taste and analytic of the beautiful. Mathieu, for instance, argues for the succession in Kant’s argumentation in his three last major books: Metaphysical Foundations, Critique of Judgment and Opus Postumum, even though their contents are different, the first ground for a science of nature, second for an aesthetic of nature (especially the second half), and last for the transition between these grounds. What interests us in this paper is the relation between the second and the last book of this alleged trilogy. Mathieu defends this relation through the unifying role of the subjective principle of reflective judgment and thus its indispensable requirement of any science or art of transition. Even though Förster tries to rule out this argument of Mathieu, he cannot

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3 ibid.
help but concluding his book on Kant’s final synthesis with Hölderlin (using his aphorism ‘I regard reason as the beginning of the understanding’) which is evidently a sign of his recognition of the intermediary role of aesthetics and reflective judgment (bridging understanding and reason). At this point, I argue that Opus Postumum, as Kant’s major work composed after the third Critique, is the continuation both of his theory of sublime and of the second part of the third Critique, where he theorizes the relation between empirical and rational, a posteriori and a priori determining principles of the power of aesthetic judgment.

Even though Kant’s last major work must be seen as complementary to the third Critique and Kantian aesthetics in general, what is new in Opus Postumum is Kant’s argument that “the objective element in appearance presupposes the subjective in the moving forces; or conversely, the empirical element in perception presupposes the form of composition of the moving forces with respect to what is mechanical”¹. This quotation functions as a deconstruction of the general Kantian subject – object dichotomy and demonstrates the necessity of a comprehensive analysis of the physical essence of the metaphysical principles or the transition from the natural moving forces to the concepts of motion through human faculty of Judgment and the metaphysical essence of the physical forces or the transition from the apperception of the aesthetic intuition to a priori principle of motion hidden in appearance again through human Judgment. Moreover, Förster argues, “The analysis of judgments of taste for the first time showed the power of judgment to be a separate cognitive faculty with its own a priori principle: Nature for the sake of judgment, specifies its universal laws to empirical ones, according to the form of a logical system”². This a priori principle yields the laws of transition as prerequisite for the redefinition of systematic empirical doctrines as a priori apprehensible within the regulated format generated in the faculty of the power of judgment. This proves the necessity of consulting with transcendental or “cosmological” aesthetics for the completeness of any argument made on Opus Postumum.

In support of the previous arguments on the inherent relation between Opus Postumum and the third Critique, both Guyer and Zammito agree that Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment is an attempt to demonstrate the relation and prove the necessity of Transition between nature and freedom. Kant claims the existence of an incalculable gulf fixed between

the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of human nature, as the supersensible, so that from the former to the latter no transition is possible, just as if they were two different worlds. “But that these two different domains, which are inevitably limited not to be sure in their legislation but still in their effects in the sensible world, do not constitute one domain, stems from this: that the concept of nature certainly makes its objects representable in intuition, but not as things in themselves, rather as mere appearances”\(^1\). However, he also argues for the necessity of a common ground for the two domains, something that “nevertheless makes possible the transition from the manner of thinking in accordance with the principles of the one to that in accordance with the principles of the other”\(^2\). In *Opus Postumum*, he puts it as following: “Nature and freedom are two hinges (principles) of philosophy, founding it”\(^3\). In summarizing the abovementioned arguments, the forces of nature can only acquire meaning through their transition to the concept of freedom. Adhering one hinge of philosophy to another, the transition requires the mediation of the detached (disinterested) human understanding and the power of free reflective judgment.

The argument for the necessity of the free reflective judgment (which is thus considered to be the telos of nature) for the possibility of aesthetic understanding leads us to the question, why did Kant bring aesthetics and natural teleology together in the third *Critique*? According to Guyer, this is because aesthetic judgments about the beautiful and the sublime and teleological judgments about nature as a whole “are both instances of…reflecting judgment, a use of judgment that seeks to discover a concept for a particular object that is given to it rather than to find a particular object to which to apply a concept that it already has”\(^4\). While aesthetic can be coupled with the cognitive judgments, natural teleology refers to “determining judgment” and must rather be categorized as non-cognitive judgment. As Guyer asserts, “Kant’s deepest reason for connecting aesthetics and teleology in a single book…is that both aesthetic and teleological judgment lead us to look at products of nature and indeed all of nature itself – and in his theory of genius Kant will imply that even works of fine art must be considered to be gifts of nature”\(^5\). Allison too underlines Kant’s argument in the introduction of the third *Critique*

