

Of the
**AESTHETIC ESTIMATION
OF MAGNITUDE**

TRANSLATED BY SUSAN JOHNSON

I can form four mental images, quite different from one another, of the quantity of an object. The tower which I see before me, is a magnitude.

It is 200 ells high.

It is high.

It is a high (sublime) object. It is striking, that something quite different is expressed in each of these four judgments, all of which, however, refer to the quantitative nature of the tower. In the first two judgments, the tower is regarded simply as a quantum (as a magnitude), in the two remaining ones as a magnum (as something large).

Everything which has parts, is a quantum. Every perception, every idea formed by comprehension, has a magnitude, just as the latter has a domain and the former a content. Quantity in general, therefore, cannot be meant, if one speaks about a difference of magnitude among objects.

Schiller wrote this essay in 1793. Its significance lies in its opposition to Immanuel Kant, the hegemonic philosopher of the time, who denied any connection between beauty and science. In this essay, Schiller demonstrates the coherence of beauty and mathematical science, in particular. In so refuting Kant's conception of beauty as subjective, Schiller created the conceptual basis for the advances later made in mathematical physics by German scientists Bernhard Riemann and Georg Cantor.

Here we speak about such a quantity as characteristically belongs to an object, that is to say, that which is not simply a *quantum*, but is at the same time a *magnum*.

Given any magnitude, one thinks of a unit to which various parts of the same kind are conjoined. Thus, if two magnitudes differ, it can only be because in one of them more parts are conjoined in the unit, in the other, fewer, or, that the one constitutes merely a part of the other. That quantum which contains in itself another quantum as a part, is, with respect to the latter quantum, a *magnum*.

To investigate how many times a certain specific quantum is contained in another, is to *measure* that quantum (if it is continuous), or to count it (if it is not continuous). What we take as a unit of measure each time depends upon whether we are to consider an object as a magnum, that is to say, all magnitude is a relative concept, an idea of proportion.

Held up against its own measure, every magnitude is a magnum, and still more so, held up against the measure of its own measure, compared with which its own measure is itself again a magnum. But, just as the process descends, it also ascends. Every magnum is small in turn, as soon as we think it contained in another, and where is there a limit, since we can once more multiply any number series, however large, with itself?

By means of measurement, thus, we indeed arrive at the *comparative*, but never at the *absolute magnitude*, at that, to wit, which cannot be included in any other quantum, but subsumes all other magnitudes. Nothing, of course, would hinder the same action of the mind which provided us with such a magnitude, from providing us with its *double*, for the mind proceeds successively, and, guided by ideas of number, can continue its synthesis into infinity. So long as it is still possible to determine how *large* an object may be, the object is still not (simply) large, and can, through the same operation of comparison, be diminished into something very small. Accordingly, there could exist in Nature only one single magnitude *per excellentiam*, to

wit, the infinite totality of Nature herself, to which, however, no one perception ever corresponds, and whose synthesis cannot be completed in any span of time. For, since the realm of numbers can never be exhausted, it would have to be the mind which brings its synthesis to a conclusion. The mind itself would have to establish or create some unit as the highest and maximum measure, and whatever exceeds that, simply define it to be large.

This also happens in practice, when I say of the tower which stands before me, *it is high*, without *determining* its height. I give no measure of comparison here, and yet I cannot ascribe absolute magnitude to the tower, since nothing at all prevents me from assuming it to be still larger. Simply by looking at the tower, therefore, a maximum measure must already be given to me, and I must be able to presume, that by saying *this tower is high*, that I have prescribed this maximum measure to every other observer as well. This measure, therefore, already lies in the idea of a tower, and it is nothing other than the idea of its *species-magnitude*.

