

# Aspects of Beauty and Sublime in Humans

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**ABSTRACT:** The sublime is what surrounds us when an image gives us a mood with a strong emotional impact, when we see something that brings back memories or some senses, we have the impression that time stands still and that we are above all the things. We see daily things that gain our interest and we would like to sit and linger for a long time watching them. The fact that we are surrounded by beauty and beautiful things makes us more and more strict with ourselves and with our work in order to have control over the things in our lives, for example, to have a physical appearance that makes our life enjoyable and by which we are delighted to have a very good image of ourselves. All the time we live we have the feeling of the sublime, something truly great, something that makes us aware of our lives or the moments in which we live.

**KEYWORDS:** beautiful, sublime, human, emotional impact, stimuli, sensations

The sublime is what surrounds us when an image gives us a mood with a strong emotional impact, when we look at a thing and it awakens some memories or some senses, we have the impression that time stands still and that we are above all things. We see things every day that arouse our interest and we would like to stay and linger a long time looking at them. If we wake up in the morning and drink our coffee watching a sunset against a blue sky that gets stronger and deeper, we have a sense of the sublime in that we are enjoying a moment of the day that will put us in a good mood for the rest of the day, even if we would not normally have the best day at work or at school.

Immanuel Kant said that "the feeling of the sublime and the beautiful is that which gives a pleasing impression, but pleased and understood differently. The image of a mountain landscape with its snow-capped peaks above the clouds, the description of a raging storm or Milton's depiction of hell's surroundings stir up pleasure, but also fear. On the other hand, the sight of some flowering meadows, of some valleys criss-crossed by meandering rivers, with grazing herds, the description of Elisha, or Homer's depiction of Venus's girdle also leave us with a pleasant, cheerful and smiling sensation. In order that our impression to take place with the appropriate intensity, we must have a sense of the sublime, and in order to fully savoure it, we must have a sense of the beautiful. The phallic oaks and the lone shadows from the sacred groves are sublime. The layers of flowers, the low hedgerows and the artistically cut trees are beautiful things. The night is sublime, the day is beautiful. The calm stillness on a summer evening, when the flickering light of the stars creeps through the dark shadows of the night and the lonely moon appears on the horizon, trains the beings endowed with a sense of the sublime into uplifting sensations of friendship, contempt for the world, eternity. Intelligence is sublime, wit is beautiful. Cuteness is sublime and grand, cunning in return is mean but beautiful" (Kant 1981, 105).

Seeing beautiful houses, beautiful cars, objects that we want in our homes makes us become ambitious, hardworking and organized people, and those beautiful things that steal our eye guide our lives. We run a lifetime to acquire them, and at some point, from the daily satisfaction we have, we realize the fact that we have produced something that makes us think obsessively about those things that we consider beautiful. What we consider beautiful is what man has given them value over time because he did not have them or he obtained them hard. If we sit one evening on a swing and if we look at the starry sky, at the moon and we see it very big and beautiful and we know that it will delight our senses, our whole life and we know that it will always be there for us to enjoy it and we also know that we will never be

able to afford it because it is there for every human being on this planet. But things are something else entirely; we become obsessive about them, they make us believe that we are superior to other people and only by acquiring them we will have a very good image in which to be surrounded by beauty and by everything that delights our senses.

Man has given value to beauty (Rotaru 2005, 38) by the simple fact that some things which he could not afford himself become very precious and of an immeasurable value, and once we have them, they become mere banalities that we cannot wait to get rid of, because we are bored of them. We have the feeling of the sublime all the time when we live, something truly great, something in which man is aware of his life or of the moment in which he finds himself. We can wake up in a place that feels very beautiful, we can listen to some good music and we can think about what achievements we have had up to that point, where we want to go and be very proud of ourselves that we have some achievements, that we haven't experienced any major trauma or suffering and even if we have experienced something more profound, we have a sense of pride and respect that we have moved on and taken life as it came and that we have learned things that we then became aware of, and that has made us what we are today.

"The sublime is built as a category that responds fully to the tendencies that foreshadow the constitution of a romantic spirit. The beautiful rejects classicist rules, but establishes others, modifying the system but not the mentality according to which a system is always necessary. At the same time, by establishing rules, therefore operating with elements that are constituted as products of reason, it proclaims the independence of the beautiful from reason and the establishment of instinct as the element that reveals the qualities of things" (Burke 1981, 11).

