



Sublime Understanding: Aesthetic Reflection in Kant and Hegel (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought)

Kirk Pillow

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The topic of the sublime is making a return to contemporary discourse on aesthetics and cognition. In *Sublime Understanding*, Kirk Pillow makes sublimity the center of an alternative conception of aesthetic response and interpretation. He draws an aesthetics of sublimity from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, bolsters it with help from Hegel, and establishes its place in a broadened conception of human understanding (thus differing from the many scholars who use Hegel to dismiss Kant or vice versa). He argues that sublime reflection provides a model for an interpretive response to the uncanny Other outside our conceptual grasp; it advances our sense-making pursuits but eschews unified, conceptual determination. Thus "sublime understanding" is the always partial, indeterminate grasping of contextual wholes through which we make sense of the uncanny particular in both art and the lived world. The book is divided into three parts. In the first two parts, Pillow presents insightful reinterpretations of Kant's and Hegel's aesthetics. In the third part he develops his own model of an aestheticized understanding, which illuminates contemporary discussions of metaphor and interpretation, while bridging Anglo-American and continental treatments of these issues. The presentation is a model of clear and well-crafted exposition, exemplifying the practice of aesthetically reflective sublime understanding that it articulates.

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