Kant's Theory of the Sublime in Nature and His Concept of Nature

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Abstract
When we reflect on how man relates himself to Nature, we see that there arise two different positions. One is to set man against Nature, i.e., the dualistic concept of Nature; the other is to conceive man as a part of Nature, i.e., the non-dualistic concept of Nature. Of these two, Kant takes a dualistic position. In this essay, I shall discuss Kant's aesthetic theory, especially his theory of the sublimity of Nature, in conjunction with his dualistic concept of Nature. I'll show that Kant's sublimity theory has several problems and that those problems are closely connected with his dualistic conception of Nature. Then I'll show further that those problems can be successfully resolved in the non-dualistic concept of Nature. By doing so, I'll suggest that the non-dualists' understanding of Nature is more adequate.

1. Introduction

As a thinking being, man has a spontaneous desire to know the world he belongs to, i.e., Nature. Or, alternatively, man cannot escape having some kind of conception of Nature, because he must constantly relate himself to it. The experience of relating oneself to Nature must differ from individual to individual, from culture to culture, from age to age, and so forth. When we focus and reflect on how man relates himself to Nature, we see that there arise two different positions.[1] One is to set man against Nature or to draw a line of demarcation between man and Nature; the other is to count man as a part of Nature and assert a continuity between man and Nature. The latter holds that Nature has active and creative force on its own whereas the former denies it. I shall call the former 'the dualistic concept of Nature' and the latter 'the non- dualistic conception of Nature.'

[1] By 'man,' I mean human species distinguished from other classes such as animals, plants, rocks, and so on.

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Let me clarify the distinction a bit further. On what grounds do the dualists draw a line of demarcation between man and Nature? On what grounds do the non-dualists deny it? Above all, one simple and immediate answer to this question can be given in terms of value, I think. The dualists assert that there is a line of demarcation because they believe that man is superior to Nature in principle. The non-dualists deny it because they do not believe in such a value distinction in principle.[2]

One may advance one step further and ask, on what grounds do the dualists believe in a value distinction between man and Nature and on what grounds do the non-dualists reject it? A satisfying answer to this question cannot be given until we examine their metaphysics, which I will do in section 2. I will discuss Kant's metaphysics to represent the dualistic position, and the metaphysics of the Taoist and of Spinoza to represent the non-dualistic position. For the present, I shall try to give an answer simply to clarify the two terms, 'dualists' and 'non-dualists'.

The dualists assert a value distinction between man and Nature because they believe in man's distinctiveness: man alone, in contrast to all other natural beings, possesses a mind, a true source of activity and creativity. The non-dualists refuse to make a value distinction because they believe that man and Nature share something in common at the deepest level: namely, that which is neither simply mental nor simply physical but covers both; that which is somewhat like creative force or causal power; or that which they regard as the ultimate reality. In so far as both man and Nature share this same reality in common at the deepest level, it is in principle not right to set up a value distinction between them. In other words, the non-dualists do not believe that the mental makes man distinguishable from and superior to Nature as the dualists do, for the mental is to be subsumed under the deepest level of reality which man and Nature both share. The non-dualists do not regard Nature merely as passive and created as the dualists do, but also as

[2] It does not mean however that the non-dualists do not admit any kind of distinction among beings. They do admit certain kinds of distinction such as the distinction made in terms of structural complexity or degree of perfection. The distinction, however, does not extend so far as to draw a line of demarcation between man and Nature. For, though it may be true that a certain species, say human beings, is, generally speaking, structurally more complex and more perfect than other species, say animals, the same sort of distinction can be made within the same species as well. Namely, some men are, for instance, more perfect than others. This is why I say that the non-dualists do not believe in a value distinction between man and Nature in principle.

active and creative in itself.[3] In other words, by 'Nature' the non-dualists mean not only the entire physical universe or the sum total of phenomena (i.e., the passive Nature), but also the creative force or causal power which is responsible for both the mental and the physical (i.e., the active Nature). The non-dualistic concept of Nature is much broader than the dualistic concept of Nature in this sense.

Returning to our main theme, which concept of Nature is more adequate and more coherent? Which one has more explanatory power? To tell my answer first, I believe that it is the non-dualistic concept of Nature. In order to show why, I'll critically examine in section 3 Kant's aesthetic theory, especially his theory of the sublimity of Nature, because, in my view, this theory has several problematic implications or flaws and they are closely connected with his dualistic concept of Nature. In section 4, I will show that those problems will be resolved successfully, or alternatively, will not arise at all in the non-dualistic concept of Nature. By doing this I will suggest that the non-dualists' understanding of Nature is more adequate.

2. The Metaphysical Grounds of the Two Concepts of Nature

2.1. The Metaphysical Ground of the Dualistic Concept of Nature: Kant

In this section, I shall consider Kant's reflection on Nature and man and show how it belongs to the dualistic concept of Nature. Kant approaches Nature from a knowable or sensuous aspect to begin with: "By Nature, in the empirical sense, we understand the connection of appearances as regards their existence according to necessary rules. That is, according to laws" (CPR A216/B263). Undoubtedly, by the necessary rules or laws he means the rules of the understanding. For Nature under discussion, i.e., Nature in the empirical sense, is constituted by the concepts of the understanding. On this ground Kant says, "the understanding is itself the source of the laws of Nature" (CPR A127) or "understanding supplies a priori laws for Nature" (CJ 196). More specifically, what are the laws of Nature, then? One of them is definitely the law of causality. Since Nature is ordered by this law, Kant holds that Nature is a mechanism (CJ 360) and is governed by the mechanical law of causality.

One thing to note here is that this concept of Nature, i.e., Nature as a mechanism, is, as Kant makes clear, not an empirical concept, for it carries

[3] The non-dualists identify Nature with the ultimate reality in this sense.

with it the concept of necessity. It is rather a concept whose knowledge we possess a priori. (Gr 455) Kant asserts however that the concept of Nature as a mechanism is nonetheless "confirmed by experience and must inevitably be presupposed if experience is to be possible" (Gr 455).

