Ancient Ruins and the Sublime

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Following a prominent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition, some contemporary philosophers have appealed to the notion of the sublime as a promising avenue for exploring the aesthetic experience of ancient ruins. Nevertheless, existing accounts have typically focused solely upon the great magnitudes *of ruins—specifically the magnitude of time—and have therefore operated exclusively within the bounds of the 'mathematically sublime'. However, this paper defends a less well-represented view in contemporary literature, that ancient ruins ought to* also *be appreciated in terms of the 'dynamically sublime': being confronted with great powers and forces of nature relative to our own. Drawing upon hitherto under-utilized conceptual resources, especially those offered by Schiller, the paper explores the necessary and sufficient conditions for conceiving of the sublime experience of ancient ruins in terms of their ability to express human vulnerability, and what the philosophically significant implications of this view may be.*

1. Introduction

The Roman Colosseum, the Parthenon in Athens, Pompeii, the Gate of All Nations at Persepolis—each year, people flood in their millions to view these and other sites from antiquity. Plausibly, at least part of what explains people's fascination with such sites is the very fact that they are *ancient*: a remarkable period of time has passed since they were erected by distant cultures. Equally plausible is a partial explanation in terms of the fact that these sites are *ruins*: they are remains of man-made structures that have deteriorated against the various forces of nature, such that they have lost their function.[1] Moreover, while the appreciation of ancient ruins will likely share many standard features in the evaluative practice of art—for example, attentiveness to the artist's intentions; the object's place within a genre; the physical constitution, form, and function of the object; and so on—appreciating these objects differs insofar as their marks of deterioration or damage over time will be *constitutive* of their aesthetic value, as opposed to being regrettable obstacles to it, as is typical in the appreciation of traditional artworks. But what exactly ought to be the primary object of attention in the

1 The necessary and sufficient conditions for what counts as a ruin varies among commentators, with some offering narrower criteria, and some wider (see Hetzler 1982; Ginsberg 2004: Preface; Scarbrough 2014: 445; Somhegyi 2020; Shapshay 2022). However, while various kinds of ruins may be philosophically interesting—the ruins of war; derelict industrial ruins; and so on—the focus of this paper will be specifically ancient ruins: those man-made structures, such as the above examples, that have deteriorated over very long periods of time.

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aesthetic appreciation of ancient ruins, and which category of aesthetic experience is best suited to capture it?[2]

A significant body of literature in aesthetics has been dedicated to answering these questions (e.g. Zucker 1961; Hetzler 1982, 1988; Riegl 1998; Ginsberg 2004; Lucas 2013; Korsmeyer et al. 2019; Korsmeyer 2019; Somhegyi 2020). Following a prominent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition, a handful of contemporary commentators have found the notion of the sublime to be a promising resource for doing so (e.g. Ginsberg 2004; Korsmeyer 2014). Some have even gone as far as claiming that the aesthetics of ruins is 'the aesthetics of sublimity par excellence' (Hetzler 1982: 105). The sublime is a phenomenologically complex category of aesthetic experience, typically thought to be distinct from the beautiful, in which the appreciation of greatness—physical, spatial, temporal, intellectual, and so on—produce in the spectator a painful sense of enfeeblement, yet, concurrently, a pleasurable sense of exaltation or elevation. While there are many competing accounts and applications of the sublime, identifying the sublime-inducing feature(s) of ancient ruins is controversial and, I shall argue, worthy of reconsideration.

To the extent that contemporary theorists of the sublime have been interested in ancient ruins, they have typically given exclusive focus to their 'age value' (Hetzler 1982; Riegl 1998; Korsmeyer 2008, 2014)—that is, how they occasion our reflection upon the immensity of time. Thus, these accounts have typically operated exclusively within the bounds of what Kant identified as the 'mathematically sublime': being confronted with great and unfathomable *magnitudes*. However, after considering an important objection to this strategy, this paper makes the case for a less well-represented view in contemporary literature, that ancient ruins are and ought to *also* be appreciated in terms of what Kant distinguished as the 'dynamically sublime': being confronted with great *powers* and forces of nature relative to our own. By drawing upon the conceptual resources of a wider range of historical theorists of the sublime than is typical in the contemporary debate—namely, Schopenhauer and especially Schiller—I propose three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for conceiving of the sublime experience of ancient ruins in terms of their ability to express human vulnerability. These are: (i) an understanding of a ruin as an *integration* of nature and man-made structures; (ii) knowledge of the particular history and cultural significance of a ruin; (iii) a strong and appropriately directed capacity for imagining the suffering of others (i.e. empathy). I argue that while Schiller's development of the dynamically sublime goes furthest towards laying the groundwork for an appreciation of ancient ruins in this way, his bifurcation of the two types of dynamically sublime experience leaves us without a clear way to place them.

2 Of course, there are many ways ancient ruins may have value. For instance, we might appreciate them in moral terms (i.e. a recognition of the effort and sacrifice of their builders; gratitude to ancestors for providing the foundations of contemporary culture; reflection upon the challenges of future generations; pessimism about cultural decline; and so on). We may also appreciate them in epistemic terms (i.e. as informing us about important historical matters and, in turn, providing deep anthropological insight). Moreover, ancient ruins can no doubt be appreciated along the lines of formal aesthetic theory (i.e. identifying the different types of beauty evident in their design). These are not mutually exclusive, nor incompatible with the type of value I explore in the paper.

This paper therefore has two aims: a broader aim and a narrower aim. The broader aim is to defend the category of the sublime as central to the aesthetic experience of ancient ruins, but to give this position a more philosophically robust foundation, one immune to important contemporary objections that plague existing accounts. The more narrow aim is to demonstrate how the aesthetic appreciation of ancient ruins turns out to evade being neatly placed into traditional classifications of the sublime, and thus such ruins present an interestingly new classification of a major aesthetic category.

2. Age value and the sublime

Let us begin by considering an existing case for the sublimity of ancient ruins grounded in their persistence through a significant period of time. Many appear to recognize that significantly old objects 'call for respect' in some way (James 2015). Steps often are taken to discover, preserve, and display coins, utensils, weapons, and cultural or religious artefacts from antiquity, even when they are no longer capable of fulfilling their original function. These objects are often taken to have final value (i.e. they are valuable for their own sakes), where this value is in no way generated by the objects' intrinsic properties (e.g. being made of iron or wood) but is generated exclusively from their extrinsic (i.e. relational) properties. We seek to discover, preserve, and display various old objects precisely *because* they are old. Natural objects in the environmental landscape—for example, mountain ranges, trees, forests, caves—are also typically thought valuable and worthy of respect at least partly in virtue of the relational property of age, even if it is also true that our respect for such natural objects, unlike artefacts such as those previously mentioned, is frequently influenced by an additional sense of their intrinsic value.

