

## On "Sentimental": In Comparison with "Sublime"

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The word of "sentimental" (sentimentalisch) or "sentiment" was used before Kant, in the fields of philosophy and literature in England. After Kant this word was used as an aesthetic category by Schiller.

"Beauty" and "sublime" are two aesthetic categories in Kant's Aesthetics. The concept of "sublime" was first considered anciently by Longinos and in the 18th century by Burke. The concept of "sublime" in Kant's aesthetics has something to do with this historical background, but it necessarily resulted from his own philosophical system.

Why did not Kant consider the problem of "sentimental"? Why did Schiller, who was a Kantian in the strict sense of the word, consider the problem of "sentimental" as the counterconcept of his "naive"? This is not only the problem of aesthetic categories, but also the problem of relationship between art and nature.

With this problem in mind, this paper attempts to examine the concept of "sentimental" in comparison with that of "sublime".

### **"Sentimental" in England in the 18th century Sterne and Smith**

It seems that the word "sentimental" or "sentiment" came to be very popular in England in the 18th century. This word was willingly used in daily life, as well as in literature and philosophy.

L. Sterne's "A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy" was published three months before his death in 1768. Irrespective of the title of the book, the sentimental journey through Italy was not written in this book. He announced a supplementary volume in which the journey through Italy might have been taken up. But this was not realized by his death.

The word "sentiment" or "sentiments" is used here and there in this book. This word means feelings, emotions, affection. Sterne's "A Sentimental Journey" is not a traditional book of travel. He tells not so much about the climate or customs in the foreign country as a delicate feeling between strangers or a delicate emotional interaction between men and women. Interestingly enough, the French word "sentiment" implies the same meaning as the corresponding word in English. "L'amour n'est rien sans sentiment. Et sentiment est encore moins sans amour." The traveller in this journey means "a good Sentimental Traveller".

Adam Smith is well known as the author of "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" (1776). He was at first Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, and he published "The Theory of Moral Sentiments" in 1759. This

had a high reputation and was translated into French and German. His fame is said to have spread even to the Continent.

Smith's "The Theory of Moral Sentiments" represented the moral sense of the then growing middle class in England. He called the moral sense with his own word "moral sentiments". The "sentiments" used here does not mean such tender feelings as nostalgia, but moral sympathy as moral motives.

How was the word "moral sentiments" translated into French or German? Two versions of French translation were published in those days, i.e., in 1764, 1774, and one version about one hundred years later, in 1860. The word "moral sentiments" was translated as "sentiments moraux" in these translations. Three sorts of German translations were also published; two in those days, i.e., in 1770, 1791, and one in the 20th century, 1926. These translations were different from each other; first, "moralische Empfindungen", second, "sittliche Gefuehle", third, "ethische Gefuehle".

In German translations the word "sentiment" is not "Sentiments", but "Empfindungen" or "Gefuehle". But at the same time Schiller used the word "sentimentalisch (sentimental)" as a keyword in his "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry" (1795). The concept of "sentimentalisch" is the counterconcept of "naive". The word "sentimentalisch" does not mean "Gefuehle" nor "Empfindungen". It has a special meaning under Schiller's system of aesthetics.

### **Burke's "Sublime"**

#### **The first "Sublime" theory in the modern aesthetic history**

Edmund Burke (1729–97) is well known as a politician, or as author of "Reflections on the French Revolution" (1790). But his "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful" (1757), which he published at the age of 28, is evaluated as the first "Sublime" theory in the modern aesthetics history.

Burke's "Sublime" theory is a reflection on abuse of the word "beauty". He distinguished the concept of "sublime" from the concept of "beauty" in which two concepts were confused, and created a new aesthetic category.

Burke was influenced by Longinos's "On the Sublime" in the first century, A. D. Studies of Longinos were popular among scholars. It is probable that Burke read Longinos's "On the Sublime" as a required textbook while he was a student. His "On the Sublime and Beautiful" called forth an echo in various fields in England, and was translated into French in 1765, then in 1773 into German by Garve. His fame spread itself to the Continent.