A certain maximum magnitude is prescribed to every thing, either through its *species* (if it is a work of nature), or (if it is a work of freedom) through the *constraints* arising from its underlying cause and purpose. We employ this measure of magnitude, more or less consciously, in every observation of objects; but our perceptions are very different, depending upon whether the measure we apply is more fortuitous or more necessary. If an object exceeds the idea of its species-magnitude, it will, to a certain degree, put us into a state of *bewilderment*. We will be surprised, and our experience expands, but insofar as we take no interest in the object itself, what remains is simply a feeling, that the magnitude which we expected has been exceeded. We have derived this measure merely from a series of empirical experiences, and there is no necessity whatever at hand that it must always fit. If, on the other hand, a product of freedom exceeds the idea which we established for ourselves about the constraints of its cause, we will no doubt feel a certain

sense of *admiration*. What startles us in such an experience is not merely the exceeded expectation, it is at the same time that the constraints have been cast off. There, in the earlier case, our attention simply remained on the *product*, which was of indifferent concern in itself; here, our attention is drawn toward the *generative force*, which is moral, or is at least associated with a moral being, and as such it must necessarily interest us. This interest will increase just to that degree, that the force constituting the active principle is the more noble or more weighty, and the constraint which we find exceeded is the more difficult to overcome. A horse of uncommon size will pleasantly surprise us, but still more the adept and powerful rider who tames him. If we now see him leap with this horse over a wide, deep gully, we are astonished, and if it is an enemy front which we see him charge, respect shall join with this astonishment, and turn into admiration. In this latter case, we treat his action as a dynamic magnitude, and apply our idea of human valor as a metric, where it is now a question of how we are conscious of our own worth and what we consider the maximum limit of courage.

Things are totally different, if the idea of the magnitude of the purpose is exceeded. Here we employ no empirical and fortuitous metric as the basis, but, on the contrary, a rational and thus necessary one, one which cannot be exceeded without negating the purpose of the object. The magnitude of a house is solely determined by its purpose; the magnitude of a tower can be determined merely by the constraints of architecture. Hence, should I find the house too large for its purpose, it must necessarily displease me. Should I, on the other hand, find that the tower exceeds my idea of a tower's height, it will but delight me all the more. Why? The one is a contradiction, the other only an unexpected accordance with what I seek. I can still reconcile myself where a constraint is relaxed, but not where an intention is not carried out.

If, now, I merely say of an object, *it is large*, without adding *how large* it is, I am not at all thereby proclaiming

it to be something absolutely large, to which no metric can measure up; I am simply saying nothing about the measure to which I subject it, on the assumption, that it is already contained in the mere idea of it. I do not determine its magnitude completely in contrast to all other things conceivable, but I do so partially, and with respect to a certain class of things, yet, therefore, always objectively and logically, because I affirm a proportional relationship, and proceed according to an idea.

This idea, however, can be empirical, and therefore contingent, and my judgment in this case will have only subjective validity. I perhaps make into the species-magnitude, that which is only magnitude of a certain kind; perhaps I see an objective limit in what is but my subjective limitation; perhaps I smuggle my private idea of the use and purpose of the thing into my judgment. As regards substance, my estimate of magnitude can thus be quite subjective, although in respect of form, it is objective, i.e., an actual determination of proportions. The European takes the Patagonian to be a giant, and his judgment is entirely valid among that stock of people from whom he derives his concept of human magnitude; in Patagonia, however, he will find disagreement. Nowhere does the influence of subjective principles on men's judgment become more apparent, than in their estimation of size regarding corporeal as well as incorporeal things. Everyone, one may assume, has a certain measure for strength and virtue within himself, which guides his estimation of the magnitude of moral acts. The miser will look upon the donation of a guilder as a very large strain on his generosity, while the generous man believes threefold the sum is too little to give. The man of common stamp celebrates his lack of criminality as a great proof of his honesty; another of fine sensibility may sometimes scruple over whether to take a legitimate profit.

Although in all these cases, the measure is subjective, the act of measuring is itself always objective; for one need only generalize the measure, and a general standard of magnitude will be introduced. This is actually the case

with the objective measures which are in general use, even though they all have a subjective origin and are derived from the human body.

