

## Discussion

### A Case for Kantian Artistic Sublimity: A Response to Abaci

Uygar Abaci's excellent article "Kant's Justified Dismissal of Artistic Sublimity" reopens and contributes to the debate concerning the possibility of Kantian artistic sublimity.<sup>1</sup> Abaci argues that genuine instances of an aesthetic judgment of Kantian sublimity cannot be elicited by art, although we can apply the logical predicate "sublime" to certain genres in what would constitute a nonaesthetic and logical judgment (p. 237). His article concludes that any attempt to extract a theory of artistic sublimity from Kant's text with genuinely Kantian conceptions of sublimity and art is "bound to fail" (p. 249). Attempting to understand and interpret the sublime on Kant's own terms, Abaci is less concerned to evaluate Kant's position than to argue that his lack of an account of artistic sublimity is "theoretically justified" (p. 237). The way in which a judgment of the sublime is elicited is central to Abaci's argument. By "way," Abaci means the subjectively purposive, negative, indirect, and free way in which an object without a purposive form provides the occasion for the free harmony of reason and imagination even in their conflict (pp. 241, 248).

Although Kant undoubtedly emphasizes the natural sublime, I argue that this does not imply that there is no room for artistic sublimity in the Kantian conceptual framework. I will offer the reasons for my position under three main headings: the fundamental role of ideas, impure sublimity, and the conception of art.

#### I. THE FUNDAMENTAL ROLE OF IDEAS

As Abaci recognizes (p. 250n7), several commentators such as Dunham and Kirwan read Kant as

holding that art can elicit the sublime.<sup>2</sup> They take this position because they maintain that the sublime has an ultimately mental character and that rational ideas play a unique and important role in the experience. I believe they are correct.

Strictly speaking, an idea of reason, not nature or art, elicits the sublime. The object is only the stimulus for the mental movement. An artistic object can act as a stimulus to the experience as much as a natural one. In fact, Abaci notes this: "One line of thought would be that if what is truly sublime is found in the mind rather than the object itself, then there is no ultimate ground for distinguishing between natural and artistic objects" (p. 239); "It also seems as though this object does not necessarily have to be natural" (p. 241). He admits that this "seems to be a tempting idea," but claims that it has the drawback of taking objects of judgments of sublimity in isolation from the "broader context" to which they belong (p. 239). This context is nature, which purportedly gives the experience of the sublime its distinctive character. However, it seems to beg the question simply to assert that the objects of judgments of sublimity must belong to a broader context understood as nature.

As Abaci acknowledges (p. 239), Kant rejects the view that nature itself is actually sublime (KU 5:245; §23).<sup>3</sup> But, for precisely that reason, Kant would reject the view that art is sublime. The two cases stand or fall together. The ideas of reason, especially moral ideas, incite the experience of the sublime. We can become explicitly aware of these ideas in response to *art*. Artworks can express moral ideas and move us to reflect imaginatively on these ideas.

Abaci makes another claim that seems to concede this point about ideas. He notes that for

Kant even *small* objects of nature could elicit the sublime (p. 239). What matters is the perceiving subject's vantage point or distance from the object and capacity to reflect imaginatively on a rational idea that the object brings to mind. The sublime is not a function of the object's size or power, this suggests, but of the ideas in the mind. But if this is so, it seems that art can elicit the sublime.

## II. IMPURE SUBLIMITY

Since ideas are fundamental, how should we conceive of the role they play in the actual act of judging? I suggest that we need an account of impure sublimity (on analogy with impure beauty). Abaci mentions impure sublimity but does not elaborate this notion adequately: "The most we can get from the *Critique* is impure, restricted, and still problematic cases of artistic sublimity, but by no means a coherent theory" (p. 237). Note that this claim does not deny the possibility of artistic sublimity. It allows for impure sublimity in response to art. Since the latter counts as genuine sublimity (just as impure beauty counts as genuine beauty), there can be sublimity in response to art.

Abaci cites (pp. 239–240) important passages from the "Analytic of the Sublime" (KU 5:252–253; §26) and the "General Remark" (KU 5:270). Kant clarifies that he is using examples of *pure* sublimity. I believe Kant begins with these pure cases for mainly pedagogical reasons. The parallel with beauty is noteworthy. Recall that impure beauty for Kant is a kind of beauty in which the judging subject incorporates a notion of the end of the object into the judgment. Kant starts off with an explanation of free or pure beauty but later complicates this with a theory of impure beauty and an account of rational and aesthetic ideas. Just as it would be a mistake to focus exclusively on free beauty or to take it as the representative kind of beauty, as formalist interpreters have done, so it would be incorrect not to take into account dependent or impure sublimity. Like impure beauty, impure sublimity can be elicited by natural and artistic objects alike.

