

introduces us to a set of five modern Sanskrit commentaries on Vaiśeṣika and fourteen international scholars of Vaiśeṣika, respectively. While much of the material in the last chapter is available in the form of bibliographic databases, it is a useful collection of references that graduate students might use for their studies. Chapter Thirteen, in contrast, gives attention to modern Sanskrit work (1958 to 1979) that may not be as well-known. This brief chapter gives high-lights of these commentaries, which readers with facility in Sanskrit may wish to explore further.

On the whole, Kumar does what she sets out to do: collect together a set of chapters which treat important aspects of Vaiśeṣika thought and give readers assistance in navigating their original sources. It can be a useful reference work for established scholars with existing background in Vaiśeṣika, with the limitations noted above kept in mind.

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THE SUBLIME READER. By Robert R. Clewis (Ed.) London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. xii+439 pp.

It is important to point out at the very outset that *The Sublime Reader* does not have an academic peer, historically speaking. It is the first book of its kind, and I emphasize that it might remain so for at least half a decade. The only book which dare approach it tangentially is Peter De Bolla's *The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Having charted a circumference ranging from Longinus and Bharata Muni to as contemporary a figure as Emily Brady, Clewis can be legitimately excused for having excluded literary figures of sublime diligence and psychoanalytic figures of the twentieth and twenty-first century (See the Editor's introduction, pp. 1, 6 and 7). I shall highlight the important features of each essay with succinct references to the questions that are posed at the end of each essay.

Neatly divided into five sections, the first commences with the 'Ancient', where Longinus's 'On Sublimity' is excerpted. The ethics of grandeur, coupled with principles of imposed asceticism as opposed to hedonism and pleasure-mongering is the familiar affect of the sublime. The sources of emotion in inspired infinities, the rendition of spirit-possession, madness and original power can be deemed indispensable for the purpose. However, Longinus's dictum that praying for one's own life is inferior to saving another's

cannot be a truism. Greatness is a version of disinterested self-preservation, propagated through an individual's disposition to create his mind in such a manner that another individual would feel an impulse to preserve and protect it in another body, or across several bodies. The Sublime succeeds when the annihilation of an individual is not the death sentence of his or her mind, but the successful transmission of nobility and originality across minds through individuals within societies continuously re-modelling the human civilization. As Longinus states, scrupulous imitations of sublime writings as well as sublime men propel human vision towards inspiration. Greatness incurs danger; its pseudo-impurity forces itself into genius by circumventing mediocrity. In his words, "Sublimity raises us towards the spiritual greatness of god" (29).¹ In Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra*, sublimity resides in the appropriate ratio between Dominant States and *rasa*, here construed as sentiment. Four sentiments – the Heroic, Terrible, Odious and Marvellous are considered superior to the rest, complimented by equally conspicuous agencies like Energy, Fear, Disgust, Astonishment and Fright.

The 'Post-Classical' section contains three essays. Of these, Zeami Motokiyo's assessment of the three levels of the flower – the first of peerless charm, profundity and tranquillity; the second of truth, mastery of breadth and prescient beauty, and the third of resilience, crudeness and delicacy argues more in favour of a hyperbolic beauty rather than the Sublime, or a sublime 'trace' at best – a cause that Clewis raises in his first question post the essay. My answer to the question would be negative, but I acknowledge that the sublime, if at all it shows itself, is a trace element in the excerpted passages. It is by no means the case in Francesco Petrarca's "The Ascent of Mont Ventoux". Petrarch's realization of the Sublime comes from his mature knowledge of the nature of inaccessibility to the infinite; he evinces that the Sublime is knowledge derived from objects which, through their very inaccessibility, draw the mind inwards in order to theorize the nature of both sublime feeling and sublime enunciations, whether of the Kantian kind² or of the apocalyptic.³

The 'Modern' section commences with Nicholas Boileau's 'Preface' to Longinus's *On Sublimity* where he is inclined to demonstrate the sublimity in action as a reflection of sublimity in the individual – emphasizing how uprightness of personality becomes a frequent point of departure for sublime understanding. Boileau is quick to rebuke those who pity the "intellectual debauches" (59) of mediocre poets who cannot discern the parameters of greatness from impoverished artificiality. He is quick to admit that "The sublime style always calls for grand words, but the sublime may be found in a single thought, in a single image, in a single turn of phrase" (ibid). Simplicity is mandatory for Kant as well as for Boileau in the proper expression of the sublime. In 'The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry', John Dennis distinguishes between 'Vulgar' and 'Enthusiastic' passion, defining the latter as the source of ideas that symbolize the divine. For Dennis, the Sublime is a "great thought" that elevates the everyday into realms of eternity (65). Terror, or more correctly, enthusiastic terror becomes a major contributor to the Sublime phenomena. Moses Mendelssohn deviates very slightly from Longinus in proffering that the sublime is essentially "strength in perfection" (94). Magnitude, combined with immensity, promotes multiplicity that generates "awe" in nature of imagination aroused. Everything that remains unenforced by asceticism – "riches, splendour, stature" and so is un-sublime (95). Sublimity is instantaneous and surpasses critical judgment if not critical insight after the sublime experience settles down. In 'Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime', Immanuel Kant equates sublimity with Miltonic "dread"⁴,

