

BEAUTY¹

by Raffaele Torella

Avant que d'entrer dans la recherche difficile de l'origine du beau, je remarquerai d'abord, avec tous les auteurs qui en ont écrit, que par une sorte de fatalité, les choses dont on parle le plus parmi les hommes, sont assez ordinairement celles qu'on connaît le moins; et que telle est entre beaucoup d'autres, la nature du beau. Tout le monde raisonne du beau: on l'admire dans les ouvrages de la nature: on l'exige dans les productions des Arts: on accorde ou l'on refuse cette qualité à tout moment ; cependant si l'on demande aux hommes du goût le plus sûr et le plus exquis, quelle est son origine, sa nature, sa notion précise, sa véritable idée, son exacte définition; si c'est quelque chose d'absolu ou de relatif; s'il y a un beau essentiel, éternel, immuable, règle et modèle du beau subalterne; ou s'il en est de la beauté comme des modes: on voit aussitôt les sentiments partagés; et les uns avouent leur ignorance, les autres se jettent dans le scepticisme. Comment se fait-il que presque tous les hommes soient d'accord qu'il y a un beau; qu'il y en ait tant entr'eux qui le sentent vivement où il est, et que si peu sachent ce que c'est?²

¹ Helmut was my guest at Rocca Priora for a few, very pleasant, days. We alternated walks on the hills nearby, full of pre-Roman historical remains, food preparation at home, endless talks on the most varied subjects. A recurring one was beauty (to be honest, particularly female

² [Before delving deeper into the difficult research that the origin of the *beautiful* is, I would first bring to the attention, with all the authors who wrote on the subject, that by a sort of fatality, the topics most addressed among men are rather ordinarily these least known to them; and that such is, among many others, the lot of the *beautiful* . Everybody reasons about the *beautiful* : it is admired in Nature's works: it is demanded in the production of Arts: its quality is conferred or denied at any time; however, if one were to ask men with the surest and most exquisite taste what the origin of the beautiful is, or its nature, its precise notion, its true idea, its exact definition; whether it is something absolute or relative; whether there is an essential, eternal, unchanging *beautiful* that would be the rule and the model for a subaltern beautiful; or whether it is for *beauty* as it is with fashions: one would witness different feelings; and ones would confess they know nothing of the matter, others would throw themselves in skepticism.

(D. Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, s.v. 'beau')

καλεπὰ τὰ καλὰ “Beautiful thinks are difficult”

(Plato, *Hippias Maior*)

After outlining his very refined and 'aristocratic' view of the path to liberation according to non-dual Śaivism, with a certain discouragement Abhinavagupta adds:

ketakīkusumasaurabhe bhṛṣaṃ bhṛṅga eva rasiko na makṣikā |
bhairavīyaparamādvayārcane ko 'pi rajyati maheśacoditaḥ ||

By the smell of the *ketakī* flower only the tasteful bee is attracted, not the flies. Analogously, only some very special (*ko 'pi*) man, driven by the supreme Lord, might feel attraction to the supremely non-dual worship of Bhairava. (TĀ IV.276)

Here, almost casually, one more element has been added to the portrait of the ideal recipient of these teachings: he must be '*rasika*', that is, aesthetically sensitive, or to use a cognate term, which holds a central position in the philosophic and aesthetic thought of Abhinavagupta, *sahṛdaya* (lit. 'endowed with heart').³ This 'aesthetic susceptibility' (Rastogi 2016: 142) is linked to *camatkāra* 'inner deep savouring', another key term of Abhinavagupta's philosophy, and prior to him, of Utpaladeva's, being in its turn the ultimate root of any *vimarśa* 'reflective awareness' by which the knowing subject appropriates the object.⁴ This aesthetic attitude is not limited to the sphere of art, but is expected to embrace life itself in its entirety.⁵ This is well

How is it that almost all men agree that there is a *beautiful* ; that some of them can experience it strongly where it lies, yet so few know what it actually is?] (transl. Bonin 2016)

³ On *sahṛdaya* and cognate terms see Gnoli 1968: XLIII-XLIV; Masson-Patwardhan 1985: 78; Smith 1985: 46; Cuneo 2013: 64-65; Rastogi 2016: 142, 160, etc. Cf. the beautiful definition given by Abhinavagupta in TĀ III.209cd-210. Less common, but also important, is the other meaning of the term: "sharing the heart with ...".

⁴ Once again Utpaladeva proves to be the very centre of Pratyabhijñā philosophy. The centrality of *camatkāra*, usually associated to Abhinavagupta's aesthetic and philosophic teaching, had already been established by Utpaladeva: *Vṛtti* on ĪPK I.5.11 "In the absence of this reflective awareness, light, though objects make it assume different forms, would merely be 'limpid', but not sentient, since there is no 'inner deep savouring' (*camatkrter abhāvāt*)"; cf. Torella 2002: 118 (with changes).

⁵ Ali 2004: 193 "[...] the assumption in courtly circles was that *rasa* was experienced by men and women of rank not merely in art but in their worldly dealings - that the capacity to experience *rasa* was a way of experiencing the affective world around them. [...] In short, the *rasika* was at once a moral and aesthetic category. [...] *Rasa* was a sort of 'meta-disposition' which aestheticised every aspect of an individual's experience"; Cuneo 2013: 52 "On the other

expressed in Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, independently of Abhinavagupta whom he never quotes.⁶

Aesthetic experience achieves the uneasy task of making one accept and deeply taste the emotional lines of everyday life, while at same time creating a feeling of ineffable distance from them with the result of preventing the subject from being overwhelmed by them.⁷ On many an occasion, Abhinava carefully distinguishes aesthetic experience from religious experience (see below) - the latter allegedly belonging to a higher order - but at the same time he includes aesthetic experience (*rasāsvāda* is 'similar' to *brahmāsvāda*⁸) in a wider horizon with respect to mere rejoicing for an intense poem or a moving theatrical representation: as he acutely remarks, *rasa* manifests itself as 'fluidity, dilatation, expansion', is a state of 'intensification' (see below). In a crucial passage,⁹ Abhinavagupta sharply distinguishes aesthetic gustation both from emotions we experience in everyday life and from yogic perception (in its turn divided into lower and higher). Here we are finally confronted with the theme at issue in this paper: what is essentially present in aesthetic gustation and essentially missing in every day emotions, and in yogic cognition as well, is 'beauty' (*saundarya*).

