Kant’s Aesthetics of the Sublime and Politics of Emancipatory Temporality

Summary: The main purpose of this work is to present and argue ontological and political significance of the concept of the sublime analyzing Kant’s aesthetics and taking into consideration the relation with the social and political context of the French Revolution in which Kant’s aesthetics has been born. In the first part of this work we will lay stress upon the temporal structure of the Kantian sublime. In order to see how notion of the sublime expresses radical reversal in the structure of time, we will lean on Deleuze’s reflections on Kant and raise the following question: if in the beautiful we reflect the form of the object, is not then the experience of sublimity based upon reflection of the form of the subject, namely, the form of its inner sense – time? Does the sublime as a representation of limitlessness confront the subject with its own temporality? However, the sublime is the case of the failed schematism which reveals the fragility of Kantian transcendental synthesis. Therefore, the Aesthetics of the Beautiful and the Aesthetics of the Sublime are not only to be considered the bridge between the first two Critiques (domain of nature and domain of freedom), but rather their most profound ground which opens particular (pre)ontological space, a territory without domain. In the second part of this work more political issues will come forward through Slavoj Žižek’s interpretation of Kant and Alain Badiou’s work on revolutionary historical riots. The territory without domain suspends mechanism of the schematism and “control” over the particular by means of universal laws, thereby the subject of that territory reflects, in an aesthetic experience, the uniqueness of the event as exhibition of freedom through subversion in the order of time. The sublime is presented as that aesthetic category which introduces a different, emancipatory temporality, refers a break in the continuity and interruption of causality of the existent social and political order. In such manner historical revolutions which bring a new principle of the social structuration are an exemplification of the sublime. The political actuality of the sublime consists in the following question: Can revision of the aesthetics of the sublime give an important contribution to the political theory of emancipation?

In his lectures on Kant of March-April 1978, although in a lateral and more indirect way, Deleuze sets forth the relation between the sublime and temporality. The Shakespearean formula “Time is out of joint”, used by Deleuze, offers us very fruitful line of interpretation of Kantian philosophical reversal. In Deleuze’s view this formula, taken from Hamlet’s words pronounced after fatal encounter with his father’s ghost, indicates in the most peculiar way the radical shift in the general conceptualization of time. The proximity between Shakespeare and Kant is not poetical or literary coincidence of two different authors; it is a matter of metaphorical intimation of the modern sense of time contained in those Hamlet’s words which
should be depersonalized, that is, deprived of its author in order to be understood as a formula. Deleuze interprets time as unhinged and “out of joint” in terms of subordinate and independent formal time. Kant’s Copernican reversal consists exactly in the passage from time, which is subordinated to the ontological movement of nature, to time as pure, linear and empty form “liberated” from cyclic curvatures and natural dynamics of the world. With Kant time is no longer measure of such dynamics, but its formal condition, that is to say, movement is now subordinated to time as its transcendental framework. Time which has been subordinated to the cosmo-ontological movement of nature was just an expression of the ancient cosmology where periodical motions of the spheres were the hinge or the real joint of the world and time was only the measure of it, as Aristotle’s assertion from the Physics points out: “Time is the number of movement”¹. Instead of being the number of movement, subordinated to the pivot of nature in its cyclic motions, with Kant time becomes criterion of movement, namely, its formal condition. It is “out of joint” since emancipated from the fixed point of reference. Temporal succession is not jointed to the astronomical motions of the heavenly bodies, thereby ceasing to be just a measure of something external to itself. The autonomized, internalized and emancipated time, however, has not become the essentialist entity or some kind of alternative natural structure, but the subjective formal condition of possibility of all phenomena, which is at the same time the condition of impossibility of the subjectivity as substance. Time that becomes the subjective form of sensible experience precludes the subject itself from being substantialized. Time out of joint, as Deleuze notes, is the enemy within subjectivity which in turn cannot be understood as substance or some kind of Cartesian res cogitans, but only as the formal apparatus of the conditions of synthesis determined by time.