Rather than discussing impure sublimity, Abaci chooses to read a case of the sublime that is restricted or constrained by concepts as an instance of the sublime "mixed up" with beauty

(p. 243), a notion from the early (1764) *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*. But a case of the sublime restricted by concepts would be an instance of impure sublimity, not the *Observations'* magnificent (*Prächtigt*) sublime (*Observations* 2:209). The pre-Critical magnificent sublime and impure sublimity are quite different.

How aware of the idea of freedom is the subject when he judges? Abaci believes that the subject is consciously or explicitly aware of his freedom in the experience of the sublime, but this is too strong a claim. Kant deals with this issue in terms of a subreption. (Since humanity for Kant involves and contains the concept of freedom, I assume that if the judge is explicitly aware of the idea of his humanity, he is aware of his freedom.) In a subreption, according to Kant, the subject gives respect to the object of the judgment of the sublime rather than to the idea of humanity in his subject (KU 5:257; §27). In my opinion, Kant maintains that the subreption or error *sometimes* occurs. It happens frequently but not always. In fact, Abaci is inconsistent about whether the subreption never or sometimes occurs (p. 240; p. 241; p. 250n12). Nevertheless, I take Abaci's stated view to be that freedom is always revealed in the sublime. In my view, Kant does not hold that there is always a direct realization of one's freedom during an experience of the sublime. Abaci's interpretation makes the *aesthetic* experience of the sublime too cognitive and self-reflective regarding one's freedom. Abaci seems to hold that if there is an experience of the sublime, the judge explicitly reflects on his freedom. But this reading seems too strong. He also seems to hold that if the judge explicitly reflects on his freedom, it is only nature that can cause this reflection. But this again is dubitable, for art can incite a judge to reflect on his freedom. Abaci's stated view that freedom (or "autonomy") is always revealed thus weakens his position. He relies on too strict a notion of freedom in the sublime. He rejects the sublime in art partly because he has too narrow an interpretation of the role of freedom. Finally, his notions of "moral autonomy" (p. 241) and freedom are not sufficiently distinct. Moral autonomy and freedom (the capacity to act or, alternatively, to be a first cause) are quite different for Kant. The dynamical sublime could disclose the capacity to act, but fail to reveal (as the moral sublime does) the capacity for *moral* autonomy.<sup>4</sup>

## III. THE CONCEPTION OF ART

As Abaci notes, the nature–art divide in Kant’s aesthetics is not as deep as it appears. If nature actually plays a role in the production of art, Abaci’s thesis that only nature can elicit the sublime is dubious, since “nature” might very well elicit the sublime *through* art. Abaci does not fully explain why he rejects artistic sublimity while at the same time (1) (correctly) questioning the nature–art *distinction* in Kant’s aesthetics and (2) holding (again correctly) that a work of artistic genius is a product of *nature* (p. 243). Both of these views are in tension with Abaci’s thesis.

There are other problems with his discussion of art. Abaci mentions a painting of a high mountain that by means of perceptual illusion evokes a feeling of infinity (p. 247). We are deceived into perceiving it as if it were natural. This picture would lead us to a perceptual failure accompanied by an awakening of the idea of infinity or greatness in us. But this means it would lead to an experience of the sublime. The example thus supports the case for artistic sublimity. Indeed, Abaci admits that if we pretend that we are looking at the depicted mountain and reconstruct the possible perceptual effect of it on us, the painting would evoke sublimity. Abaci calls this scenario quite “unlikely” (p. 247), but he admits its possibility. He thus undermines his own position.

Moreover, there are even better examples of artworks that elicit sublimity. In an interesting passage in the fifth section (p. 246), Abaci mentions Frank Stella, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and other artists (Richard Serra comes to mind) whose works function as perceptual settings for the sublime. Such works are not imitations and representations of the natural sublime (as are some works by Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole, and Caspar David Friedrich). We can refer to the former as Stella-Serra cases. Instead of *representing* objects traditionally deemed sublime, Stella-Serra cases *present* or evoke the sublime. Under the right conditions, we can make a judgment of the sublime in response to these works. Abaci’s supposed problem with these examples is that the appropriate combination of visual elements is *purposive*. The form of the artwork is so determined as to create the effect of formlessness on the human perceptual makeup (p. 247). But it is unclear how this is a problem. Consider the parallel case of beauty. The fact that an artwork, which has a determinate form

and is purposive, is intended by the artist to elicit a pleasant experience of beauty does not mean that for Kant we cannot experience its beauty. The argument from purposiveness is unconvincing.

