



موزه و امر والا (بر مبنای امر والای کانت)

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چکیده

چرا برای برخی افراد موزه‌ها مکانی بی‌روح است و برخی افراد را به وجد می‌آورد؟ احساسی غیر قابل توصیف، که کمتر بدان پرداخته شده است. حال در مقاله پیش رو برای توصیف این حالت یا احساس مخاطبین از امر والای کانت بهره گرفته شد. در تعریف مختصر امر والا از نظر کانت باید گفت؛ امر والا به وسیله عینی عظیم، به صورتی جنشی در ذهن ما بیدار می‌شود و سپس قوه متخیله را تا انتهای مرزهای بسط می‌دهد؛ که موجب آگاهی ما از سرنوشت ماوراءطبیعی خویش می‌شود؛ احساسی که با استعدادی ذهنی شبیه اخلاق، پیوندی تنگاتنگ دارد. برای توصیف امر والا در موزه، باید گفت، اشیاء تاریخی می‌توانند برانگیزنده خیال مخاطبین باشند. بدین ترتیب که انسان سعی می‌کند از تخیل خویش درباره گذشته اشیاء، انسان‌ها یا جوامعی که آنها را پدید آورده‌اند و از بین رفته‌اند، بهره گیرد؛ و این امر موجب بسط قوه تخیل یا به عبارتی فرا رفتن از معیارهای حسی و آگاهی از سرنوشت ماوراءطبیعی ایشان می‌شود؛ به گونه‌ای که بهره‌گیری آگاهانه از این احساس در موزه‌ها می‌تواند، به تدوین سیاست‌های نوین در جذب مخاطب و حتی پرورش اخلاق جامعه منجر شود.

واژگان کلیدی: امر والا، مخاطب، موزه، والای ریاضی، والای پویا.

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Museum and the Sublime (Based on Kantian Sublime)

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Abstract

Why do historical objects invoke feelings of thrill for some, but remain soulless for others? This indescribable feeling has been less addressed in the literature. In the present article, Kant's concept of sublime has been used to describe the state of the audience. The Sublime is stimulated in the form of movement through a large object in our minds. It challenges the limits of the power of imagination, and makes us aware of our supernatural destiny which in Kant's brief definition: is a feeling that is closely linked to a moral talent similar to morality. Some historical objects can arouse the imagination of the audience, to describe the sublime in the museum. Thus, the man tries to use his imagination to reflect on the past of the objects, people, or societies that have created them and thus, vanished. This action leads to transcendence from the sensory criteria and awareness of their supernatural destiny. Accordingly, the conscious use of this feeling in a museum can lead to the formulation of new policies, to attract the audience and educate on the ethics of society.

Keywords: Historical objects, Museum, Kant, Mathematical sublime, Dynamic sublime.

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This research stems from my years of close interaction with audiences at the National Museum of Iran, where I worked as a museum guide. Over 15 years of engaging with numerous visitors, I gained insight into their profound feelings and imaginations about the history of the objects, aligning with Kant's theory of the sublime. This understanding suggests that consciously utilizing these emotions can influence the policies and goals of museums.

Introduction

There exist emotional mood and enthusiasm about historical objects that bring visitors to the museum over and over again; emotions that are largely the result of imagination about the object's past, people, or the communities that have created them and disappeared, and then its simultaneous integration with the museum's object at the same time, which of course is not successful. At the same time nonetheless, it can be a failure including pleasure; a pleasure as of the expansion of the imagination, and a kind of reminder of the supernatural abilities of man, which is itself a trophy in today's life. Thus it has been tried to define the described feeling with the help of Kant's sublime in this study.

The sublime is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'Set or raised aloft, high up' and on this basis, a building or a mountain, or perhaps a thought, a heroic deed, or even a mode of expression can be defined as sublime. But the definition of the sublime is not limited to the rules of value, it also describes a state of mind. (Shaw, 2007: 1) It should be noted that many thinkers, from Longinus to postmodern philosophers i.e. Derrida, Lyotard, and de Man, have somehow dealt with the concept of sublime. Since Kant's viewpoints on the matter possess a special status, many of the contemporary philosophers are indebted to him in some way, and at the same time, his sublime relies on the concept of transcendence and morality in contrast to postmodern philosophers (Shaw, 2007), it is more in line with the aims of this article. Therefore, the article relies on Kant's views on the sublime and its redefinition consistent with the aims of the paper.