However, this is not of course the whole story about Kant's concept of Nature. A further speculation about Nature begins when he encounters organic beings. In such cases, according to Kant, we can hardly be satisfied with viewing Nature as a mere mechanism. Kant illustrates his meaning by an example of a tree: its growth, reproduction, and adaptation.

> The way Nature comes, in these forms of life, to her own aid in the case of injury, where the want of one part necessary for the maintenance of the neighboring parts is made good by the rest; the abortions or malformations in growth, where, on account of some chance defect or obstacle, certain parts adopt a completely new formation, so as to preserve the existing growth, and thus produce an anomalous form. (CJ 372)

When we consider these phenomena, we naturally come to think, Kant believes, that the phases of such processes are directed to the end of achieving, continuing, maintaining the existence of a tree in its final form. On Kant's view, to think of the phenomena in this way is not only natural but actually necessary. In other words, Kant believes that in order to get an understanding of the essential Nature of organisms, we must approach them as if they were designed and as if every part is purposive: "That the origin of a simple blade of grass is only possible on the rule of ends is, to our human critical faculty, sufficiently proved by its internal form" (CJ 378).

Based on these beliefs, Kant holds that an organized being is not a mere machine, which has solely motive power. An organism possesses inherent formative power so that every part is thought as owing its presence to the agency of all the remaining parts and as existing for the sake of the others and of the whole. That is to say, an organism is one in which every part is reciprocally both end and means, with the principle of final causes as its governing principle (CJ 373-76).

Kant emphasizes however that the principle of final causes is not empirical but a priori because the principle possesses the universality and necessity that are marks of a priori principles. And, unlike the categories of the understanding, it is only a regulative a priori principle:

> It is true that the occasion for adopting this principle must be derived from experience -- from such experience, namely, as is methodically arranged and is called observation. But owing to the universality and necessity which that principle predicates of such finality, it cannot rest merely on empirical grounds, but must have some underlying a priori principle. This principle, however, may be one that is merely regulative, and it may be that the ends in question only reside in the idea of the person forming the estimate and not in any efficient cause whatever. (CJ 376)

Once we realize this, we can advance a step further and apply this principle to the whole of Nature: namely, Nature in general is to be estimated teleologically as a system of ends (CJ 377). In this manner, Kant introduces another concept of Nature: Nature as a system of ends.

Kant warns, however, that "this principle (of final causes) is altogether silent on the point of whether anything estimated according to it is, or is not, an end of Nature by design" (CJ 379). That is to say, we must treat Nature as if it had been designed, without prejudging whether it were in fact designed, as McFarland says.[4] When viewed as designed, "Nature's capacity for production by final causes must be considered as a special kind of causality"; whereas viewed as undesigned, "this capacity is at bottom identical with natural mechanism" (CJ 391). Whichever be the case, Kant emphasizes that the teleology must not lead us to convert Nature into an intelligent being, for that would be absurd: "when teleology is applied to physics, we speak with perfect justice of the wisdom, the economy, the forethought, the beneficence of Nature. But in so doing we do not convert Nature into an intelligent being, for that would be absurd" (CJ 383). Also he rejects that the teleology leads us to place an intelligent being above Nature: "but neither do we dare to think of placing another being, one that is intelligent, above Nature as its architect, for that would be extravagant" (CJ 383).

To sum up, Nature is, according to Kant, a mechanism on the one hand and a teleological system of ends on the other. As an object of sense or as a complex of phenomena, Nature is a mechanism because the principle of mechanical causality as one of the constitutive principles of the understanding applies to all phenomena. Nature is a teleological system of ends as well, because organisms afford objective reality to this concept. But

[4] J. D. McFarland (1970), p. 139.

the principle of final causes that is a governing principle here is not constitutive; but it can be used as a regulative principle to guide further scientific investigation, i.e., as a heuristic principle. What is common to both principles is that both are a priori principles: namely, they are not principles derived from experience.

One may ask however whether these two concepts of Nature, the mechanical and the teleological, are compatible. Kant answers that they are. For both concepts of Nature are the concepts of reflective judgment. Or, alternatively, both are regulative concepts, not constitutive concepts. In other words, to say that Nature is a mechanism is not to say "all production of material things is possible on mere mechanical laws" but to say "all production of material thing and their forms must be estimated as possible on mere mechanical laws" (CJ 387). In the same manner, to say that Nature is a teleological system of ends is not to say "some production of such things is not possible on mere mechanical laws" but to say "some products of material Nature cannot be estimated as possible on mere mechanical laws" (CJ 387). The first are the examples of constitutive principles whereas the second are those of regulative principles. Kant's point is that his two seemingly incompatible concepts of Nature are not really incompatible in so far as we understand them not as constitutive principles but as regulative principles. That is to say, if we understand them as constitutive principles, then an antinomy arises and one of the two would necessarily be false. But if we understand them as regulative principles, there is no contradiction between the two. Kant emphasizes therefore that when he says that "I must estimate the possibility of all events in material Nature, and consequently, also all forms considered as its products, on mere mechanical laws," he does not thereby assert that "they are solely possible in this way, to the exclusion of every other kind of causality" (CJ 387). On the contrary, continues Kant, "[t]his assertion is only intended to indicate that I ought at all times to reflect upon these things according to the principle of the simple mechanism of Nature, and, consequently, push my investigation with it as far as I can, because unless I make it the basis of research there can be no knowledge of Nature in the true sense of the term at all" (CJ 387).

One important thing that follows from this is that "[t]his leaves it an open question whether in the unknown basis of Nature itself the physico-mechanical and the final nexus present in the same things may not cohere in a single principle, it being only our reason that is not in a position to unite them in such a principle" (CJ 388). This is to admit the possibility that a

supersensible ground be procured, although for us unknowable, as a substrate for the sensible Nature (CJ 409). Once we admit this possibility, then we can be more confident in estimating Nature on two kinds of principles, the mechanical and the teleological. That is to say, everything which is necessary in this Nature as an object of sense we should estimate according to mechanical laws. But concerning those which we must deem contingent in respect of mechanical laws or those which exist in Nature as an object of reason, namely, Nature in its entirety as a system, we should also consider in the light of teleological laws (CJ 409). "For we are at least assured of the possibility of both being reconciled, even objectively, in a single principle in as much as they deal with phenomena, and these presuppose a supersensible ground" (CJ 413). In other words, "Kant does not attempt to argue," McFarland points out, "that the mechanical principle may be true of appearances and the teleological true of the supersensible; rather he argues that both can be applied to appearances without contradiction, because it is possible that both are reconciled in the supersensible."[5] Kant holds therefore "The mechanical mode of explanation would not be excluded by the teleological as if the two principles contradicted one another" (CJ 409).