Abaci’s discussion of Saint Peter’s Basilica also seems to strengthen my position. As Abaci notes, Kant mentions the basilica as an example of an object that elicits the mathematical sublime (p. 240). I can look at this intentionally created work of architecture as a mere magnitude. I overlook the fact that it is purposively created. Abaci considers this possibility, but for some reason backs away from it: “One may ask whether vast works of art can be represented as ‘mere magnitudes’ rather than as objects that bring their ends in themselves, and this may be what Kant has in mind when giving examples from architecture for the mathematical sublime” (p. 240; see also p. 245). Abaci never shows why we cannot appreciate works of art aesthetically as mere magnitudes. Of course, I could also see the structure *as* a created, purposive work rather than a mere magnitude. Indeed, we need the pure–impure sublimity distinction to help us understand such cases.

Kant uses presentation/exhibition (*Darstellung*) and representation (*Vorstellung*) in key passages cited by Abaci, but Abaci unfortunately seems to see little difference between the two terms (pp. 242, 243, 247). An artwork can *represent* the sublime and objects traditionally associated with the sublime without evoking the sublime. A Friedrich painting of an iceberg does not always elicit the sublime in us, even when we can logically categorize the work as sublime. Such Bierstadt-Cole-Friedrich cases belong to a *genre* that we recognize and can classify as sublime, yet we do not necessarily make an aesthetic judgment of sublimity when viewing them. Conversely, artworks can *present* the sublime (the Stella/Serra cases) without representing objects traditionally considered sublime. In short, Abaci is wrong to imply that art must represent the sublime and cannot present it. What does present mean? Kant’s text supports associating presentation of the sublime with *evocation*. If art presents the sublime, it evokes the sublime; then there is the sublime in art, and Abaci’s thesis is incorrect. Kant connects a “tumultuous” movement of the mind, which is another way of referring to the experience of sublimity, with a “sublime presentation [*Darstellung*]” (KU 5:273; “General Remark”). Kant equates *Darstellung* (not *Vorstellung*) with *exhibition* (*Anthropology*

from a Pragmatic Point of View 7:167; KU First Introduction 20:220/VII; KU Second Introduction 5:192/VIII). It is unclear how an artist could successfully exhibit the sublime without evoking it. Moreover, we must recall that an *object* for Kant is not truly sublime at all. Since the sublime has to do with a judge's mental movement, it is hard to see how the sublime could be presented without being evoked. The presentation–representation confusion thus has implications for a Kantian account of the sublime in art. An artwork can present and evoke the sublime, leading to an aesthetic experience.

In conclusion, I do not see any good reason to presuppose that the phenomenology of the artistic sublime is necessarily different from that of the natural sublime. Abaci's article assumes that the responses are qualitatively different. I believe this is because Abaci believes that a model of the artistic sublime must follow Wicks and Pillow (pp. 246, 251n33), whom he justly criticizes (p. 244).<sup>4</sup> But we need not draw a parallel between sublimity and genius or make connections between aesthetic and rational ideas as Wicks and Pillow do. We do not have to propose a new or distinct phenomenology of the experience of the artistic sublime, as Abaci assumes. Despite Abaci's acute examination of the possibility of artistic sublimity, it remains to be shown why the fact that the aesthetic object, the artwork, is produced by an artist *necessarily* limits the capacity of that object to evoke the sublime. A work of art can elicit a feeling structurally the same as what we experience in an engagement with the sublime in nature. Art can elicit the sublime for Kant.

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1. Uygur Abaci, "Kant's Justified Dismissal of Artistic Sublimity," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (2008): 237–251. I refer to this article with page numbers within parentheses throughout.

2. Barrows Dunham, *A Study in Kant's Aesthetics: The Universal Validity of Aesthetic Judgments* (Lancaster, PA: The Science Press, 1934), pp. 88–89; James Kirwan, *The Aesthetic in Kant: A Critique* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 61.