The first step, therefore, is to take into consideration this shift from time subordinated to movement to the movement subordinated to time. If we call to mind the fact that ancient cosmology always qualified as beautiful the harmonic order of the spheres and their natural cyclic passages, than we can conclude that time in such order was also the measure of beauty, subordinated to the beauty of cosmo-ontological harmonia. The passage from this ancient vision of time as an image of eternity to the Kantian conceptualization of formal, linear and pure time, provides

actually the passage from the category of beauty to the category of sublimity. Formalized and empty time has lost its cyclical form becoming a pure straight line so that “the beginning and the end no longer rhyme” (Hölderlin), that is, the beginning and the end does not fall anymore at the same point of circle; and only such kind of temporality can bear the character of something which is sublime. This character of sublime should be considered in real Kantian sense: something absolutely great and incomprehensible which cannot be grasped in one unified representation. Exactly as that Borges’ labyrinth - to which Deleuze refers in order to emphasize that straight line of time is not its simplification in terms of predictability, but a vertiginous openness of real labyrinth - time in itself becomes not-symmetrical, not-numerical, where the before and the after are not coincident, and “something is always elusive”\(^2\). Such temporality cannot be neither beautiful nor the measure of something beautiful. It opens the horizon of sublimity and its relation to the very form of subjectivity.

Another consequence of this Kant’s reversal in the conception of time, which ceases to be subordinated and gains independence and formal character, touches on the problem of limit. According to Deleuze’s interpretation, during entire classical metaphysics limit was thought as external limitation, as obstacle and resistance. Spatial matter, for example, limits the thought and spiritual realm. In other terms, thought refers to something outside thought which is irreducible to thought itself, because it is totally other of thought, its radical alterity, and this alterity should be regarded as something external. Cartesian metaphysics is perhaps the most clear and distinct example of this position: thinking substance and extended substance are exterior and irreducible each to other so that the main problem becomes to find the true point of their unity (God from Descartes’ point of view). With Kantian formalization of time, whereby time gets out of joint, limit is not considered as an external limitation but internal flaw and fissure within the transcendental subject. The circular form of the ancient cosmological time can be viewed as geometrical representation of beautiful and harmonic definition/delimitation of the world. And every transgression of this metaphysic limitation, as ancient Greek tragedies show, is destined to fail in order to recuperate destabilized order. The circle of time corresponds to the circle of temporary destabilization and sequent restoration of harmony. Nonetheless, with Kant – and Deleuze, following Hölderlin’s studies, shows

\(^2\) G.Deleuze, *ibid.*
that this shift in the notion of time already has been carried out with Sophocles’
tragedy which expressed the modern sense of time – we have un-curved time which is
no longer the circle which limits and encompasses the world in terms of its harmonic
order, but we could say that time becomes horizon which opens the movement, the
passage toward an asymptotic limit which always remain elusive and unattainable.
The long wandering of Oedipus is the expression of this uncurved time turned out to
be pure straight line. In more philosophical terms we can assert that external
limitation is substituted by internal split and disharmonious heterogeneity of the
subjectivity itself. The other of thought (space-matter in classical philosophy)
becomes the other within thought: time. Time traverses the subject, splits it in two and
marks its dual structure, its heterogeneity (viz. sensibility and understandings,
spontaneity and receptivity). Deleuze insists a lot on this fundamental change which
resides in the interiorization of limit which ceases to be external material-corporal or
spatial obstacle and assumes temporal meaning. In that sense time plays a role of the
“interior enemy” which operates within subjectivity and works against it “as if there
was in thought something impossible to think”\(^3\). Such impossibility inherent to the
subjectivity is directly connected to the experience of the sublime which is
fundamentally the experience of limit and the impossibility of representations, shortly,
the case of the failure of synthesis. Because of that the theory of the sublime is not a
mere appendix, as Kant himself claims\(^4\), or some secondary and less important
aesthetical problematization. Furthermore, the question of the sublime is not only the
aesthetical question, but one of the keystones of whole Kantian system which deals
with the main problem – the possibility of synthesis. It means in other words that
Kant’s aesthetics provides a further answer to his principal and inaugural question:
how are synthetic judgments a priori possible?

In order to examine the temporal value of the sublime (and the sublime
meaning of temporality as well) it is necessary to analyze the Kant’s paragraphs from
his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. We can interpret the tension between
apprehension and aesthetic comprehension in the mathematical sublime as a
fundamentally temporal tension between tendency to the infinite succession and the
instantaneous grasping of totality. The Reason (*Vernunft*) imposes to the imagination
the task to represent the absolute totality of intuition in one instant. In the successive