In his definition of sublime Kant believes that it is awakened in our minds as a motion through a massive object (in respect to its extension or its might over the mind) and then strains the imagination power towards the end of its boundaries, the result of which drives the man beyond sensory criteria. A feeling that cannot be imagined without getting linked to a

talent in the mind resembling morality (Kant, 2018). According to Kant, the feeling of satisfaction or pleasure from a massive object such as the broad ocean agitated by storms, the pyramids, or St. Peter's church in Rome is not in any sensuous form but satisfaction with the expansion of the imagination. A feeling alike excitement or in other words motion, hence incompatible with gravity, as the mind in addition to being attracted by the imagination, is also alternately repelled (Kant, 2018). It should also be noted that Kant divides the sublime into two main types, the mathematical and the dynamic sublime related to the vastness and power of nature, respectively. Both of them are related to our inability to understand nature through the limited time and space scales we have, but at the same time, this limitation informs us of the inability to think in the grandeur of phenomena. (Krawford, 2011)

Of course, less attention has been paid to the subject of the museum and Kant's sublime. Of the few articles that have dealt with this issue, two can be mentioned. John Sanbonmatsu, in the first one "The Holocaust Sublime Singularity, Representation, and the Violence of Everyday Life" points out the similarity between the visitor's encounter with the overwhelming horror of the Holocaust in war museums and the Kant's sublime i.e. dynamic sublime. Thus, the Holocaust's sublime in the war museum is not revealing, it rather hides the conventional notions and social structures that make genocide inevitable. In the next article "Lessons: Education and Ambivalence in War Exhibitions", Debbie Lisle discusses the existence of the sublime in war museums: an ambivalence that arises when faced with simultaneous feelings of terror and awe mixed with respect in the visitor. But then again since war museums neutralize horrific objects e.g. guns, bombs, shrapnel, utilizing war lessons and narratives of victory, they are more in line with the Kantian sublime, which is full of catharsis and transcendence, in comparison to the postmodern sublime. With examples from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Imperial War Museum in Lon-

don, and the Smithsonian Institution, she explains how the display of war tools in museums reproduces a politics of consensus by carefully managing the experience of the sublime.

So, as both the above-mentioned articles have referred only to Kant's dynamic sublime and only to the museums of war, the present article discusses the existence of Kant's mathematical and dynamic sublime both in the field of the museums in general, for the first time. To achieve this, the author first takes a look at the status of the sublime in the museum, then introduces the mathematical and dynamic sublime in museums, and discusses the consequences of being aware of the sublime in the museums afterward.

Historical objects and Kant's sublime

As mentioned above, there is an attitude of excitement in the museum visitors which is largely an outcome of the imagination about the past of objects in the museum, people, or communities that have created or used them in the past; an imagination that is mostly not successful but enjoyable at the same time. The expansion of the imagination is an aide-memoire of the supernatural abilities for the man especially in today's life, so it could be considered like a trophy. The author for that reason has tried to define this feeling with Kant's sublime. A massive object arouses the previously mentioned feeling in the man's mind by either its extension or its power and then stretches the imagination towards the edges of its boundaries which may cause the man to proceed beyond the sensory criteria. Kant's sublime is unquestionably for the most part about nature but he also has further examples including man-made artifacts to note: the pyramids and St. Peter's church in Rome for the mathematical sublime, and a warrior man for the dynamic sublime.

At this point, the historical objects are considered as the sublime for the first time in this article. In the author's opinion, an old man-made object inviting people to fantasize arouses a more sublime sense than nature. Because, according to Kant, what we usually term

as sublime has nothing to do with the object of nature sublime, and we must seek the sublime one merely in the attitude of mind introducing the sublimity through the representation of nature. Accordingly, the sublime is due to a replacement of humanity with the concept of respecting the natural object in mind (Kant, 2018). So only the objects of nature can arouse the state of sublimity in man.