But what is beauty? Seeking for help in defining beauty one is immediately reminded of the famous article by Ingalls (1962), which however sets out with a caveat: "There is no word in

hand, Abhinavagupta uses the term *rasa* having especially in mind the idea of 'extract' or 'essence', in the sense that the aesthetic experience is, in other words, the sublimated counterpart of ordinary experience". A similar atmosphere is that of the roughly coeval Heian period in medieval Japan, aptly depicted by Ivan Morris (1964: 205): "The 'rules of taste' applied not only to the formal arts but to nearly every aspect of the lives of the upper classes in the capital. It was central to Heian Buddhism, making [...] religion into an art and art into a religion." This attitude, outlined in the Trika literature, will become central in later thinkers, like Rūpagosvāmi and Viśvanātha (Gerow 1977: 285)

⁶ Cf. Raghavan 1963: 466 "[...] this is an attribute referring to some excellence in man's personality which goes to make up the grace that distinguishes his behaviour in society from that of another who is called Nīrasa. This quality which makes Rasikas of men must be one single Rasa and cannot differ with each man. If analysed, it is found to be the very Ego of man himself [...]"

⁷ A "disengaged engagement", as Pollock aptly puts it (2010: 155). This may remind us of the power of the 'vague' in Giacomo Leopardi's thought and poetry, where the indefinite is seen as a kind of surrogate of the infinite for those who are still trodding through human paths: "(472) *Non solo la facoltà conoscitiva, o quella di amare, ma neanche l'immaginativa è capace dell'infinito, o di concepire infinitamente, ma solo dell'indefinito, e di concepire indefinitamente. La qual cosa ci diletta perché l'anima non vedendo i confini, riceve l'impressione di una specie d'infinità, e confonde l'indefinito coll'infinito [...]*" (Leopardi 1937: 382). ["(472) Neither the faculty of knowledge, nor that of love, nor even that of the imagination is capable of infinity, or of conceiving infinitely, but only of the indefinite and of conceiving indefinitely. Something delights us because our soul, unable to see any limits, receives the impression of a kind of infinity, and confuses the indefinite with the infinite [...]."] (M. Caesar, D'Intino F. transl. 2013: 266)

⁸ However, the term *āsvāda* is common to both of them. The first to make this statement was Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, followed also in this by Abhinavagupta (Gnoli 1968: 48, note 1; Cuneo 2008-9, II: 283, note 217). See also Cuneo 2008-9, I: 65, note 19.

⁹ For a discussion of this problematic passage and its translations see Appendix.

Sanskrit for the English word ‘beauty’ ” (p. 87). This is followed by a few remarks worth taking into consideration, however problematic some of them may seem:

“Many of the foregoing particulars may be explained by realizing that the Indians never developed a Platonic division of the universe into beautiful and non-beautiful. It has been the fashion in Europe for two and a half thousand years to assign everything to one or another of these mutually exclusive classes, just as we assign everything to either good or bad.”(p. 106) “It has no word for spiritual beauty; it speaks instead of spiritual truth” (p. 107). “In Western civilization it follows from the all-inclusive nature of the classes beauty and non-beauty that those classes have been assigned high meta-physical importance. And the realists among us, who have usually been stronger than the nominalists, have reified and objectified beauty as though it were something quite apart from the men on whom it works: a power high above us, as unitary and permanent as truth. This of course is nonsense, but it has been deeply felt and has had its effect on our language. Such notions have played no part in Sanskrit. Beauty is conceived by the Sanskrit poet far more subjectively than in the west. His words for beauty are words for something he himself reacts to and that would be impossible without the reaction. Indeed, the very same word is sometimes used for both power and reaction. Since beauty is conceived of so subjectively it is also thought of, by most Sanskrit authors at least, as multifarious, residing in many objects, appealing in different ways to many men. And so it is not permanent. Finally, since the fashion in Indian philosophy in the classical period was for monism, it will be apparent that to authors who were philosophically inclined it must have seemed that there was something unreal about beauty.” (p. 107)

A FEW WORDS ON BEAUTY IN THE WEST

We can start our inquiry with the acknowledgment that in most of early western aesthetic speculation beauty is considered as a feature of the object, which may be either present or not. Its presence may generate love, desire, appreciation in the onlooker, stimulate in him a wish for appropriation or even mere contemplation, or, more in general, act as a dynamizing factor. If we turn to the question that very naturally comes next – in what does such ‘beauty’ consist? – we are facing with a sense of impotence, well outlined in the passage from Denis Diderot’s entry ‘beau’ in the *Encyclopédie*, put in exergo:

*Comment se fait-il que presque tous les hommes soient d’accord qu’il y a un beau; qu’il y en ait tant entr’eux qui le sentent vivement où il est, et que si peu sachent ce que c’est ?*¹⁰

One of the oldest replies - Pythagoreans, Plato, Aristoteles, Stoics, etc. (with slight variations) - links beauty to symmetry and harmony of the various parts of the object, thus giving prominence to the visual and auditory faculties of the subject.¹¹ Plato (and after him Plotinus,

¹⁰ Or, as M. Mendelssohn (1729-1786) put it: “Beauty vanishes away as soon as we try to analyze it” (cf. De Wulf 1909: 447). Hume 1768: 259: “To seek the real beauty, or real deformity is as fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter”.

¹¹ Renaissance thinkers, like Marsilio Ficino, even inclined to link beauty to sight alone (Tatarkiewicz 1980: 122). On the primacy of sight and hearing as aesthetic senses see also

Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, etc.) is keen on saying that appreciation of the beauty of manifested world is only the first step for tuning with higher spiritual beauty.

Beginning from obvious beauties he must for the sake of that highest beauty be ever climbing aloft, as on the rungs of a ladder, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; from personal beauty he proceeds to beautiful observances, from observance to beautiful learning, and from learning at last to that particular study which is concerned with the beautiful itself and that alone; so that in the end he comes to know [211d] the very essence of beauty. In that state of life above all others, my dear Socrates,' said the Mantinean woman,¹² 'a man finds it truly worth while to live, as he contemplates essential beauty. (*Symposium* 211c-d, transl. Fowler 1925)

The so-called objectivist thesis is well represented by Thomas Aquinas' statement: "Something is not beautiful because we love it, but rather we love it because it is beautiful" (Tatarkiewicz 1980: 132). Well known is his statement in the *Summa Theologiae* regarding the components of beauty: "In fact, three conditions are required for beauty. First, wholeness or completeness [...]; second, due proportion or harmony; and then, clarity [...]"¹³ Starting from XIV c. the 'objectivist' thesis started to fade: beauty is a too complex and subjective concept to lend itself to whatsoever definition. As Hume says in his essay *Of the standard of taste* (1768: 259): "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty." One of the most widespread expressions used to 'define' beauty, being in fact a non-definition, comes to be the famous *nescio quid* found in Petrarch's work, probably derived in turn from the *Confessiones* of St. Augustin. The term soon started enjoying a widespread fortune first with the Italian '*non so che*', quickly followed by the French '*Je ne sais quoi*' (cf. Montesquieu 1831: 82-86) and English 'I know not what'.¹⁴ Parallel to the eclipse of the objectivist thesis was the progressive eclipse of the primacy of visual and auditory senses as aesthetic faculties in respect to a more intimate and ineffable sense - taste - along with related terms, like gustation,¹⁵ etc. Of taste, one of the most

Abhinavagupta's PTV p. 202. According to Abhinavagupta, in this sharing the general *alamkāraśāstra* view (cf. Gnoli 1985: 31 note 88), only visual and auditive objects lend themselves to the 'generalization' presupposed by the aesthetic experience, while the objects of the other senses do not possess such dynamic power, since they are bound to "implode in themselves" (*svātmany evocchalanāt*). It is to be noted that in other contexts Abhinavagupta (and Śaiva religious speculation in general) extends such power also to the other senses, taking their more intimate and less 'public' nature as a specially effective means to free the self from its limitations (see e.g. *Vijñānabhairava-tantra*, *Spandakārikā* and *Svabodhodayamañjarī*).

