

Longinus' Perception about "The Sublime and Beauty"

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Abstract

This paper takes under consideration the work of Longinus, *On the Sublime*, and his opinions on the notions of the sublime and beauty. In the treatise of Longinus, one can notice an interesting definition of the sublime as a specific kind of literary and rhetorical greatness that surpasses the category of mere beauty. Greatness of thought, strong emotion, certain figures of speech, noble diction, and dignified composition are the five sources of sublimity that Longinus enumerates. This paper brings forth how sublime differs from the conventional ideas of beauty. The ideas of Longinus about the sublime developed many successive aesthetic theories among them those of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. The continuity of interest in his thoughts shows their abiding relevance to the exploration of literary and artistic greatness.

Introduction

Longinus is a figure in history that was never very clear, and because of that, he is best remembered for *On the Sublime*, an influential treatise regarding the nature of sublimity in literature and rhetoric. The work provides a frame through which greatness and impact of texts could be determined. The sublime differs from the conventional notions of beauty that exhibit harmony and proportion in that it does manage to evoke feelings of greatness and a deep emotional response. The purpose of this paper is to explain Longinus' concepts of the sublime and beauty, in what ways these concepts are different from one another, and how they influenced later thought about aesthetics.

Biography of Longinus

The name of Longinus is a pseudonymous attachment to the real author of *On the Sublime*, a work which genuinely influenced classical rhetoric and even literary criticism. There are a number of scholarly candidates for his identity, but none with certainty; he has even been identified as the Greek rhetorician Cassius Longinus. Whatever the obscurity of his biography may be, *On the Sublime* is one of those cornerstones in the study of aesthetic theory.

In the treatise, dated to the 1st century AD, Longinus considers sublimity as that aspect in literature which affects audiences and demonstrates the power of language and expression toward a sense of grandeur above conventional beauty. His ideas have influenced thinkers since him, from Edmund Burke to Immanuel Kant, who developed his concepts within their own philosophical frameworks.

Explanation of Longinus' Views about the Sublime and Beauty

The Sublime

In *On the Sublime*, Longinus defines the sublime as that aspect of literature which inspires the soul with a sense of awe and grandeur. The sublime is above the ordinary aesthetic experience because it is intended to lift the audience or reader with its strong emotional and intellectual effect. Longinus names five causes for sublimity:

Greatness of Thought: This would comprise high and weighty ideas that answer to the conception of the extraordinary in the hearer's mind. Longinus is of the view that the utterance thereof raises the discourse to dignity and majesty and gives birth to admiration.

Strong Emotion: Another source of sublimity is the power of exhibiting strong emotion. If the original author is in a state of powerful emotion concerning his matter, the intensity of his feelings may be transferred to the audience.

Certain Figures of Speech: Metaphor, hyperbole, and other rhetorical figures of speech go to create this elevation. These figures add eloquence to the text and raise a strained sense of sublimity.

Noble Diction: The vehicle of expression through loftier and high-brow language is important for attaining to sublimity. For Longinus, the quality of words used is seminal to creating an impression of greatness.

Elevated Composition: The composition of the subject matter into a general body or form creates an aspect which adds to the sublimity of the work. A well-composed, coherent, and dignified text brings about a closer sense of sublimity.

Beauty and How It Differs from Sublimity

In classical aesthetics, beauty is associated with harmony, proportion, and visual pleasure, as opposed to the sublime. Beauty usually makes its mark through its pleasing and balanced attributes, pleasurable to the senses while offering aesthetic delight. Longinus differentiates the sublime from beauty with regard to the deeper, overwhelming response it may evoke.

Whereas beauty is concerned with sensual pleasure and proportion, the sublime deals with the sense of vastness and intensity beyond the ordinary notion of aesthetics. The notion of the sublime pertains to the capability to elicit feelings of astonishment and wonder, in most instances through the pathetic or grand experience.

Influence on Later Aesthetic Thought

Longinus's conception of the sublime is one that has continued to resonate with later aesthetic theories. Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) further articulates the concept from Longinus's work by looking at the psychological effect of sublimity with respect to beauty. Burke extends the work of sublimity in its emotional and sensual features, hailing its capacity to excite terror and astonishment.

The concept of the sublime was further developed in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in 1790, which accounted for the philosophical implication of the concept. For Kant, there are two forms of the sublime: the mathematical sublime with an inclination towards vastness and scale, and the dynamical sublime with a relationship to power and force. Kant's treatment of the sublime reflects and extends Longinus', integrating his ideas within an extended philosophical framework.

Conclusion

Longinus' observations of the sublime and the beautiful are basic to an understanding of aesthetic theory. His division of the sublime, accompanied by greatness and power of effect, and beauty, which is connected with harmony and proportion, has been influential in subsequent philosophical and critical theory. The article examines Longinus' treatise and its influence upon later theorists to bring out that his contribution continues to be of utmost relevance to the research of literary and artistic excellence.

References

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