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\(^2\) ibid, p.63
\(^5\) ibid.
concerning the conciliatory role of the aesthetic faculty of Judgment. However, again, what all these writers do not regard is that neither the idea of freedom nor the concept of nature, but rather the principle of transition presented in Opus Postumum (which takes place through human intuition and which is regulated by human judgment) is the common source for both hinges of philosophy.

Consequently, it should be admitted that the new principle introduced in Opus Postumum not only complements but also, revising Kantian metaphysics as a whole, encompasses particularly the third Critique among others. In that sense, I agree with Förster’s argument that the primary motivation behind Opus Postumum cannot solely be attributed to the problems and ideas arising in Kant’s theory of the reflective judgment. Rather, I support the view that the third Critique itself (especially from the section on the sublime onwards) was a product of the very unresolved motivation that possessed Kant throughout his philosophy, which ended up with the unfinished Opus Postumum. And that is precisely why the reading of Kant must begin with his last work.

**The Kantian Sublime**

Another building block of the paper is the fruitful comparison between the Kantian sublime and Nietzschean Dionysian, which are going to be construed as the aesthetic theories on human understanding representing the transition from nature to art. Bearing the abovementioned arguments in mind concerning the transition between the natural forces and aesthetic concepts, now I will try to examine how we take nature in and apply it to the concepts of understanding with regards to the sublime and Dionysian. In doing so, the Kantian sublime shall be handled both cosmologically and aesthetically, both as the aesthetic representation of Universality or kosmos, and as an idea generated within the faculty of the power of Judgment, which schematises the transition from the sensible to supersensible. In the Critique of the Power of Judgment, Kant defines the sublime as the presentation of an indefinite concept of Reason symbolizing the formless and boundless idea or feeling which has developed from the Idea of the Object of Nature, and which pleases immediately in multiple ways but communicates with thought as one totality ascribed to Nature. According to this cosmological viewpoint, the sublime is a “whole” rather than an individual object and therefore it is absolutely great but equally incomprehensible (if not entirely inapprehensible) by human mind since it

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requires a supersensible purely intuitive faculty as an extension of the mind which feels itself able in another (practical) point of view to go beyond the limit of sensibility. In Kant’s theory of aesthetics, Nature is considered somehow distinct from human beings. However, Kant also acknowledges Nature as the source of any sublime feeling and movement in the faculties of the human mind. In that sense, the motion in nature and the movement occurring in the aesthetic faculties are essentially linked not only by way of their affects but also of their source.

“Nature considered in aesthetic judgment as a power that has no dominion over us, is dynamically sublime.” Kant associates power, motion and energy with dynamically sublime, but confines our aesthetical judgment on the sublime in nature. The might of the natural object (as the amalgam of the abovementioned characteristics) is apprehended via the greatness of the resistance that can only be developed in human rationality again through a necessary separation of human mind from Nature so as to ensure the outcome of a free aesthetical judgment on it. For Guyer, Kant’s dynamically sublime is rather “a feeling that suggests a certain interpretation that we can only spell out by means of concept, but at the same time gives us a certain palpable sense of the validity of those concepts before we have even spelled them out.” In other words, for Kant, it is impossible to achieve a comprehension of our Nature via Imagination and here, the sublime, to which the subjective purposiveness directed represents the Nature beyond the achievability of human mind. Thus, since nature itself is unattainable, we have to and can only identify and examine nature with its phenomenal representation without really knowing but only intuiting and apprehending its essential sublimity.

