

On the final exam, which is Monday 15 May, WAG 101, 9-12 noon, there will be thirty-five true/false questions (33%, two misses free) and two essays (67%), one a question that everyone must answer, the other your choice among four. The review questions below will be altered but only slightly, with quotations altered/added that should be blended into your discussion. The thirty-five true false questions will range over the reading from the beginning of the course, as highlighted on the web and in lecture, with disproportional representation of the last half of the course (from Spring Break).

There will be a review session in WAG 302, Fri 12 May, 3-6,

The question to be addressed by everyone:

1. Write a philosophic essay on the “Tantric turn” exhibited in at least two of the three following quotations, (a) from the *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, (b) from Abhinava Gupta’s *Anubhava-nivedana-stotra* (tr. Paul Muller-Ortega), and (c) from the chapter of Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine*, “The Double Soul in Man”:

(a) Here a Bodhisattva, who courses towards enlightenment, and has stood firmly in the perfection of giving, gives a gift not for the sake of a limited number of beings, but, on the contrary, for the sake of all beings. And in the same spirit he practices the other perfections.

(b) Such a yogin abides with eyes half opened and yet with a mind that is motionless and serene, his gaze fixed steadily [at the secret portal that opens to the yogin’s subtle perception found] at the tip of the nose. The sun and moon [ . . . or the two breaths and the whole world of duality that they stir] have dissolved into the great interiority of awareness that pulsates naturally with the triple vibration [either the vibration of the energies of will, knowledge, and action or the vibration of the supreme śakti that constantly tends towards the manifestation of the visible reality, the counterbalancing reabsorptive pulsation of consciousness and the supreme pulsation or ādya-spanda that abides beyond such polarizing movements].

(c) For, as we now know by psychological observation and experiment that the subliminal mind receives and remembers all those touches of things which the surface mind ignores, so also we shall find that the subliminal soul responds to the *rasa*, or essence in experience, of these things that the surface desire-soul rejects by distaste and refusal or ignores by neutral acceptance. Self-knowledge is impossible unless we go behind our surface existence . . . [and identify with the subliminal soul]. The subliminal soul is conscious inwardly of the *rasa* of things . . . . In other words, our real soul takes joy of all its experiences, gathers from them strength, pleasure and knowledge, grows by them in its store and its plenty.

Some of the dimensions or yardsticks by which you might compare the ideas in these passages with the views of older, non-Tantric texts such as the *Yogasūtra*, the Upanishads especially as interpreted by one or another of the classical schools such as Advaita, the *Gītā*, and so on are: (1) view of our world of finite contingencies, (2) the body, (3) mystic psychology, (4) God or Brahman the Absolute, (5) desire, (6) emotions, (7) pleasure and pain (8) activity, (9) the yogic or spiritual goal, (10) view of non-yogins, and anything discussed by Frawley or in another required text and/or a contrast or sameness you identify on your own. As best you can as you proceed, give your own opinions and evaluations of the Tantric difference or continuity.

For the second essay, you will have to choose one of the following general topics. Again, quotations may be added or altered.

(d1) Explain the concept of *rasa*. Why does the experiences require an impersonal or universalized empathy? Move on to Abhinava’s handling of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* theory and his new teaching of yogic self-development? In particular, explain, and criticize, his view of the connoisseur (*sa-hṛdaya*, “like-hearted”), who would have an aesthetic sense or capacity for tasting the eight (or nine) rasas (like some develop a palette and capacity to distinguish varieties of fine wine), as somehow also a yogin, fashioning, or tuning into, karmic dispositions purportedly continuous across lives. Be sure to say a word or two about individual rasas. How, for example, would cultivating the disgust *rasa*, to the point of its being a subconscious disposition continuous across lives (i.e., its becoming a *vāsanā*), serve as yogic self-development?