Therefore, according to the above arguments, we can exhibit the remnants of ancient civilizations instead of massive natural objects in the museum, and the respect for the idea of humanity and human being's status will increase. Because, as Kant says, man is the ultimate end of nature, and the whole of nature is a teleological subject to it¹ (Kant, 2007). So imagination about the past of a historical object regarding those who have created it used it, passed away, and have been the ultimate end of nature themselves, brings us a state of respect for the idea of humanity and even the status of humanity in nature. Thus, historical objects not only evoke sublimity in man but also they can be considered far more motivating than nature. The state in which man encounters massive elements of the museum can be examined from two perspectives: vastness (mathematical sublime) and power (dynamic sublime). The case will be discussed in the following lines i.e. mathematical sublime and dynamic sublime in the museum.

Historical objects and the Mathematical Sublime

In explaining the mathematical sublime, it should be said that it appears mainly by observing huge elements such as soaring mountains; a state in which the imagination goes to infinity to estimate the size of an object in a cumulative process without any obstacles. But the mind seeks intuition, integration, and intuitive unity in such a way that in this integration it does not exempt even the infinite (space and time passed). Thus, the sense of the mathematical sublime is a sense of displeasure caused by the mismatch of the great aesthetic estimate by the imaginary with the

estimate of the same greatness by the intellect, and at the same time bringing pleasure by the conformity of the same sentence on the inadequacy of our greatest sensory power (imagination) with rational ideas. This makes us aware of the mental faculties that transcend any sensory criteria and feel exalted by this awareness. (See Kant, 2018)

The mathematical sublime is thus the relation between imagination and reason, not on the basis of harmony but based on the mismatch between the needs of reason and the inability of the imagination. As already mentioned, Kant's examples of the mathematical sublime are mostly natural objects such as the soaring mountains or the vast ocean and his two examples of mathematical sublime among the human artifacts include the pyramids and St. Peter's in Rome. However, this article is the first-ever in which the museum object has been introduced as an infinite thing human trying to imagine. It is also worth noting that even Kant has referred to the past space and time (regarding the sublime) as infinite:

The mind, however, hearkens now to the voice of reason within itself, which for all given magnitudes—even for those which can never be completely apprehended, though (in sensuous representation) judged as completely given—requires totality and consequently comprehension in one intuition, and which calls for a presentation answering to all the above members of a progressively increasing numerical series, and does not exempt even the infinite (space and time past) from this requirement, but rather renders it inevitable for us to regard this infinite (in the judgment of common reason) as completely given (i.e. given in its totality) (Kant, 2018).

The mathematical sublime in the case of historical objects occurs when the audience's mind tries to imagine the object in its temporal context and at the same time in the case of some objects. In this case, the imagination reaches its limits, but the totalitarian mind de-

mands intuitive integration and unity. This often is a simultaneous combination of the present and the tangible object with infinity (such as space and the past), not successful albeit. But this same expansion of imagination creates pleasure in the museum visitors.

This imagination can either be about a small object such as a Roman coin, a woman, a man, a child wearing that time's costume and going to daily shopping, or a society that has been using this type of coin. In the case of a large historical object such as a column or a relief from an Assyrian or Achaemenid palace, the visitor's imagination can be the hands of a worker who had polished the stone, or the grandeur of the whole palace with the people who had lived there. Ancient Egyptian gold ornaments may also be so extraordinary to the visitors that they may spend hours imagining how they have been made with basic tools. Therefore, the mathematical sublime in the museum has a wide range of dimensions, and these are just some of the examples that visitors to a museum encounter; imaginations that are not successful because the mind can't combine the museum object with its past at the same time as an intuitive unity, though the action creates pleasure in the visitor. Therefore, this pleasures mentioned by Kant can be described as a pleasure accompanied by pain, or a sensation that makes us aware of the mental faculties that transcend any sensory criterion and let us feel elevated through this awareness.

Historical objects and the Dynamic Sublime

Dynamic sublime arouses when we are in a safe place and confronted with something like a powerful storm, to explain briefly. Our strength of resistance is extremely small compared to the mighty situation, thus we call it dynamic sublime. Because this brings the faculties of the soul to a height higher than the normal altitude and gives us the courage to measure ourselves with the absolute omnipotence of nature. The reason why nature is considered sublime in our aesthetic judgments is not that

it arouses fear, but that it calls us to a force by which we can undervalue the things that we are afraid of losing (worldly belongings, health, and life). And so we do not consider them dominant over ourselves and our personality, but as a way to achieve freedom in some way. (Kant, 2018)