How does Kant understand man, then? Or, what is Kant's concept of man? In so far as man is a part of Nature, the two concepts that apply to Nature, i.e., the mechanical and the teleological, apply to man also: namely, man also is both a mechanism and an end.

Is it true, then, that man is nothing more than a part of Nature? No, it is not. Kant does not believe that man is merely a part of Nature. There is something more in man, which distinguishes man from all other beings. What is that? It is reason, according to Kant: "Now man actually finds in himself a power which distinguishes him from all other things -- and even from himself so far as he is affected by objects. This power is reason" (Gr 452). It naturally leads Kant to postulate the conception of the final end, i.e., "an end that does not require any other end as condition of its possibility" (CJ 434). In the teleological context, all beings in Nature are indeed regarded as ends; but they are, except for man, at the same time means for others. Man alone cannot be a means for others, but remains an end all the time. It amounts to the distinction between a mutually subordinated end and a final end. All natural forms of life except for man are, even when Nature is regarded as a teleological system, nothing more than subordinated ends: that

[5] *Ibid*., p. 130.

is, they are ends but at the same time means for others. But man must be presupposed to be the final end:

> we have in the world of beings but one kind whose causality is teleological, or directed to ends, and which at the same time are beings of such a character that the law according to which they have to determine ends for themselves is represented by them themselves as unconditioned and not dependent on anything in Nature, but as necessary in itself. The being of this kind is man, but man regarded as noumenon. He is the only natural creature whose peculiar objective characterization is nevertheless such as to enable us to recognize in him a supersensible faculty -- his freedom -- and to perceive both the law of the causality and the object of freedom which that faculty is able to set before itself as the highest end -- the supreme good in the world. (CJ 435)

Namely, if there is to be a final end at all, which reason must assign a priori, then it can only be man -- or any rational being in the world -- subject to moral laws, according to Kant. For "if the world only consisted of lifeless beings, or even consisted partly of living, but yet irrational beings, the existence of such a world would have no worth whatever, because there would exist in it no being with the least conception of what worth is" (CJ 448-49). This is how Kant believes that we have a rational ground to explain why Nature must be in accord with the conditions of man's happiness.

It becomes obvious now which concept of Nature Kant takes. It is definitely the dualistic one. That is to say, Kant believes that man must be distinguished from and superior to all other beings of Nature because man alone possesses reason[6] or because man alone can be the final end whereas other beings of Nature remain mutually subordinated ends. In brief, the distinction or demarcation line between man and Nature does not collapse even when Kant views Nature as a teleological system. Kant's concept of Nature, whether it be mechanical or teleological, stands therefore strictly under the dualistic concept of Nature.

[6] That man alone has reason does not mean, regretfully, that man remains rational all the time. We're frustrated more often than not to see that man's rationality becomes a slave of passion, to borrow Hume's words. Man can abuse his rationality and becomes irrational fairly easily. My point is that having a reason does not necessarily prove that man is superior to Nature, as Kant believed.

I've shown so far Kant's metaphysical reflection on Nature and man, which clearly evidences that he has a dualistic concept of Nature. I'll turn now to the metaphysical reflection of the non-dualists.

2.2. The Metaphysical Grounds of the Non-dualistic Concept of Nature: The Taoist and Spinoza

I'll consider here two metaphysical positions that support the non-dualistic concept of Nature, the metaphysics of the Taoist and of Spinoza.

2.2.1. The Taoist

For the Taoists, the ultimate reality is understood in terms of '*Tao.*' What is '*Tao,*' then? Lao Tzu says that *Tao* cannot be described in words: "The *Tao* that can be told of is not the eternal *Tao*. The name that can be named is not the enduring Name" (L 1). It is because, as Wang Pi says, "A name is used to determine a form. *Tao* is nebulously complete, form-less and cannot be known."[7] All the same, Lao Tzu gives it the name '*Tao*' (L 25). Why? '*Tao*' literally means 'Way.' According to Wang Pi, "the name '*Tao*' (or 'Way') is derived from the understanding that nothing does not follow it."[8] In other words, Lao Tzu seems to have given it the name '*Tao*' (or 'Way') because everything is supposed to follow it.

Let us try to characterize *Tao* now. Based on the text of Lao Tzu, I shall characterize *Tao* as follows: above all, *Tao* can be characterized as the origin, source, and mother of the universe.

> The name-less is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
> The named is the mother of the Ten Thousand Things.
> . . .
> These two issue from the same [source], and yet have different names (L 1)

> There is "something" nebulously complete in and by itself, which comes before Heaven and Earth.
> Silent, boundless, standing alone, and changeless;
> Its cyclical process has no end.
> It may be considered the mother of the world. (L 25)

[7] Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Sandra A. Wawrytko (1989), p. 16.
[8] *Ibid*., p. 16.

Wang Pi comments, "All being (*yu*) originates from No-thingness (*wu*). Therefore at the time of no-form and no-name prior to the appearance of forms and names, *Tao* is the origin of the ten thousand things; at the time forms and names appear, it 'fosters them, rears them, nurtures them, and harbors them' (L 51), as their mother."[9]

How, then, does *Tao* develop? The way *Tao* develops itself is described in the following manner:

> *Tao* gives birth to the One;
> The One gives birth to the Two;
> The Two give birth to the Ten Thousand Things. (L 42)

As a consequence, *Tao* comes to pervade everywhere: namely, there isn't any place where *Tao* does not reside. The method *Tao* takes to develop itself is described in terms of *Yin* and *Yang*: "The Ten Thousand Things carry *Yin* and embrace *Yang*, infusing these two vital forces to realize harmony" (L 42). That is, when myriad creatures are begotten from *Tao* but without being given the form yet, the division of *Yin* (negative) and *Yang* (positive) already appeared; and when they begin to move, things come into being with form. *Yin* and *Yang* thus become the principle *Tao* employs to develop itself. We have to note here that *Yin* and *Yang* are not two separate energies or activities. The activity of the one is inherently contained within and created by the other, thus complementing each other. For both of them spring from the supreme ultimate, *Tao*. In brief, heaven and earth, or Nature, is understood as the physical representation of the interaction of *Yin* and *Yang*, themselves springing from *Tao*.