¹² The "Mantinean woman" (or to be more precise "the Mantinean stranger" [ξένη] is of course Diotima).

¹³ *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 39, a. 8 *Nam ad pulchritadem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem, integritas sive perfectio [...]. Et debita proportio sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas [...].*

¹⁴ On the history of *non so che/je ne sais quoi* see Croce 1922: 219-223; Scholar 2005.

¹⁵ Cf. Agamben 2017: 24: "It is Campanella, too, who in the preface to *Metafisica* (1638) opposes a form of knowledge by *tactum intrinsecum in magna suavitate* [inward touch of great sweetness] to reason, 'that is almost an arrow through which we reach towards a faraway target without tasting it [*absque gusto*]." See also Agamben 2017: 31: "Let us now examine the other face of this excessive sense: the beautiful which constitutes its object. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatises we find the latter constituted, in a perfectly symmetrical manner to

elegant and insightful definitions is due to Montesquieu in his *Essai sur le goût* (1831: 63-64): “Mais le goût naturel n’est pas une connoissance de théorie; c’est une application prompte et exquise des règles mêmes que l’on ne connoît pas.” [“But natural taste is not a theoretical cognition; it is the quick and exquisite application of the rules themselves that [however] we do not know”]. More or less the same happens with Indian aesthetic terminology, where terms like *rasa*, *camatkāra*, *āsvāda*, *carvaṇā* abound, this making V. Raghavan nicely speak of a derivation from the Pākaśāstra ‘science of cooking’ (Raghavan 1973: 293). These cursory remarks about the concept of beauty in the West only aim at preparing us some way to the highly original position held by Abhinava. In this connection, we should add a few words concerning one of the deepest and most influential thinkers on the subject – Plotinus -, who in some respects looks rather close to Abhinavagupta. According to the testimony of Porphyrius, the oldest treatise in his *Enneads* was precisely that *On Beauty* (Περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ), which now occupies the position I.6.¹⁶ For Plotinus, beauty is in everything (but is not perceived by all; cf. *Ennead* V.5.12). In a sense, it is the only principle in the multiform manifested universe enabling us to perceive its interconnection as the manifestation of the One.¹⁷ “Sensible beauty” says Margaret Miles “provides the impetus and the energy for a deeper and more concentrated look, not beyond, but within visible beauties, for they are an image of the great beauty” (Miles 1999: 37). The beauty of things (καλόν, κάλλος) acts as a device to ascend to the ‘hyper-beautiful’ (ὑπέρκαλος I.8.2; ὑπέρκαλον V.8.8, VI.7.33)¹⁸ of the Spirit (νοῦς, the first manifestation of the One).¹⁹ This culminates with *De divinis nominibus* by Pseudo-Dionysius Aeropagite, where one of the names of God is precisely ‘beautiful’ (καλόν) and ‘beauty’ (κάλλος):

This Good is described by the Sacred Writers as Beautiful and as Beauty, as Love or Beloved, and by all other Divine titles which befit Its beautifying and gracious fairness. [...] But the Super-Essential [Dionysius uses the term ὑπερούσιον] Beautiful is called “Beauty” because of that quality which It imparts to all things severally according to their nature, and because It is the Cause of the harmony and splendour in all things, flashing forth upon them all, like light, the beautifying communications of Its originating ray; and because It summons all things to *fare* unto Itself (from whence It hath the name of “Fairness”), and because It draws all things together in a state of mutual inter penetration. eternally, unvaryingly, unchangeably Beautiful; incapable of birth or death or growth or decay; [...] It is, in Itself and by Itself, uniquely and eternally beautiful, and from

the concept of taste, as an excessive signifier that can neither be adequately perceived by any sense nor produce any knowledge.” About *gusto* see the remarks of Croce 1922: 208-211.

¹⁶ Cf. Miles 1999: 34 “Plotinus began his authorship with the suggestion that no one can adequately understand the world who has not been startled and instructed by its beauty (*Ennead* 1.6). For Plotinus, beauty was not an aesthetic category, in the usual sense of the word. To notice beauty is not to make a judgment about a particular object. To perceive beauty is to experience the universe as gift.”

¹⁷ It is to be noted that Plotinus devoted the entire *Ennead* II to attacking the Gnostics for their contempt of the world and the body.

¹⁸ Plotinus (then followed by Dionysius) uses the rare and archaic word καλλονή (πρώτη) as a designation of the One itself (VI.2.18). See also μέγα κάλλος (I.6.9). Plotinus oscillates between connecting beauty with the Spirit or the One. This crucial point does not make problem in Dionysius, for he makes these two principles merge into the unity of God.

¹⁹ See also *superpulcher* in Thomas Aquinas (derived from Dionysius). This literally coincides with the *atisaundarya* of Śiva (see below).

beforehand It contains in a transcendent manner the originating beauty of everything that is beautiful. For in the simple and supernatural nature belonging to the world of beautiful things, all beauty and all that is beautiful hath its unique and pre-existent Cause. From this Beautiful all things possess their existence, each kind being beautiful in its own manner, and the Beautiful causes the harmonies and sympathies and communities of all things. And by the Beautiful all things are united together and the Beautiful is the beginning of all things, as being the Creative Cause which moves the world and holds all things in existence by their yearning for their own Beauty. And It is the Goal of all things [...] (DN IV.7, transl. Rolt 1920: 61)

Symmetry is not beauty, rather beauty is the light that shines in symmetry:

It is as if it was in the presence of a face which is certainly beautiful, but cannot catch the eye because it has no grace [χάρις] playing upon its beauty.²⁰ So here below also beauty [κάλλος] is what illuminates good proportions [συμμετρία] rather than the good proportions themselves, and this is what is lovable. For why is there more light of beauty on a living face, but only a trace of it on a dead one, even if its flesh and its proportions are not yet wasted away. And are not the more lifelike statues the more beautiful ones, even if the others are better proportioned? And is not an uglier living man more beautiful than the beautiful man in a statue? Yes, because the living is more desirable; and this is because it has soul [...] (VI.7.22, transl. Armstrong 1988: VII.157-9)

The legacy of the teachings of Dionysius on beauty (in his turn greatly indebted to Plotinus) will be - several centuries later and through the Latin translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* made by Johannes Scotus Eriugena in IX c. - fully accepted by Thomas Aquinas (through his master Albertus Magnus), one of whose early works was precisely a detailed and insightful commentary on DN (*In librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus expositio*). Through Thomas Aquinas it will enter into the main stream of medieval philosophy. Beauty is understood as the divine perfection by which God manifest himself in the universe. Being such, beauty is assigned a special anagogic power:²¹ through the experience of beauty the individual can gradually rise to God himself.