3. References to Kant are to the volume and page number of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (KGS), edited by the German (formerly Royal Prussian) Academy of Sciences, 29 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–). KU designates *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, or *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (KGS 5) (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews [Cambridge University Press, 2000]). I cite the relevant sections of the third *Critique* after the Academy page number.

4. Robert Wicks, "Kant on Fine Art: Artistic Sublimity Shaped by Beauty," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 189–193; Kirk Pillow, *Sublime Understanding: Aesthetic Reflection in Kant and Hegel* (MIT Press, 2000).

### Artistic Sublime Revisited: Reply to Robert Clewis

I am thankful to Professor Clewis for his comments on my article "Kant's Justified Dismissal of Artistic Sublimity."<sup>1</sup> There I argue that the absence of an account of artistic sublimity in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is not a trivial gap in the architectonic of the book, but rather a theoretically significant one.<sup>2</sup> The way Kant constructs the concepts of sublimity and art leads to certain problems that leave no room for a coherent theory of artistic sublimity in Kant's critical aesthetics, but perhaps only a set of impure cases. I raise three such fundamental problems: (i) Kant specifically takes nature as the broader context of objects that elicit the sublime; (ii) artworks are irreducibly purposive objects whose forms and magnitudes are determined by human ends; (iii) Kant thinks that art ought to represent whatever it represents beautifully. So anyone with a claim to a *Kantian* theory of artistic sublimity has to present us with a convincing explanation of the absence of an actual account in Kant's text, address the problems I raise, and take on the burden of a positive account that is able to explain our aesthetic response to purportedly sublime artworks in terms of judgments of sublimity as Kant understands them.

Clewis's response to my article neither provides an explanation of this gap in the *Critique* nor addresses the problems I raise. It rather presents a set of arguments for a positive account of artistic sublimity. I believe my article considers most of these arguments. Here I will try to state my position on them more clearly. For an easier comparative read, I will adopt the structure that Clewis uses in his response.

### I. THE FUNDAMENTAL ROLE OF IDEAS

Clewis first argues for the insignificance of the object in the experience of the sublime, emphasizing the “ultimately mental character” of this experience and the important role of rational ideas in it. He writes: “strictly speaking, an idea of reason, not nature or art, elicits the sublime. The object is only the stimulus for the mental movement” (p. 167). This is, however, not quite accurate. An idea of reason is not what *elicits* the experience of the sublime but it is what is *revealed* through it. Clewis gives the impression that the sublime is a completely introspective experience elicited and executed by the ideas of reason, and he thereby overlooks its indispensable perceptual aspect. Kant insists that in the experience of the sublime our ideas of reason, that is, infinity or moral freedom, are revealed as a result of the failed perceptual efforts of our power of imagination to comprehend the magnitude or power of the object in question. Therefore, the argument for the insignificance of the object does not work.

Without explaining what he takes to be the difference between the two notions, Clewis expresses the view that experience of the sublime is “elicited” by ideas of reason, while it is merely “stimulated” by objects. I am not entirely sure what he has in mind here, but it appears to me that Clewis sees a connection between that view and “objective subreption.” According to Kant, what is truly sublime is not the object itself, but the idea of reason called to mind through our experience of that object. From this, Clewis, like Kirwan and Dunham, too easily concludes that whether the object is natural or artistic is irrelevant in stimulating the sublime.

As Clewis notes, I reject this argument on the ground that it isolates objects from their broader contexts. Although Clewis claims that I “simply assert” that in the case of the sublime, this context must be nature, and that this begs the question, the relevance of the context of the object is perhaps the most important of the problems my article raises for any account of artistic sublimity. Briefly, I argue that the distinctive feature of the Kantian sublime is its being a revelation of human rational (cognitive and moral) freedom from (and superiority over) sensible nature. Since this is not a revelation that we reach through any reflection on freedom, but rather an eventual revelation unexpectedly following the initial feeling of

displeasure, an intimidation for the insignificance of our sensible existence, elicited by a sensible object, nature should be understood as the context to which this object belongs. Therefore the fact of objective subreption does not render the object insignificant, nor does it undermine the relevance of its context. On the contrary, it makes it all the more explicit that the sublime, with both of its negative and positive phases, reflects the contrast between our rationality and sensible nature.