The *Yin* and *Yang* principle can also be understood as the principle of cyclic process. That is, "the movement of *Tao* is," says Lau, "described as turning back, meaning that *Tao* causes all things to undergo a process of cyclic change"[10]: "Reversion is the movement of *Tao*; Suppleness is the function of *Tao*" (L 40). Hence, Lau continues, "[w]hat is weak inevitably develops into something strong; but when this process of development reaches its limit, the opposite process of decline sets in, and what is strong once again becomes weak; and decline reaches its lowest limit only to give way once more to development. Thus there is an endless cycle of development and decline." That is to say, the *Yin* and *Yang* aspects of *Tao* or

[9] *Ibid*., p.1.
[10] D. C. Lau (trans.) (1963), p. 25.

the principle of *Tao* produces the endless process of cyclic change, and the natural order is delicately balanced. The process of life and death, for instance, is understood in terms of this principle. In short, the principle of *Tao* applies to all things that undergo change: it applies to man as well as to inanimate creatures.

In brief, according to the Taoist, all beings in Nature including man are considered to be threaded into one through *Tao*: all have their origins in *Tao*; all are governed by the *Yin* and *Yang* principle of *Tao*. That is to say, *Tao* exists as a core of all beings in Nature at the deepest level. Again, *Tao* is, as principle as well as origin of the universe, not something passive and created but something active and creative.[11] Accordingly, Nature must also be conceived of not merely as something passive and created but as something active and creative; or, alternatively, Nature is itself identified with *Tao*. The Taoist metaphysics thus surely reflects the non-dualistic concept of Nature.

2.2.2. Spinoza

In Spinoza's metaphysics, the ultimate reality is understood in terms of one 'substance.' 'Substance' is identified with 'God' on the one hand, and 'Nature' on the other. What does he mean by 'substance,' 'God,' and 'Nature' respectively? And how and why are they identified with one another?

Spinoza defines 'substance' as "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself: that is, that the conception of which does not require the conception of another thing from which it has to be formed" (I D3). That is to say, Spinoza's characterization of substance includes, "conceptual as well as ontological independence," as Allison puts it.[12] In contrast to it, "that which is in something else and is conceived through something else" is 'mode,' as Spinoza defines it: "By mode I mean the affections of substance" (I D5); hence, a mode is dependent upon substance conceptually as well as ontologically. Again, to help understand what 'substance' is, Spinoza introduces the concept 'attributes' defined as "that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence." (I D4)

It follows from this definition of 'substance' that there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute in the universe (I P5); that

[11] The *Tao* of the Taoists seems to me to be quite similar to the God of Spinoza, which I shall discuss in the next section, in that both may well be understood as a sort of creative power and principle of the universe.

[12] Henry E. Allison (1987), p. 46.

existence belongs to the nature of substance, for substance cannot be produced by anything else and is therefore self-caused (I P7); and that every substance is necessarily infinite or it possesses an infinity of attributes, for if it were finite, "it would have to be limited by another substance of the same nature, and that substance also would have to exist. And so there would exist two substances of the same attribute, which is absurd" (I P8).

What is Spinoza's 'God'? Spinoza defines 'God' as "an absolutely infinite being: that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence" (I D6). Hence, 'God' is identified with 'substance': "There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God" (I P14).

What is Spinoza's 'Nature'? Spinoza approaches the understanding of Nature from the distinction between '*Natura naturans*' and '*Natura naturata*':

> By '*Natura naturans*' we must understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself: that is, the attributes of substance that express eternal and infinite essence; or God insofar as he is considered a free cause. By '*Natura naturata*' I understand all that follows from the necessity of God's Nature, that is, from the necessity of each one of God's attributes; or all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God and can neither be nor can be conceived without God. (I P29 S)

In brief, '*Natura naturans*' is 'God' and '*Natura naturata*' is the modes of 'God.'

In this manner, Spinoza identifies all these three, i.e., 'substance,' 'God,' and 'Nature.' In other words, Spinoza's metaphysical speculation concerning the ultimate reality leads to the conclusion that 'substance,' 'God,' and 'Nature' are all identical.

When the ultimate reality is understood in this manner, what kinds of characterizing features follow from it? First, God is the cause of all things: "From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinite things in infinite ways" (I P16). That is, God serves as the source or ground of all things. Hence, God is characterized as the first cause (I P16 C3) and the efficient cause (I P16 C1) of all things, according to Spinoza. God is also characterized as the immanent, not the extraneous or the transient cause of things (I P18), for it is the one and the only substance and all things are just modes of it, whether finite or infinite.

Now, if God is the efficient cause of all things and there is nothing that does not follow from God, what is the way God takes to fulfill this job? In other words, how does God act as the efficient cause of all things? What kind of causal relation is there between God and its modes or between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*?

Certainly, God acts 'freely' because, being absolutely infinite, there are nothing beyond God, on which God could depend. Hence, Spinoza describes God as the free cause as well. (I P17 C2) What is acting 'freely' to Spinoza? 'Freedom' is explained by Spinoza in terms of self-causation and self-determination: "that thing is said to be free which exists solely from the necessity of its own Nature, and is determined to action by itself alone" (I D7). That is to say, when Spinoza says that God is the free cause, he does not mean that God acts in an undetermined manner. Rather, God acts in a certain determined manner. But the source of that determination is not outside but inside: it is self-determination. Thus Spinoza says, "God acts solely from the laws of his own Nature, and is constrained by none" (I P17).