BEAUTY IN ABHINAVAGUPTA

Looking for a definition of beauty in Indian culture exposes us to the same sense of discouragement as that expressed by Plato at the very end of his paradoxical *tour de force* in search of what beauty is in the *Hippias Maior*: καλεπὰ τὰ καλά “beautiful things are difficult”²². Not even the monograph by V. Raghavan *The concept of the beautiful in Sanskrit literature* is of much help. (By the way, for the criticism of one of the possible candidates for

²⁰ Cf. the concept of *lāvaṇya* in *Dhvanyāloka* I.4 and *svavṛtti*. On ‘grace’ see Milani 2009.

²¹ The word καλόν (and κάλλος, etc.) is made by Thomas (preceded in this by Dionysius and Plotinus) to derive from καλέω ‘to call’.

²² This ‘*subhāṣita*’, which also occurs in two passages of Plato’s *Republic*, is ascribed by Plutarch to Solon. Apparently, the failure in finding a rational definition of beauty directs Plato towards attempting a more emotional and existential approach, such as that in *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*.

the essence of beauty- *aucitya* ‘appropriateness’, dealt with at length by Raghavan (1973: 214-281) - we can avail ourselves precisely of the arguments that the *Hippias Maior* applies to the cognate concept of *πρέπον*).

The term most used for ‘beauty’ by Abhinavagupta is no doubt *saundarya*,²³ just as the favourite term for Ānandavardhana is *cārutva*, but I looked in vain for a direct definition of *saundarya* in Abhinavagupta’s works. Thus, we are obliged to broaden our search and try to build this missing definition through what are the effects and causes of beauty. Inevitably, the discourse on beauty in Abhinavagupta refers us to aesthetic experience (*rasa*): there is no *rasa* without *saundarya*.²⁴ Such *saundarya*-based aesthetic experience has a more specific qualification than mere ecstatic contemplation: it is a transformative experience. As Abhinavagupta acutely remarks (see below), *rasa* has the capacity of removing from the consciousness of the subject the thick obstruction caused by his innate nescience, and such an experience is in its essence ‘fluidity, dilatation, expansion’,²⁵ is a state of ‘intensification’.²⁶

Once again, let our understanding of the matter be supported by our confronting with Plotinus’ teachings. The destabilising effect caused by the meeting with beauty is poignantly analysed in many a passage of the *Enneads*, among which the following one stands out:

Here are the emotions that must occur whenever there is contact with any sort of beautiful thing: amazement (θάμβος), sweet shock (ἐκπληξιν ἡδεῖαν), longing (πόθον), desire (ἔρωτα), dismay mingled with pleasure (πτόησιν μεθ’ἡδονῆς) (I.6.4, my translation).

“Beauty”, says Plotinus elsewhere (I.5.12), “brings wonder (θάμβος) and shock (ἐκπληξιν) and pleasure mingled with pain (συμμιγῆ τῷ* ἀλγύνοντι ἡδονήν)” (transl. Armstrong 1988:

²³ See the statement discussed in the Appendix: there can be no aesthetic experience whatsoever if there is no beauty (*saundaryaviraha*). On *saundarya* and other words for ‘beauty’ in Sanskrit see Ingalls 1962, Smith 2010.

²⁴ Another essential ingredient is pleasure: “[...] for the compact light made of relishing one’s own consciousness has bliss as its essence”. Cf. AbhBh vol. I p. 276 *tatra sarve ’mī [rasāḥ] sukhapradhānāḥ, svasaṃviccarvaṇarūpasyaikaghanasya prakāśasyānandasāratvāt*. Ibid. *ity ānandarūpatā sarvarasānām*.

²⁵ AbhBh vol. I, p. 271 *raso ’nubhavasmrtyādivilakṣaṇena [...] drutivistāravikāsalakṣaṇena [...] bhogena paraṃ bhujyate*. Cf. Gnoli 1968: 47. In fact, the concepts of *druti-vistāra-vikāsa* come from Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka whose relevant passage is quoted (or paraphrased) in full by Abhinavagupta in his *Locana* on DhĀ II.4 (p. 83); later in the commentary on the same stanza, he refines this conception by saying that the mention only of these three experiences cannot be accepted, for they are in fact numberless (p. 85 *sattvādīnāṃ cāṅgāṅgibhāvavaicitrya-syānāntyād drutyādītenāsvādagaṇanā na yuktā* “But it is wrong to think that the varieties of relishing are fully enumerated by melting, expansion and radiance, because there are innumerable possible variations on account of the endless variety [of human character] created by the varying degrees of predominance among the components of character, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.” (transl. Ingalls (ed.) 1990: 226) On the ‘fortune’ of the *druti-vistāra-vikāsa* conception see Ingalls (ed.) 1990: 228, note 15; Gnoli 1968: 46-47.

²⁶ AbhBh vol. I, p. 274 *eṣaiva copacāyāvasthāstu* (Gnoli em.: Ed °*vasthāsu*) *deśādyaniyantraṇāt*.