Ancient ruins have often been thought to elicit this type of response from human spectators in an especially vivid way. A great deal of resources, for instance, are harnessed for the protection of ruins under the designation of UNESCO World Heritage sites. Following Alois Riegl (1998), Carolyn Korsmeyer, for example, claims that aesthetically appreciating a ruin inevitably 'summons the past into awareness' (Korsmeyer 2014: 429), and identifies two distinct types of value involved in the process. On the one hand, ruins possess 'historical value' in virtue of their ability to impart knowledge about 'life and culture from bygone times'. On the other hand, ruins possess 'age value' in virtue of how they 'bear the marks of wear, damage, and deterioration' (Korsmeyer 2014: 429). While these types of value 'mingle' in the appreciation of an ancient ruin,[3] Korsmeyer nevertheless claims that it is not historical value but age value which is the 'proper aesthetic object of a ruin' (Korsmeyer 2014: 430). In other words, when we observe the Colosseum, for example, central to our aesthetic experience is the visible damage and decay of the ruin that betrays the immense passage of time, and not what we learn about Roman culture and practice.

3 Although, as Korsmeyer and others (e.g. Ginsberg 2004: 319) have recognized, historical value and age value can sometimes stand in tension, particularly in efforts to preserve ruins, since the more a ruin is restored in order to retain what it can tell us about the past, the more its age value is compromised.

Korsmeyer's argument for the priority of age value in this context turns upon the 'immediate aesthetic impact' (Korsmeyer 2014: 430) that she claims it uniquely has in our perception of ruins, particularly via touch. Because the physical deterioration is imminent to our experience and, unlike historical value, does not require any deep background knowledge or scholarly enquiry, age value makes a direct and forceful impression on our emotions (see also Riegl 1998: 33).

We shall shortly come to question this justification, the significance and extent of how historical value and age value may 'mingle' in our experience of ancient ruins, as well as the place of background knowledge of ruins in the aesthetic appreciation of them. However, of primary interest for now is how an appeal to the priority of age value can facilitate a move to conceive of the sublime as the most fitting model to explain the aesthetic experience of ancient ruins; a move Korsmeyer herself makes. In her words, 'ruins speak to one directly of the march of history and the hugeness of time in its devouring and ruthless advance' (Korsmeyer 2014 : 431). There are multiple components to this picture. Briefly, the aesthetic category of the sublime is defined in terms of a curious hedonic mix in the experience of greatness: a negative hedonic component in a feeling of terror, inferiority, or enfeeblement; and a concurrent positive hedonic component in a feeling of exaltation or elevation beyond our ordinary perspective. There are various, competing accounts of the substantive content of each component (see Brady 2013: Part I), some of which will be touched upon and exploited as this paper progresses, although largely I will intentionally leave at least the positive component open. Similarly, there are a number of instantiations of greatness that we may come to appreciate in this way. One form of greatness that has been typically discussed in relation to the sublime is that of great magnitudes. When we look up at the night sky, for example, we are humbled in our awe of the sheer vastness of space. When we gaze upon the colossal mountains of the Alps or the Florence Cathedral, we similarly marvel at their immense physical size relative to our own. In his *Italian Journey* of 1786, Goethe reports exactly this 'quietening effect [*wirkt ganz ruhig auf uns ein*]' in witnessing the 'immensity [*Ungeheure*]' (Goethe 1970: 133) of ancient monuments and structures such as the Colosseum of Rome. With a noticeably Kantian inflection in his emphasis on being unable to fathom its great magnitude, he writes: 'Once one has seen it, everything else seems small. It is so huge that the mind cannot retain its image; one remembers it as smaller than it is, so that every time one returns to it, one is astounded by its size' (Goethe 1970: 137–38).

Another type of magnitude that has sometimes been noted in discussion of the sublime is the immensity of time—what Emily Brady has called the 'temporal sublime' (Brady 2013: 37). Extremely old objects give us occasion to reflect upon and attempt to fathom the expanse of time that objects have endured through the various epochs. The Pyramids of Giza and the Great Wall of China, for example, do not just threaten to overwhelm us with their physical size, but also by reflecting upon their great age. We can perceive—visually, via touch, and even via smell—the marks of deterioration and damage that reveal the thousands of years these structures have stood. In his *Essay on Taste* from 1759, Gerard recognizes 'length of duration' as one of the many objects that 'seem incapable of amplitude', and thus something we often denominate as sublime

in their 'power to exalt the disposition of the observer' (Gerard 1759: I.2, 16).[4] Conceptions of the sublime as different as Schopenhauer's, decades later, also build in an acknowledgement of the magnitude of time's capacity to humble us. Schopenhauer claims that certain objects 'arouse the impression of the sublime by reducing us to nothingness in the face of their spatial magnitude *or their advanced age*, i.e. their temporal duration, and yet we revel in the pleasure of seeing them' (Schopenhauer 2010: 231, emphasis mine). He is explicit that the 'colossal ruins of antiquity' provide a vivid occasion for the sublime, precisely in their ability to make the observer reflect 'on the millennia past and the millennia to come' (Schopenhauer 2010: 230). Once again, Goethe reports exactly this phenomenon in his appreciation of the ancient ruins of Rome. Surveying a ruin, he reports that 'Here is an entity which has suffered so many drastic changes in the course of two thousand years, yet is still the same soil, the same hill, often even the same column, or the same wall.... Contemplating this, the observer becomes, as it were, a contemporary of the great decrees of destiny' (Goethe 1970: 133).