What kind of laws are they? Or, what kind of necessity is it? It is generally agreed upon by commentators that Spinoza means by the 'laws' or the 'necessity' of God a kind of logical law or logical necessity. The expression, for instance, that things 'follow from' (I P16, 22) or are 'produced by' (I P33) God, or the geometrical analogy employed by Spinoza to explain the relation between God and things in "from God's supreme power or infinite nature an infinity of things in infinite ways -- that is, everything -- have necessarily flowed or are always following from that same necessity, just as from the nature of a triangle it follows from eternity to eternity that its three angles are equal to two right angles" (I P17 S) are suggested by Curley as the evidences that strongly support this interpretation.[13] In other words, what Spinoza would have in mind as the causal relation between God and things or between substance and its modes or between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* is understood to be in some way analogous to the logical relation between ground and consequent.[14] Again, since logic is the rules of reason, the laws of God are taken to be equivalent with the laws and rules of reason.[15] It is tantamount to saying that the logical order of our ideas reflects the necessary causal order of reality.

[13] E. M. Curley (1969), p. 45.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 46; and Allison (1987), p. 64.
[15] Wetleson (1979), p. 221.

Another characterizing feature of God is that it has both extension and thought as its attributes: "Thought is an attribute of God: i.e. God is a thinking thing" (II P1). "Extension is an attribute of God: i.e. God is an extended thing" (II P2). Of course, extension and thought are not the only attributes God possesses. God as an infinite being possesses an infinity of attributes. Extension and thought are however the only two attributes of God that are known to man. Moreover, what is to be noted here is that extension and thought are, according to Spinoza, not two distinct and separate entities but different attributes conceived by the human intellect as constituting God. For God is the one and the only substance that is indivisible: "Absolutely infinite substance is indivisible" (I P13).

Along this line, body and mind are not viewed by Spinoza as two distinct entities but as two aspects of one and the same entity. In other words, every body has, according to Spinoza, an idea corresponding to it (II P7). Since "there is necessarily in God an idea of each thing whatever, of which idea God is the cause in the same way as he is the cause of the idea of the human body," says Spinoza, "whatever we have asserted of the idea of the human body must necessarily be asserted of the idea of each thing" (II P13 S). For Spinoza, therefore, a sharp demarcation line does not exist between the living and the non-living, the conscious and the non-conscious, and consequently, between man and Nature, either. Instead, he distinguishes individuals in terms of bodily complexity or versatility: "in proportion as a body is more apt than other bodies to act or be acted upon simultaneously in many ways, so is its mind more apt than other minds to perceive many things simultaneously; and in proportion as the actions of one body depend on itself alone and the less that other bodies concur with it in its actions, the more apt is its mind to understand distinctly" (II P13 S). For example, the difference between the mind and body of human beings and those of animals is explained entirely in terms of a difference of degree in their structural complexity. Hence, Spinoza says, "[w]e cannot deny that ideas differ among themselves as do their objects, and that one is more excellent and contains more reality than another, just as the object of one idea is more excellent than that of another and contains more reality" (II P13 S).

How is Spinoza's metaphysics related to the non-dualistic concept of Nature? As I showed above, God or Nature (or *Natura Naturans*) is conceived to be the source or origin of all things (or *Natura Naturata*), including man. The way by which things follow from God is explained in terms of the necessity of divine nature that may be analogous with the laws of

logic. Extension and thought are not considered as two separate substances but as two attributes of one and the same substance, God or Nature. Consequently, Spinoza admits no room for a demarcation line between man and Nature. Man is, like other beings, a mode of Nature; man as well as other beings follows the same laws of Nature; and mind does not distinguish man from other beings because mind, as an attribute of thought, pervades everywhere. In brief, Spinoza's metaphysics does not allow that man be considered as a being that is distinguishable from or superior to other beings of Nature. Also, Spinoza's metaphysics suggests that Nature be conceived of not only as passive and created (i.e., *Natura Naturata*) but also as active and creative (i.e., *Natura Naturans*). Spinoza's metaphysics thus reflects the non-dualistic concept of Nature.

3. Problems in Kant's Theory of the Sublimity of Nature

3.1. Aesthetic Pleasure

In the beginning of the third critique, Kant discusses the beautiful, where he gives four determinations of it. Among these four, the first one is concerned with aesthetic pleasure. Kant says that there are, roughly speaking, three kinds of delight: that of the agreeable, of the beautiful, and of the good. "Of these three kinds of delight, that of taste in the beautiful may be said to be the one and only disinterested and free delight; for, with it, no interest, whether of sense or reason, extorts approval." (CJ 210) In the following section of the sublime, Kant continues: "the beautiful and the sublime agree on the point of pleasing on their own account." (CJ 244) That is to say, the pleasure in the sublime has the peculiar characteristic of disinterestedness as well. The 'disinterestedness' thus becomes the characteristic feature of aesthetic pleasure of the sublime as well as of the beautiful, according to Kant.

My question is whether the 'disinterestedness' is coherent with his theory of the sublime, especially the sublime in Nature. To tell the conclusion first, it is not, in my view. Let us consider how the pleasure in the sublime in Nature arises. This pleasure has a different origin from the pleasure in the beautiful. Kant explains how the pleasure arises when contemplating the beautiful:

> all rational beings are capable of cognition, which requires the connectibility of two faculties, imagination and understanding. Particular acts of cognition involve the connection of particular

> representations with particular concepts--they require determinate relationships between imagination and understanding. But these acts presuppose an indeterminate general relationship--an underlying harmony of the two cognitive faculties. When they are idling or not seriously directed to the pursuit of knowledge, these faculties can play at knowledge, in a sense, enjoying the harmony between them without being tied down or bound by particular sense-intuitions or particular concepts. It is precisely in this state, i.e., the state in which the two cognitive faculties play freely enjoying the harmony between them that the mind takes intense pleasure or satisfaction, which is the experience of beauty. (CJ 217-218)

To wit, it is out of the harmony the faculty of judgments finds in relating the imagination, in its free play, to the understanding that the pleasure of beauty is generated.