V.193). In the same vein, many centuries later Rilke will say:²⁷ “*Denn das Schöne is nichts / als des Schrecklichen Anfang, der wir noch grade ertragen*” [For beauty is nothing but the terror’s beginning, that which we can still bear]. Another passage from Rilke, this time the close of *Archaischer Torso Apollos* (“*Du musst dein Leben ändern*” [You must change your life])²⁸ is behind Gadamer’s considerations in one of his latest writings, referring in particular to artistic beauty :

The work of art that says something confronts us with ourselves. That is, it expresses something in such a way that what is said is like a discovery, a disclosure of something previously concealed. The element of being struck is based on this. “So true, so filled with being” [*So wahr, so seiend*] is not something one knows in any other way. Everything familiar is eclipsed. To understand what the work of art says to us is therefore a self-encounter. But as an encounter with the authentic, as a familiarity that includes surprise, the experience of art is *experience* in a real sense and must master ever anew the task that experience involves: the task of integrating it into the whole of one’s own orientation to the world and one’s own self- understanding. [...] The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and demolishing of the familiar. It is not only the impact of a “This means you!” [“Das bist du!”] that is disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us: “You must change your life!” (Gadamer 2007: 129-131)

Likewise, Abhinava attributes to aesthetic experience a transformative power, in that it is able to create a crack in the wall of everyday life thus opening the way to liberation.²⁹ The following passage of the AbhBh, representing in fact the position of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka that Abhinava makes his own, is very explicit: “Aesthetic experience (*rasa*) [in poetry or theatre] is realised by a capacity of evocation being the agent of removing from the consciousness of the subject the thick obstruction caused by his innate delusion (*bhāvakatvayāpāreṇa* [...] *nibīḍanijamohasaṃkātātānivāriṇā*; AbhBh vol. I p. 271). Thus, the experience of beauty as a means to evade from *saṃsāra* is put essentially on the same plane as the explosion of any human emotions, according to the teaching especially of the already mentioned *Vijñānabhairava-tantra*, *Spandakārikā*, and *Svabodhodayamañjarī* (Torella 2000).

Emotional states, whether sexual excitement or fright, joy or terror, not only should not be obliterated, any more than they should be merely accepted, but they should also be cultivated, skilfully intensified, and then exploded and spread in order to create subtle rents in the veil of ordinary existence, through which we can make contact with the magma of universal consciousness/energy. (Torella 2015: 68)

So far we have attempted to put up with the lack of a definition of beauty by investigating the nature of its effects. A valuable additional help could come from delving into its cause(s). However, since the texts do not show either any direct indication of what are the cause(s) of its coming into being, we have to make do with what are the causes of its absence. This subject is dealt with in an emblematic passage of the AbhBh, whose philological and hermeneutical

²⁷ *Duineser Elegien*, I.4-5.

²⁸ From *Neue Gedichte*.

²⁹ The theme of ‘aesthetic shock’ in India has been treated (in fact, in a quite cursory and disappointing way) in Coomaraswami 1943.

problems will be treated in the Appendix. There are three possible causes of the absence of beauty (*saundaryaviraha*), each of them characterizing ordinary emotional experience, lower yogic perception and higher yogic perception, respectively. They are: 1) The arising of a painful urge for appropriation, avoidance, etc. occurring in ordinary emotions; 2) non-involvement, which marks lower yogic perception – i.e. the yogin’s indifference by vis-à-vis the feelings he is ‘reading’ in the other’s mind; 3) total dissolution of the difference between the self and the other, which characterizes higher yogic perception with his total merging into absolute bliss.³⁰ This amounts to saying that *saundarya* presupposes an ‘intermediate’ state in which the object has lost its heaviness, but at the same time has not altogether waned. In the case of emotions, this task is accomplished by ‘generalization’ (*sādhāraṇībhāva*) of *bhāvas*, a concept that Abhinavagupta largely derives from Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka (along with many other important features of his aesthetic thought; see Pollock 2010). Such ‘generalization’, Abhinavagupta adds, is not limited (*parimita*), but expanded (*vitata*);³¹ in it, however, the I has neither disappeared (*tiraskṛta*) nor is well outlined (*ullikhita*), the former corresponding to the state of liberation, the latter to ordinary life.³² (Another essential requirement for beauty, and aesthetic experience, is ‘vividness’, *sphuṭatva*). What happens with theatre (or poetry)? On the scene, the spectator looks at the actor³³ who is representing an emotion not belonging to himself, but following the footsteps of the author who in his turn has represented an emotion belonging to somebody else (the character) he has never seen before and foreseeably will never see at all in the future (e.g. Rāma).³⁴ No wonder if this *bhāva*, being alive merely due to the power of imagination³⁵ and made at the same time both lighter and lighter and more and more intense - like in the process of distillation - may lend itself to the sublimation (cf. Cuneo 2013: 70) by the spectator in the form of *rasa*. This may be compared to the use of strong emotions as a device for the Śaiva adept to come into contact with the ultimate *spanda* principle. As Kṣemarāja clarifies, the emotions, described as goddesses (*devatā*, *devī*) taking hold of the subject, are indeed intensely felt, but the subject is at the same time required to be constantly

³⁰ Cf. AbhBh vol. I p. 279 *sakalavaiṣayikoparāgaśūnyaśuddhaparayogigatasvānandaika-ghanānubhavāt* “[different] from the compact and exclusive experience of one’s own bliss, taking place in the supreme yogin – a ‘pure’ experience inasmuch it is exempt from any colouring by the objective world”. See Appendix.

³¹ AbhBh vol. I p. 273 *tathāvidhe hi bhaye nātmātyantatiraḥkṛto na viśeṣata ullikhitaḥ | evaṃ paro ’pi | tata eva na parimitam eva sādharmaṇyam, api tu vitatam.*

³² These remarks occur with reference to the *rasa* of fear, but can obviously be extended to any *rasa*.

³³ At several points of the AbhBh Abhinava delves into the character-author-actor-spectator relationship, with many insightful remarks. See e.g. Gnoli 1968: 86-87, 93-101. Cf. Bansat-Boudon 2004: 143-176; Shulman 2012: 62-64, 77.

³⁴ This may be linked to the importance of μίμησις in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, whose complex signification can hardly be reduced to mere ‘imitation’ (cf. Gallavotti 1974: 227-240). Significant passages of the AbhBh are devoted to investigating the nature of *anukarāṇa* ‘imitation’ to which Abhinavagupta prefers the more nuanced *anukīrtana* ‘re-narration’ (cf. Gnoli 1968: 98-101).