Korsmeyer continues this tradition of thought in her association of the age value of ancient ruins with the sublime. She takes the sublime to be the most appropriate aesthetic category to appreciate ancient ruins on the basis of a two-step argument: (1) age value has a sublime effect; (2) age value is the 'proper aesthetic object of a ruin'. The first claim has prima facie appeal. As we have seen, numerous commentators in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European philosophy recognize the sublime effect of age value, and this accords well with the truth of (1), at least relative to those that share significant cultural touchstones.[5] Claim (2) is more controversial and, as we shall shortly see, can be questioned on numerous grounds. Korsmeyer herself claims that attempts to conceive of the aesthetic value of ancient ruins in terms of the sublime, characteristic of the Romantics, 'probably seem a trifle overwrought' to contemporary ears, and 'unduly effortful in their attempt to elicit emotional extravagance' (Korsmeyer 2014: 431). In this respect, such accounts run the risk of kitsch sentimentality. Nevertheless, she maintains that this perspective 'offers the most interesting and profound approach to ruins' (Korsmeyer 2014: 432). Before attempting to defend this view by expanding the sublime-inducing aspects of ancient ruins, it will be useful to consider an important objection to the traditional focus upon age value.

4 In a lengthy footnote devoted to discussion of a closely related point made by Hume, Gerard anticipates the Kantian conception of the sublime in arguing that we tend to value things and persons in the distant past more because 'we find greater difficulty, and must employ superior energy' in contemplating temporality (Gerard 1759: I.2, 21–22).

5 As has been noted, some philosophical traditions—such as traditional Japanese and Chinese aesthetics—make little use of the sublime, and instead emphasize the 'small, charming and tame' (Saito 1985: 240; see also Brady 2013: 204). I welcome a historicist approach, and accept that because aesthetic standards will vary according to the shape of the contingent socio-cultural institutions that ground them, the appropriateness of the sublime for the appreciation of ancient ruins will not necessarily be universal but in large part localized to cultures influenced by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European philosophy.

3. The limits of the temporal sublime

One might have justifiable concerns about the ability of the temporal sublime to suitably capture the most salient features of the aesthetic appreciation of ancient ruins. Making 'age value' the primary object of attention risks, one may think, over-generalizing them into too broad a category. By focusing on a property common to not just ancient ruins, but *all* old objects, this may end up concealing the unique features of ruins that warrant our attention. While an account like Korsmeyer's, for example, may then have some philosophical purchase for appreciating a UNESCO World Heritage site *qua ruin*, it nevertheless may also overlook its particular historical and cultural significance, and so fails to appreciate a ruin *qua world heritage landmark*.

A challenge of precisely this kind has been recently advanced by Jeremy Page and Elisabeth Schellekens (2019). What gets lost in emphasizing the ability of a ruin's age value to provoke a consideration of an immense temporal magnitude, Page and Schellekens claim, is an appreciation of an ancient ruin on its own terms—the ruin becomes merely instrumental to directing our attention elsewhere. In emphasizing the (attempted) comprehension of the enormity of time in the universe, 'the object itself, and the object's particular history and significance, are pushed into the background, and even the marks which the passing of time has wrought on the material object are valued primarily as prompts to an experience of something external to the object' (Page and Schellekens 2019: 243). As such, *anything* with 'age value' can be appreciated in this way, making the appreciation of sites such as the Colosseum, the Pyramids, or the ruins of Palmyra no different in kind from a pile of rocks in an old quarry or some pebbles on the beach. It is precisely this reduction of an ancient ruin to a general object of age that Page and Schellekens claim is a structural failure to manifest an appropriate *respect* towards world heritage sites. On these grounds, it is plausible that a ruin's history and cultural significance 'will, and should, play a greater role than Korsmeyer allows' (Page and Schellekens 2019: 243–44). We can call this the Respect Criterion: a plausible account of the aesthetic appreciation of an ancient ruin will and ought to include a respect for what that ruin is *qua world heritage site*, which requires attentiveness to its particular historical and cultural significance.[6]

Before further assessing the Respect Criterion's relevance to the issue at hand, it is worth noting that the Criterion is a historically conditioned phenomenon itself. As others have noted (e.g. Schnapp 2014), what *kind* of ruin—that is, from which culture, from which time period—has been considered to warrant a historically informed aesthetic appreciation (and subsequently, what merits designation as a world heritage site) has changed over time. Through the Renaissance and particularly into the eighteenth century, classical antique heritage—namely, the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome—were the near-solely acceptable candidates for aesthetically appealing ruins in the sense presently being

6 To be clear, Page and Schellekens do not deny that one may have a sublime experience of ancient ruins, but they do challenge this experience as what ought to be, and what is in actual fact, 'paradigmatic for most if not all our encounters with ruins'. In sum, Page and Schellekens' concern for the attitude of respect in this domain leads them to hold that 'a bona fide aesthetic appreciation of a given [ancient] ruin requires that the object's context, history and significance play a more central role in one's engagement' (Page and Schellekens 2019: 251).

discussed. However, the scope was later broadened to include ruins of other, distant cultures, and from different time periods. The Respect Criterion, then, should not be considered a timeless phenomenon, but one shaped by the contingencies of culture.

As the Respect Criterion suggests, there are two variants of the general objection presently under consideration. In addition to a normative critique, which holds that a ruin's individual history and cultural significance *ought* to be at the centre of our aesthetic appreciation of it, there is a second critique that can be cashed out in phenomenological terms. It holds that what is *in fact* central to people's aesthetic experiences of ancient ruins is an attentiveness to their historical and cultural significance, with age value playing only a limited role. One argument for this might be constructed by way of an inference to the best explanation: we do not have as powerful aesthetic experiences of just any old objects—for example, piles of stones in an ancient quarry, or pebbles on a beach—but we do when we perceive ancient ruins such as the Colosseum. What best explains this, the argument goes, is that ruins such as the Colosseum are historically and culturally significant, and this is what powerfully occupies our attention and appreciation.

I take the Respect Criterion seriously, and consider it a decisive objection to conceiving of the sublimity of ruins *solely* in terms of age value. By challenging the significance of age value to the appreciation of ancient ruins in each of these ways, Korsmeyer's appeal to the sublime is undercut, since she tethers this appeal to age value. This gives us warrant to explore whether an alternative and expanded account of the sublime can be offered to better account for the appreciation of ancient ruins. I now intend to develop such an account, one that is less represented in the literature. One of the interesting features of this new account, I shall argue, will be its ability to retain the virtues of Korsmeyer's temporal approach but avoid its weakness in failing to account for the Respect Criterion. In doing so, I will aim to more robustly defend the broader notion that the sublime is 'the most interesting and profound approach to ruins' (Korsmeyer 2014: 432).