How does the pleasure arise in contemplating the sublime in Nature, then? Is it the same kind of harmony that is responsible for the pleasure in the sublime? No, it isn't. Kant's answer is that the pleasure in the sublime arises because "we can become conscious that we are superior to Nature within, and therefore also to Nature without us." (CJ 264) Certainly it is an answer which shows his dualistic position on Nature. We feel, facing overwhelming Nature, at first, impotent as physical creatures; however, this sense of impotence brings home to us the awareness of our infinite superiority as moral beings, our spiritual inviolability in the midst of Natural perils. Thus, humanity in our person remains un-humiliated, though the individual might have to submit to this overwhelming power of Nature. Hence it is the sublimity of our nature that we actually admire.

> The feeling of the sublime is at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and a simultaneously awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with ideas of reason, so far as the effort to attain to these is for us a law. It is, in other words, for us a law (of reason), which goes to make us what we are, that we should esteem as small in comparison with ideas of reason everything which for us is great in Nature as an object of sense; and that which

> makes us alive to the feeling of this supersensible side of our being harmonizes with that law. (CJ 257)

It means that our faculty of judgment generates the feeling of the sublime, not out of the harmony, but out of the conflict and subsequent dominion made when relating the imagination to the Reason and its transcendent Ideas.

Is it not strange that we have to ascribe two different origins to the same aesthetic pleasure of disinterestedness? For Kant, it is not. The aesthetic pleasure of disinterestedness originates, in the case of the beautiful, from mental harmony, whereas it originates from mental conflict and subsequent dominion in the case of the sublime. For me, however, it is a strange and awkward position. Is the mental conflict really capable of causing disinterestedness? The mental harmony may well cause the disinterested delight; but I doubt that mental conflict does. The word 'conflict' is associated not so much with *disinterest* as with *interest* and pains of struggle. As a matter of fact, Kant himself claims that the sublimity in Nature represents the struggle, indeed, to break the limits of sensuous form in order to find a subjective equivalent of infinity within the self. I can hardly imagine, therefore, that the pleasure in contemplating the sublimity of Nature shall have a disinterested character. On the contrary, it will have a very 'interested' character, because the pleasure has certainly its origin in the struggle between the sense and reason and subsequent dominion of the latter over the former. In other words, I don't think that such words as 'conflict,' 'struggle,' and 'dominion' which Kant employs to describe the sublimity experience are compatible with the claim that 'disinterestedness' is to be found in experiencing the sublime in Nature. One may object that Kant characterizes the experience of the sublime as disinterested because the person experiencing it is not herself threatened (for instance by a storm), but watches it safely; whereas a person physically threatened by a storm will not experience sublimity but will have an 'interested' relation to the storm. Is it not the case, though, that the act of distinguishing threat from safety is itself already a sign of an 'interested' relation to Nature? I would say therefore that this is one of the problems in Kant's sublime theory, and that his dualistic concept of Nature stands behind this problem.

3.2. Aesthetic Freedom

'Freedom' in Kant has an equivocal meaning. The concept of freedom in his aesthetics and that in his ethics are different. In the case of the aesthetic

judgment of the beautiful, Kant says that a free play occurs between the imagination and the concepts of the understanding; so 'freedom' in this context is an unhindered operation according to one's own principle. This freedom is however not the same as the freedom developed in Kant's ethics, moral freedom. Granted that it is self-determined, moral freedom is self-determined in a form of pure energy; or, alternatively, moral freedom comes from a power of opposition by limitless power of the will. That is to say, whereas the freedom in the aesthetic experience of the beautiful comes from inner harmony, the moral freedom comes from inner disharmony and opposition.

What about the case of the sublime? Since the sublime is also an aesthetic experience, can we expect the same kind of freedom, namely, the freedom of harmony? I am afraid not. As I've explained in the previous section, it is not a harmonious play (between the imagination and the concepts of the understanding) but a conflict (between imagination and the Ideas of reason) and a subsequent dominion of the other over the one that characterizes the aesthetic experience of the sublimity of Nature. Hence, the freedom emerging from the sublime is not the same as the freedom emerging from the beautiful. That is to say, aesthetic freedom must split into two kinds, according to Kant: one originates from harmony, and the other from conflict and subsequent dominion.

Is it really the case that we entertain entirely different kinds of freedom in our aesthetic experience of the sublime than in that of the beautiful? When I reflect on my own aesthetic experiences, it does not seem correct to say so. I don't think I experience a feeling of conflict nor a feeling of dominion when I encounter the sublimity of Nature. It is more an uplifting feeling of transcendence: I feel as if I forget and leave behind my ordinary trifles and are invited to the hidden realm of the vast, deep and boundless. I feel as if the sublimity outside in Nature triggers the sublimity deep inside me and creates a kind of tuning experience. Anyway, it is certainly an experience of great freedom and liberation. I think on this account that the aesthetic freedom of the sublime is more a product of harmony than a product of conflict. To wit, I would think that aesthetic freedom is of one and the same kind regardless of whether it is of the sublime or of the beautiful: namely, it is a freedom emerging not from disharmony or conflict but from harmony and accordance. This is the second problem I want to point out in Kant's sublime theory, which is certainly related to his dualistic concept of Nature.

3.3. The Claim of Displeasure-precedence

For Kant, Nature that is esteemed sublime is represented as a source of fear. In regard to this, Kant introduces the following assertion of displeasure-precedence: "[t]he feeling of the sublime is at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and a simultaneously awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with ideas of reason, ... " (CJ 257) That is to say, the conflict between imagination and reason produces a feeling of displeasure first because man is unable, as a phenomenal being, to grasp the magnitude of Nature; it turns into a feeling of pleasure the next moment, because she becomes conscious that man is superior to it as a noumenal being. So, Kant says, "the object is received as sublime with a pleasure that is only possible through the mediation of a displeasure." (CJ 260)

This claim does not seem to me to have any plausible ground. As far as my experiences are concerned, it is not so much fear as awe or limit-breaking openness and freedom that I experience in contemplating the sublimity of Nature. In addition, Kant ascribes the feeling of displeasure to the case of the sublimity of Nature alone. He does not ascribe displeasure to such cases as the sublimity in works of art or of the human form. I do not believe, however, such uniqueness does exist. It seems to me that the aesthetic feeling of the sublime is the same whether it is in art-works, in man, or in Nature. In all these cases, fear or displeasure does not precede. The sublimity of Nature may well provoke a feeling of humility, but not a feeling of humiliation as Kant claims; and the feeling of humility does not produce the feeling of displeasure. Why, then, does Kant make such a problematic assertion of displeasure-precedence to explain the sublime in Nature? It is surely because he has a dualistic concept of Nature, I would think.