As Zammito rightly accentuates, “now we can fully appreciate how profoundly Kant intended his claim that the essence of the sublime was its aspect of “relation,” i.e., the relation of the sensible to supersensible. Kant introduces the faculty of judgment as an intermediary faculty relating the particular to the universal, the sensible to the supersensible, and the microcosm to macrocosm: “The concept which originally arises from the power of judgment and is proper to it is that of nature as art, in other

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2 ibid, sec.28, p.143
words that of the technique of nature with regard to its particular laws”\(^1\). In that sense, when one makes a judgment about the things and forces in nature (including himself and all human beings), he unconsciously universalizes the particulars reshaping, categorizing and hence transforming them into Ideas. In *Observations* Kant directly and unsystematically identifies the sublime with the moral, exalted, virtuous, honorable, dutiful action and the good will insofar as they are built upon proper universality: “…when universal affection toward the human species has become a principle within you to which you always subordinate your actions…it has been placed to its true relation to your total duty…Now as soon as this feeling has arisen to its proper universality, it has become sublime”\(^2\). In another part of the same essay, he claims, “…true virtue can be grafted only upon principles such that the more general they are, the more sublime and noble it becomes”\(^3\). Therefore, in *Observations* Kant rhetorically declares that *the sublimity is not the essential characteristic of a moral feeling, but rather the latter acquires sublimity by way of its universalization*. However, in the third *Critique*, he replaces the ‘feeling of the sublime’ with the ‘judgment on the idea of the sublime’, which requires the intervention, and ultimate dominion of the faculty of Reason and which, due to its initially supersensible and consequently rational character, involves a stronger possibility of universalizability.

Setting *universalizability* as the main criterion for his theory of the sublime, Kant criticizes the Burkean definition of sublime construing it as a mere feeling, which rests on an impulse towards self-preservation and fear due to the movement it produces and purification, excitement and satisfying horror it stimulates. Thus, Burkean sublime can only be demonstrated through psychological observations and phenomenological analysis of the human mind; in short as something neither philosophical nor universalizable. On the other hand, Kant suggests,

“It is not the pleasure but the universal validity of this pleasure perceived in the mind as connected with mere judging of an object that is represented in a judgment of taste as a universal rule for the power of judgment valid for everyone”\(^4\).

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\(^3\) ibid, p.60

Accordingly, he accentuates the necessity of a transcendental (or cosmological) ground for all of our aesthetical judgments. While the beautiful object pictured by Imagination ought to arrive at its conceptual representation in Understanding, the sublime in nature ought to be concluded as a rational (and potentially moral) Idea in order to become universal. In that sense, Kant distinguishes our judgments on the beautiful in nature and those on the sublime in nature mainly in terms of their respective levels of universality. He asserts that while the more universalizable the former is due to its objective relation to the faculty of Understanding, the less the latter due to its qualitative dependence on the subjective (and thus social) faculty of practical Reason (which is developed according to the level of cultural maturity). The feeling of the sublime primarily stems from human nature since it takes place thanks to the dissonance between human reason and imagination stimulated by the inadequacy of Nature as a whole to human mind. In other words, human Imagination would always fail to capture an exact mental picture of Nature, and thus contradictorily defines it as both terrible and attractive. This universal natural feeling underpins every cultural description and representation of the sublimity of Nature. However, its final acknowledgment ranges from terrible (in immature barbarian cultures) to moral sublime (in the most mature educated cultures). Therefore, Kant actually draws attention to the potential for morality present in human nature and associates this with the feeling of sublime in nature by means of their formative relativity to the faculty of the practical Reason although only under a subjective presupposition ascribed to everyone.

Nietzschean Aesthetics, the Dionysian and Tragic Chorus

Similarly, in Nietzschean aesthetics, this sublime movement (stimulated by the Dionysian art) appears to be posited as the feeling occurring via the reconciliation of the outer sensible nature and inner intuitive nature or the final apprehension of the oneness; in other words, as the essential unity of the moving forces and the human understanding which actually is one of these objects of Nature. In this section on the Dionysian, it is going to be proved that not only is it an aesthetic theory that links Nature (phusis) to Human Nature (ethos) as it is represented in the Chorus in Greek Tragedy which plays an intermediary role between the gods and humans, but also is the symbolic representation of the universally valid and entirely senseless

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1 This argument entirely contradicts his early account in his Observation to which the character of a feeling is sublime insofar as it is universal and deducible to human nature in general.

