

Aesthetic experience as a paradigm for religious experience in Tantric Śaivism of Kashmir

Seminar / 60h / 6 ECTS / winter semester / oral exam

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Synopsis:

The philosophy and the religious worldview of Kashmirian non-dual Śaivism, culminating in its greatest spiritual master and philosopher, Abhinavagupta, is impregnated by a basic aesthetic flavour (and, moreover, it is to be noted that Indian aesthetics as a whole has Abhinavagupta as its most prominent figure). A major characteristic of this aesthetic-aristocratic attitude in religious experience is the downgrading of all painful effort, seen as plebeian feature. The aristocrat intends to show that what inferior people can achieve only at the cost of long and painful exercises is accessible to him promptly and very easily. However, such ‘easiness’ is all but easy for ordinary (and not aesthetically refined) man.

Required reading list (exam)

1. “Śaiva Nondualism”, in J. Tuske (ed.) *Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology*, London: Bloomsbury, 2017, pp. 183-205.
https://www.academia.edu/35162313/S_aiva_Nondualism_pdf
2. “Abhinavagupta’s attitude towards yoga”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 139-3, 2019, pp. 647-666.
https://www.academia.edu/40806877/Abhinavaguptas_Attitude_towards_Yoga
3. “Abhinavagupta as an aristocrat” in *Archaeologies of the Written: Indian, Tibetan, and Buddhist Studies in Honour of Cristina Scherrer-Schaub*, ed. V. Eltschinger, V. Tournier, and M. Sernesi. Series Minor, Università di Napoli “L’Orientale.” Naples: Università di Napoli “L’Orientale, 2020, pp. 843-856.
https://www.academia.edu/44641868/R_Torella_Abhinavagupta_as_an_aristocrat
4. “Beauty” in *Gedenkschrift Helmut Krasser*, ed. V. Eltschinger et al., Harvard Oriental Series., Harvard (forthcoming). (pdf enclosed)

Literature (suggested)

1. “Passions and emotions in the Indian philosophical-religious traditions”, in P. Bilimoria, A. Wenta (eds.) *Emotions in Indian Thought-Systems*, London: Routledge 2015, pp. 57-101.
https://www.academia.edu/31112206/PDF_improved_R_Torella_Emotions_in_Indian_Thought_Systems_Chapter_1_pdf