\(^3\) G.Deleuze, *ibid*.
apprehension of intuitions the imagination goes on to the infinity, but as the movement from one sensuous part to the other one proceeds, the application of the rational Idea of totality becomes more and more difficult, until it reaches the point of its real impossibility. It happens when we find ourselves before some absolutely immense object of perception, like the calm ocean or the starry sky. Our apprehension is moving from one intuition to another one, but at the moment when the imagination needs to comprehend and encompass the entire successive series of the intuitions of the senses in one perceptive representation, it faces then its own limits and lack. There is no time to carry out and complete the operation of comprehension, and as Kant writes “the eye requires some time to complete its apprehension… but during this time the former always partly fades before the imagination has taken in the latter”\textsuperscript{5}. The lack of time is inscribed in the synthetic operation of the imagination as its transcendental condition. The imagination is temporally limited, traversed by the line of time, and its failure to satisfy the claims of Reason is actually the failure to schematize (temporalize) something that is beyond time, i.e. the Idea of the Reason. This negative experience produces the sentiment of perturbation and irritating inadequacy between faculties (imagination and reason). As Kant shows, the imagination is the victim of Reason which commits violence forcing imagination to do something of which it is not capable, that is, to represent irrepresentable. But this violence of Reason toward the imagination is actually just the other side of the violence inherent to the imagination itself. And exactly this is the moment of Kant’s great “aesthetic contribution” to his theory of transcendental synthesis exposed in the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}. In the First \textit{Critique} imagination has a conciliatory and mediatory role consisting in the producing of schemata in order to realize the passage from the categories of understanding to the intuition of sensibility. Without this concretization and application of the intellectual concepts to the sensibility no experience and cognition could be possible. Now, in the \textit{Critique of Judgment} we have everything but this irect and conciliatory imagination which operates without disruptions for the purposes of the understanding and its theoretical interest to constitute the empirical objects. “Free play of the faculties” conceals the potential conflict which actually emerges in the sublime, where an accord is reached only

\textsuperscript{5} Kant, op.cit., §26, p.136
through a discord. Moreover, confronting itself with the Reason, the imagination turns reflexively to itself and discovers its violent kernel.

In the First *Critique* Kant proposes the famous triple synthesis: synthesis of apprehension in intuition, synthesis of reproduction in imagination, synthesis of recognition in concepts. The second type, synthesis of reproduction, commit a violent act, for it stops the natural flow of time, that is, linear succession of the discrete intuitions in apprehension. In order to reproduce and retain the previous elements and the partial representations and to synthesize them as coexistent under one perception, imagination suppresses the time\(^6\). Kant writes: “… a subjective movement of the imagination does violence to the inner sense”\(^7\). This inner sense in Kant is nothing but time as universal form of every representation. In order to synthesize intuitions and grasp all of them as coexistent, the imagination needs to go against the natural, linear course of time. Every sensuous unity in some sense is a result of such violence of the imagination which “cancels the time-condition”\(^8\), suppresses the irreversible extension of time in order to reproduce the previous intuitions and make simultaneity intuitable. We can use here Delezian interpretation of time as interior limit and inner enemy and say that this tension between imagination and its temporal conditioning is a clear consequence of the radically changed temporal structure defined as “time out of joint”. The pure experience of this “disjointedness” is in the experience of the sublime constituted through perception of chaos, disarray, devastation and cruelty. If we have met the imagination in the first *Critique* as a constructive mediatory faculty of the *Bildung*, producing the schemata (defined by Kant as *Zeitbestimmungen*) in function of the intellectual unification of synthesis, in the third *Critique* we see that the form of time undermines the imagination from within, so what happens is an inherent conflict between these two. In some sense, the experience of the sublime is the plausible consequence of the mode in which Kant grounds the synthesis in his first *Critique*. To put time as general condition of synthesis, the form of interiority and all representations, and, on other hand, posit it as a bridge which connects the heterogeneous aspects of the same subject (receptivity and spontaneity), means actually build the whole construction of the transcendental synthesis on a very precarious terrain. What Kant’s aesthetics, and the experience of the sublime


\(^7\) Kant, *op.cit.*, §27, p.142

\(^8\) Kant, *ibid.*
particularly, shows us is the fragility of synthesis as such. Deleuze also insists a lot on this chaotic, precarious, aesthetical of entire Kantian construction. In the text *What is Philosophy* Deleuze and Guattari describe Kant’s third *Critique* as an unrestrained work of old age. Deleuze also writes: “It will be the Critique of Judgment, in his last book, as if to the extent that he aged, he became aware of the catastrophe”. We could only add that the fragility of synthesis, brought to light in the catastrophic failure to synthesize the absolutely huge and the absolutely powerful, is a result of the inherent heterogeneity within the subjectivity and its incessant inner tension which tracks the line of time.