Both Edmund Burke and Kant reflect that the sublime is something that succeeds in impacting us in a certain way and something that leaves a deep mark on us because once we are confronted with a sublime situation, it marks us in a certain way, whether it gives us a good or a negative state. Burke emphasizes the fact that a nature dominated by a particular sensitivity can feel the experience of some much stronger emotions compared with the experience of not feeling things so deeply and it would manage to detach from what it sees around. Kant emphasizes very strongly that the sublime, in essence, produce a much stronger emotion and so we are put in the position to control it much harder by having before us an image that is not so familiar to us and which we find difficult to understand through the prism of things that are familiar to us. He draws attention to the fact that the sublime can be of two forms, but nevertheless it brings us to the heights of happiness or sadness, because we can be put in difficult life situations where we feel our breath is taken away and then we begin to feel that negative sublime through which the body begins to feel more and more intensely some experiences and so we are surprised by deep pain. There is also that part of the positive sublime in which we are filled with joy and excitement because we have before our eyes a situation that delights our eyes and our lives.

Both Burke and Kant point out that we experience the sublime at its highest intensity, whatever form it takes, whether good or bad, it is at its highest intensity and so we feel an accumulation of emotions that floods through our whole body and often dictates the momentary choices we make in life that we may or may not regret. The sublime moments are the ones that make us stay where we are or open our eyes and see that things are not as we imagined, and that life has managed to surprise us in a negative but very productive way for us and for our journey in this world.

Kant, unlike Edmund Burke, points out that beauty is not guided by rules or norms under no circumstances because beauty is what we choose, according to what we like and not with what is imposed to us, even if the choices we make are made in order to be accepted in the society and in order to appear upright citizens who have the ability to choose what is good or bad.

Kant shows that we are our own masters in what dictates beauty to us and we don't feel that we have any barriers to stop us from choosing something in particular, even if we try to be as accepted by society as possible, deep inside we will see that part that no one and nothing can change, our taste for beauty and for what we like. Even if we are bombarded with different news or different TV shows trying to force a certain fashion or a certain style on us, even if we conform in some places or in some situations, we will still choose what we like and feel that it belongs to us. Our lives and the choices we make are because we feel that's how we like it and how we should act.

Kant emphasizes that we should not have barriers and we should not be guided by certain currents that appear or by other external stimuli, but we should do what we like and we should try as much as possible to be unique, to have our own conceptions of the world and of what surrounds us, without being influenced by anything, because we will never be happy, and this is the most important thing in this world, the fact that we have lived a good life in which we have done everything we wanted to do. If we have our own conceptions of life and of how we should do things, then we are people who knew how to make choices and were not guided by anything, because Immanuel Kant wants to point out that we have to be our own architects in this life and what is beautiful for us, for others may not be so, and that would lead to a whole circle of opinions by which we could be labeled in different ways and we would not have anything positive.

Edmund Burke, as well as Immanuel Kant, strongly stated that beauty is something that has to come from the choices we make in order to be happy and to have a life where everyone knows their limits and acts rationally for the decisions they make and in order not to have a form through which to be considered to be bringing a revolt to society or to come out negatively and shock society by the clothing we chose to have or by what we consider to be beautiful and we might arouse revolt from people around us.

If we look at a man who is wise but not very cultured, and if we talk to him and he instills in us a certain kindness and understanding of the world, we will have a sublime feeling that wisdom and kindness prevail, we will in a very short time come to drop our ideologies and our different views of the world and we will try to be more reticent about what that man says, because it touches us exactly where the essence of things is and exactly where we have a problem. If we look at our grandparents or at an elderly person who has a lot of life experience, we will see that they will tell us very few things, that they will repeat over and over again and that are basically the essence of life that we are interested in. That man tells us all the life he has had and that we will have, no matter how much we try to find other ways of thinking or seeing things. If we look at a clever man who shows us that he has a vast culture and whom we should take as an example, we will see that he will tell us many things about life, but he will not reach the essence that a wise man reaches. If we try to see beauty in its pure form and not necessarily in the beauty that is promoted, we will also acquire the wisdom of things.