4. Vulnerability and ruins as dynamically sublime

Contemplating the immense magnitude of time, which Korsmeyer argues is central to the aesthetic experience of an ancient ruin, is an instance of what Kant identified as the 'mathematically sublime'. However, Kant made a now familiar distinction between the 'mathematically sublime' and 'dynamically sublime' that can serve as the launching point for a different and promising approach. On the latter account, the negative hedonic component of sublime experience—namely, the humbling effect—is not produced by the comprehension of great magnitudes, but of great powers. Specifically, it is triggered by confronting objects that are threatening to our self-preservation, yet with the knowledge that we are in fact safe from harm. Typically, examples of the dynamically sublime have been natural objects such as severe forms of weather (e.g. storms, tornadoes and hurricanes); barren landscapes; avalanches; steep cliffs; wild predators (great white sharks, bears, tigers, etc); and so on. In each case, our causal efficacy and power are painfully revealed as puny by comparison.

If age value produces the mathematically sublime, but there are good reasons to think that age value is or ought not to be of primary importance in the aesthetic appreciation of

ancient ruins, might Korsmeyer's claim about the centrality of the sublime in this domain be preserved if one can show that ancient ruins can plausibly be dynamically sublime in some way, as well as mathematically sublime? Korsmeyer hints at such a view in her crowning remark that 'ruins speak to one directly of the march of history and the hugeness of time in its *devouring* and *ruthless* advance' (Korsmeyer 2014: 431, emphasis mine). Yet she does not explicitly draw the Kantian distinction above. This is unfortunate, I believe, since close attention to the potential manifestations of the dynamically sublime, as it has been developed in post-Kantian thought, offers the resources to answer the proposed question.

I propose that ancient ruins can be dynamically sublime insofar as they vividly express an existential threat to the human observer, and to humanity generally—namely, the power of the forces of nature to overwhelm over time. Ancient ruins can be *foreboding* environments for this reason, and this provides the basis for sublime feeling. When Paul Zucker describes the eighteenth century as 'the climax of the widespread interest in ruins', he identifies the fundamental component of ruins' appreciation to be precisely in how they remind one of 'the transience of all life' (Zucker 1961: 122). But this does not go far enough. Being among ancient ruins does not seem to merely remind us of our finitude, in a manner similar to the seventeenth-century artistic genre of vanitas (cf. Edelstein 2022: 130). Rather, ancient ruins—like storms, hurricanes, tsunamis, even the process of evolution by natural selection—demonstrate the effects of the complete *indifference* of nature to our well-being and existence, and the turmoil of history. The relevance of nature's indifference is well captured by Schopenhauer. When we are alone in natural environments, for example, and do not distract ourselves from this fact, our vulnerability becomes terrifyingly apparent: our consciousness is filled with 'the constant inconsolable lament, "It is of no use to me". Thus in solitude even the most beautiful surroundings have for them a desolate, dark, strange, and hostile appearance' (cf. Schiller 2004: 97; Schopenhauer 2010). It is in one's awareness of our 'dependency, our struggle with hostile nature, our will which is broken in this struggle' that we are reduced to a 'vanishing nothing' (Schopenhauer 2010: 228–29).[7] This framing in terms of our bodily *vulnerability* to the powers of nature is, I claim, fruitful for explaining the dynamically sublime experience of ancient ruins.[8]

This framing requires more fine-grained detail. I argue that there are three essential components that together facilitate an aesthetic appreciation of ancient ruins in terms of the dynamically sublime, along the lines just mentioned:

(i) An understanding of a ruin as an integration of architecture and the natural environment.
(ii) Knowledge of the particular history and cultural significance of a ruin.
(iii) A strong and apt capacity for imagining the suffering of others (i.e. *empathy*).

Let us consider each in turn.

7 For an account of Schopenhauer's conception of the sublime with particular attention to its existential implications, see Hassan (2023).

8 Consideration of vulnerability with respect to the sublime experience of ruins—classical and more recent—has occasionally been acknowledged in the contemporary secondary literature (e.g. Hill 2019).

4.1. (i) Ruins as integrations of forces

The first component, (i), is a requirement to perceive a ruin as an object where environmental forces are *intertwined* with a man-made architectural entity (see Ginsberg 2004: 99, 317; Scarbrough 2014: 446–47). Indeed, for some commentators, this very feature is built-in to the definition of a ruin. Florence M. Hetzler, for example, designates ruins as 'the disjunctive product of "the intrusion of nature" upon a human-made edifice without loss of the unity produced by the human builders' (see also Simmel 1958: 380; Hetzler 1988: 51). The notion of 'intrusion' is significant here. Crucially, nature is not a cooperating artistic force in the creation of ruins,[9] but, as Sandra Shapshay has aptly put it, nature is rather a 'network of unintentional processes, which proceed autonomously from the human' (Shapshay 2022: 1543). It is exactly this feature that reveals nature's *indifference* to human activity and well-being, and that we see represented in the fusing of architecture and the natural environment that ruins are sited within. The South East Tower of Caerphilly Castle in Wales (thirteenth century CE), for example, famously leans at a sharp, foreboding angle due to gradual subsidence and disintegration over the past 700 years; its stone is discoloured and partially covered in moss. None of this can be ignored or separated from our perception of the ruin. We cannot help but witness the striking power of nature.

4.2. (ii) Knowledge of a ruin's historical and cultural significance

The second component of a dynamically sublime experience of ancient ruins, I argue, is (ii) a requirement to understand the particular history and cultural significance of the structure. Our vulnerability to the great power of nature could be felt by witnessing the integration of just *any* man-made structure, including derelict industrial ruins. What is dynamically sublime about distinctly ancient ruins is how they express the threat of the unrelenting force of nature: even the *greatest* civilizations—for example, of Rome, of China, of Persia, of the Aztecs, and so forth—succumb to it, and are eventually trampled beneath the march of history. Again, consider how Goethe reports his experience of the ancient ruins of Rome. In perceiving them, he writes that one 'comes upon traces of both magnificence and of devastation, which stagger the imagination' (Goethe 1970: 133). One way to interpret the report of his experience is precisely the one just suggested: the devastation of magnificent structures from antiquity brings us face to face with our own vulnerability.