³⁵ As Shulman notes (2012: 38), the spectator or the reader is every now and then reminded that what is seizing him so strongly is in fact a fiction.

intent in discerning the *spanda* principle inside them.³⁶ Rāmakaṅṭha’s remarks bring the matter even closer to aesthetic experience as described so far:

“For the enlightened adept these [emotional states] suddenly act as means to the firm perception of the *spanda*, but only to the extent that they are the object of inner reflective awareness,³⁷ that is, not if they are [merely] experienced. For the latter condition would be marked by pain, etc.”³⁸

Being at same time in this world and not fully coinciding with it is precisely the ideal proposed to the *kaula* adept. One might object that this is precisely the lower kind of *āsvāda*, the aesthetic one (*rasāsvāda*), destined to be overcome by the religious *āsvāda* of the absolute (*brahmāsvāda*). I am not so sure that this is how things stand. Just as beauty needs the interference of the object, so the Śaiva absolute needs the continuous dissolving of the other into higher and higher unity. Thus, *brahmāsvāda* should not be seen as a higher state with regard to *rasāsvāda*, but only as its enlargement and universalization; in other words, *saundarya* is not a provisional step destined to be abandoned, but the prelude to a so-to-speak hyper-*saundarya*. Let’s keep in mind that Utpaladeva in ŚSĀ XVIII.21b (*tvayi na stutiśaktir asti kasyāpy athavāsty eva yato ’tisundaro ’si*), quite unusually in Trika literature,³⁹ addresses Śiva precisely as *atisundara*. Admittedly, in other contexts Abhinavagupta appears as sharply contrasting *rasāsvāda* with *brahmāsvāda*,⁴⁰ the most explicit being perhaps the passage of his *Locana* on *Dhvanyāloka* III.44 in which he comments on a verse by Ānandavardhana himself. Abhinava says: *tadānandavipṛṇmātrāvabhāso hi rasāsvādaḥ* “For the gustation of aesthetic flavor is the manifestation of just a drop of that bliss [i.e. bliss deriving from repose in the Supreme Lord]”.⁴¹ While in principle the ‘ontological’ primacy of *brahmāsvāda* is beyond discussion, we could gather additional information on Abhinava’s personal leanings from an AbhBh passage (first mentioned in Gnoli 1968: 82-83, note 4). Here, it is again a question of aesthetic relish contrasted with yogic cognition (*yogapratyaya*) and ordinary cognition (*laukikapratyaya*). Even though I am far from being convinced that the transmitted passage be

³⁶ SN p. 47 *prathamam evonmiṣatsaṃjihīrṣādevatābalād antarmukhībhavadraśmicakro ’tikruddhaḥ [...] unmajjatpūrṇābhilāśadevatāvaśa° [...] °prasaraḍuduyogadevīpreraṇa° [...] spandatattvaviviktaye satatam udyukto yo yogijanas tasya tatra vṛttikṣayātmake pade avasthāviśeṣe spandaḥ pratiṣṭhitaḥ*. Cf. SK I.21 *ataḥ satatam udyuktaḥ spandatattvaviviktaye | jāgrad eva nijaṃ bhāvam acireṇaivādhigacchati ||*.

³⁷ *pratyavamṛṣyamāna*, for which we might easily substitute the corresponding aesthetic term *rasyamāna* or *carvyamāna*.

³⁸ SV p. 74 *etās [daśāḥ] ca prabuddhasya pratyavamṛṣyamānāḥ sadyaḥ pratiṣṭhitaspandopalabdhyupāyatām bhajante, na tu anubhūyamānāḥ | sā hy avasthā duḥkhādimayī eva*.

³⁹ The adjective will become popular only a few centuries later, in the Vaiṣṇava *bakti* songs.

⁴⁰ See Cuneo 2008-2009, I: 65, note 19.

⁴¹ The full passage (p. 286) reads: *sakalapramāṇapariniścitaḥṣṭādrṣṭaviṣayaviśeṣajam yat sukham, yad api vā lokottaram rasacarvaṇātmakeṇ tata ubhayato ’pi parameśvaraviśrāntyanandaḥ prakṛṣyate tadānandavipṛṇmātrāvabhāso hi rasāsvāda ity uktam prāg asmābhiḥ* “Above the joy that comes from having determined the nature of all objects by every valid means of knowledge, above the joy that is found in relishing transcendent aesthetic flavour, is put the bliss of repose in God the all-highest” (transl. Ingalls [ed.] 1990: 655).

correct in all its parts,⁴² the gist is quite clear: Abhinava is distinguishing between pre-eminent ‘pleasantness, charmingness’ (*hr̥dyatātiśaya*) of consensual gustation (*saṃviccarvaṇā*) and ‘harshness, stiffness, roughness’ (*paruṣa*) of yogic perception⁴³, a stiffness deriving directly from its being deprived of gustation of the objective world. It is hardly assumable that Abhinava might conceive of *brahmāsvāda* in the terms of stiffness of yogic perception, however high.

CONCLUSION

Abhinavagupta’s position regarding beauty does not lend itself to be included in the objectivistic approach - this is quite evident - but not even in the subjectivistic approach as outlined above. To him, *saundarya* is not a *vastudharma*, accessible to everyone’s experience indiscriminately, neither is it a hidden, undefinable, quality of the thing itself requiring from the perceiving subject a special kind of insight which only happy few can possess.⁴⁴ Rather, he maintains that it is only a special way of approaching reality that alone ‘creates’ beauty in the object. Thus, only our spiritual refinement is responsible for the emergence of beauty, and in turn the beauty-based experience - i.e. aesthetic experience (*rasa*, etc.) - nourishes our spiritual refinement, helping us evade from *saṃsāra*.

Appendix

On a crucial passage of AbhBh

AbhBh, GOS IV Ed. vol. I p. 279 (GOS II Ed. vol I p. 285):⁴⁵ *sā ca pratyakṣānumānāgamopamānādilaukikapramāṇajānitaratyādyavabodhatas tathā yogipratyakṣaja-*

⁴² AbhBh vol. I p. 284 *laukikāt pratyayād upārjanādivighnabahulād yogipratyayāc ca viṣayāsvādaśūnyatāparuṣād vilakṣaṇākārasukhaduḥkhādivicitravāsanānuvedhohanata-hr̥dyatātiśayasamviccarvaṇāmanā buñjate budhāḥ.*

⁴³ Evidently referring to the higher kind of yogic perception; see above.

⁴⁴ In this regard, Abhinavagupta is close to Plotinus: not everyone has this ‘aesthetic susceptibility’ as a native gift. However, neither of them bars the possibility of cultivating and enhancing such a capacity.

⁴⁵ In fact, I am quoting according to Gnoli’s edition (1968: 21), which furnishes the most readable text; regrettably, his emendations with respect to the GOS edition are not always clearly indicated. To make things more complicate, there are four GOS editions (from 1926 to 1964 (1992); Gnoli refers to the II) each claiming to improve the previous ones (while it is often not so). Furthermore, these editions very freely include the parallel passages of the

taṭasthaparasamvittijñānāt sakalavaiṣayikoparāgaśūnyaśuddhaparayogigatasvānandaika-ghanānubhavāc ca viśiṣyate | eteṣāṃ yathāyogam arjanādivighnāntaro⁴⁶ dayātāsthyāsphuṭatvaviṣayāveśavaivaśyākṛta-saundaryavirahāt | atra tu svātmaikagatatvaniyamāsaṃbhavāt⁴⁷ svātmānupraveśāt paragatatvaniyamābhāvāt⁴⁸ tadvibhāvādisādhāranyaśaśasamprabuddhocitanijaratyādivāsanāveśavaśāc ca na vighnāntarādīnāṃ saṃbhavaḥ.⁴⁹