strength, terror and ability to “touch” (106). Solitude is identified with sublimity, and so is timelessness. Friendship, tragedy, darker colours, true virtue, physical and moral restraint are all classed with the sublime.⁵ Finally, we find in Friedrich Schiller the ‘theoretically sublime’, or the sublime that engages thought beyond the “cognitive instinct” (151), while the ‘practically sublime’ targets the domain of power that is ultimately responsible in transcending an experience beyond natural limits. As Schiller rightly accrues, “Fear is a condition of *suffering* and *violence*; only in a detached consideration of something and through the feeling of the activity inside ourselves can we take pleasure in something sublime” (153). Three things – namely the power of a natural object, our physical resistance against the annihilating aspects of this power and the moral interpolation of this superiority of human will against supernumerary forces are primary agents in the makings of everything sublime.

Part IV, or the ‘Late Modern’ section commences with William Wordsworth’s “The Sublime and the Beautiful” where he traces the early origins of both the Sublime and the Beautiful, arguing how their origin cannot be determined by chronology alone (178). The sublime impresses with its presence in a more forceful manner, although Wordsworth slightly sacrifices his Kantianism by referring to “spiritual nature” (181) as the progenitor of the sublime besides the moral. In “The World as Will and Representation”, Arthur Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, adroitly distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime by claiming that beauty is knowledge accomplished through harmony of form and being, whereas the experience of the sublime is agonistic. From the conscious disjuncture of human will, one is aware of an annihilation of the self through the imposition of the sublime object. This annihilation can be prevented by an anxiety-less resistance to the sublime through moral superiority of the individual. Schopenhauer retains that space and time has the immensity to nullify any wilful restraint of the individual. He pays his spiritual debt in the process to the Vedas, the Upanishads and Kant – something that Hegel wisely repeats in his own manner in ‘Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art’. For him, “The sublime in general is an attempt to express the infinite, without finding in the sphere of phenomena an object which proves adequate for this representation” (202). Indian Poetry becomes an exemplar of such sublime struggle for two reasons – first, for magnifying the individual and making it manifest universal dimensions and second, proving its indeterminacy by not implying it directly, but by deferring its meaning through concrete negation of all possible determinacies, through what could be called *via negativa*.⁶ The sublime in ‘Beethoven’, as Richard Wagner illustrates, originates in music when “the most universal concept of the inherently speechless feeling” (217) can be categorized as imagination, furthering the feeling of the sublime. It is devoid of matter, and its essence constitutes nothing but continuous expression of the ethereal. An original and profound understanding of the sublime can be found in the excerpts of Friedrich Nietzsche’s ‘The Birth of Tragedy’, where Apollo, or the Apollonian is identified with prophecy, virtuosity, solemn and quietened harmony. He is the God of everything beautiful, to put it in fewer words. The Dionysian is triggered by “the influence of narcotic drink”⁷ resulting in a situation where “the subjective fades into complete forgetfulness of self” (225). The sublime blurs the material and philosophical differences between the artist and his art, and the power of supreme association qualifies the Dionysian above the Apollonian. Characterized by bestiality, leonine nature and Homeric “temerity” (226), the sublime in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is solemn, strained, dark and immobile, with a will that is always harnessed – the true *ubermensch*.

The 'Contemporary' section brings Barnett Baruch Newman's 'The Sublime in Now' under the critical lens. Newman argues that modern art can be characterized as un-sublime art lacking content, infertile to its spiritual core and powerless against the sublimity of European Renaissance artists unless it is deliberately misread, settling for "geometric formalisms" (244) which mean nothing. Julia Kristeva, in the excerpt from 'Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection' identifies the 'abject' within a space where meaning collapses, immorality and imperialism supplant true grandeur, and the Freudian 'Uncanny' sets in. Kristeva's sublime is differentiated from the Symptom, which is the sinister aspect of the Unconscious, considered the breeding ground of the abject. Her sublime restrains the Symptom so that sublimity might be intelligently understood as "something added" (252), with moral and intellectual aims on the horizon. In his study of Newman's essay, Lyotard elicits an interesting response when he asserts that

When he [Newman] seeks sublimity in the here-and-now he breaks with the eloquence of romantic art but he does not reject its fundamental task, that of bearing pictorial or otherwise expressive witness to the inexpressible. The inexpressible does not reside in an over there, in another word, or another time, but in this: in that (something) happens. In the determination of pictorial art, the indeterminate, the 'it happens' is the paint, the picture. The paint, the picture as occurrence or event is not expressible, and it is to this that it has to witness (262).