pure cosmic forces that require Apollonian form and sense-giving force for its actualization. Nietzsche theorizes his own Dionysian, beyond the Kantian Sublime and Schopenhauerian reconstruction of it. For Kant, it is impossible to achieve a schema of our Nature via Imagination and here, the sublime, to which the subjective purposiveness directed represents the Nature beyond the achievability of human mind (or the cosmic nature). Thus, since nature itself is unattainable, we have to and can only identify and examine nature with its artistic representations. Nietzsche claims that we cannot “know” the essential truths of the Nature but he adds that at least there is an achievable “middle world between beauty and truth...The world reveals itself in a playing with intoxication, not in complete entrapment by it”\(^1\). This is “the artistic middle world of the Olympians. In order to be able to live, the Greeks were obliged, by the most profound compulsion, to create these gods”\(^2\).

As for further confirmation of the intermediary nature of Nietzsche’s theory of the Dionysian, Del Caro, in his essay on Nietzsche’s transfiguration of the Dionysian suggests, “the Dionysian is not a religion in the sense that requires religious faith or needs dogma to defend it. In fact, the Dionysian properties are conducive to life-affirmation...for Nietzsche Dionysus became a ‘philosopher god’ or with less fanfare, a human”\(^3\). Nietzsche’s tendency to unveil the Dionysian myth within human nature is very apparent even in the early Dionysian which he describes as “the god who experiences the sufferings of individuation in his own person (like the tragic hero...and who) has a double nature; he is both cruel, savage demon and mild, gentle ruler”\(^4\). In that sense, Dionysus is both god and human, he is an aesthetic symbol of the transition between the godly, deified natural forces and the concepts of human understanding; he is the best representation of this metaphysical transition thanks to his dual nature which originates from the most complex and deepest insights and forces within human nature\(^5\).

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Zarathustra is the best example to illustrate Nietzsche’s argument on the sublimation or deification of these forces. In the section called “Those Who Are Sublime”, Nietzsche echoes the Dionysian-Apollonian amalgamation he defended in Birth of Tragedy for the creation of the sublime art of tragedy where he argues for the final embodiment of the sublime and beautiful in overhero who is internally hard and enduring (substantial), and externally more beautiful and gentle (joyful)1. In Ecce Homo, he describes Zarathustra as the most affirmative spirit or the overman who says the loudest ‘Yes’ to life, while embodying all oppositions in human nature such as the sweetest (the beautiful) and the most terrible (the sublime)2. In the Will To Power, he apparently personifies Dionysus (to which he dedicates his last book) as the overman who has completed his transformation and has become a man with stronger instincts (like Zarathustra): “he instinctively gathers from all that he sees, hears, experiences, what advances his main concern—he follows a principle of selection”3. As the half-human – half-god, Dionysian materializes his cosmological existence through its embodiment of beauty and consciousness, and he accomplishes this via aesthetic human understanding and reflective human judgment. Therefore, it would also not be wrong to call the overman a superabundant man who undergoes a double overcoming. He transcends his old values, rational categories and moral norms, thereby first leading to his deification, or projection towards the eternal cosmic unity previously disrupted in the name of metaphysical illusions, deities and other ideal objects; but then purified from the metaphysical illusions and descended and returned back to the human realm as a metamorphosed individual-god overman who has internalized or discovered the eternal motion and consciously become a part of it: “Your will and your valuations you have placed on the river of becoming; and what the people believe to be good and evil, that betrays to me an ancient will to power”4. However, it is important to note that Nietzsche’s concept of will to power is very ambiguous and must be distinguished from the concept of ‘will’ and defined through ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’.

Observe, for instance, the following crucial passage from *Twilight of the Idols*:

“In the beginning there was the great disaster of an error, the belief that the will is a thing with causal efficacy, - that will is a faculty … These days we know that it is just a word… Much, much later, in a world more enlightened in thousand ways, philosophers, to their great surprise, became conscious of a certainty, a subjective assurance in the way the categories of reason were applied: they concluded that these categories could not have come from the empirical world, - in fact, the entirety of the empirical world stood opposed to them. So where did they come from? …In fact, nothing has ever had a more naïve power of persuasion than the error of being”\(^1\)

Especially the second part contains a very Heraclitean stance when criticizing the metaphysics of being on the ground of its empirical (physical) groundlessness and functions against most of the post-Platonic and modern philosophical traditions including the German idealism based on Kant’s doctrines.