"The sublime impresses, the beautiful delights. The face of a man fully possessed by the feeling of the sublime is serious, sometimes stony and astonished. On the other hand, the lively reception of the beautiful is recommended by a bright clarity of the eyes, by smiling features and often by a noisy cheerfulness. The feeling of the sublime is sometimes accompanied by a certain fright or sadness, sometimes only by a quiet amazement, and in other cases by beauty extended into the plane of the sublime. The first case is a frightening sublime, the second case is noble, and the third is great. Loneliness is sublime, but in a frightening way. The sublime must always be great, and the beautiful can also be small" (Kant 1981, 106).

What man seeks in his essence is to find that part where he is deeply impressed by what he sees. He searches for this all his life, both through what the human eye perceives and what the ear perceives. He wants to find a way in which he can live in the midst of these sublime

things, to experience different places on the planet. What we are seeing now as a trend in the media and on various social media sites is the idea that man must travel, go to places he has never been before, because life is slipping through our fingers, time is fleeting, we find that we are big people with responsibilities and we often think that we need to take a break from the everyday things and to travel by ourselves or with various friends, to experience unique things and moments in our lives, because only by experiencing those things will we be able to accumulate experience and a vast and rich culture of life, because it is what we are left with at the end of our lives, when we no longer have so much power to work and no longer feel so capable of doing things or discovering them. This is the great baggage of experiences we have had in life, the places we have been, what we have visited, the moments we have lived to the fullest, some things that will follow us all our life.

With regard to the aesthetic side of their image in society, it depends on what is going on inside the home, the culture they have, the education they received, the way they dress, because if you look around, what you see in a child is the predominant imprint of the parent. The fact that this child in adulthood or even in childhood has a certain healthier diet or used to arrange his dishes more beautifully on the plate, which for some may be considered a sign of snobbery, for this there is an aesthetic education that this child or adult has received. Some people will only consume some drinks in the specific glasses of that drink, because they were taught that for each drink there is its object in which it should be put.

Some people have no problem drinking a glass of wine from a plastic cup, for example, because for that person there has not been a lot of aesthetic education or he does not think it is normal to have so much artifice for some things. Some of us lead a healthy lifestyle, because we know that we are what we eat, and because we have been taught since childhood that we must live healthy, because only then we will have a clean skin and healthy hair, while others are less concerned about these details.

"Marc Richir in *About the Sublime in Politics*, the celebrations described by Michelet in his book *The History of the French Revolution* are considered both from the point of view of beautiful and of the sublime, because they involved the establishment of something new, of a new way for people to be together, of a political "body" reborn. For this reason, they are considered to form the essence of the French Revolution as an event of metaphysical and philosophical importance, beyond the strictly historical. The federations' celebrations and the revolutionary days form a phenomenon, namely, that between the *symbolic* and the *phenomenological fields* and that between the *spectator* and the *actor*" (Crişan 2004, 307).

In the Ricardian interpretation, it goes, however, beyond the Kantian distinction between the beautiful and the sublime and the distinction between the various faculties of the human spirit, i.e., between sensibility, imagination, intellect and reason. The beautiful and the sublime can only be conceived from the point of view of this phenomenological analysis as poles of the phenomenon, as mere intensities in its manifestation" (Crişan 2004, 308).

Marc Richir exposes in the French revolution a beauty and a desire for change that people took into account in order to have a better life, a desire for power and a desire to change an obsolete and uncaring political class, people felt the need for something new and for something that would change their lives for the better. Marc emphasizes the courage of the people who changed the country's economy and who made things more beautiful, more prosperous. In politics, we will often see that people started to get involved, people always wanted something else, and they will revolt whenever they will have the opportunity. So that's the beauty of things around, that people know that only they, through their ambition, can change something and through their courage. Kant offers an image of perfection, in which everything is dominated by peace and love of their fellows, he tries to avoid this side of rebellion because he believes that only through peace, we will possess beauty and only through kindness and love for our fellow man. However, Marc encourages the courage of people to say things by their name and to overcome a nation, to be able to have a word and so

to exist a change, he says that this courage is the capacity of the strong man, and only then we will be truly happy, when everyone will get what they deserve and when there is fairness towards others and when people will rebel for what they will consider to be good.