The experience of the sublime, indeed, gives as a very important lesson on antagonism in the core of the very subjectivity. The antagonism between the imagination and the reason reveals the antagonism within the imagination itself, that is, the conflict with its temporal conditioning. Or rather we can ask: are these two antagonisms (imagination versus reason or synthesis of imagination versus temporal succession) actually one and the same disagreement? Is not disagreement with Reason and with its pretension to the unconditioned totality just a projection of a radical ambiguity within the imagination itself?

The main point of Kant’s theory of the sublime is concluded in the moment when the imagination and the Reason reach a mutual agreement in all their discord. What is the basis of this harmony between two faculties that seemed totally irreconcilable? The imagination, brought to its ultimate limits, recognizes Reason as superior faculty of the supersensible, in such manner that it recognizes the supersensible as its own destination. In other words, imagination through negative experience, tension and pain discovers its transcendental origin and common root with Reason. The imagination is not capable of representing supersensible Idea, however, it represents this very incapability and its own insufficiency. Through this privative self-reflexive experience of proper insufficiency, the imagination enters in harmony with the faculty of the supersensible, since it recognizes the supersensible as the origin of all our faculties; the origin which it cannot represent, but only prefigure. However, Kant begins his discourse on the sublime with the assertion that apprehension tends to the infinity, as an infinite temporal succession of sensuous parts in the intuition. In other words, it means that supersensible Idea of infinity is already

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9 Deleuze, *Fourth Lesson on Kant*, 04/04/1978
10 Deleuze, *Third Lesson on Kant*, 28/03/1978
present at the pre-discursive level of the sensible apprehension, and as such it is
constitutive for synthesis of imagination. The confrontation with Reason serves to
explicit this transcendental presence of the infinite in all our faculties and to discover
their point of concentration, that is, the supersensible unity of all our faculties.\footnote{11}

It is very important to stress that the sublime for Kant is not a quality of the
object. And when we judge some phenomenon as sublime it is only improper use of
the category of the sublime. Even the category of the beautiful is not objective: what
is beautiful cannot be determined objectively, derived from some concept of the
object or made dependent upon the immediate relation with the object in terms of the
pleasantness. Nonetheless, in the judgment of the beautiful we express ourselves as if
the object judged is in itself beautiful. For Kant, the beautiful is the reflection upon
the form of the object. In the case of the sublime seems that this “as if” term” fades
away and we do not have that type of subjective finality between objects in nature and
accordance of our faculties, as we have it clearly in the experience of the beautiful.
What we have in the sublime is more likely some kind of projection of our inner
disposition. Kant defines the sublime as “disposition of the mind”\footnote{12}, “a movement
of the mind connected with the judging”\footnote{13} or simply, the use that the faculty of judgment
makes of some objects, and not the object itself. Instead of prescribing a definition to
the sublime objects Kant, when he wants to be more precise, uses the expressions
such as “object serves for the presentation of a sublimity that can be found in the
mind”\footnote{14}. In fact, what is sublime in the experience of the sublime is the very subject
of this experience who discovers the potency of the supersensible. Therefore, if in the
beautiful the subject reflects the form of an objects, could we conclude that in the
sublime what is reflected is the form of the subject? The sublime is a self-reflection of
the subject which, in the encounter of the certain natural phenomena, such as calm
immense oceans, starry sky or storms and volcanic eruptions, reaches the awareness
of its own supersensible nature in the form of the Ideas of Reason. If we take into
consideration that the form of the subject, namely, the form of its interiority is time,
for it is the universal condition of all phenomena, the constitutive framework for

\footnote{11} Cfr. Deleuze, L’idée de genèse dans l’esthétique de Kant, in: Revue d’Esthétique, Paris, 1963,
pp.113-136
\footnote{12} Kant, op.cit., §25, p. 134
\footnote{13} Kant, op.cit. §24, p.131
\footnote{14} Kant, op.cit. §23, p.129
every representation that necessarily belongs to our inner state\textsuperscript{15}, then self-reflection of the form of the subject necessarily includes its temporal dimension. Time underlies the way in which representations are collocated in our mind, that is to say, time as pure intuition, or subjective a priori form of our inner state, regards the pure relationality between representations in terms of succession, simultaneity, or permanence\textsuperscript{16}. Because of this universal and relational character time is pure irrepresentable interiority which cannot be perceived immediately, but nonetheless acts as the ground of all possible experiences. Analogously to the exhibition of the irrepresentable ideas of the reason, what comes forward in the experience of the sublime is an exhibition of the temporal core of subjectivity.