The first part of this passage (up to *viśiṣyate*) presents no particular textual or hermenutical problems: “This [*carvanā* ‘aesthetic gustation’] is different from: a) the experience of feelings such as amorous enjoyment, etc., produced by ordinary means of cognition such as direct perception, inference, verbal testimony, analogy, etc.; b) the cognition [exempt from personal involvement] of others’ mental states, as born out of the special perception of the yogin (*yogipratyakṣa*); c) the compact and exclusive experience of one’s own bliss, taking place in the supreme yogin, a pure experience exempt from any colouring by the objective world.” The second part (from *arjanādi-*) is much less smooth. The passage has been translated three times (Gnoli, Cuneo, Pollock), with minor differences. First section (up to °*virahāt*):

“Indeed, these three forms of cognitions, being in due order subjected to the appearance of obstacles (practical desires, etc.), lacking evidence and at the mercy of the (adored) object, are deprived of beauty. ” (Gnoli 1968: 82); “[It is distinguished from these three,] because they lack beauty on account of the intervention of obstacles such as desire of acquisition, etc., the absence of fullness due to unconcern and the powerlessness due to the immersion in the [transcendental] object respectively.” (Cuneo 2008-2009, I: 300); “The difference lies in the fact that those three forms of consciousness are all devoid of beauty: the first because of the presence of this or that hindrance (such as the desire to actually possess the woman one sees); the second because of the indistinctness that

Kāvyaṅuśāsana in the very text of the AbhBh (sometimes between commas, sometimes even without!).

⁴⁶ °(*u*)*dayāt tāṭasthye ’sphuṭatva*° GOS II Ed., °(*u*)*dayāt tāṭasthyahetukēnāsphuṭatvena* GOS IV Ed.

⁴⁷ I delete the additions: (*na viṣayāveśavaivaśyam*) GOS II Ed., *na viṣayāveśavaivaśyam* GOS IV Ed.

⁴⁸ I delete the additions: (*na tāṭasthyāsphuṭatvam*) GOS II Ed., *na tāṭasthya(hetukā)sphuṭatvam* GOS IV Ed.

⁴⁹ Due to the great use of KĀ for checking or restoring AbhBh’s text I will quote in full the part which paraphrases the passage under examination: Parikh-Kulkarni II ed., p. 102 (corresponding to *Kāvyaṃlā*, KM, ed. 1901, p. 65) *sā ca pratyakṣānumānāgamopamānādī-laukikapramāṇajānitaratyādyavabodhatas* (°*bodhas* KM ed. 1901) *tathā yogipratyakṣajataṭasthaparasamvittijñānāt sakalavaiṣayikoparāgaśūnya*° (*śūnyaś ca* KM ed. 1901) *śuddhaparayogigatasvānandaikaghanānubhavāc ca viśiṣyate | eteṣāṃ yathāyogam arjanādivighnāntarodayena tāṭasthyahetukāsphuṭatvena viṣayāveśavaivaśyena ca saundaryavirahāt | atra tu svātmaikagatatvaniyamāsaṃbhavān na viṣayāveśavaivaśyam, svātmānupraveśāt paragatatvaniyamābhāvān na tāṭasthyāsphuṭatvam (tāṭasthyasphuṭatvam* KM ed. 1901) | *tadvibhāvādisādhāranyaśaśasamprabuddhocitanijaratyādivāsanāveśavaśāc ca na vighnāntarādīnāṃ saṃbhavaḥ* (curiously, the portion from °*vādi*° to °*saṃbhavaḥ* has disappeared from Parikh I ed. 1938 and Parikh-Kulkarni II ed. 1964; I quote the text given by KM ed. 1901).

accompanies the indifference; the third because one is possessed by the blissful object and thereby overpowered.” (Pollock 2016: 202).

In my (earlier) understanding, the phrase *viṣayāveśavaivaśya* (and its translations), if connected with the experience of *parayogin* (as all the translators assume), sounded doubtful.⁵⁰ In order to dispel these doubts not even the comparison with Hemacandra’s KĀ, which follows the text of AbhBh very closely, is of much use, since it adds only very few explanations to Abhinava’s text quoted almost *verbatim* (and confirms the reading *viṣayāveśavaivaśya*); Hemacandra’s contribution amounts to just explicating the connection of *arjanādivighnāntarodaya-tātaṣṭhyāspṛuṭatva-viṣayāveśavaivaśya* with the subsequent passage of AbhBh introduced by *atra tu*. The phrase *viṣayāveśavaivaśya* deserves a closer look, also owing to the various translations it has occasioned. I have not been able to find any other occurrence of it in the texts; nonetheless it cannot be doubted as it is invariably present in all the testimonia of the AbhBh and in the KĀ. In themselves, the three terms are essentially unambiguous: *viṣaya* ‘object [of cognition], domain’, *āveśa* ‘occupation by, invasion by’⁵¹, *vaivaśya* ‘total dependence, surrender’. The combination *āveśa-vaivaśya* is common enough (see e.g. TĀV vol. II p.150 *ratisaukhyasamāveśavaivaśyena*; ŚSĀV p. 101 *samāveśavaivaśyāt*, p. 109 *samāveśavaivaśyaṃ*, etc.); less common is *viṣayavaivaśya* (see Kṣemarāja’s *Uddyota* on SvT X.60 *viṣayavaivaśyābhāvāt suhrṣṭātmā*; ĪPVV I p. 25 *bhaktiā hi tatparameśvaraviṣaya-vaivaśyasamāveśarūpayā*).⁵²

In my opinion, while in the earlier part of this passage Abhinava mentions three different kinds of cognitions (deriving from *laukikapramāṇas*, and belonging to (lower) *yogin* and *parayogin*, respectively), the three features he subsequently mentions are not to be mechanically connected with these three cognitions and their order. In particular, the third feature (*viṣayāveśavaivaśya*) is not to be associated with the third cognition (the one by the *parayogin*). This assumption has induced the three translators to take °*viṣaya*° in the sense of “adored object” (Gnoli), “[transcendental] object” (Cuneo), “blissful object” (Pollock). To my mind, instead, two elements militate against this hypothesis. The first is the phrase *sakalavaiṣayikoparāgaśūnya*°, occurring in the same passage, for which a meaning different from “exempt from any colouring by the objective world” can hardly be figured out. In support of the translation “object, objective world” we can refer to the aforementioned *Svacchanda-uddyota* passage (*viṣayavaivaśyābhāvāt suhrṣṭātmā*) where the absence of ‘total dependence’ (*vaivaśya*) - having as a result the state of *suhrṣṭātmā* - cannot but be on “the objective world”.⁵³ However, a (seeming) counterevidence could be adduced (also Pollock pointed it out to me in a personal communication), i.e. the already quoted passage from ĪPVV, containing a definition of *bhakti* in the light of non-dual Śaivism. To my understanding, however, by

⁵⁰ Some perplexity had already been expressed in Pollock 2016: 389, note 154.