### II. IMPURE SUBLIMITY

Clewis also claims that an account of “impure sublimity” is needed in Kant’s aesthetic theory. But the way he motivates this claim seems odd: “Since the ideas are fundamental, how should we conceive of the role they play in the actual act of judging? I suggest that we need an account of impure sublimity (on analogy with impure beauty)” (p. 168). Clewis is misled by the view that ideas of reason *ground* judgments of sublimity and thinks that such involvement of ideas in the sublime renders it impure. He has in mind the allegedly analogical case of “impure” or adherent beauty where the judgment is grounded upon a concept of what the object ought to be rather than its mere form. I already argued that ideas of reason do not ground or elicit judgments of sublimity but are revealed, or if the subreption is to be disclosed, judged to be sublime, through judgments of sublimity. Thus the role of ideas of reason in the sublime is not really analogous to that of the concepts in adherent beauty. Besides, if Clewis is right, then all cases of the sublime must be deemed impure because the involvement of ideas of reason is a definitive feature of the Kantian sublime.

Apparently, Clewis wants to argue that some account of impure sublimity would accommodate the artistic sublime. He asserts that “like impure beauty, impure sublimity can be elicited by natural and artistic objects alike,” but he does not provide a positive explanation of how this is possible (p. 168).

However, as Clewis observes, my article leaves the door open for the possibility of impure sublimity. I also find Clewis’s suggestion of an analogy with adherent beauty worth considering as a starting point, if, of course, we put aside his unfortunate allusion to the involvement of the ideas of reason and reconstruct the analogy on the right

basis. What makes an adherent beauty adherent? The presupposition of a concept of what the object ought to be in the judging of its beauty (§16, 5:229). Those passages from the “Analytic of the Sublime” (§26, 5:252–253) and the “General Remark” (5:270), where Kant states that he chooses his examples from pure cases of sublimity, confirm that the free–adherent or pure–impure distinction applies to all aesthetic judgments. Thus, an impure judgment of sublimity would be one that is based on a concept of the object’s end or purpose. Now, this framework conception of impure sublimity makes one thing clear. If there is to be (a judgment of) artistic sublimity, it is necessarily impure, because artworks are irreducibly objectively purposive.

Yet there are two points to be made here. First, it is still curious that Kant does not continue his discussion of the sublime with an account of impure sublimity. Though Clewis implies that it is there, the textual parallel with impure beauty does not really exist. Second, and more importantly, an account of impure sublimity would accommodate the artistic sublime if the only problem with the latter were the objective purposiveness in artworks. There are other problems to be addressed. Kant’s conception of art as beautiful representation is one such problem, for it both renders the artistic representation of even the sublime mixed up with beauty and further complicates the idea of a judgment of artistic sublimity. Contrary to Clewis’s suggestion, here I am not only talking a type of sublime such as the “magnificent sublime,” which could be observed in nature as well as in art, but I am raising the more basic question of the sublimity of art given Kant’s insistence that art ought to represent beautifully.

Clewis finds my interpretation of the sublime “too cognitive and self-reflective regarding one’s freedom,” because he thinks I lay too much emphasis on the awakening of one’s awareness of her freedom in the experience of the sublime (p. 168). But this is not an entirely fair criticism. I suggest that the discovery of one’s freedom in the sublime cannot always be as explicit as Kant describes it, and that to claim such explicit consciousness of the subreption for the subject would be analogous to claiming that we are constantly aware of the pure subjectivity of space and time in our ordinary cognitive experience.<sup>3</sup> But one should note that Kant is giving a theoretical account of what he thinks is happening in a certain kind of aesthetic

experience. The fact that the actual subject may have only a tacit awareness of her mental movements does not undermine the validity of Kant’s theoretical account.

### III. THE CONCEPTION OF ART

Clewis offers two main suggestions regarding the conception of art to support his view that there is room for artistic sublimity in Kant’s aesthetics.

First, he suggests that if genius is “a product of nature,” then nature can be thought of as eliciting the sublime through the art of genius. This is a suggestion that I consider in my discussion of Kant’s theory of genius as a place where some scholars look for room for artistic sublimity.<sup>4</sup> Broadly put, my view is that it is true that Kant’s theory of genius blurs the nature–art divide, but there are still fundamental differences between our appreciation of the work of genius and our experience of the sublime, particularly with respect to the function of imagination and the role of ideas.

Second, Clewis refers to those nonrepresentational artworks that are designed to be the right perceptual settings for eliciting the sublime, the so-called Stella-Serra cases. In my article I argue that judgments on these cases would have to be impure on account of the fact that they are objectively purposive (or contrapurposeful). Although these works do not give the viewer a concept of what they are meant to be in the way the representational artworks do, they are still intentionally designed for the purpose of doing violence to the viewer’s imagination.