The beginnings of a philosophical view of this kind can be found in Schiller's essay 'On the Sublime' (Schiller 2001), made public in 1801. There, Schiller considers 'world history [to be] a sublime object', since, as a historical object, it is 'at bottom nothing other than the conflict of natural forces amongst one another and with the freedom of man, and history reports to us the result of this contest' (Schiller 2001). For Schiller, the study of history reveals what he takes to be a fundamental conflict between natural forces and

9 Sandra Shapshay (2022: 1543) has criticized Zoltán Somhegyi (2020) on precisely these grounds (i.e. for anthropomorphizing nature to the status of a quasi-artist).

human freedom.[10] One way of interpreting Schiller's claims is to take the study of history as a kind of realistic corrective: it shakes us out of our comfortable ignorance rooted in our predisposed optimism (i.e. in expecting moral progress, lasting happiness, the conduciveness of nature to well-being). Schiller continues:

> Does one but approach history with great expectations of light and knowledge—how severely is one there deceived! All well-meant attempts of philosophy to bring into agreement that which the moral world *demands,* with that which the real *affords,* are disproved by the evidence of experience, and as pleasantly as nature conforms in its *organic kingdom* to the regulative principles of judgment or seems to conform, so ungovernably does it tear off the bridle in the kingdom of freedom, wherein it would gladly imprison the spirit of speculation.
>
> (Schiller 2001)

Building on Schiller's point—and perhaps broadening his attention to human well-being beyond just freedom—we might apply this line of thought to the topic at hand by holding ancient ruins to be physical *symbols* of this struggle. What the magnificent achievements of the Colosseum and the Pyramids, for example, evidence is the indifference of the power of nature and even the greatest civilizations' vulnerability to it, let alone our own personal vulnerability as observers.

Crucially, it is important that in order for this effect to fully manifest, we must have some *understanding* of the object's particular historical and cultural significance. If while hiking in Yorkshire, one stumbles across the ruins of what is in fact a third-century Mithraic temple, being unaware of this fact—that the ruins are of historical importance as a religious and cultural site, constructed by the Roman legions during their occupation of Britain, for whom the god Mithras was significant—the ruins would very likely not strike one as *dynamically* sublime (even if they may still be very interesting and draw our curiosity). What forces us to comprehend the struggle for existence against the immense power of nature is precisely the knowledge of what the structure was there to do, for whom it was supposed to function, the battle that that great civilization lost against the ruthless march of history for it to become ruined, and the suffering that might have been experienced in the process (a point to which I shall shortly return). This is something one will not as vividly experience in perceiving contemporary ruins of mundane sites, such as an abandoned petrol station or a burnt-out Walmart.

Robert Ginsberg comes close to the view described in his landmark analysis of the aesthetics of ruins. Ginsberg first notes a similar effect in being confronted with ancient ruins: 'all ruins point sadly to our destiny. We are doomed' (Ginsberg 2004: 319). But he goes further—rightly, in my view—in acknowledging the relevance of indifference to human well-being that we earlier identified in Schopenhauer and Schiller. This indifference, for Ginsberg, is not merely the indifference of *nature*, however, but of the ruin itself.

10 This is not all dissimilar from how Georg Simmel conceived of the symbolic value that ruins possess in his landmark essay on the topic, which is in terms of a tension between culture and the forces of nature (Simmel 1958).

Taking the fortress of Masada in Palestine as a paradigmatic example, he writes that while 'the forms and uses are human, the ruin repels human presence. It does not welcome us in its timeless solitude. It has freed itself from its history and our needs. We are obliged to recognise its awesome autonomy' (Ginsberg 2004: 134). Moreover, that in our experience of navigating the ruins of Masada, precariously placed on a hilltop, we 'run the hazard of being overwhelmed. The ruin cares nothing if we drop from the sun, trip behind a wall, or lean over far enough to take the fastest route down' (Ginsberg 2004: 134). But for Ginsberg, a significant part of the powerful aesthetic experience one has of the ruins of Masada is derived from knowing about the history and importance of the structure to the civilizations in the region. Furthermore, it is derived from understanding the significant events that actually took place there, namely the Zealot rebellion against Roman rule in Judea, and the subsequent brutal Roman siege to recover the fortress, during which its Jewish defenders committed mass suicide at the last moment, rather than surrender.

As a substantive example, Ginsberg highlights the remains of the Roman encampments around the ruin, reminding the observer of the conflict involved at the site, and especially the final ramp that the Romans launched their siege weapons from: 'the means by which the fortress was brought to ruin. Terrible drama is connected with the sublime ruin' (Ginsberg 2004: 134). Because of the tour guides, the guidebooks, the signs, postcards, and so forth, 'we cannot shake off the meaning of ruin from its aesthetics' (Ginsberg 2004: 134). It seems that the more we understand about the history of an ancient ruin and its significance to the culture that produced or occupied it, the greater the dynamically sublime effect. Nature's power and indifference become increasingly vivid when we know more about the ways of life that were tethered to the structure and the function of it to the relevant civilization.

However, it also seems that knowledge of the *way* a structure became ruined may be pertinent to our appreciation, feelings, and understanding of it, and hence its sublime effect. This is particularly pressing given that the process of ruination can take place in a variety of ways, not all of which are primarily caused by the types of powerful forces of *nature* that are associated with the dynamically sublime. Consider a selection of typical examples of ancient ruins that are now world heritage sites: Pompeii, Persepolis, Masada, and the Roman Colosseum. Pompeii became a ruin primarily as a result of natural forces (i.e. a violent volcanic eruption). Persepolis and Masada were ruined primarily as a result of human actions (i.e. deliberate or accidental fire post-conquest in the case of the former; siege warfare in the case of the latter). In the case of the Roman Colosseum, it was a combination of both natural forces (i.e. earthquakes; weathering) *and* human action (i.e. plundering and disassembly). If knowledge of a ruin's historical significance is a necessary condition for their dynamically sublime effect, the question then arises of whether it is important for the spectator to know which of their aspects or to what degree the ruin's state is the result of natural as opposed to human forces. In hybrid cases such as that of the Roman Colosseum, is there a determinate ratio of natural-to-human induced destruction that potentially would prevent the evocation of the dynamic sublime?

Some have certainly taken the distinction proposed to have significant ramifications for the appreciation of ancient ruins. In Georg Simmel's landmark essay on ruins, for example, he claimed that ruins that exhibit *human*-caused damage, 'however interesting they may be

otherwise, lack the specific fascination of the ruin—to the extent, that is, to which one notices in them the destruction *by man*; for this contradicts the contrast between human work and the effect of nature on which rests the significance of the ruin as such' (Simmel 1958: 380). As the first component of dynamically sublime ruins that we introduced in the previous section holds, the integration of human and natural forces is indeed a necessary component of their aesthetic quality in the sense presently under consideration. However, there are ways of accounting for the role of natural power without having to settle for too restrictive an account of dynamically sublime ruins (i.e. excluding sites such as the Roman Colosseum and Persepolis).

