

Thesis Advisor's Report on the Bachelor Essay "The Sublime and the Ecstatic in the Works of Werner Herzog", written by Marcelo Echevarri

The presented essay focuses on the concept of the sublime in the work of the acclaimed German director Werner Herzog. Mr. Echevarri first summarizes the key aspects of the concept of the sublime, including its short philosophical history. He focuses on Longinus, Burke and first and foremost on Immanuel Kant and his approach to the difference between beauty and the sublime and last but not least the difference between the mathematically and dynamically sublime. These analyses are by no means superfluous; they provide a necessary background to the subsequent critical exposition of Herzog's own original arguments that explicitly draw on the Burkean and Kantian conceptions. They also clearly prove that Mr. Echevarri is capable of thorough and critical reading both of the treatises that are not so easy to grasp and an author who, in case of Herzog, is himself rather fuzzy and even treacherous when it comes to a proper philosophical line of reasoning. In other words, Mr. Echevarri manifested his ability to orientate himself in a complicated philosophical terrain without a blind acceptance of the presented arguments on the one side and their misrepresentation on the other. At the same time, Mr. Echevarri did well not only in analysing Herzog's written legacy; he also managed to mutually expose his movies and the texts, i.e., he successfully managed to locate the key cinematic moments and expose them as specific arguments and supported these choices by carefully and cleverly screened Herzog's manifestos, interviews, articles etc.. Especially the illuminating chapter on Caspar David Friedrich and his influence on Herzog's "architecture of the sublime" clearly manifests Mr. Echevarri's ability to creatively think through the phenomena and see the connections where they are not clearly visible at first sight (that is, until you find them, which is all the more contributive).

Naturally, the bachelor thesis has its limits. The survival of the concept of the sublime is much more complicated than the presented work suggests and especially the chapter on Kant would highly benefit from a wider range of the secondary literature on the subject. Mr. Echevarri tends to erase the complication by flattening them into one and necessarily simplified cohesive argument; he also tends to operate with the abstract or opaque concepts (both "ecstasy" and "truth" being good examples) as if they were quite specific and clear notions. Nevertheless, he is aware of these limits and he explicitly acknowledges them at the end of the thesis, which, after all, is a *bachelor* thesis and even if the chapters on the sublime (or the concept of the "ecstatic truth") could be more elaborated, the thesis present a solid and enlightening interpretation.

Hence I rate the essay with the grade "1".

Should I suggest a question for a discussion, I would ask Mr. Echevarri to polemize with Herzog and elaborate a bit on his strategy: are his semi-fictional "documentary" scenes subversive in order to "uncover" suppressed or indistinct aspects of humanity, or does he only substitute one fiction for another, cunningly avoiding any clear images of what the human condition might consist in? Is it possible to specify if and how Herzog delineates the human condition he refers to?



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Mgr. Ondřej Váša, Ph.D.