All comparative estimation of magnitude, however, be it abstract or physical, be it wholly or only partly determinant, leads only to relative, and never to absolute magnitude; for if an object actually exceeds the measure which we assume to be a maximum, it can still always be asked, by how many times the measure is exceeded. It is certainly a large thing in relation to its species, but yet not the largest possible, and once the constraint is exceeded, it can be exceeded again and again, into infinity. Now, however, we are seeking absolute magnitude, for this alone can contain in itself the basis of a higher order, since all relative magnitudes, as such, are like to one another. Since nothing can compel our mind to halt its business, it must be the mind's power of imagination which sets a limit for that activity. In other words, the estimation of magnitude must cease to be logical, it must be achieved aesthetically.

If I estimate a magnitude in a logical fashion, I always relate it to my cognitive faculty; if I estimate it aesthetically, I relate it to my faculty of sensibility. In the first case, I experience something about the object, in the second case, on the contrary, I only experience something within me, caused by the imagined magnitude of the object. In the first case I behold something outside myself, in the second, something within me. Thus, in reality, I am no longer measuring, I am no longer estimating magnitude, rather I myself become for the moment a magnitude to myself, and indeed an infinite one. That object which causes me to be an infinite magnitude to myself, is called sublime.

The power of imagination, as the spontaneity of emotion, accomplishes a twofold business in conceptualizing magnitude. It first gathers every part of the given quantum into an empirical consciousness, which is *apprehension*; secondly, it assembles the *successively collected* parts into a pure self-consciousness, in which latter business, that of *comprehension*, it acts entirely as pure understanding. The

concept of my "I" (empirical consciousness), in other words, combines with each part of the quantum; and through reflection upon these successively performed syntheses, I recognize the identity of my "I" (pure self-consciousness) in this series as a whole; in this way, the quantum first becomes an object for me. I link A to B, and B to C, and so forth, and while I watch my activity, as it were, I say to myself: in A, as well as in B, and in C, I am the acting subject.

Apprehension takes place *successively*, and I grasp each partial conception after the other. Since, after every moment in time, another constantly follows, and so forth into infinity, there is no danger in this procedure, that I would not be able to bring even the quantum with the highest numerical value to completion. Simply give me time, and there is no number, in apprehension, which shall exceed my reach. The synthesis, however, takes place *simultaneously*, and through the concept of the self-identity of my "I" in all preceding syntheses, I transcend anew the temporal conditions under which they had occurred. All those different empirical conceptions held by my "I" lose themselves in the single pure self-consciousness: the subject, which had acted in A, and B, and C, and so forth, is I, the eternally identical self.

For this second act, that is to say, for the reduction of different empirical apperceptions into pure self-consciousness, it is now absolutely not a matter of indifference, how many such empirical apperceptions are to be resolved into pure self-consciousness. Experience at least teaches us, that the power of imagination has a limit here, however difficult it may be to find out its necessary ground. This limit may differ for different persons, and can perhaps be extended by deliberate practice and energetic effort, but it can never be dissolved. If the power of reflection transgresses this limit, and seeks to bring together mental images, which already lie beyond the limit, into one unity of self-consciousness, it will lose as much in clarity as it gains in scope. Between the circumference of the entirety of a mental image and the distinctness of its parts, is an ever insuperable,

specific relationship, wherefore in each addition of a large quantum we lose as much backward as we gain forward, and when we have reached the end-point, we see the starting-point vanish.

That number of mental images with which the distinctness of the individual parts can still perfectly subsist, would thus be the maximum of the human power of comprehension. This maximum can be exceeded, and indeed very considerably so, but each time at the cost of distinctness; and to the disadvantage of the mind, which must rigorously depend upon that distinctness. Fewer than three this number cannot truly be, for the original act of comparison upon which all determinate, precise thinking is based, makes this three-ness necessary. Whether this number may be greater than three may be doubted, and experience at least provides nothing by means of which it could be proven. And so certainly the number *three* may be called the holy number, for through it our orbit of thought would be determined.