One strategy that could be developed for this purpose would be to hold that while some ruins can primarily be a result of human actions, the neglect of them—that is, the allowing of them to remain and (where preservation efforts are not taken) further decay at the hands of nature rather than rebuild them—allows ruins to function as vivid monuments to the march of history to which humans remain vulnerable. Natural forces may in these cases function in a contrastive fashion: despite the immensity of nature's power, it also will not protect you from annihilation by its other human pawns. Moreover, it is this realization of nature's indifference that, as we interpreted Schiller to suggest above, functions as a corrective to our presupposed optimism about the suitability of the world to our well-being. The more we know about an ancient ruin's significance and its process of ruination, the thought goes, the more potent our feelings of vulnerability will be.

This epistemic component of the position I develop here from Schiller, and find reflected in elements of Ginsberg's view, is thus cognitivist in nature. Cognitivism, in aesthetics, is the view that knowledge of a particular object ought to guide and structure an appropriate aesthetic appreciation of it. Allen Carlson has famously defended cognitivism in the domain of environmental aesthetics, for example, where he has argued that a proper aesthetic grasp of the environment ought to come via the knowledge afforded by the natural sciences: ecology, geology, biology, and so forth (Carlson 2000). As I have suggested here, the appreciation of ancient ruins in terms of the dynamically sublime requires knowledge of their historical and cultural significance. As such, it will operate with a broader conception of science than Carlson, involving not the 'natural sciences' but the so-called 'softer sciences': history, archaeology, linguistics, and anthropology.

However, cognitivism is a contentious position in aesthetics, and it is especially contentious whether it is compatible with the sublime. In the *Critique of Judgement*, for example, Kant argues that for an object to produce the feeling of the sublime, the observer needs to perceive it in a particular way: (1) as incomprehensible, in the case of large magnitudes; (2) as it is immediately, crudely presented to us, in the case of great powers. This is what allows for the pleasure in an awareness of our rationality: we transcend the limits of our cognitive and physical capability, and in doing so, we transcend nature. As Kant says:

> when we judge the sight of the ocean we must not do so on the basis of how we *think* it, enriched with all sorts of knowledge which we possess … e.g., as a vast realm of aquatic creatures, or as the great reservoir supplying the water for the vapors that impregnate the air with clouds for the benefit of the land … Instead we must be able to view the ocean as poets do, merely in terms of what manifests itself to the

> eye—e.g., if we observe it while it is calm, as a clear mirror of water bounded only by the sky; or, if it is turbulent, as being like an abyss threatening to engulf everything—and yet find it sublime.
>
> (Kant 1987: 130, emphasis original)

The implication of this view is that, contrary to the position defended in the paper up to now, the more we know about an object, the *less* we shall find it sublime. In the case of perceiving ancient ruins then, seeing them 'as the poets do'—that is, without an understanding of their particular history—is a prerequisite for their sublimity; ruins, if dynamically sublime, would stand to us as unknown artefacts from a bygone era, as esoteric monuments to our impending doom.

However, Kant's conception of the sublime is not the only one available. There are different models of the sublime, each of which takes a different position on the role of knowledge (e.g. see Ginsberg 2004: 315–25). Johann Gottfried von Herder, for example, defended a conception of the sublime that was diametrically opposed to Kant's in this respect, and accords with the position offered in this paper. As Rachel Zuckert (2003) has shown, Herder's critique of Kant's conception of the sublime is multifaceted. But one of the starkest differences between their views on the sublime is that Herder takes Kant's anti-cognitivism to be empirically unfounded. Ancient mythology and religious practice attest to how cultures have historically found the 'starry heavens above', for instance, to be sublime before discovering the physical laws governing them. But when an understanding of these laws improved with the development of astronomy and physics, Herder thinks, we did not thereby cease to consider the 'heavens' sublime; we may even find them *more* awe-inspiring in virtue of this knowledge (Zuckert 2003: 219). While I cannot fully defend this view here, the view has prima facie appeal, to the extent that it is a genuine contender alongside the opposing Kantian view. As Zuckert remarks in her positive appraisal of Herder's cognitivist view: 'though *sometimes* knowledge can render an object less admirable, such knowledge does not ipso facto render admiration impossible: a colleague of mine in the philosophy of biology probably always has admired the power, complexity, and order of biological forms, but her admiration for nature is not diminished, but enhanced, by advances in biology or by her own growing knowledge of natural patterns' (Zuckert 2003: 222).

4.3. (iii) Empathy and the imagination of past suffering

In addition to (i) an understanding of ruins as an integration of human of architecture and nature, and (ii) a historical knowledge of the ruins in question, the awareness of our vulnerability that sparks the dynamically sublime likely also requires (iii) a significant role for the faculty of the imagination. In the mathematical sublime when we focus on a ruin's age value, the role of the imagination is straightforward: our cognitive faculties struggle to fathom the immensity of time and deploy the imagination to 'fill in the gaps', to the extent possible. But the role of the imagination in the dynamically sublime, particularly pertaining to historical remains of human structures, is more puzzling. What, exactly, are we

supposed to be imagining in cases where we are in awe of an object that symbolizes a threat to our existence? What, specifically, did Goethe mean when, upon witnessing the ruins of ancient Rome, he said he saw traces of 'both magnificence and of devastation, which stagger the imagination' (Goethe 1962: 133)?

One potential doubt that may arise at the outset pertains to whether the imagined danger prompted by our encounters with ancient ruins is really sufficient to evoke the intensity of the feeling of vulnerability that is characteristic of dynamically sublime experience. The typical examples of dynamically sublime experience are of witnessing immediately destructive phenomena—storms, violent waves, steep cliffs, large wild animals—from a position of safety. However, while ancient ruins unquestionably demonstrate that nature has the power to overwhelm even the greatest structures over time, it is by comparison a very slow and extended process. One may then wonder, the objection goes, whether witnessing ancient ruins can give rise to the requisite sense of danger and vulnerability.[11]

Appealing to Schiller's thought will again prove useful here, for he displayed philosophical sensitivity to these issues in a way that went beyond Kant, and that remains underexplored in the contemporary literature. Schiller accepted the Kantian distinction between the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime (although referring to them as the 'theoretical' and 'practical' sublime, respectively). Of the latter, Schiller makes a further distinction pertaining to the role of others' *suffering* and how it can produce a sublime effect. In 'Of the Sublime' (Schiller 2004)—an earlier essay on the topic, written in 1793—Schiller outlines two types of case.