3.4. The Morally Good's Immediate Interest in the Beauty of Nature

Kant maintains that taking an immediate interest in the beauty of Nature is always a mark of a morally good soul. Why is this so? His argument is as follows:

> We have a faculty of judgment which is merely aesthetic . . . . We have also a faculty of intellectual judgment for the mere forms of practical maxims . . . . The pleasure or displeasure in the former judgment is called that of taste, the latter is called that of the moral

> feeling. But now, reason is further interested in ideas (for which in our moral feeling it brings about an immediate interest) having also objective reality. That is to say, it is of interest to reason that Nature should at least show a trace or give a hint that it contains in itself some ground or other for assuming a uniform accordance of its product with our wholly disinterested delight (a delight which we cognize a priori as a law for everyone without being able to ground it upon proofs.) That being so, reason must take an interest in every manifestation on the part of Nature of some such accordance. Hence the mind cannot reflect on the beauty of Nature without at the same time finding its interest engaged. But this interest is akin to the moral. One, then, who takes such an interest in the beautiful in Nature can only do so in so far as he has previously set his interest deep in the foundations of the morally good. On these grounds we have reason for presuming the presence of at least the germ of a good moral disposition in the case of a man to whom the beauty of Nature is a matter of immediate interest ... and the analogy in which the pure judgment of taste that without relying upon any interest, gives us a feeling of delight, and at the same time represents it a priori as proper to mankind in general, stands to the moral judgment that does just the same from concepts, is one which, without any clear, subtle, and deliberate reflection, conduces to a like immediate interest being taken in the objects of the former judgment as in those of the latter -- with this one difference, that the interest in the first case is free, while in the latter it is one founded on objective laws. (CJ 300-301)

In other words, the moral feelings of a good soul and the aesthetic experience have similarity in that both of them are totally disinterested. This disinterestedness of the morally good is a reason why they have an immediate interest in the beauty of Nature. Interestingly, however, Kant does not include the sublimity of Nature here. As Kant himself says, it is not only the beautiful but also the sublime that evokes the 'disinterested pleasure' in the aesthetic experience. Then, why does he exclude the sublimity of Nature in this argument?

Moreover, Kant further argues, moral knowledge is presupposed by the feelings of the sublime. So, if we say of someone that he fails to appreciate the sublime, we assume that he also lacks moral sensitivity: "just as we taunt a man who is quite unappreciative when forming an estimate of an object of

Nature in which we see beauty, with want of taste, so we say of a man who remains unaffected in the presence of what we consider sublime, that he has no feeling (that is, the moral feeling)." (CJ 265) If such is the case, there has to be still less grounds to confine the immediate interest of the morally good to 'the beauty of Nature' alone and exclude 'the sublimity of Nature.' The better a soul is in moral respect, the more immediate interest he must have in the sublimity of Nature. In other words, I think it is far more coherent to say that it is the aesthetic experience of 'Nature' rather than 'beauty of Nature' that the morally good has an immediate interest in.

Will it be the case that Kant fails to see the incoherency in his claim? I do not know. I'm certain however that it is also a corollary of his dualistic concept of Nature. That is to say, Kant cannot but exclude the sublimity of Nature because sublimity does not reside in any of the things of Nature, but only in human mind, according to his theory of the sublime. He even claims that sublimity is an instance of 'the pathetic fallacy': the feeling of the sublime in Nature is respect for our own vocation, which we attribute to an object of Nature by a certain subreption (CJ 257). The morally good, then, cannot or must not have an immediate interest in the sublime in Nature. For such an interest would be eventually an interest in himself, a kind of self-absorption, which contradicts the morally good's virtuous character. It is on this account, I think, that Kant has to exclude 'the sublimity of Nature' in the argument.

I've shown in this section that Kant's dualistic concept of Nature has a direct connection with various problematic assertions and flaws in his theory of the sublime in Nature. What will happen to these problems if one takes the non-dualistic concept of Nature, then? I will show in the next section that these problems will be resolved successfully or do not arise at all in the non-dualistic concept of Nature.

4. Solution of the Problems

I will elaborate now how the problems in Kant's sublimity theory can be resolved in the non-dualistic framework.

4.1. Aesthetic Pleasure

Let us start from the problem of aesthetic pleasure, first. My point was as follows. Kant claims that aesthetic pleasure in the sublime as well as in the beautiful has the characteristic of disinterestedness. But, if Kant's theory of sublimity is correct, we can hardly expect 'disinterestedness' in the case of

the sublime in Nature. For its aesthetic pleasure does not originate from the same source as that of the beautiful: in the case of the beautiful, the pleasure originates from harmony of the two mental faculties (imagination and understanding); but in the case of the sublime, the pleasure originates from dominion of reason over imagination after conflicts. While it stands to reason to claim that the harmonious state of mind has the characteristic of disinterestedness, it does not stand to reason, in my view, to claim that the conflicting state of mind has the characteristic of disinterestedness. Every conflict causes a struggle. In other words, I would think that Kant contradicts himself when he claims that the aesthetic pleasure issuing from the sublimity of Nature has the characteristic of disinterestedness.

According to the non-dualistic concept of Nature, however, such a contradiction does not arise. Nature is basically neither inferior nor superior to man. For the Taoist, *Tao* runs, as the ultimate reality, through both man and Nature. For Spinoza, both man and Nature (as *Natura Naturata*) are the modes of God or Nature (as *Natura Naturans*). In other words, both man and Nature are manifestations of the one and the same reality, *Tao* for the Taoist and God for Spinoza. Kant's theory of sublimity that presupposes superiority of man to Nature does not fit in here. In other words, the Kantian conflict between man and Nature does not have its proper place in this framework. On the contrary, it may better be described as a kind of attraction than conflict that is expected between man, especially the morally good man as Kant puts it, and Nature, because, as the old saying goes, like attracts like. Where attraction exists, harmony is to follow as a rule. And the pleasure one experiences in the sublimity of Nature is bound to be 'disinterested' because a personal interest does not exist in such a harmonious state. That is to say, whereas the claim that the aesthetic pleasure (both in the beautiful and in the sublime) has a characteristic of disinterestedness encounters a problem of incoherency in the dualistic concept of Nature, it does not in the non-dualistic concept of Nature.