(d2) Consider the relationship between art and yoga, as you yourself (creatively) envisage it or as envisaged by a classical exponent such as Abhinava Gupta (c. 1100). Abhinava, a Kashmiri Shaivite, invented a new yoga that he elucidated in the terms of a Vedantic non-illusionist philosophy (in which Shiva and the Goddess, Shakti, are central) and a new aesthetic theory. The yoga has two sides. The first is, roughly speaking, the discipline to “capture the essence” of every experience, to find *rasa* (“juice” or “flavor” or “joy”) in every life circumstance (“see life as art”). “Rasa” is an aesthetic concept that entails aesthetic distance such that there can be, for example, “aesthetic value” even in extreme pain or suffering or in various character flaws such as anger or greed. Here

the guiding idea seems to be that of a “witness” to life, a training of seeing one’s own life in the way that one would watch in delight a good movie. The second side of the yoga involves the idea of the yogi or yogini as artist. Tantric philosophy finds the world to be created for the purpose of the God’s and Goddess’s aesthetic enjoyment (brought about in some ultimate fashion by Devi, the Divine Energy, the World Mother). Consonantly, the culmination of the new yoga is to be creative expression by individuals making perfect art by means of openness to the energies of their “higher selves.” Thus the second side of this yoga as art is “making life art” through integration with a higher self. Is there irreconcilable tension between the two sides of Abhinava’s yoga? What is your opinion of this, in whole or in part? Be creative!

(e) Reconstruct one or more of Sāntideva’s arguments for compassion in a passage that will be provided from the required reading. To what extent does his reasoning rely on the Buddhist theory of “no-self,” i.e., that there is no nugget soul or substantial person that is identical from one moment to the next but rather only a stream of karma?

(f) Aristotle writes: “Neither by nature nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.” In other words, we become good by doing good things over and over again and bad conversely. Relate this view to the YS’s teaching about *samskāra* and purification, but also go on to address why an ethical transformation is viewed as a prerequisite for yogic accomplishment from a Tantric perspective, Buddhist and/or Hindu. Or, explain why Aurobindo claims that a person undergoing psychic or spiritual transformation should not hold herself to conventional moral codes. Is this correct?

(g) Is there anything that is universally recommendable in yoga, or does the recommendability of yoga depend upon self-chosen, ultimately arbitrary goals of individuals? For example, is the “sattvacization” of one’s nature to which many YS practices are directed a good thing in general, or is it desirable only for those who think either that sattvacization is a good thing in itself or that it leads to something intrinsically good? What about *prāṇāyāma*, “breath-control”? Is it only for those who want other yogic goals, or is it recommendable for everyone? In a similar vein, is the yoga of the *Gītā* or of Aurobindo or the meditational discipline of Buddhist Tantra only for those who accept the corresponding metaphysical views? An interesting phenomenon: Gym-yoga teachers are wont to preface instructions for postures with an “If you want to.”) Write an essay on the conditions of the recommendability of yogic practices. Possible leads: the importance of personal assimilation, physical health as a universal value, a pluralist and existentialist view of self, power of concentration as a universal value, criteria for curriculum selection (including “physical education”) for grammar schools, etc.

(i) Discuss what philosophers call the mind-body problem with respect to yogic phenomena. Various brands of materialism view “consciousness,” “desire,” “will,” and the like as terms of a seriously deluded “folk psychology.” Some materialists presume these terms will disappear in a future biology which will be capable of fully explaining “mind” in chemical terms, i.e., in talk about brain chemistry and neural principles. Does the fact that yogic practice can increase voluntary control constitute a problem for such a “reductionist” approach? (How far, would you say, having studied some of the literature, can control extend? To the minds and bodies of others?) (B) Either through personal will-power or by surrender and attunement (as some say) to a higher self, yoga practitioners claim not only to reach a higher consciousness but also to undergo a process of spiritual transformation, of assimilation of body, desire, emotion, thought, etc., into a more essential self. Discuss the practice of yoga as it relates to the metaphysics of transformation. According to one or another of the schools of Yoga philosophy, how does practice prepare a yogin or a yogini for transformation? What is to be transformed and how? Are there good examples or analogies?

(j) What are the main contentions of Aurobindo’s “metaphysics of delight (*ānanda*)”? What is his view of pain and suffering? Is it at all plausible that in each of us there is a psychic entity that has *rasa* experience with regard to the events of our “surface” lives? Optionally, go on to explain how in Aurobindo’s view yoga connects with an evolutionary purpose or *telos*.