However, we realize our limitations in the infinity of nature and the inability of our forces to obtain a criterion commensurate with the great aesthetic estimate of its realm. But at the same time, we find in our intellect a different non-sensory criterion which has the same heterogeneity as a unit under it, and in comparison with it everything in nature is small, and therefore in our mind, we feel a kind of superiority over nature with all its infinities. The irresistibility of the forces of nature also compels us to acknowledge our physical incapacity, while at the same time revealing to us the powers by which we can judge ourselves independently from nature, and hence, humanity remains unchallenged in our viewpoint. So the horror of a spectator/person who sees himself as safe is not real and is just an attempt by the imagination power to make us surrender to it. (Kant, 2018)

Of course, Kant's examples of the dynamic sublime are not just natural events such as storms and earthquakes, as he also indirectly refers to death. His example in this case is a man who is not afraid [of the power of death] and does not succumb to danger [death], rather, he fights it [death] with full intent and power. He goes on to discuss the high position of warriors even in the most advanced civilizations [as they are not afraid of death], points out the impact of war on the elevation of moralities of society [because death is closer to man] and moreover to the effects of long-lasting peace on increasing the spirit of cowardice and selfishness [because man is far away from the concept of death]. (Kant, 2018)

So if we consider death to be a faculty of nature and our resistance infinitesimal compared to it, then it can lift the human soul to

a height above the normal altitude if we are not afraid of it. In my opinion, a museum can be like a cave for watching a terrible storm vis-a-vis Kant's example for a dynamic sublime. Because in the best of circumstances, we objectively, without pain and fear, confront the subject of death over a wide range of times in different societies, classes, and human governments; statuses none of the creators and users of the objects have been able to deal with. So our fear of death in the museum is not real, but just an attempt by the imagination power to surrender to. Furthermore, it somehow elevates the soul to a height above the normal and gives us the courage to compare ourselves to the great power of death.

Imagination in the museum can be about each of the objects, for example, a king's cup made by the best craftsmen and artists of his time, or a clay cup in which the most ordinary people drank water, or the war tools of mummies, skeletons, and burial objects that are somehow directly related to death. None of the people who came into contact with these museum objects have been able to cope with this enormous power of nature i.e. death. The enormous force that compels us to acknowledge the eternity of nature vis-a-vis our physical impotence, and at the same time, to find the same infinity in our minds by which humanity remains lofty in our view. This kind of perception evokes a great feeling in which we can belittle the things we care about (worldly blessings, health, and life), this way, we do not consider them dominant over ourselves and our personality, and thus achieve freedom.

Consequences of Awareness of the Sublime in Museums

According to what went before, museums have various capabilities to create a sense of sublime in the visitor. So here the basic question of the research i.e. why historical object are cold and soulless for some people and exciting for others can be answered: the enthusiasm is due to the sublime. Because, according

to Kant, feeling sublime is like excitement or in other words, movement; an excitement that can bring people to the museum over and over again. Besides, the mind is also repelled in addition to being attracted by the imagination in the sublime. So in the museum, the sublime can be aroused in our minds, like a movement, by a massive object, both in terms of vastness (imagination about the past of the object and the people who made or used it) and power (death of the humans associated with the objects) and then expand the imagination to the edges of its boundaries and cause the man to go beyond sensory criteria. Therefore, intuitive unity, or in other words, the simultaneous integration of the imagination about the historical objects and their past, is not possible, but at the same time, going beyond usual sensory and common standards, especially in today's human life, is considered a kind of victory.

In Kant's view, the sublime is related to morality, in that it is an object of nature with its representation compelling the mind to conceive of the inaccessibility of nature as a representation of ideas. This makes us aware of our metaphysical destiny and, consequently, makes humanity more prominent for us, and thus human dignity, which is necessary for free will in the practice of moral duties (Kant, 2018, Ginsborg, 2013& Lazarof, 1980). Describing Kant's moral sense along these lines may be as follow:

But it does contradict the experience, which can only be inward, that no idea so elevates the human mind and animates it even to inspiration as that of a pure moral disposition, revering duty above all else, struggling with the countless ills of life and even with its most seductive allurements and yet overcoming them (as we may rightly assume that one is capable of doing). That the human being is aware that he can do this because he ought to disclose within him a depth of divine predispositions and lets him feel, as it were, holy awe at the greatness and sublimity of his true

vocation (289).

Therefore, the feeling of the sublime is inconceivable unless associated with a character of mind resembling the moral. This allows us to seek the feeling of the sublime as a moral presupposition in man and even cultivate it (Kant, 2018: 95& 99).