Kant came to know Burke's "Sublime" theory through this translation by Garve. In "Critique of Judgement" (1790) Kant says that Burke deserves to be called a leading author in this field. If it is true, it may be that Kant did not know the whole of Burke's "Sublime" theory when he published "Observations on the Feeling of the Sublime and the Beautiful" in 1764. If it is true, Burke's "Sublime" theory and Kant's "Sublime" theory are the greatest twin stars in the modern European "Sublime" theory.

## Nature and Art in Kant's Aesthetics

### The Sublime as a New Aspect of Beauty of Nature

"Nature proved beautiful when it wore the appearance of art; and art can only be termed beautiful, where we are conscious of its being art, while yet it has the appearance of nature." (Kant: *The Critique of Judgement*. § 45)

Kant published in 1790 "*The Critique of Judgement*". The quotation above shows the relation of nature and art in Kant's Aesthetics. We can paraphrase the quotation as follows: nature finds her ideal in art; and art finds her ideal in nature. Nature and art mutually regard her partner as ideal. Nature does not exist without art; art does not exist without nature. This relation of nature and art is harmonious. But by introducing the concept of "sublime" into the system of Kant's aesthetics, there arises a dynamic aspect as the harmony by conflict.

In the system of Kant's aesthetics the beauty is divided into two: one the beautiful as the harmony of imagination and understanding, another the sublime as the harmony by conflict between imagination and reason. The beautiful is founded on the concept of nature, and consists of the harmony of nature. The sublime is founded on the concept of freedom, and consists of conflicts with freedom.

The sublime is classified into two: the mathematical sublime and the dynamic sublime. The former is considered in respect of the quantity and quality of judgement, and there the imagination is related to the faculty of cognition. The latter is considered in respect of the relation and modality of judgement, and here the imagination is related to the faculty of desire.

"Bold, overhanging, and as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piled up the vault of heaven, borne along with flashes and pearls, volcanoes in all their violence of destruction, hurricanes leaving desolation in their track, the boundless ocean rising with rebellious force, the high waterfall of some mighty river, and the like, make our power of resistance of trifling moment in comparison with their might. But, provided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness; and we readily call these objects sublime, . . ."

(Kant "*Critique of Judgement*" § 28)

The quotation above is from "the dynamic sublime in the nature". Provided our own position is secure, we are all the more attracted for its fearfulness. The sublime is contemplative for us. Why does Kant represent the dynamic sublime such as given in the quotation as if we were observing with our own eye, that is, as if a picture? Kant's "*Observation on the Feeling of the Sublime and the Beautiful*" (1764) is prior to his "Sublime" theory in "*Critique of Judgement*" (1790). We cannot find a picturesque description of scenery in Kant's "*Observation*". It has only descriptions of natural scenery which were borrowed from poetry or verse by Milton, Virgil, Klopstock, etc. Why is there a difference? It seems that it has a connection with the appearance of landscape painting. This problem is the one to be solved in the future.

### **Nature and Art in Schiller Seeking the Lost Nature**

Schiller wrote his essay, "On Sublime" in 1793. In it he considered the problem of sublime with respect to moral philosophy.

Two years later Schiller deeply considered the problem of relationship between nature and art in his "Native and Sentimental poetry" (1795-96). This article is the summarization of Schiller's aesthetics and a result of first modern aesthetics against the classical aesthetics. We can already find the concept of "sentimental" as an aesthetic category for the first time in the modern history of aesthetics.

As the title shows, "Naive and Sentimental Poetry" is a literary theory in which Schiller tried to seek the *raison d'être* for his own theory different from Goethe's theory. Consequently, Schiller tried to not only investigate the essence of Goethe's literary theory and Schiller's literary theory, but classify historically and theoretically two distinguished types of poetry from ancient to modern times.

The counterconcept of "naive" and "sentimental" is the first counterconcept in the modern history of aesthetics prior to the counter-concept of "classic" and "romantic", or "apollonian" and "dionysian". The poetry of Goethe, Shakespeare, or Homeros belongs to "the naive poetry"; the poetry of Schiller, Euripides, or Horatius belongs to "the sentimental poetry".

This counterconcept by Schiller is the concept of types in poetry, as well as the concept of aesthetics proper.

"All poets either are nature, or seek the lost nature. The former come to be naive poet, the latter come to be sentimental poet."