Clewis recognizes the purposiveness inherent in Stella-Serra cases, which means he should recognize that this makes them at best impurely sublime. I understand Clewis to be making two points about the problem of objective purposiveness. First, he suggests that it is in fact not a problem, because the existence of artistic intentions does not prevent us from experiencing artistic beauty. Then, he recurses to the possibility of perceiving artworks as “mere magnitudes” rather than purposively crafted objects, a possibility that I raise in my article and dismiss as untenable. I will briefly address these two points in reverse order.

Clewis points out that my article does not explicitly show why we cannot appreciate artworks as mere magnitudes. I take the explanation to be straightforward, however: even if it is supposed

that we can abstract ourselves from our awareness of what the object in question is and perceive it as a mere magnitude, we will not be appreciating an artwork anymore. According to Kant, our awareness of an artwork as such is a prerequisite for our aesthetic appreciation of art (§45, 5:306).

The first point is a fair one. But still, we should not rely too much on the imperfect parallel with the case of artistic beauty. The experience of the sublime is neither a merely mental (rational) nor a merely perceptual (imaginative) experience, but a successive mixture of both. I hold that artworks can meet the perceptual criteria of the sublime. For with the right magnitude, form, and vantage point, any object can create the effect of formlessness by stretching our power of imagination beyond its capacity of comprehension. But although this perceptual operation is necessary for the overall experience of the sublime, it is not sufficient. Taking the perceptual qualities of the Stella-Serra cases to be sufficient for our aesthetic responses to them to be judgments of sublimity would leave out the pleasant, mental component of the experience of the sublime and diminish it to a mere perceptual procedure. The sublime is an aesthetic experience with strong intellectual implications, such as the contrast between humanity and nature and the rational freedom of the former from the latter. The character of the object has to be relevant to the reconstruction of this contrast. Neither every reflection on the ideas of infinity and moral freedom nor every stretching of our imagination beyond its capacity are necessarily experiences of the sublime. Clewis is inconsistent in his formulations of the composition of the experience of the sublime. In the first part of his response, he emphasizes only the rational component and argues for the unimportance of the object of perception in the sublime. Now, regarding the Stella-Serra cases, he seems to consider only the perceptual component as sufficient for the sublime.

Finally, Clewis introduces a distinction between “presentation” (*Darstellung*) and “representation” (*Vorstellung*), claiming that this distinction will help a Kantian account of artistic sublimity. He argues that an artwork can present or evoke the sublime without representing the sublime. He criticizes me for not recognizing the distinction and suggests that I am “wrong to imply that art must represent the sublime and cannot present it” (p. 169). This is an unfair suggestion if

not a profound misunderstanding of my argument. I raise reservations for the possibility of artworks evoking judgments of sublimity in the sense Kant outlines in the “Analytic of the Sublime.” Yet I never imply that if art is to evoke the sublime, it must do so through the representation of the sublime. Despite Kant’s narrow conception of art as beautiful representation, I also consider the possibility of nonrepresentational forms of art, that is, Stella-Serra cases, evoking the sublime, in addition to various possible artistic representations of the sublime. I argue against art’s ability to evoke judgments of sublimity in general and do not restrict evocation to representation. Clewis’s distinction does not bring anything new to the discussion in his favor.

The Kantian sublime is a special type of aesthetic experience carefully defined as involving distinctive phenomenological and intellectual components. The fact that Kant’s only account of the sublime exclusively takes objects of nature as eliciting this experience is theoretically suggestive. The sublime has a crucial role for Kant’s ultimate ethical ambitions of demonstrating human rational superiority over nature and thereby the realizability of human ends in nature. If we stretch Kant’s conception of the sublime too much and overlook its distinctive features in order to have a broader application, it loses its philosophical force and crucial role in Kant’s project.

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1. See *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 66 (2008): 237–251.

2. In this article, all references to Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* will be to the following English translation from the Academy edition of *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

3. See my “Kant’s Justified Dismissal of Artistic Sublimity,” p. 250 n 12.

4. On the moral sublime, see Robert Clewis, *The Kantian Sublime and the Revelation of Freedom* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

5. See “Kant’s Justified Dismissal of Artistic Sublimity,” pp. 243–245.