We saw that the experience of the sublime depends directly upon the new character of time opened by Kantian subject (or better to say: opened in the Kantian subject). Slavoj Žižek in his interpretation of Kant's imagination argues that the experience of the sublime marks the moment of a radical rupture and interruption in the linear temporal order\textsuperscript{17}. Such order is constituted by the schematism in function of the application of the discursive categories of understanding, that is to say, the subject’s violent synthesis counteracts the natural flow of sensations and “produce” the time as order of succession. This temporal order is necessary for the imagination to schematize the categories in order to constitute the object of experience, as Kant’s doctrine on schematism demonstrates. According to Žižek, such schematized time is a homogenized time in which nothing really new can emerge, because it provides a framework for the repetitive experience ruled by necessary laws. This experience designates the scientific methodic truth for which the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} offers transcendental grounding, while Kant’s third \textit{Critique} opens the space for the extra-methodic truth\textsuperscript{18}. This space is what Kant in the Introduction for his third \textit{Critique} defines as territory without domain\textsuperscript{19}. The territory without domain suspends mechanism of the schematism and “control” over the particular by means of universal laws, thereby the subject of that territory reflects, in an aesthetic experience, the

\textsuperscript{15} “All presentations, whether or not they have outer things as their objects […] belong to our inner state; and this inner state is subject to the formal condition of inner intuition, and hence to the condition of time”. Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1996, B51.

\textsuperscript{16} Kant, op.cit., B50 and B67

\textsuperscript{17} Slavoj Žižek \textit{The Ticklish subject}, Verso, London-New York, 1999.


\textsuperscript{19} Kant, \textit{Critique of the Power of Judgment}, p.64
The uniqueness of the event as exhibition of the freedom through subversion in the order of time. The experience of the sublime is the experience of something non-ordinary and extra-ordinary, felt like an event ex nihilo. In the order of objective experience and cognition nothing can be created ex nihilo because the principle of causality as category of understanding requires the state of conditions which necessarily produce an effect. But since the sublime is a matter of subjective experience and movement of the mind the fact that we feel some phenomenon as event - unexpected, unpredicted, compelling and transfixed - produces a rupture in the homogeneous order of schematized time. Such event has a meaning of the liberation and emancipation from previous conditions, because something new “cannot be accounted for by reference to the pre-existing network of circumstances”\(^{20}\). This liberation from blind causality concerns our transcendental freedom, and our moral supersensible destination, as Kantian sublime shows. The morality as the Law of Reason, which intervenes particularly in the dynamic sublime, is nothing but emergence of our intrinsic freedom which breaks with natural causality and linear order of time. “We are dealing here with another temporality, the temporality of freedom, of a radical rupture in the chain of (natural and/or social) causality”\(^{21}\). In this break we have to search the political significance and emancipatory character of the sublime. Is not revolution the sublime experience of disruption felt like something historically new? Are the popular uprisings, civil riots, and social revolts the sublime openings of the historical new, of unexpected, “absolutely huge” and “absolutely powerful” with unpredictable consequences? In keeping with Žižek we can ask: when does the experience of the sublime occurs in politics? His answer is when people "risk freedom" against their interests, profits and calculations in terms of costs and benefits, and when impossible, due to the new temporal order, becomes possible.

The relation between Kant’s sublime and political revolution is not only conceptual but historical as well. Kant’s Third Critique is the work which has been written in the political atmosphere of the French Revolution, published in the 1790. Is not the ambiguous character of sublime (attractive and repulsive at the same time) an aesthetic translation of Kant’s impressions and political attitude toward French Revolution\(^{22}\). The harmony in disagreement should represent superiority of the

\(^{20}\) S. Žižek, op.cit., p.43  
\(^{21}\) Ibid.  
subject of Revolution, who finally finds rational satisfaction and subjective finality in violence and terror. What is also interesting to notice is that another important name for the aesthetics of the sublime, Edmund Burke, is also the author of the famous conservative critique of the French Revolution. Can differences between Kant’s and Burke’s sublime be an indication for their political differences and views on revolutionary events? To answer on this question it is necessary to examine political implications of the notion of the sublime.