According to this description, we are allowed to seek the feeling of the sublime in the museum as a moral presupposition in man and even nurture that feeling. Museums are thus closely linked to the subject of social ethics. As a result, museums can find a new and more targeted program to attract visitors with knowledge of the sublime and act more effectively in society, especially regarding social ethics. To make more conscious use of the sublime capability in museums, initial solutions are proposed in both mathematical and dynamic sublime topics. For example, to create mathematical sublime in the museum_ when the visitor tries to imagine the past of the object the people of the communities that created it_ through a feeling that is more common to the visitor and can be fostered in a more accessible way. As a result, to create that feeling he can be invited to imagine museum objects, or he can be brought by bringing up the diverse and multiple questions about the people and the communities associated with that objects. Also, drawing attention to the details of making an object with primary tools, can invite the visitor to imagine how to make an object. As mentioned earlier, fantasies are not successful because combining and compilation of an object with its past is not possible for the mind as an intuitive unity, but this expansion of imagination creates pleasure in the visitor. Therefore, this pleasure can be considered, according to Kant, a pleasure accompanied by pain. A feeling that arouses sublime in the visitors and elevates their soul, in a way that informs them of their mental abilities and metaphysical destiny.

In the case of Dynamic sublime also, museums can invite visitors to imagine the enormous power of death about people who were somehow connected to these objects i.e. none

of them have been able to stand against this enormous force compelling us to acknowledge the infinity of nature, our physical incapacity, and inadequacy of our minds; and thus the position of humanity remains lofty in our opinion. This kind of view helps us underestimate the material facilities dominating our lives, especially in today's modern life, and thus achieve freedom.

Conclusion

Kant's definition of the sublime was used in the article for the first time ever to describe the indescribable feelings and enthusiasm that bring people to the museum over and over again. It should be noted that this feeling was in harmony with Kant's two definitions of the mathematical and dynamic sublime. The mathematical sublime at this point occurs when the visitor imagines the past of the object, the human beings, and the societies who created and utilized them. The imagination is not successful because the totalitarian mind wants the integration and intuitive unity of the museum object and its infinite past at the same time, though this expansion of the imagination, forces us to become aware of the mental powers that go beyond any sensory criteria and feel sublimity via that. Hence, this transcendence of the museum's visitor can be considered as a kind of departure beyond sensory and common criteria, markedly in today's human life.

When we encounter an enormous force—death force—in the safe place of the museum with a long time passed, and when we come to know that none of the creators and users of the objects, with any position and social class, has been able to cope with it, the dynamic sublime is aroused. So our fear of death in the museum is not real, it's just an imaginary attempt for us to surrender to; an endeavor that takes the soul to a height higher than the usual heights and gives us the courage to compare ourselves to the great power of death. The enormous force that compels us to acknowledge the infinity of nature and our powerlessness, physically and

mentally. Thus the position of humanity raises in our eyes, and this moreover gives us a huge feeling of underestimating the things we have fear of losing, such as properties (especially in today's consumerist human life), health and life, and hence achieve freedom in some way.

To conclude, the answer to the main question of the research asking about why the historical objects are cold and soulless for some people and makes others excited was discussed with the help of Kant's ideas on the concept of sublime. Consequently, the museum visitors' excitement and rejoice was considered as the enthusiasm caused by the sublime—with the potential to bring people to the museum over and over again. Because the sublime in the form of a movement, can be triggered by a large object in the museum, either in terms of vastness (imagination about the past of the object and the people who made or used them) or in terms of power (death of humans that associated with these objects) and then expands imagination to the end of its boundaries; this causes man to go beyond sensory criteria.

It should be noted that these results link the sublime in the museum with ethics, as Kant believes, the sublime has a close connection with morality, and the sense of the sublime can be sought as a moral presupposition in man and be reinforced by cultivating. A feeling that somehow makes us aware of our mental abilities and our supernatural destiny, and consequently makes humanity and morality more prominent. Museums are therefore closely linked to the subject of social ethics. In this way, museums can find new and more targeted programs to attract visitors by being aware of the sublime, and act more effectively in society and social ethics.

Note:

1) Because if the world consisted only of inanimate beings or living beings but without intellect, the existence of such a world would have no value. (Kant, 2018)

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