The aesthetic measure is directed according to this logical base-measure, as well, in the estimation of magnitude, which, to be sure, cannot be understood so narrowly. It is agreed, at least, that we are able to take in and distinguish more than three units at a time, although the further we enlarge the summation, the more the clarity decreases. Yet since, in the estimation of magnitude, all parts are taken to be of the same kind, here the requirement for clarity is somewhat less rigorous. We may perhaps perceive twenty persons at one glance, but to recognize more than three among them at one instant will be difficult. Generally, here we must take heed, that we do not take as simultaneous, that which is simply a rapid succession. The rapidity with which the mind makes nine out of three-times-three, no longer allows us to distinguish whether these nine units appear to us all at once, or in a succession of three moments. We often fancy, that we grasp with our senses, when we but comprehend with our mind. We need but only make the experiment, whether that which we take in all at once

with a rapid ordering makes the same effect when it is in disorder. Classification and order can only aid the mind, never the power of imagination; thus what we easily take in under the foregoing condition, we have not perceived at one stroke, but counted or measured.

This maximum of comprehension, determined by the constraints of our subjectivity, governs us in all estimation of magnitude, also the mathematical, as the ultimate base-measure. Since each magnitude is only determinable by means of comparison, the mind, without such a maximum base-measure, would lack a fixed point of reference on which, by necessity, it must ultimately rest in order to be able to distinguish any magnitude at all. Now, every quantum in Nature will be estimated according to this subjective base-measure, and the sameness of this measure in all human beings is the sole cause of why men's judgment about magnitude can agree. Were this base-measure to be expanded, all objects, at least aesthetically considered, would move into a different relationship to us; calculations which now proceed only discursively according to concepts, would be the work of a glance; and objects which now move us by their sublimity, would shed their entire enchantment and vanish into the common rank.

Let us assume for the moment, that this maximum of sensuous comprehension is *ten*. The power of imagination can thus grasp ten units in one, without missing a single unit. Now, however, let a given magnitude contain a thousand such units, and the entire thousand is to be absorbed by consciousness. To apprehend the quantum, i.e., to take each of these thousand units individually into consciousness, is not difficult at all, for nothing but time is required; but to comprehend the quantum, i.e., to recognize the consciousness strewn into all these thousand mental images of units as self-identical, to grasp a thousand different apperceptions in a single one, that is the difficult task to be solved. Now there is no other way out, but to reduce these thousand units to ten, for ten is the highest unit which the power of imagination can take in all together.

But how can a thousand units be represented by ten?— In no other way than through concepts, which are the unique and invariant representatives of perceptions. The power of imagination thus relinquishes its intuitive business, and the mind begins its discursive (here, actually symbolic) work. Number must assist where perception no longer suffices, and thought must subdue, where the eye's vision can no longer become master.

From those ten units, which are the maximum of sensuous comprehension, the mind forms a new logical unit, the number-concept 10. Now, however, the power of imagination can, as we assume, comprehend ten units at the same time; every number-concept 10, thought of as a unit, can thus, taken ten times, fuse together in one intuition of the power of imagination. Admittedly, these logical units formed by the mind are appropriated in this second act of comprehension not as multiples but as units, and the ten units, which each contains, are no longer seen as individuals. All that is accounted is the concept simply as representative, and what is represented loses itself in darkness or disappears. These ten logical units are now compressed by the mind into a new unit, the number 100, which, repeated 10 times, can once more be conceived at a single stroke by the power of imagination, producing the number 1,000, which fully provides the measure of the given quantum. In this third act of comprehension, those original units must still be extinguished far more, because their immediate representatives, the number-concepts 10, have become represented by others, and themselves have vanished into darkness.

Throughout this operation, the power of imagination has in no way enlarged the scope of its comprehension, and it was always just the same quantum of 10 units which hovered before it at any one point in time. Yet, by virtue of the fact, that the mind, in three successive operations, replaced those sensuous units with logical ones, and constantly brought the latter under the sway of other, higher logical units, the mind subdued for the power of imagination

the whole quantum of that 1,000, and in this fashion concealed her aesthetic impoverishment from her in a logical profusion.

Nevertheless, in order to know, that one is not counting ten, but a thousand, and that each of the last ten units contains within it a hundred others, the mind's spirit must quickly recall the preceding synthesis through which it produced these units. At least a dim intuition of the content of the number-concepts must accompany the ongoing synthesis, as anyone who has watched himself making calculations can observe in himself. Only it cannot but come to pass, that the more the number-concepts increase, the more logical the operations of the mind's spirit constantly become, and clarity of perception must fade away; from this it also follows, that the highest number-concepts ultimately tell us far less than the lower ones, for we still associate a content with the latter. In order to be moved by the concept of a million pieces of gold, one must at least dimly recall how large a content already lies in the number thousand, and how many smaller coins a single gold-piece contains.