Alain Badiou in his recent book *The Rebirth of History*, distinguishing immediate, latent and historical uprisings, sets out a theoretical framework for current and future rewakenings of History under the form of mass upheavals and riots against existent political and social order, whereby previously excluded people, the inexistent, mount the stage of history, become visible and, due to the subjective energy of moment, open the whole series of the unexpected and until that time unimaginable emancipatory consequences. Badiou therefore develops the concept of Event which makes possible “the restitution of inexistent” and sets free a truth in the form of a new, previously unknown political possibility. In this study Badiou makes a few allusions to Kant; when he elaborates the question of intensification of subjectivity as constitutive factor of a historical uprising, he identifies such intensification with the concept of enthusiasm recognized already by Kant, and moreover, recognized by Kant exactly as sublime feeling. Badiou does not aim to establish any interpretative connection with Kant’s aesthetics of the sublime, but we are convinced that such relation is a fruitful way for further analysis and philosophical reflection, since Badiou’s considerations on the rewakening of History coincide to a great extent with Kant’s discourse on the sublime. Analogously to the sublime which confirms the power of the Idea of Reason and discovers our supersensible destination, the historical uprising is only that event where power of an Idea will take root and confirm itself. Here is not place to elaborate the difference between Kant’s and Badiou’s concept of Idea, and its debt to platonic tradition, but it is obvious that what connects the sublime with the awakenings of history is the exhibition of the Idea, of the infinite, of the irrepresentable, through the moment of rupture and through unforeseen emergence of something New. Badiou disavows riots that have only negative, violent and anarchic

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25 Kant, op.cit., pp. 154-157
character deprived of any enduring truth. The accord with an Idea is needed in order to have truly historical Event which opens the new emancipatory possibilities important for the collective destiny of mankind. The universal aspect emerges from the tension and conflict, from violent rupture in the causal order which introduces a new temporality. However, as well as in the painful experience of the sublime, negativity is a way in which Idea exhibits itself. For Kant this negativity, that is, awareness of the irrepresentability and impossibility of Idea, is the unique way in which it can manifest itself (as Darstellung and not as Vorstellung). In order to carry out this negative exhibition of the infinite the schematized order of time must be abandoned and suspended. And here comes another interesting point of contact between Badiou’s notion of historical event and Kant’s sublime which puts forward the actuality of the aesthetical experience in the framework of political theory and, besides, confirms our line of interpretation which passes through the problem of temporality in the structure of the sublime. Badiou claims that “the invention of time”\textsuperscript{26} is necessary in order to establish a continuity of revolutionary Event when its initial force peters out. Very similar to Žižek’s analysis of the Kant’s sublime, Badiou puts entire philosophical analysis of the rebirth of History in terms of a new and old, mainstream temporality. Organization or discipline of the Event which wants to preserve and in some sense institutionalize the new possibilities brought up by massive initiative is actually “the transformation of evental power into temporality”\textsuperscript{27}. This new temporality is, according to Badiou, regarded as outside time, in the sense that it cannot be inscribed into the order of time prescribed by the previous world. The Event-historical riot made an irremediable break in time, against its causal linearity and predictability, subverting the relation between possibility and impossibility (what seemed impossible within one temporal order now after the rupture is possible). Is not this break in time exactly what happens in the experience of the sublime? Moreover, is not Badiou’s “invention of time”, by means of which outside-time happened in the historical Event needs to create its new temporality, that is, a new temporal order of continuity through organization and elaboration of political results, similar to the gesture which Kant’s ascribes to genius. The genius in some way unifies the sublime and the beautiful, in other words, he/she unifies the event of its infinite inspiration and creation of new matter with the process of form-giving and harmony in order to make

\textsuperscript{26} A. Badiou, op.cit. p.70
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
communicable its creation\textsuperscript{28}. If we want to remain on the same line, discovery of the aesthetic Idea by genius would be analogous to the exhibition of political Idea in a massive popular uprising, while genius’ composing of his/her artwork would be analogous to the political organization of historical revolutionary movement which translates itself into political body and institutional coordinates. Without second moment, the moment of forming, organization and conceptualization, the artwork would be just an incomprehensible, incommunicable personal vision, as well as the storm and volcanic erruption of political event would be just a nihilist and violent episode of history. The emancipatory character of the sublime, hence, lies in its temporal rupture which opens a new horizon of the universal impact, but this openness will remain counterproductive or even destructive if accord between historical imagination and political intellect lacks - the accord which gives a form and consistency in order to make a revolutionary political event a model for others to follow.