In other words, Lyotard's sublime is the present itself; in the 'inside-out' philosophy of the subject is the subject's intersubjective expression which he calls "inexpressible" since its subsonic frequency cannot be heard promptly without effort. The 'Present-ness' of the present does not mean that the 'Un-present' must be sought for beyond the present, but within it – in its rear, at its borders, boundaries, within its unslipped territory, the *parergon* in Derrida's *The Truth of Painting*. The role of intersubjectivity in the making of the sublime is discussed in detail by Clewis in his essay. According to Sandra Shapshay, the 'Thin sublime' can be derived from Burke's "immediate emotional but not highly intellectual aesthetic response" (335), whereas the thick "understands the sublime as an emotional response in which the cognitive faculties play a significant role" (ibid). The former response is physiological, the latter transcendental and ideological. Jane Forsey and Emily Brady's essays bring the book to a successful close.

My focus has been on new developments coupled with theoretical additions to the area. This book is a massive improvement, since it encloses everything that is invaluable in the literature of the sublime. If possible, the author may incorporate Timothy Morton's cognition of 'Hyperobjects' as a development along the lines of the sublime. Otherwise, I laud and appreciate the author's superhuman efforts which will enable research scholars interested in 'reading' the sublime to direct their attention to this extremely handy book.

Notes

¹ Consider this section on Dante from 'The Hero as Poet' section by Thomas Carlyle in *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*: "His greatness has, in all senses, con-centered itself into fiery emphasis and depth. He is world-great not because he is world-wide, but because he is world-deep" (OUP, 1968 reprint, pp. 121). Longinus's "god", for Victorian Carlyle, becomes an embodiment at once of prophecy, depth, masculinity, morality and dichotomy. For a psychological interpretation of the same, see the "Hero" section in Jung's *Aspects of the Masculine*.

² ""nothing is admirable besides the mind; compared to its greatness nothing is great"" (53).

- ³ “If darkness and the shadow of death” find you there...you must pass the eternal night in incessant torments” (51) Recall Wordsworth in the ‘Yew-Trees’: ‘Fear and trembling hope, / Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton / And Time the shadow” (ll. 26-28).
- ⁴ Kant does not cite an example here. In Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, Satan finds Adam and Eve “imparadised”, questions the magnitude of torment he faces in hell, identifies everything in Hell as dreadful and therefore useless, but is inclined to point at that one sublime, singular dread which has more impact in Edenic peace in lieu of a thousand dreads in war – the only ‘necessary evil’ in the world of ignorance: All is not theirs, it seems; / One fatal tree there stands, of Knowledge called, / Forbidden them to taste. Knowledge forbidden? / Suspicious, reasonless! Why should their Lord / Envy them that? Can it be sin to know? / Can it be death? And do they only stand / By ignorance? (pp. 93, 513-19). This sublime introspection operating between dichotomies of being is sublime, both for its brilliance of rhetoric and the soliloquising of supreme dread. See *Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Northrop Frye (Books Way, 2016 (reprint))
- ⁵ Clewis cites passages from Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry* and Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, but I refrain from discussing it here since they are well-anthologized ‘sublimators’. Much has been written on their sublimity already.
- ⁶ Hegel cites his example from the *Bhagavad Gita*. A similar and equally powerful example can be drawn from the confabulations between Yama and Nachiketa in the *Katha Upanishad*, where Yama elaborates upon the nature of the Self which communicates through AUM: “The intelligent Self is neither born nor does It die. It did not originate from anything, nor did anything originate from it. It is birthless, eternal, undecaying, and ancient. It is not injured even when the body is killed. If the Killer thinks (of It) in terms of killing and if the Killed thinks (of It) as killed, both of them do not know. It does not kill, nor is it Killed” (I.ii.18-19, 151-52). It magnifies the individual existent through the universal ‘It’ and creates his identity through a series of negations, of determinacies. See *Eight Upanishads: With the Commentary of Shankaracharya*, translated by Swami Gambhirananda. Vol. 1, Advaita Ashrama, 2013 (Twelfth Reprint).
- ⁷ I think Nietzsche is wrong here. The reference to narcotics is an attempt on his part to imagine intoxication, and he instead concludes with inebriation which is the least desirable form of intoxication. In fact, inebriation beats the purpose of true intoxication – God-intoxication or spiritual awakening and so on. Inebriation is counterproductive to the “sublime” ends of intoxication, since it makes the individual hallucinate and directs the mind to false corners of non-life. See ‘Why do Men stupefy themselves?’, an essay by Leo Tolstoy who deals with the social aspect of Nietzsche’s absurd claim.

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WOMEN AND BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY: ENGAGING ZEN MASTER KIM IRYOP.
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Women and Buddhist Philosophy en-gages literary scholars and academics of theology. Any reader involved with the historicization of narrative or the intersectionality of Zen axiom in cultural and linguistic tradition may find the Buddhist view of the entire universe as methodical and relational. This binary methodology endures in most dharma narrative. Jin Y. Park, professor of Asian and comparative philosophy and religion and founding director of the Asian studies program at American University, engages with how and why women engage with Buddhism. This idea is the underlying query that *Women and Buddhist Philosophy: Engaging Zen Master Kim IryOp* offers to resolve