4.2. Displeasure Precedence

Similarly, Kant's problematic assertion of displeasure-precedence disappears in the non-dualistic concept of Nature. Since there is no opposition or conflict between man and Nature, there isn't any ground for man to feel displeasure in the face of the sublimity of Nature. The feeling may be better put as awe or reverence than displeasure or fear as I mentioned earlier. For Nature is greater than man at least in that it does not impair its beauty and sublimity

with something like an egotistical vanity or selfish desires as man frequently does. In short, the problematic assertion of displeasure-precedence disappears in the non-dualistic framework.

4.3. Aesthetic Freedom

Let us consider the problem of freedom now. To summarize, there are two different concepts of freedom in Kant: one is the freedom found in his aesthetics of the beautiful and the other is the freedom found in his ethics and his aesthetics of the sublime in Nature. The former originates from harmony; the latter from conflict.

My objection was that one did not seem to encounter such a radical difference of aesthetic freedom in between the case of the beautiful and that of the sublime. As far as my experience is concerned, I certainly do not see such a radical difference. I experience more or less a similar feeling of freedom. I explained previously how this seemingly awkward claim was also connected with his concept of Nature. Since Kant believed that man was certainly superior to Nature he could not ascribe the sublimity to Nature. Instead, the sublimity was thought to be an attribute of man, not of Nature. All the same, Kant could not still deny the fact that Nature did look greater than man at least in appearance. Faced with this dilemma, Kant had to distinguish between freedom of the sublime and freedom of the beautiful. But I do not think it is a correct or sound explanation of the phenomena.

If we view Nature from a different angle, i.e., the non-dualistic standpoint, this problem does not arise. Since man and Nature are essentially of the same root, or since man is neither inferior nor superior to Nature, man does not need to feel any tension facing Nature. That is to say, no room is made for conflict. The sublimity can be an attribute of Nature as well as of man. Consequently, the aesthetic freedom in contemplating the sublimity of Nature has its root in consonance and empathy rather than in conflict and subsequent dominion of man over Nature as in Kant. In other words, freedom in the sublime is essentially not different from freedom in the beautiful in this view, and the Kantian problem related to freedom does not arise, to begin with.

4.4. The Morally Good's Immediate Interest in Nature

Let us move now to the question of the morally good's immediate interest. I've explained previously that Kant's claim that the morally good had an immediate interest in the 'beauty of Nature' but not in the 'sublimity of

Nature' was an awkward position. It seems to me that the sublimity of Nature is, when viewed from an aesthetic point of view, as much, if not more, an object of the morally good's immediate interest as the beauty of Nature. Why, then, does Kant take such an awkward position of excluding the sublimity of Nature from the argument? It is because his sublime theory did not permit this, I would think.

According to Kant, it was the 'accordance' between the beautiful objects in Nature and the mental states of the morally good that made the latter to have an immediate interest in the former. That is to say, the beautiful as the origin of the disinterested pleasure is in 'accordance' with the disinterested mental state of the morally good. The accordance is not supposed to be found, however, in the case of the sublime because Nature cannot be an object of the sublime. In other words, since Kant, as dualist, thought that the sublimity did not reside in Nature but in man alone, he could not but exclude the sublime aspect of Nature when he explained the relationship between the morally good and Nature.

In the non-dualistic view of Nature, however, the sublimity exists not only in man but also in Nature. When it is said that the morally good have an immediate interest in Nature, 'Nature' includes its sublime aspect as well as its beautiful aspect. That is to say, the argument changes like this: the morally good have an immediate interest in Nature because the beauty and sublimity of their mental states find accordance and harmony in the beauty and sublimity of Nature.

5. Conclusion

There are two different ways man relates himself to Nature, dualistically or non-dualistically. The dualist like Kant believes that man is to be distinguished from Nature because man alone possesses reason and thus is superior to Nature. The non-dualists like the Taoist and Spinoza assert, however, that it is in principle wrong to draw a line of demarcation between man and Nature because both are manifestations of the one and the same reality.

I've attempted in this essay to seek for a more adequate and coherent concept of Nature. In order to do this, I've carefully examined and shown that Kant's sublimity theory of Nature has various problems, that they are closely connected with his dualistic concept of Nature, and that those problems can be resolved successfully or do not arise at all if one takes the non-dualistic concept of Nature. By doing so, I've proved indirectly that the non-dualists'

understanding of Nature is more coherent and adequate. I believe that we can expect similar consequences in other areas of human experiences. Aesthetic experience is just one example I've shown in this essay.

Abbreviations

References to the primary texts are given directly in the main body of my essay, and references to the secondary literatures are given in the footnotes.

The primary texts and abbreviations used in Kant sections are:
Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (1929), St. Martin's Press: New York.
Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, trans. by H. J. Paton (1964), Harper & Row, Publishers: New York.
Critique of Judgment (Part I & II), trans. by James Creed Meredith (1952), Clarendon Press: Oxford.

CPR *Critique of Pure Reason*
A A edition
B B edition
Gr *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*
CJ *Critique of Judgment*

e.g., (CPR A261/B317) *Critique of Pure Reason*, A edition, p. 261 / B edition, p. 317.

The primary text in the Taoist section is the work of Lao Tzu, the title of which is well known as *Tao Te Ching*. The English translation I used for it is "Wang Pi's Commentary on Lao Tzu," trans. by Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Sandra A. Wawrytko (1989) in monograph.
e.g., (L 1) Lao Tzu, Chapter 1.

The primary text in the Spinoza section is *Ethics*, trans. by Samuel Shirley (1982), *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. The abbreviations employed are as follows:

D Definition
P Proposition
C Corollary
S Scholium

e.g., (II P16 S) *Ethics*, Chapter II, Proposition 16, Scholium.

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