A regiment of 2,000 men, stationed along a broad front, three men deep—let us quickly form a mental image of its magnitude. To facilitate the act of perception, I shall assume, that they are all arranged in groups of 10. Let a small segment "a" stand for every 10, and a larger one, "aa," for every 100, and our eyes shall survey the entire length of the front. The first segment, up to "a," we shall thus take in, according to our previous assumption, in one simultaneous glance, wherein each individual man can still be distinguished. This segment is now at the same time a unit for the reflecting mind; and when our gaze has passed over 10 such segments, and the power of imagination has accomplished her act of comprehension ten times successively, the mind attempts once more to realize for itself the identity of consciousness in these ten acts of comprehension, i. e., to make from these ten logical units a new unit. The mind succeeds in this, too, but at the cost of the first intuition, which conceals its parts, in the same proportion as it trans-

forms itself into a part of another whole. As the successive acts of comprehension are made simultaneous by means of the reflecting mind, so the simultaneous intuitions of the power of imagination lose their clarity, and now appear before the soul simply as masses. If this synthesis is now brought to a still higher level, and new units are again generated out of the ones already produced, the individual entity disappears altogether, and the entire front simply melts into a continuous length, in which it is impossible to distinguish a segment, much less a particular head. It follows from this, that the clarity of intuition always remains confined only in a specific number; that for all discursive progression on the part of the mind, the power of imagination never expands its real wealth (as far as the simultaneity of perception is concerned); and that, even if the process of calculation goes into the millions, only a specific number contained therein will always be the governing number in which the others, as it were, are submerged. Now, if one wishes to obtain an aesthetic impression of a large quantum, one must try to quickly reconstitute the original units out of the concept representing them, which, e.g., in the preceding case, will occur when one tries to constantly keep the first segment in mind, while looking down at the entire front.

But it is precisely here, in this attempt of the power of imagination to restore the sensuousness of the mental image out of the logical representation provided by number-concepts, and so to grasp length with breadth, simultaneity with succession in one intuitive act, that the limit of this ability comes to light; yet, at the same time, so does the strength of another capacity, through which latter discovery that lack will be more than recompensed.

Reason insists, in accordance with its necessary laws, upon absolute totality of perception, and without letting itself be rebuffed by the necessary limitation of the power of imagination, the mind requires from it a complete summation of all the parts of a given quantum in one simultaneous mental image. The power of imagination is thus com-

pelled to exhaust the entire scope of its comprehensive capacities, but because it nevertheless does not complete this task to the end, and, all exertions notwithstanding, cannot extend its scope, the power of imagination sinks back into itself exhausted, and sensuous man experiences with painful disquiet his limitations.

But is it an external force, which gives him this experience of his limitations? Is it the fault of the measureless ocean, or the infinite star-sown heaven, that I become self-conscious of my impotence while representing their greatness? Whence, in that event, do I know, that their greatness exceeds the reach of my representation, and that I can obtain no totality of their image? Do I, indeed, know of these objects, that they are supposed to constitute a totality of a mental image?—I could only know this by virtue of my mental image of them, and in no other way, and yet it is presupposed, that I cannot imagine them as a totality. They are thus not presented to me as a totality, and I myself am the very one, who first put the concept of totality into them. I thus already have this idea in me, and I myself, the thinking being, am the very one, by which I, the being who makes representations of images of the intellect, am vanquished. In contemplating these great objects, I indeed experience my *powerlessness*, but I experience it through my *strength*. I am not vanquished by Nature, *I am vanquished by mine own self*.