The new formation of Nietzsche’s late Dionysian is also apparent in the concluding dialogue between Nietzsche and Dionysus in *Beyond Good and Evil* in which he, on the one hand, restates Dionysus as the tempter god who descends and tempts human souls and encourages them to explore their inner nature (as the representations of the moving forces in nature), to “make them stronger, more evil and more profound than they are”\(^2\), on the other, he adds, through this interaction, Dionysus imparts the idea of beauty with its necessary amalgamation with the Apollonian side of human nature for its aesthetic realization in the human world. Late Nietzschean aesthetics is mainly ingrained in the argument that all metaphysical deities are the outcomes of the transformation of the apprehensions and apperceptions of human senses into highest spirituality from which the real joy in life arises and by which the human existence is justified: “the most sensual functions are finally transfigured by a symbol-intoxication of the highest spirituality: they experience a kind of

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deification of the body in themselves”¹. And Nietzsche defines this highest aesthetic achievement of human kind as the aesthetic transfiguration or deification of human nature.

In Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche explicitly disapproves of the conception of beauty in contemporary aesthetics which has entirely ignored the substantial qualities of the beautiful and the sublime: “What a spectacle our aestheticians present as they lash about, with movements that are to be judged neither by the standard of eternal beauty nor of the sublime…an aesthetic pretext for their own sober-sided, impoverished sensibility”². Nietzsche furthers his critique on the weaknesses of the rationalist and objectivist accounts of aesthetical education in the following section where he declares its confrontation with the true art, tragedy which celebrates its rebirth with Goethe, Schiller³ and Wagner: “We understand why such debilitated education hates true art, for it fears that it will be destroyed by it”⁴. The “true art” for Nietzsche is evidently the Dionysian or the tragic art, or the art that destroys the veil of beauty and depicts the ugly, formless, unmediated forces inherent in human nature. Then, he accuses contemporary aesthetics of misinterpreting tragedy as the consequential triumph of the universal moral order and in doing so, lacking the ability to make a substantial analysis of human drives and the forces affecting them represented in the tragic art: “they (aestheticians) never tire of characterizing the true essence of tragedy as the struggle of the hero with fate, the triumph of a universal moral order”⁵. This critique is mainly directed against the sublime in Kantian aesthetics which is associated with tragedy (in the Observations) and which is used as the primary link between morality and aesthetics via the faculty of Reason. Construing tragedy as the supreme art above and beyond the moral categories and principles, Nietzsche defines the morally sublime as impure due to its consequential resort to the territory of ethical condolence down to the feelings it evokes such as pity and fear. However, he builds his aesthetics

² ibid, sec.19, p.94
³ Nietzsche’s attitude about Schiller and Romanticism as a whole is very controversial. Generally, on the one hand, he confirms that Schiller enriches and develops the aesthetics in German culture; on the other, he disapproves of Schiller’s appreciation of Kantian ideal that the aesthetic education of individuals must lead to the transformation from the “Natural State into a Moral one” (Schiller, Friedrich. (1967) On the Aesthetic Education of Man, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.13)
neither on an antithesis of the moralizing tendency in art nor on l’art pour l’art which would render art and life purposeless and pointless. Rather, in the *Twilight of the Idols*, he explicitly announces that art is “the great stimulus to life”\(^1\). This must be considered as the representation of the artist’s most basic inspirations that are rooted in the senseless cosmic forces represented by the Dionysian. But, due to the senselessness of the forces, the tragic artist must communicate the ugliest, harshest, questionable, and fearful aspects of life so as to create a motive, disturbing and purposeful art which can stimulate the spectator’s understanding and imagination projecting a middle world in which the chorus resides\(^2\). This entails a pure demonstration of the tragic transition between the forces in nature and pure concepts of human life.