The quotation above suggests that Schiller's theory is not only the theory on poets, but is also contained the problem of relationship between nature and art. We can paraphrase the quotation as follows: art either is nature, or seeks the lost nature. If it is possible, we can find a new viewpoint of relationship between nature and art which can't be found in Kant.

According to Kant, the ideal of art is nature, while the ideal of nature is art. There the relationship between nature and art is harmonious. According to Schiller, art either is nature, or seeks the lost nature. Only five years later than Kant's "Critique of Judgement" Schiller's "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry" was published. We should be surprised that a new viewpoint in which nature is lost came to arise, and a new aesthetic theory in which art seeks the lost nature came to appear.

#### **"Sentimental"**

##### **In Comparison with "Sublime"**

Both the sublime and the sentimental have a special relation to the nature. Both the sublime and the sentimental are ideal.

According to Kant, the sublime (the mathematical sublime) is absolutely great in respect of the quantity. The sublime is to be looked for not in the things of nature,

but in our own ideas. What is absolutely great is only idea. According to Kant, the ideas can never be intuited. Hence the concept of formlessness is introduced into Kant's aesthetics.

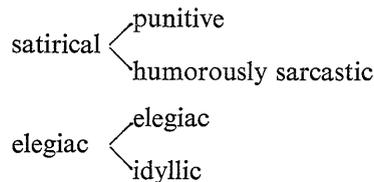
The formless objects may appear to be resisting the ends of our power of judgement, to be ill-adapted to our faculty of presentation, and to be, as it were, an outrage on the imagination, and yet it is judged all the more sublime on that account.

"Threatening rocks, thunderclouds, volcanoes, hurricanes, the boundless ocean and the high waterfall" which were quoted above as the dynamic sublime are very fearful nature. The irresistibility of the might of nature forces upon us the recognition of our physical helplessness as beings of nature, but at the same time it reveals a faculty of estimating ourselves as independent of nature, and discloses a pre-eminence above nature. For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground external to ourselves, but for the sublime we must seek a ground merely in ourselves.

Threatening rocks, thunderclouds, volcanoes, hurricanes, the boundless ocean and the high waterfall are external nature. But it should be noted in the history of aesthetics that these nature are discussed in correlation with the sublime. The landscape painting by Wilson, R., Blake, W., Constable, J., and Turner, J., in England gave a light to the "sublime", "sentimental", and "grotesque" as the new aesthetic aspects.

According to Schiller, "sentimental" means "to seek the lost nature". "Naive" is nature itself: "sentimental is ideal. Hence the relation between "naive" and "sentimental" in Schiller is parallel to that between "the beautiful" and "the sublime" in Kant, because the beautiful is to be found in the nature, whereas the sublime is to be found in the concept of reason.

The sentimental poetry is divided into two sorts of poetry in terms of the relationship with the reality and ideal, and is further subdivided into two. Contrastingly, there is only one kind in the naive poetry. These sorts of sentimental poetry are shown diagrammatically as follows:



The sentimental poetry is divided into two: whether it regards the reality as the object of hatred, or it regards the ideal as the object of attachment. The former is satire, and the latter is elegy.

The satire is divided into the punitive poetry which sarcastically satirize the reality, and the humorous poetry which humorously satirize the reality.

The elegiac poetry is divided into the elegy in the narrow sense which represents the ideal as something which can't be reached, and the idyll that represents the harmony between reality and ideal.

Schiller's "Naive and Sentimental Poetry" is a literary theory as described above. But there is historically and theoretically an intimate relationship between poetry and painting. It is in the modern age that the landscape painting as an independent genre of the painting appeared and established in Europe. It is an interesting phenomenon that the landscape painters in the 19th century England willingly painted mountains, lakes, marshes, clouds, hurricanes, ruins, a deserted vessel, and furthermore a nightscape. This phenomenon is parallel to the phenomenon that the concept of "sublime" or "sentimental" appeared in the history of modern aesthetics.

How has the concept of "sentimental" as an aesthetic category been developed since Schiller to the present time? How has the concept of "sentimental" been related to that of "romantic"? How has "sentimental" been related to "landscape painting"? Since Schiller the concept of "sentimental" has been hidden behind the great concept of "romantic", so that very often only the popular, superficial aspect of "sentimental" tends to be emphasized. Therefore, this historical and structural problem should be examined.

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