In wanting to comprehend all individual parts of an apprehended quantum, what do I actually want to do? I want to recognize the identity of my self-consciousness in all the partial conceptions, I want to find myself in everything. I want to say to myself: "All these parts have become conceived through me, the eternally self-same subject." One must remember, that reason always requires the comprehension of only those parts which are already apprehended, thus already presented in empirical consciousness; for a magnitude only begins to affect me, if I have scanned it with my power of imagination, thus apprehending its parts, yet cannot entirely comprehend it.

Thus I want to dissolve images of the intellect, which I already have, into a single one, and cannot do it, and I am pained, that I cannot. But in order to experience, that I cannot fulfill a requirement, I must at once have the idea of this requirement and that of my incapacity. But this requirement is present: totality of the parts in the act of comprehension, or unity of my "I" in a certain series of transformations of my "I." Thus I must only imagine, that I cannot generate in consciousness a mental image of the unity of my "I" in all these transformations; but precisely in so doing I do produce this idea. Precisely in so doing, I think the totality of the whole series, and that I *want* to think it, for I can want nothing of which I do not already have an idea. I thus already bear within myself this totality which I seek to represent, just because I seek to represent it. Greatness, therefore, is in me, not outside me. It is my eternally self-same subject, persistent through every change, finding itself once more in every transformation. I can continue the act of apprehending into infinity: this means nothing else, than that, in endless transformations of my consciousness, my consciousness is self-identical, the entire infinity lies in the unity of my "I."

This solution can be expressed in another formulation. In all ideas about objects, including magnitude, the mind's spirit is never simply what is *determined*, rather it is at the same time always what *determines*. It is indeed the object which changes me, but I, the conceiving subject, am what makes the object into an object, and through its generation, changes itself. In all these transformations, however, there must be something which does not change, and this eternally immutable *principium* is precisely the pure and self-identical "I," the ground of the possibility of all objects, insofar as they become represented to the intellect. Whatever of greatness lies in the idea, lies in us, who bring forth these ideas. Whatever law may be given to us for our thoughts and actions, it is given us *by us*; and even if, as sensuously constrained beings, we *must* leave unfulfilled, as we do, the law of totality here

in the theoretical realm in the portrayal of magnitude, or when, as free beings endowed with will, we break the law, as we do the moral law in the practical realm, still it is always *we* who have established the law. I may thus lose myself in the dizzying idea of omnipresent space, or never-ending time, or I may feel my own nothingness in the idea of absolute perfection—it is after all only I, myself, who gives space its infinite breadth, and time its eternal length, it is I, myself, who bear within me the idea of the Holy of Holies, for I create them; and the Godhead, which I conceive, is my creation, so surely as my thought is my own.

The sublimity of the magnitude is therefore no objective property of the object to which it is attributed; it is purely the effect of our own subjectivity, occasioned by that object. It arises in one part out of the imagined incapacity of the power of imagination of the mind to achieve the totality demanded by reason in portraying magnitude, partly again from the imagined capability of reason to make such a demand. On the first is based the repulsive, on the second the attractive power of great magnitude and of the sensuous-infinite.

Although the sublime is a phenomenon which is first produced in our subjectivity, yet the object itself must contain the reason why only this object and no other gives us occasion to make this use of it. And since, furthermore, we posit the predicate of the sublime in our judgment *into the object* (by which we indicate, that we do not simply resolve upon this connection arbitrarily, but rather thereby intend to establish a law for everyone), so our subjectivity must contain a necessary reason why we make precisely this use of a certain class of objects, and no other.

There exist accordingly *internal* and *external* necessary conditions of the mathematical-sublime. To the former belongs a certain specific relationship between the mind and the power of imagination, to the latter a specific relationship of the perceived object to our aesthetic measure of magnitude.

The power of imagination as well as reason must express themselves with a certain degree of intensity if something of great magnitude is to affect us. It is required of the power of imagination, that it summon up all its resources of comprehension to set forth the representation of the absolute, toward which Reason unremittingly presses. If the imagination is sluggish and dull, or if the emotive tendency of one's mind is more toward conceptual formulations than intuitive vision, even the most sublime thing remains merely a logical object, and will not be brought before the aesthetic tribunal at all. This is the reason, why those with overbearing intensity of analytical understanding seldom prove to be very receptive to that which is aesthetically great. Either their power of imagination is not lively enough to so much as venture toward the representation of reason's absolute, or their mind too preoccupied to appropriate the object itself, and play it over from the field of intuition onto the mind's discursive terrain.