In one type of case, (C), a particular object is taken to be the cause of *possible* suffering, and the observer imagines themselves as the bearer of that suffering. The imagination here does significant heavy lifting, and is far from an uncommon phenomenon. As Schiller writes:

> not rarely are objects of nature, indifferent in themselves, transformed subjectively through the intervention of fantasy into fearful powers, and it is fantasy itself which reveals the fearful not merely through comparison, but rather creates it on its own authority without having an adequate objective ground for it.
>
> (Schiller 2004: 97)

Schiller's examples include looking over a cliff edge, and seeing an erupting volcano or a flood from a safe distance. While these objects are things that *could* harm us if we were to confront them, Schiller crucially also allows that indeterminate, abstract, or 'ideal' objects that cannot really harm us—for example, complete silence or darkness, 'necessity', and even the moral law—are 'fearful objects, as soon as the imaginative power refers them to the preservation drive' (Schiller 2004: 96). The imagination works harder here, because one creates a fearful object *and* the circumstances that produce a sense of impending

11 Of course, an observer might experience imminent danger of collapse upon them when walking within an ancient ruin. But this is not the kind of object of danger relevant to the vulnerability that concerns the sublime, nor is it distinctive of ancient ruins, or indeed ruined structures generally.

danger. But in each type of case, the object becomes sublime when we activate our imagination and consider the danger they pose to our own existence. For this reason, Schiller takes this scenario to be less intense: 'fantasy first adds the fearful, and it is completely up to us, to suppress an idea, which is our own work' (Schiller 2004: 96).

In a second type of case, (P), a particular object really is dangerous, and the observer witnesses the suffering of another that is caused by it. Via empathy, the observer then imagines that same suffering for themselves: they 'make the application of it to his moral condition and produce the sublime from the fearful' (Schiller 2004: 96). Nevertheless, our capacity for sympathy would be too overwhelmed to maintain a calm aesthetic contemplation if the suffering was *actually* happening to someone. So, Schiller claims, the suffering of the other that we conceive of must be either 'mere illusion and fiction'—as is the case in watching tragic plays—or, if the suffering has occurred in reality, 'when it is not directly presented to the senses, but rather to the imaginative power' (Schiller 2004: 98). Broadly, this is Schiller's distinction between the 'contemplative sublime' (C) and the 'pathetic sublime' (P).[12]

Interestingly, the dynamically sublime experience of ancient ruins seems to be a unique case that falls somewhere between the contemplative sublime and the pathetic sublime, blending elements of both in a way that Schiller did not anticipate. First of all, it is important for our purposes that a ruin seems just as capable of being harnessed by the imagination for the contemplative sublime in the way that 'ideal' objects can be. The ancient ruin is not something that is actually capable of harming us, but can be an imagined object of fear in so far as it, like darkness or necessity, can be a symbol of our proximity to annihilation.[13] Schiller even says of 'enchanted palaces that are found in fairy tales', for example, that 'a dead silence rules, which awakens dread' (Schiller 2004: 97). There seems nothing to stop us from applying this same line of thought to existing ancient ruins. Walking around the remains of Petra, which we know to have once been a bustling centre of cultural activity, only the deteriorated structures remain, damaged but not destroyed, defiant yet eerily silent, unresponsive, and cold, capable of rousing a frightful anticipation of misfortune. So ancient ruins might be said to retain from the *contemplative* sublime the idea that the imagination takes something non-threatening and postulates it as something actually threatening. But second of all, when we perceive an ancient ruin and have sufficient historical knowledge of it, we are better able to imagine the suffering and annihilation of the historical people anchored to the structure, and empathize with them. In this respect, an ancient ruin seems to retain from the pathetic sublime a conception of another's actual suffering, although because this suffering is *historical* (i.e. real, but from the distant past), it is brought by 'the imaginative power' and 'not directly presented to the senses' (Schiller 2004: 98), and can thus still be entertained aesthetically. To be sure, this 'imaginative power' will need to be sufficiently strong, nuanced, and historically

12 For a more detailed account of the distinction and particularly how it fits into to Schiller's theory of tragedy, see Beiser (2005: 257–62).

13 Schiller even explicitly notes how 'time, regarded as a power' can be used by the imagination in this way (Schiller 2004: 96).

guided, if the values, worldviews, and psychologies of ancient peoples often radically different to our own are to be empathized with. Only then could the intensity of the feeling of danger and vulnerability when witnessing ancient ruins approximate that which is characteristic of dynamically sublime experience.

The precise object of one's empathy on this account, however, requires some elaboration. The potential problem is as follows. Granted that imagining the historical suffering of past people is an important element of experiencing the sense of danger and vulnerability that evokes the dynamic sublime, there is a remaining question about the exact nature of that suffering experienced in connection to a specific ruin. More precisely, does the suffering that past people experienced need to be the *direct result* of events that causally produced the ruin? Or is it the case that there need be no direct connection between the suffering and the process of ruination, other than the fact that the general vicissitudes of mortal existence—illness, harm, poverty, famine, death, and so on—simply happened there?

The significance of the question lies in the seeming dilemma it poses. If we hold that the suffering imagined must be *directly* related to the ruination of a site, then perhaps only highly specific ruins will be capable of evoking this experience (e.g. Pompeii, Masada, or Persepolis) to the implausible exclusion of others (e.g. the Roman Colosseum or Petra). But if we hold that the past suffering can be incidental to how the structure became ruined, this implies that any place ever inhabited with humans could potentially evoke the experience of the dynamically sublime. So, on one horn of the dilemma, empathy delivers too narrow a result, and on the other horn, it delivers far too broad a result.

However, the problem posed is best dealt with by holding that the relevant suffering of past peoples is not necessarily that which is the direct result of events that *causally produced* the ruin, but only that it must be clearly connected to events in the history of that ruin. For instance, Petra was gradually abandoned over a number of centuries, leading to its neglect and ruin. But learning about the events connected to the site brings to mind the suffering associated with it: earthquakes, periods of poverty from changes to trade routes and regional capitals, successive conquests by different empires, severe flooding, and so on. The Roman Colosseum may also bring to mind past suffering associated with the horrors of its practice, if not the experiences involved in the structure's prolonged decline. Both of these examples also concern sites that remain emblematic of major lost civilizations, and thus stand as potent symbols of decline and annihilation, reminding us of our own eventual fate. This helps explain why such world heritage sites can evoke the dynamic sublime, while other ancient sites—for example, the remains of farmhouses or bread shops—may not, or at least may not with equal intensity.