⁵¹ While it is well known the double (transitive-intransitive) meaning of the root *āviś-* (and derived words (*āviṣṭa*, *āveśa*), with significant impact on its use as a philosophical-religious term (cf. Torella 2002: XXXIII-XXXIV), its current meaning in literary, or non-technical, texts is ‘to be entered, to be possessed’ (e.g. *bhūtāviṣṭa* ‘possessed by evil spirits’). This also holds in aesthetic literature, etc., when total occupation of the individual by a certain feeling is meant (e.g. *krodhāviṣṭa* ‘furious’).

⁵² However, the meaning of *viṣaya* in the two sentences is obviously different (see below).

⁵³ The full passage reads: *śānto dāntaḥ suhrṣṭātmā tv anahaṅkāravān samaḥ* || X.60 || *Uddyota: śānto jītacittaḥ | dānto jīteṅdriyaḥ | ataś ca viṣayavaivaśyābhāvāt suhrṣṭātmā, niraḥāṅkāraś ca.*

*tatparameśvaraviṣayavaivaśyasamāveśarūpayā*⁵⁴ Abhinavagupta did not mean “consisting of being occupied by the total dependence on the [adored, transcendent blissful] object that is Parameśvara”, but “[...] total dependence which has Parameśvara as its object”, which is just a śāstric analytical way of expressing the simple “total dependence on (i.e. surrender to) Parameśvara”. This interpretation would fit better Hemacandra’s gloss, clearly connecting *svātmaikagatatvaniyamāsambhavāt* with *viṣayāveśavaivaśya*, for which I propose the translation: “there is [no] surrender to the invasion by the object, because [in *rasa* experience] there is not the restriction of [the feelings’] being referred solely to one’s own empirical ego⁵⁵”. The intended meaning is that we come to be overwhelmed by the objective world if we link its experience directly to our individual ego, that is, without the screen of *sādharaṇībhāva* “generalization, universalization”. This help us understand better the apparently conflicting *svānupraveśāt* which immediately follows (its position in the AbhBh passage makes its meaning rather ambiguous - an ambiguity that the KĀ dispels by grouping together *svānupraveśāt* and *paragatatvaniyamābhāvāt*). What we can gather from the above considerations is that *rasa* experience - which has beauty as its inner core - is different from the yogic cognition of others’ feelings, because, unlike the latter, the former does possess vividness and involvement due to its not being restricted to something felt as belonging exclusively to others, for it is able to make the feelings enter somehow into one’s own self and affect it (*svānupraveśāt*). In other words, *rasa* experience presupposes the entrance of the object into the self, but at same time the object’s not becoming the ruler of a self subjugated by it. Thus, my own translation of this *vexatus* passage is as follows: “For in the just mentioned experiences there is absence of beauty - an absence deriving from: a) the arising of specific obstacles [to aesthetic experience], such as the desire of appropriation [of the object which has aroused a pleasant emotion], etc. [or the desire to avoid it, if it has aroused an unpleasant emotion], b) lack of vividness caused by non-involvement [the case of yogin reading emotions belonging to others], c) surrender to the invasion by the object.” The difference in the understanding of this passage has obvious repercussions on the understanding of the following passage, introduced by *atra tu*. Here are its available translations:

“Here, on the contrary, because of the absence [of sensations of pleasure, pain, etc.] as inhering exclusively in our own person, of an active participation in our own self, of the absence [of the afore mentioned sensations] as inhering exclusively in other persons and the immersion in the latent traces of our own sentiments of delight, etc., reawakened by the corresponding determinants, etc., which are generalized – because, I say, of all these causes, the appearance of obstacles is impossible.” (Gnoli 1968: 84). “In the [experience of *rasa*], on the contrary, other obstacles, etc. cannot intervene because there can be no limitation such as the mere reference to one’s own Self, because one is personally involved, because there is no limitation such as the reference to other persons and because one is immersed in the latent impressions of one’s own appropriate emotions of delight, etc. awakened by the state of generality of their Determinants, etc. ” (Cuneo 2008-2009: 300). “In the theater, however, because the aesthetic event cannot possibly be restricted to oneself alone, such overpowering cannot take place; because the event cannot be restricted to someone else alone, given one’s own participation, that

⁵⁴ I cannot exclude that °*vaivaśyasamāveśa*° might be the result of a scribal inversion of an original °*samāveśavaivaśya*° (this, however, would hardly affect the overall meaning).

⁵⁵ This is definitely the meaning that *svātmaikagatatva* has in other passages of AbhBh (e.g. vol. I p. 274 *svaikagatānām ca sukhaduḥkhasaṃvidām āsvāde [...] paragatatvaniyamabhājām api suḥkhaduḥkhānām samvedane [...]*).

imprecision cannot arise; and because one's congruent predispositions of desire (or other stable emotion) take possession of one when activated by force of the 'commonization' of the aesthetic elements], none of the hindrances can come into play [...] (Pollock 2016: 202).

The translation I propose is: "In the aesthetic experience, instead, there is no possibility for the arising of obstacles and other [shortcomings listed above], because: a) there is not the restriction of [the feeling's] being referred solely to one's own empirical ego; b) there is not the restriction of [the feeling's] being referred [solely] to other subjects due to the capacity of the feeling to enter into one's own self [and affect it]; c) in it [i.e. the aesthetic experience], the corresponding latent traces of [past] emotions, like love passion, etc., when awakened by the state of 'generalization' of their determinants, etc., take possession of the subject."

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ĪPK - Utpaladeva, *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* and *svavṛtti* (see Torella 2002)

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TĀ - Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka with Commentary by Rājānaka Jayaratha*, edited with notes by Madhusudan Kaul Shastri, vols. I-XII, KSTS 23, 28, 29, 30, 35, 36, 41, 47, 52, 57, 58, 59, Allahabad-Srinagar-Bombay 1918-1938.

DhĀ – Ānandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka* see DhĀL

DhĀL – Abhinavagupta, *Dhvanyāloka-locana*

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PTV - Abhinavagupta, *Parātrimśikāvivarāṇa* (see Gnoli 1985)

ŚSV - Kṣemarāja, *Śivasūtravimarśinī*, edited by J.Ch. Chatterji, KSTS I, Śrīnagar 1911.

ŚSĀV - Utpaladeva, *The Śivastotrāvalī with the Sanskrit Commentary of Kṣemarāja*, edited with Hindi Commentary by Rājānaka Lakṣmaṇa, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series 15, Varanasi 1964.

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