Without a certain intensity of imagination, great objects do not become aesthetic at all; without a certain strength of reason, on the other hand, that which is aesthetic does not become sublime. The idea of the Absolute certainly requires a more than ordinary development of the higher faculty of reason, a certain richness of ideas, and a more rigorous acquaintance on the part of the individual with his noblest self. He whose reason has undergone no cultivation at all, will never know how to make a supra-sensual use of the grandness of the senses. Reason will not become involved in the business at all, and it will be left to the power of imagination alone, or to the mere understanding alone. The power of imagination, however, for itself, is not about to tolerate a process of synthesis which becomes embarrassing for it. It thus contents itself with the mere apprehension of something, and it never even occurs to it to want to give its representations universality. This is the source of that most stupid insensibility with which the savage can dwell in the lap of most sublime Nature, and amidst the symbols of the Infinite, without thereby being awoken from his bestial

slumber, without revering even from afar the great spirit of Nature, which speaks to a feeling soul out of the sensuous-inmeasurable.

What the crude savage gapes at with dull insensibility, the unnerved weakling flees as an object of horror, one which shows him not his strength, but only his impotence. His straitened heart feels painfully pulled asunder by great ideas. His imagination is sufficiently excitable to make an attempt at representing the sensuous-infinite, but his reason is not sufficiently independent to complete this undertaking with success. He wants to scale the summit, but goes to his knees halfway, fainting. He does combat with awesome Genius, but only with earthly weapons, not immortal ones. Conscious of this weakness, he prefers to withdraw from a sight which would vanquish him, and seeks succor from the consolatrix of all weak men, the *rule*. If he cannot stand up straight to the greatness of Nature, then Nature must climb down to his small powers of comprehension. She must exchange her bold forms for those of artifice, those alien to her, but which are yet what his spoiled senses require. She must subject her will to his iron yoke, and cringe within the shackles of mathematical regularity. That is how the earlier French taste in gardens arose, which at last has almost entirely given way to the English, without in its course having come appreciably closer to true taste. For Nature's character has just as little to do with sheer variety as with uniformity. Her lawful, tranquil seriousness accords just as little with these sudden, frivolous transitions, which in the new gardening style have her hopping from one decoration to another. As Nature transforms herself, she does not relinquish her harmonious unity, in modest simplicity she conceals her fullness, and even in the most exuberant freedom, we see her uphold the law of continuity.¹

Among the objective conditions of the mathematical-sublime are, first, that the object deemed by us to be such, constitute a whole, and thus manifest unity; second, that it make the largest sensuous measure, which we habitually

use to measure all magnitudes, utterly useless to us. Without the first condition, our power of imagination would not be challenged at all to attempt a representation of its totality; without the second, it would not be possible for this effort to fail.

The horizon surpasses any magnitude which can ever come before the mind's eye, since all magnitudes in space must lie within it. Nevertheless, we often observe, that one particular mountain, rising over the horizon, can give us a far stronger impression of the sublime than our entire field of vision, which encompasses not only this mountain, but also thousands of other magnitudes. This comes about, because the horizon does not appear to us to be a single object, and thus we are not invited to comprehend it and represent it as a totality. But if one removes all objects from the horizon which especially attract our attention, if one conceives of a wide, continuous plain, or an open sea, the horizon itself becomes an object, and indeed the most sublime which can ever appear before our eyes. The circular shape of the horizon especially contributes to this impression, because, in itself, it is so easy to grasp, and all the less can the power of imagination abstain from seeking to complete the shape.