Kant is of the opinion that beauty lies in the goodness and morality that we have towards our fellows and in forgiveness for the wrongs that they have done to us, and he believes that this is precisely the beauty of life, in the good deeds that we do to people around us and the goodness and wisdom that we have towards them. And by rebellion we stir up exactly the opposite because in this way our life is in the hands of others, at any time we are exposed in situations without escape and the beauty of life is completely lacking. But our lives must also be guided by reason because in this way, we do not experience anything and our life is in the hands of the adversary and God created us to enjoy life and to collect as many beautiful memories as possible.

The beauty that people showed in the French revolution was illustrated by the fact that they wished with all their hearts a change, a better and more peaceful life and Richir emphasizes this namely the fact that man cannot be subjugated and confined because then he loses his beauty and becomes a robot, and his life is a terror because if he does not revolt at the right time for justice (Rotaru 2019, 269-271) and for the good of the nation then others will come who will rule them and abuse them even more. And the beauty and sublimity of this revolution was the fact that every man managed to wake up and fight for the homeland and for the good of the nation, and thanks to these brave people full of courage and confidence in their strength, many generations from now on have not felt any lack.

Kant tries to talk about an ideal world in which peace reigns, but often you have to fight for it and you have to be careful not to be stolen from you by someone because not everyone has good intentions and not everyone can show honesty and fairness, and people will always feel the need to dominate other which are weaker and more vulnerable people, and at some point, everyone no matter how much goodness they have will wake up and will rebel. The world has never been perfect, always someone has more than someone else and so it creates envy and malice around and all this leads to negative situations.

"J. Winckelmann states that the supreme beauty lies in the human figure, consisting in the harmony of the parts. Fr. Schiller holds the opinion that man, pervaded by the feeling of Beauty, acquires the predisposition to commit the moral act" (Baciu 2009).

Both of them say that a man's countenance must be in perfect harmony and this is seen outwardly by his deeds and by what he is willing to do for others, and by the purity of the soul he possesses, because if the man's face is hardened by problems or situations in which he can no longer find the light at the end of the tunnel or an escape from his situation, then he will act accordingly and on his face will be a neutral image that does not shine and that does not exude goodness and beauty. Both of them say that if a face is harmoniously structured then the man has a much better state of mind and gains much more self-confidence, and this begins to show in the way he treats those around him and in the love he is willing to share.

In Winckelmann's view, the only thing you can consider beautiful in a man is that he should have the most harmonious features possible and not to have anything that stands out too much and arouses strong reactions around him. If a man's face is shaped by fine features that exude goodness and good health then we will begin to trust that man and what he is willing to give us without having the impression that he is taking advantage of us or of our goodness.

According to Schiller, if a man is faced with something that gives him joy and brightens, he will act positively, even if he may not be in such a good mood and disposition as to overlook the situation in which he finds himself. He emphasizes that beauty influences the decisions we make and the way we act, because when we are put in a favorable situation that gives us joy, then the negative mood that we are in will begin to disappear and those dark

clouds will go away and we will have a bright thing in front of our eyes that takes our gaze and makes us think that beautiful things are much better and beneficial for us.

"In his mission to confirm the world and himself in the world, to know it by creating it, man is congenitally bound to the beautiful. Why the beautiful? Why should not be enough for us the Useful and the Pragmatic, the Efficient and the Pleasure of comfort and convenience produced by civilization and by the techno-scientific process? Because in that way it would not differ essentially from other beings, which, although inconsistently, also perform a vital activity that is useful and pragmatic and is felt as efficient and pleasant. Now, the useful and pragmatic, efficiency and pleasure, not being essential to the human being, cannot define it as such" (Pâslaru 2018, 125).

Man has always been attracted by the beautiful (Rotaru 2016, 29-43), because it stole his eye, man buys beautiful things to keep them in his house as a decoration and to enjoy his gaze, even if he does not have the greatest need for some things, the beautiful is what hypnotizes him. We rarely buy things because they are useful, but not necessarily beautiful, in many cases those things that have only the practical side and not necessarily the aesthetic side are those things that we hide from people's eyes, so as not to spoil the harmony with the others, man before animals has developed a very strong aesthetic sense for beauty. In animals we will not see neat or tidy things, they are the opposite of us because they are not rational beings. If we go into a shop and want to buy a cassette player, we will look at the one that looks the best so that we can match it as a decorative object, but if it is not the most aesthetic, we will think about whether to buy it or not.

