

COOCH BEHAR PANCHANAN BARMA UNIVERSITY COOCH BEHAR

B.A. HONOURS IN ENGLISH

UNDER CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM

B.A. HONOURS IN ENGLISH: 5TH SEMESTER

LONGINUS' IDEA OF THE SUBLIME

Q. Make an analysis on LONGINUS' IDEA OF THE SUBLIME

Longinus defines sublime as a kind of loftiness and excellence in language raising the style of the ordinary language. Sublimity springs from a great and lofty soul, thereby becoming "one echo of a great soul". It should not only be distinct and excellent in composition but also move the readers along with the effects of pleasure and persuasion. Such effects should be subtle, flashing at the right moment, scattering everything before it like a thunder bolt and at once displaying the power of plentitude. In this sense, sublime is lofty and excellent poetic creation with power to please, persuade and move the readers through the upliftment of their souls. Sublimity is thus the aesthetic upliftment of the soul through the reconciliation of the poetic inspiration and rhetorical mastery of the writers. Longinus believes that sublimity is achieved by a deft handling of Nature and Art, which is inborn genius and learned skills. The five sources he mentions for the sublime are either related to author or poem. In the course of dealing with the sources of the sublime, Longinus even differentiates true sublime between false sublime.

Power of forming great conceptions: It is concerned with the grandeur of thought in writers and is the first essential source of sublime. Lofty and natural expression is possible when there are noble and lofty thoughts. Such elevating thoughts that remain as the "echo of great soul" are possible when the author has power of forming great conceptions. Mean and ignorable thoughts can never energise a lofty utterance. The great thoughts come from the imagination of a great creative genius and from a sound interpretation of the imitation of nature and of the great predecessors.

Vehement and inspired passion: The second source of sublime is the genuine emotion. The emotion should be strong and natural expressed in lofty and elevated language so that it can move the readers with pleasure and persuasion. It should match with the grandeur of subject, thought and lofty style.

The due formation and use of figures of speech: The third source of sublime is the poetic use of language. The formation and use of figures boost the elevated expression if they

are properly used. Such a use of figures should not be mechanical and forceful. They should be used genuinely and as per the demands of the contextual environment. Longinus deals with some major figures of speech- to him; the proper use of rhetorical question makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. In short, the use of figures must be physical and intimately connected with thoughts and emotions.

Noble diction: The fourth source of sublime is diction that includes choice and arrangement of words. Longinus says that the use of proper and striking words enthrall (hold attention) the hearers. The words, to him, should be noble corresponding to the subject matter and emotion, so as to impart grandeur and beauty, giving breath in to dead things.

Dignified and elevated composition: The last source of sublime is the dignified and elevated arrangement of the diction for the grandeur of composition. The verbal order should be rhythmic and harmonious which helps pull off persuasion and pleasure. Such a composition appeals to the soul and enables the readers to participate in the emotions of the author. Similarly, while discussing the sources of true sublime, Longinus also deals with the factors of the false sublime. To him, the vices of the sublime emerge out of the lack of passion sincerely and inadequacy of communication caused by faulty techniques. The following factors are described to mention how they cause sublime to be false:

Conceit of turgidity: It is a type of timidity or bombasting use of language, which he thinks, is drier than dropsy.

Puerility: The use of puerility spoils the sublimity. It is a pedantic type of conceit adding to a pompous and frigid style.

Parentheses: It is a passion out of place and meaning, where there is no cause for passion or unrestrained where restraint is needed. Here unrestrained passion does not make sublime for the greatness of soul, place, manner, occasion, and purposes are essential.

Defects of style: The false sublimity even arises out of the defeats of style, especially when sincerity is sidelined in favor of the craze for fashionable style. Here, he suggests that the same elements of true sublime may obstruct and cause false sublime if they are not well handled by virtue of nature and sincerity.

At last to Longinus, the form and content should bring about equilibrium. The hierarchical composition can never be sublime as an art showing a beautiful cock in the mid- ocean can never be natural and pleasing.