The reason for the aesthetic impression of magnitude, however, is that the power of imagination attempts in vain to give a complete representation of the given object, and this can only come to pass in such a manner, that the maximum measure of magnitude which the power of imagination can grasp clearly at one strike, adding to itself as many times as the mind can clearly think all together, is too small for the object. But from this it seems to follow, that objects of like magnitude would also have to make an impression of like sublimity, and smaller size would elicit a lesser impression, which, however, is contrary to experience. For according to experience, the part often seems more sublime than the whole, the mountain or tower more sublime than the sky it stretches toward, the cliff upon which the waves wash more sublime than the ocean. Here

one must recall the condition mentioned above, by force of which the aesthetic impression only ensues when the imagination is receptive for the totality of the object. If it omits to do so with respect to the far larger object, and on the other hand carries it out with respect to the smaller one, it may be aesthetically stirred by the latter, and yet insensitive to the former. If it thinks this larger object as a magnitude, however, the imagination thinks it, at the same time, as a unity, and then it must necessarily make a relatively stronger impression, the more it exceeds the other in size.

All sensuous magnitudes exist either in space (extended magnitudes) or in time (numerical magnitudes). Although every extended magnitude is at the same time a numerical magnitude (for we must also apprehend in time that which is given in space), numerical magnitude is yet itself sublime only insofar as I transform it into a spatial magnitude. The Earth's distance from Sirius is certainly an enormous quantum with respect to time, and if I want to grasp it in its totality, it overwhelms my imagination; but it would never occur to me to behold this temporal magnitude; on the contrary, I avail myself of numbers, and that, only when I call to mind, that the maximum spatial magnitude I can comprehend as a unity, e.g., a mountain-range, is nevertheless a much too small and utterly useless measure for this distance, do I receive the impression of sublimity. Thus, I do take the measure for this distance from extended magnitudes, and it depends upon just this measure, whether or not an object is to seem large to us.

Great magnitude in space appears either in *lengths* or in *heights* (which also include depths, for depth is only a height below us, just as height can be termed a depth above us). Accordingly, Latin poets did not hesitate to use the expression *profundus* [deep] for heights as well:

ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum
 quippe ferant rapidi secum. . . .²

—*Aeneid*, I, 58

Heights indeed seem more sublime than equally great lengths, partly for the reason that the dynamic-sublime combines with the vision of the height. A mere length, however impossible it may be to see its end-point, has nothing at all terrifying about it, but a height surely does, for we could fall down from it. For the same reason, a depth is still more sublime than a height, because the idea of the terrible immediately accompanies it. For a great height to frighten us, we must first think ourselves aloft, and thus transform it into a depth. One can readily experience this if one beholds a blue sky intermixed with clouds in a well, or in dark water, where its infinite depth gives an incomparably more terrifying appearance than its height. The same thing happens to a still greater degree, when one looks upside-down at the sky, which in the same way becomes a depth, and, because it is the only object which strikes our view, it irresistibly compels our power of imagination to represent its totality. Heights and depths affect us more intensely for exactly this reason, because no process of comparison weakens the estimation of their magnitude. A length always has a metric on the horizon, before which it pales, for, however far a line may extend, the heavens also extend so far. The highest mountain range is indeed small against the height of the firmament, but that is merely what the understanding teaches, not the eye, and it is not the heavens whose height makes the mountains low, rather it is the mountains which, by their magnitude, show the elevation of the sky.

It is, accordingly, not merely an *optically* correct, but also a *symbolically* true idea, when it is said, that Atlas holds up the heavens. Just as the heavens themselves literally seem to rest on Atlas, so our idea of the height of the heavens rests upon the height of Atlas. Thus the mountain, in the figurative sense, really holds up the heavens, because it holds the heavens aloft for our sensuous comprehension. Without the mountain, the heavens would fall, that is, it would sink before our eyes and be brought low.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

1. The art of gardening and the art of drama have had in recent times somewhat the same fate, and indeed in the same nations. The same tyranny of rules in French gardens and French tragedies; the same motley, wild unruliness in the parks of Englishmen and in their Shakespeare; and, as German taste from time immemorial has had the law laid down by foreigners, in this case, too, it was compelled to swing back and forth between those two extremes.

2. Translation, from *Der Sturm auf dem Tyrrhener Meer*:
"Thät er das nicht, sie brächen hervor, durchwühlten die Meere, | Schleiften den Erdball, und schleiften den ewigen Himmel | Mit sich dahin. . . ."