"In his novel *Les Misérables*, Hugo believes that Beauty is as necessary as utility. Man's life would therefore be much more difficult in the absence of beauty, which constantly reveals itself to him and delights him with its infinite nuances: from the gentleness of flowers, the chirping of birds and the cooing of the child, to the eternal restless grandeur of the sea, to the dizzying grandeur of the peaks and to the sublime starry depths of the summer sky. Without beauty, perhaps life would become a nonsense. It is not possible otherwise, if we consider that beauty, together with goodness, truth, justice, freedom and the sacred are the fundamental coordinates on which human existence moves with the vocation of the all-human, embodied in dignity and nobility of the soul" (Petrovai 2016).

Useful things are, in most cases, the things we need, even if they don't always have the aesthetic aspect we want, but we want to buy beautiful things, so that we can use those objects that we consider useful and that make our daily work easier, our life depends to a large extent on the aesthetics of things if we use an object that we like very much there is a very good chance that we will use it every day and if that object lacks the aesthetics that we want there is a very good chance that we will not use it even though it is very practical.

What I'm trying to say is that our life revolves around beauty and around things that please our eyes and delight us, we often choose in life some situations that could make us have a better image of us and what we want to show and display around us, the situations in which we shine are often those in which we compromise, in which we make sacrifices and try our best to have them, to master them, to dominate them. When we go to buy a pet, we will look for it to be as cute and as nice as possible to have an extra to our image. If we didn't want that extra to our image, we would do the right thing and we would adopt an animal, and keep it in the same house as the other animal of a very popular breed. We have the opportunity every day to do that, but our self-image makes us go in the direction of buying a very nice thing for us and for others around us.

We want to have the nicest things and for that we work a lifetime to afford them and try to surpass our condition and no matter what situation we are put in, we want to have more, and nothing is ever enough, because if we want to grow or develop to a certain point (Rotaru 2016, 29-43), we will never feel that it is enough and that we have done enough, and when we get to the point of obtaining one things, we enjoy it just for a little bit and we think how to get

the next 5 things, and so our life becomes a chase for money, for power, for success and only in this way we become proud of ourselves and of our achievements.

"Beauty in general (it can be beauty of nature or of art) can be called the expression of aesthetic ideas: only in beautiful art, this idea must be occasioned by a concept of the object, but in beautiful nature, it is sufficient only the reflection over a given intuition, without the concept of what the object must be, in order to awaken and communicate the idea whose expression is considered to be that object. If, therefore, we wish to classify the fine arts, we cannot find a more convenient principle, at least as an attempt, than the analogy of art with the kinds of expressions which men use in speech to communicate with each other as fully as possible, that is to say, not only according to their concepts, but also according to their sensations. It consists in that of taste, gesture and tone (articulation, gesticulation and modulation). Only the union of these three forms of expression constitutes the speaker's complete communication. Therefore thinking, intuition and sensation are transmitted through them to others simultaneously and united" (Kant 2007, 268).

As Kant explains here, our sensations transmit to the receptors in our brain that something may or may not be beautiful, through the senses we are endowed with, we have the ability to discern between what is pleasant and what is not so pleasant and which may leave a negative mark on us and so makes us distance ourselves from those things. Our senses are so designed that we can know with certainty if something looks good, smells good, or sounds good and so we know if something deserves our attention, and is worth admiring and possibly cherishing it. If we were not endowed with these senses, we would not have the ability to discern between the two sensations, positive or negative, and so we would look at things in a natural way and not be able to bring them to a particular level where we would feel different because we have them around or because we are looking at something that pleases our eye.

If we were not endowed with the senses Kant speaks, we would look at the world around us as something natural, something that exists, or perhaps something that we not even notice. Beauty, says Kant, is something that takes our gaze, it is something that holds us in place and makes us lose ourselves while we look at it, what is beautiful leaves an imprint on us and our state of mind rises, takes shape and we feel that we are more and more happy, we are at peace with ourselves and with our thoughts and so we become more positive. According to Kant, the beautiful must be accompanied by an object or shadow that reflects the object, so it becomes pleasant, but in nature, the pleasant and the beautiful can be anything. It can be a state that gives us a hot summer morning, it can be a heavy rain, and so on, but in art, to be considered something beautiful and to catch our eyes, there must be an embodiment of something.

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