In summary, then, we have an interesting case in ancient ruins of objects that can potentially embody an as-of-yet unforeseen compound of Schiller's more nuanced distinction of dynamically sublime experience, which is rooted in the active role(s) of the imagination. An implication of this view is that the more an observer has a weak and inapt imagination or impoverished empathy, the less likely they are to experience ancient ruins as dynamically sublime, even if they are historically informed; a point Schiller recognizes (Schiller 2004: 96).

5. Further implications

The previous section has argued that a dynamically sublime experience of ancient ruins is constituted by three jointly sufficient components: (i) an understanding of a ruin as an integration of natural and man-made forces; (ii) knowledge of a ruin's particular historical and cultural significance; and (iii) a strong and apt capacity for imagining the suffering of others (i.e. empathy). The view we have reached up to this point is not a *replacement* of the temporal sublime with the dynamically sublime. Rather, we are left with a consistent synthesis of the two: ancient ruins can be sublime on account of the immense magnitude of time they force us to confront, *as well as* on account of the imagined threat to our self-preservation they express. I now wish to briefly consider some philosophically interesting implications of this view, as well as noting some further questions to be raised for consideration in future work.

First, it should now be clear how my account of the dynamically sublime experience of ruins offers the tools to respond to the objection raised in Section 2. Recall that for commentators such as Page and Schellekens (2019), an appropriate aesthetic experience of UNESCO sites will and ought to include the attitude of respect, where to appreciate a ruin respectfully is at least partly to understand its particular history and cultural significance. Appreciating a ruin's journey, so to speak—that is, its reason for being built; its function and importance for the people who built it; and the causes and process of its ruination—is what marks it out from just any old object. This is the Respect Criterion, and meeting it may also facilitate a range of associated beliefs, affects, emotions, and dispositions (e.g. humility). In Section 2, we granted that elevating age value to a position of primacy in the appreciation of ruins fails to meet the Respect Criterion. However, we can now see why conceding this point does not compromise the centrality of the sublime in this context, since the second component of my dynamical account is explicitly cognitivist: ancient ruins can be dynamically sublime on the condition that we are, inter alia, attentive to the ruin's historical and cultural significance. If this feature is what it means to give ancient ruins their due respect, the Schiller-inspired model of the dynamically sublime that I have outlined here is appropriately respectful, whether the temporal sublime is also present or not.

Another interesting implication of the view I have defended is that, contrary to the views of some commentators (e.g. Scarbrough 2014: 449, fn. 18), inauthentic ruins such as fakes or imaginative reconstructions seem to be incapable of being dynamically sublime in the way I have suggested here, when one is not ignorant to their status as fake. Fakes and reconstructions are not (i) integrations of human and natural forces; they do not possess (ii) a history from which we can appreciate the indifference of nature and our vulnerabilities; and having been built by contemporaries and having never genuinely deteriorated, they do not evoke (iii) our imagination for suffering and empathy with any sufferers. Neither can fakes and reconstructions be temporally sublime, even if they could in principle be mathematically sublime on account of their size. But as my qualification above specifies, fakes are incapable of being dynamically sublime assuming *one knows* the structure is a fake. Consider again the case of a Roman history enthusiast stumbling across a third-century Mithraic temple, but this time the temple is a fake. It seems plausible that, to the extent the observer is fooled into thinking the ruin is genuine, it could still satisfy (i)–(iii), if only for a short period of time before the ruse is discovered upon closer inspection.

Instead of seeing this as a bug, I see it as a welcome feature of my view. There is and ought to be a difference in our appreciation of genuine ancient ruins that are designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites and sham ruins built for entertainment or educational purposes.

One question that requires more space for a comprehensive discussion is whether the account offered here in fact goes beyond ancient ruins, and could also extend to the aesthetic experience of other ancient objects in the same degree, or perhaps even in kind: for example, Roman-era utensils, jewellery, clothing, weapons, and so on. While I do not have the space to explore this fully here, I suspect that at least some ancient ruins—particularly UNESCO World Heritage sites—merit a sublime response, or, at the very least, a more intense sublime response, on account of their more vivid representation of a civilization's achievements and greatness. Page and Schellekens, for example, recognize the Temple of Bel as telling of 'the highest points of human civilisation' (Page and Schellekens: 245). This characterization matters because these ruins would show how even the greatest are vulnerable to the power of nature as they face the relentless advance of history, let alone our individual selves. This is something that a mundane everyday tool with primarily utility value, such as a Roman-era wooden spoon, would not as vividly represent.

6. Conclusion

This paper has considered the suitability of the aesthetic category of the sublime for the appreciation of ancient ruins. It has found that one need not take age value to be the 'proper aesthetic object of a ruin' (Korsmeyer 2014: 430) in order to retain the category of the sublime. In fact, doing so makes one vulnerable to the charge that such an account will not reflect the ways in which people do or ought to value world heritage sites such as Palmyra, Pompeii, and the Giza Pyramids—namely, with a respect for an ancient ruin qua world heritage site. Nevertheless, I have argued that by drawing upon greater resources from the history of philosophy, one can also plausibly endorse a conception of ancient ruins in a more unorthodox way, namely as dynamically sublime. Ancient ruins can produce a sense of forebodingness, and this is rooted in their ability to make our own and our species' relative vulnerability apparent to us. Moreover, I have argued that understanding ancient ruins as dynamically sublime via the three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions I have proposed allows one to dispel the objection that the sublime fails to meet the Respect Criterion. The view defended holds that knowledge about the particular history and cultural significance of a ruin is not only compatible with a sublime experience of ancient ruins, but may even *enhance* this experience. The most significant and original finding to draw from this investigation is that the appreciation of ancient ruins occupies an awkward place in the most developed of the traditional frameworks for the sublime (i.e. that proposed by Schiller). Ancient ruins partly meet the conditions of the contemplative sublime, and partly meet the conditions of the pathetic sublime. They therefore present an interesting anomaly with respect to existing aesthetic classifications.[14]

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