Nietzsche suggests that the most successful tragic artists who could achieve an aesthetic understanding of the forces affecting human life are Aeschylus and Sophocles because the intermediary role of the Chorus in Greek Tragedy between the gods and humans is never more apparent than in the plays of these poets. The tragic chorus, as the primary element of the early Greek tragedy, offers various background information, comments and recitation so as to substantiate the act. It functions as a mediator between the actor and spectator, truth and appearance, inside and outside. The chorus, especially in Sophocles, provides insight for the characters about the truth they are afraid of but strive for. In Aeschylean tragedy chorus is the main performer and tragedy itself is derivative of the chorus and not the other way around. Walton argues that the tragedy presented in the plays of Aeschylus is a highly developed, complex, and totally serious dramatic form, displaying the slightest links only with Dionysus and completely ignoring his revelling companions\(^3\). This is mainly because Aeschylus is talented in raising the content of a particular story to the level of a general process in history and thus rendering it more universal and atemporal. On the other hand, Sophocles achieves the same result by making his tragedy as individual as possible through universalising the hero. By contrast, Chorus in Aeschylus, as the narrating divine judge, tells the story using the language of divine gods. In other words, Aeschylean tragedy begins and continues in the divine, universal or cosmological level depicting the individual tragedies within a general framework comprised of pure natural forces acting through aesthetic concepts. According to Nietzsche, Aeschylus demonstrates the sublime in the “Olympian justice”

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\(^2\) ibid, pp.204-205

in which gods and men are in subjective communality through their constant reciprocal influence, i.e. the intermingling of the character of human and that of gods: “the divine, the just, the moral, and the happy are seen by him as being intertwined in a unified whole”\(^1\). On the other hand, Sophocles finds sublimity in the obscurity of justice in life, in the complexity of the transfiguring force of suffering and in the puzzles of human existence through his demonstration of human nature with its terrible fragility. Nietzsche further argues that the artist embodying the tragic sublime goes beyond senses, beyond the realm of beauty, although in so doing, he does not seek truth but probability, not beauty but semblance. Thus, the sublime is here construed by Nietzsche as the representative of the disturbing terrors of existence and unreasonable but planned nature of events\(^2\). These events can only be apprehensible intuitively and they appear to be the source of suffering due to their causing the removal of the veil of beauty.

Nietzsche brings out the tragic chorus’ function of intermediary between the metaphysical ideas (or noumena) and the world of phenomena: “just as tragedy, with its metaphysical solace, points to the eternal life of that core of being despite the constant destruction of the phenomenal world, the symbolism of the chorus of satyrs is in itself a metaphysical expression of that original relationship between the thing-in-itself and phenomenon”\(^3\). However, in accordance with the principle of transition, Homeric gods referred to by the tragic chorus are not simply the deified representations of human passions but actually the human reconstruction of the cosmic forces (affecting on human nature) through direct or indirect association with aesthetic concepts. And the qualitative changes rooted in this reconstruction, Heraclitus argues, are not arbitrary but according to logos or the laws regulating the continuous change, the laws through which the forces of phusis and aesthetic concepts continue to exist in balance, the laws of the transition between them.

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\(^2\) A Heraclitean argument by Nietzsche referring to his concept of the natural justice and order incomprehensible by human mind


Conclusion

The main argument defended in this paper can be summarized thus: Transition is what makes stratum sensible, and substratum supersensible. For the forces in nature can only acquire meaning and identity through the supersensible concepts of understanding, and these concepts of understanding are alive and substantial insofar as they continue to represent these forces. Transition is thus the principle from which both the cosmic forces and aesthetic concepts derive. And this transition is only apprehensible because it functions simultaneously. The reason for this simultaneity, I argue, is that neither metaphysical nor physical, neither noumenal nor phenomenal exist independent of their transition to and from each other and of a mind that initiates or apprehends this transition, for their primary qualities derive from this very process. In other words, it is not the metaphysical principles which define the transition, but the transition defines these seemingly separate realms of thought since the principle of transition itself (like the Heraclitean logos) determines the ways the forces of nature (phusis) are apprehended, and aesthetic, political, ethical and legal concepts are understood and defined. As the Greek tragedy was born from the spirit of the Dionysian aesthetics, the Nature is apprehended and represented through the generation of the Sublime ideas, and logos as transition is the determinant and creator of both phusis and ethos, because the concepts of understanding are the products of the ways of apprehension and conceptualisation of the cosmic forces.

References