**Conclusion**

One can object here that this interpretation of Kant’s sublime is not valid since Kant’s aesthetics is predominantly based upon reflection of the natural phenomena (sky, seas, oceans, stormy clouds, mountains, etc) and therefore we are not allowed to make a similar passage from the nature to the history applying reflective judgment to the political and social events. Another critique could object that the sublime refers to a single person, to the modern individual subject in all his “robinsonade” and solitude before the nature and outside from society (Kant himself says that there is something sublime in separation from all society\textsuperscript{29}), so that the sentiment of the sublime is in some way a-political, regards only the ambiguous relation between individual and the world of nature. We will respond to these possible objections through three different elucidations. Firstly, the way in which Kant conceives aesthetic reflection implies the overcoming of the naturalness and immediate dependence on natural causality. According to the main postulates of the German Idealism, reflection is always self-reflection, so even when we reflect the form of an object of nature, judging it, for instance, as beautiful, what is at stake is the free relation between our faculties and our relation with the nature as well. In the

\textsuperscript{28} Kant, op.cit., §48 and §50

\textsuperscript{29} Kant, op. cit., § 29, p.157
experience of the sublime particularly, the naturality is overcome in the victory of the supersensible moral vocation of subject, thereby its noumenal freedom confirms the superiority and independence from nature, where nature is regarded “as paling into insignificance beside the Ideas of Reason”\textsuperscript{30}. The argument that the sublime is restricted to the natural phenomena is therefore narrow, because nature in Kantian aesthetics of the sublime serves as a mirror of our own sublimity, the enlarging mirror in which our reflection becomes magnified. Secondly, even the relation between man and nature has been changed since Kant’s epoch. Due to a complete \textit{Enzauberung} of the world, technological and scientific development of mankind, which put the control over the nature, and besides, made visible and accessible even the most distant and the most unusual places on the Earth, the nature certainly has lost its overwhelming, almost divine impact on the man that challenges him to a heroic duel. More humanized, that is, more subjected to the man’s power, nature has become less hostile. The gaze of the wanderer above the sea of fog from famous Caspar Friedrich’s painting today, at the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, will be definitely different. If sublimity before the nature is eclipsed, it does not mean that sublimity as such has lost its meaning. As Italian philosopher Remo Bodei argues, the sublime is dislocated from nature to history, and to politics also\textsuperscript{31}. The aesthetics of the sublime in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century can be viewed as a reaction to the prevailing and dominant mechanistic approach to nature of that time\textsuperscript{32}, so the only way to escape this deterministic vision, which follows the model of perfect clock mechanism, was to offer another approach to the nature, that of reflective judgment. This analogy actually condenses the intentions of our work by which we attempt to propose a revision of the aesthetics of the sublime as a potential contribution to the political theory of emancipation. Nowadays the deterministic model is transposed to the social reality succumbed to the logic of capital and managerial \textit{techne}, so it becomes necessary to oppose another, alternative model of sociality. In that process the aesthetics of the sublime can have emancipatory role in the same way it has it in Kant's epoch\textsuperscript{33}.

\textsuperscript{30} Kant, op. cit, § 26, p.140
\textsuperscript{33} It could be interesting to call our attention to one Holderlin's letter, addressed to his brother Karl, in which he writes that Kant's philosophy is the only possible because it plays an important (we can say: emancipatory) role by saving the Germans from their timorous obtuseness. F. Hölderlin, \textit{Sämtliche Werke und Briefe}, ed. M. Knaupp, 3 voll., Hanser Verlag, München-Wien, vol. 2, 1992-1993, pp. 725-727.
Thirdly, it is almost impossible to disregard the echo of the epoch of Revolutions in Kant's work. One note from the *Critique of Judgment*, published during the second year of the French Revolution, seems to refer explicitly to this great event of «fundamental transformation of great people into the state».

Moreover, isn't that the revolution in another Kant's text, namely, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, is defined in terms of the unity between nature and freedom, which is exactly the program of his third Critique? In this late work of Kant, written in the 1798 when the French revolution had already shown its atrocities and dramatic outcomes, he notes that even if «the revolution of a gifted people which we have seen unfolding in our day» brings misery and atrocities, nonetheless it finds "in the hearts of all spectators (who are not engaged in this game themselves) wishful participation that borders closely on enthusiasm, the very expression of which is fraught with danger".

This sympathy of the spectator for the revolution has cause in our moral disposition, as well as the sublimity recompenses, through the negative pleasure, the anguished breakdown of the imagination elevating (erheben) us to the most profound rational nature of our being articulated in the moral Law and the Idea of humanity. Revolution is moral because it is “the acknowledged duty of the human soul, concerning mankind as a whole”, and as such it signifies the realization of the morality in the history through the will of the people to give themselves autonomously the constitution as morally good in itself. Kant’s views on the French Revolution are not moralizing, because he saw the 1789 as an application of the Pure Practical Reason, as the Event of the morality of the Right. And conversely, since he sees the Revolution as an ethical moment to be realized in history, Kant’s ethics is not to be regarded as a rigid military moralism. In some way, the experience of the sublime demonstrates the true character of Kant’s ethics. Those very enthusiastic tones from Kant’s text written in the 1798, in which he, interestingly, did not condemn the Jacobins terror, but talks about moral sympathy nonetheless atrocity, serve to some authors as argument in favor of Kant’s revolutionary intentions often hidden by an art of the ambiguous and contradictory writing, necessary in the times of censorship.

French philosopher André Tosel articulates Kant’s political antinomy, which is nothing but a symptom of

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34 Kant, op.cit., p. 246
36 Kant, op.cit, p. 157
37 Could not we take all these quoted Kant’s words from *The Conflict of the Faculties* as an example of the reflective aesthetic judgment?
the real historical antinomy in the period of crisis, in these terms: the Event of the Right, through revolution as a historical symbol of the Idea of freedom and justice, does not use the instruments of the right, that is to say, does not respect the actual legal order and *status quo* of the institutionalized right. The Event of the Right is always illegal violent reaction to the violence of the authority grounded in the valid legislation and current systems of rules. Therefore, revolutionary Event of the Right necessarily counteracts the fact of the right. This antinomy could be resolved if we take the meaning of the concept of “right” differently when we speak about the Event and when we speak about the fact or legality. However, the sense of this dramatic antinomy is that the state of the Right, regarded as an Idea of Reason, cannot be enacted through the legal instruments of right. The zero-point, the initial situation of a new political and social organization, which is more agreeable with the Idea of Reason, is not a juridical fact agreeable with the actual state of things, but a disorder, disarray, rupture with all its temporal meanings that we elucidated on the example of the sublime and its temporal structure. The origin of legality is “illegal”, chaotic and violent - sublime. The new, “evental” violence in name of Reason collides with the old, “ancien régime” violence which acquired the form of the natural course of things, despotism of *status quo* in name of Nature and self-proclaimed realism. Does this conflict between two transgressions, constitutive for the realization of the Idea of Right, remind us on the violence and collision inherent to the sublimity where imagination which violates the inner sense is in turn violated by the pretensions of the Reason to represent the Idea? Only the victory of the Reason can establish the peaceful harmony between the faculties, in the same way as the victory of the revolutionary cause can only legitimize new political and social state. Furthermore, this relation between two orders, between the Event and the fact, between the sublime irruption of the freedom and the conventional continuity of *status quo*, introduces thus a new perspective for the interpretation of the sublime with regard to *sensus communis*, another important concept of Kant’s aesthetics. If sublime finds its profound meaning in the “domination of the rebellion”, as an emancipatory authentic act oriented against the regime of facticity in order to set up conditions for the new

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40 The Event of the Right refers to the right as an effect of the idea of reason concerning our moral supersensible vocation and striving to the freedom (because of that the term is written with the capital letter). The fact of the reason has meaning of legality and juridical system of the rules in force. Therefore, we use two different meanings of the same term “right”. 
order of law, then sensus communis, as horizon of intersubjective communicability authorized by current social rules, is always threatened by the potential rupture of the sublime. On the other hand, the sublime is constitutive for the common sense, as its “illegal” origin and that instance which can always question the common logos of communicability. But the sublime event, as we have already noticed, in order to produce far-reaching consequences with an universal and “objective” impact, has to find its proper sensus communis, its own language. All this generates some kind of the hermeneutical circle between the sublime and the common sense.

The interpretations of the Kant’s aesthetics that intend to ground political philosophy upon the category of sensus communis have been already suggested during the 20th century⁴¹. We tried here to put forward the notion of the sublime as truly political category, and the keystone of Kant’s project of transcendental synthesis. The aesthetic theory of the sublime, hence, brings to light its sublime actuality.