

The 'Transcendental Body' in Indian Iconography: An Ontological Critique

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"It is nothing foreign to consciousness at all that could present itself to consciousness through the mediation of phenomena different from the liking itself, to like is intrinsically to be conscious."¹

-Edmund Husserl

The notion of 'art' itself tends to be complex and heterogeneous in ancient India — which is based on the contradictory notions of the 'artist' as such. The identity of the artist in ancient Indian art often posits itself as a platform for diverse ontological quests. Indian aesthetic philosophies incorporate the 'sacred' in various ways, which allows art as a medium for realising 'self' and 'no-self'. The term *śilpī* only roughly translates to an 'artisan,' while in the case of architecture and sculpture, the term *stapatī* only provisionally implies an architect. The dichotomies are apt in the textual sources; but what remains clear is that the practice of the arts in ancient India was not as much centered on the individual artist, rather workshops and a company of artisans, recognised in scholarship as 'guilds' were a preferred mode of practice²; nonetheless artists with individual identity and the idea of 'artistic genius' also existed simultaneously. However, *utpictura poesis* would not hold true in the South Asian context, if seen from the perspective of authorship: in which ancient literature is considerably more well-defined than ancient art. In ancient and early-medieval Indian arts and aesthetic philosophy, a spectrum can be seen in textual canon and within practice whereby the artist and subsequently a work of art can exist within multiple ontological perspectives. The 'artist(s)' and 'art' share an intricate relationship — the art being symbolic of the artist's quest for realization — ranging from devotional dualism to a unity of the artist and art. The artist loses his/her self, through a discipline of anonymity, to attain the universal self — this, while simultaneously

being mandated by strict rules of composition, deification and installation. The purpose of art in ancient India were diverse — talismanic, religious, political or erotic. The 'spectator' is a complex idea — as for the artist, for the spectator too, the primary objective is the realisation of the true nature of the self through the medium of art. The notion of *darśan* signifies this. Ancient Indian texts on aesthetic philosophies especially the *rasa* theory, often posit art as the vehicle of human cognitive sensibilities and the artist as a 'non-identity.' Perception, then, is not an additive culmination of art, artist and the spectator but rather an immediacy incorporating all three into a single whole.

Any iconographic study of art from the subcontinent is invariably linked to the study of texts. Without drawing from textual descriptions, it is impossible to decipher the identity of images, let alone properly name them or contemplate their meaning and significance. Within the subcontinent, there are numerous texts from the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain canons. In the Brahmanical traditions, a wide array of texts namely — a) literary sources like — the *R̥gveda* (especially the *g. r̥hyasutras*), b) the *Mahābhārata* body of texts, the various *Āgamas*, *Tantras*, *Samhitās*, *Pāñcarātras*, c) the different *Purānas* and *Upapurānas* (like the *Matsya*, *Brahma*, *Skanda*, *Agni*, *Padma*, *Viṣṇudharmottara*, especially the *vāstuśāstras* in the *Matsya-purāna*) etc, d) Puraṇic texts like — the *Devībhāgavata*, the *vāstuśāstras* in the *Br̥hatsamhitā* and the *Sanatkumāra Vāstuśāstra*, the *Aparājita-vāstuśāstra* etc, e) the different *śilpāśāstras* like — the *Mānasāra*, the *Kāśyapīya* (also known as the *Aṃsumadbhedā*), the *Sakalādhikāra*, the *Citralakṣaṇa*, the *Pratimālakṣaṇa*, the *Devatāmūrti-prakaraṇa* and *Rūpamaṇḍana* by Maṇḍana, the *Mayamata*, *Abhilaṣitārtacintāmaṇi*, the *Samarāṅgana-sūtradhara* and the *Silparatna* (from southern India) etc, f) the different texts on astronomy and the *nītiśāstras* like — the *Śukranītiśāra* and the *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi* etc, overlay the functions and aims of artistic representation. The list cannot be complete. The study of Buddhist art in the

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subcontinent, from its beginnings, extensively relied on the study of Buddhist narrative literature like the *Jātakas*, *Avadānas* etc. and Buddhist texts especially biographic literature, which formulate iconographic depictions in Buddhist art like the biographical stories in the various *Nikāyas* and the texts like *Lalitavistāra*, *Buddhacarita* etc, in order to understand the iconography and iconographic narratives of this art. Similar textual traditions are to be found in the Jain canon in their *Agamas*, the *KalpaSūtras* etc. In the Brahmanical tradition, due to the complexity posed by the existence of varied sources and interpretations, the modern scholar of Indian art gets caught up in a semantic circle of textuality and hermeneutics. The Brahmanical traditions, as we know, are heterogeneous — the culmination of centuries of evolution, syncretism, assimilation and politics of religion; thus, any text in the tradition cannot be ascribed to any one particular episteme or pedagogy. Textuality in such a case operates at multi-fold levels, with ‘meanings’ being at constant variance with ‘interpretations.’ Interpretations change from time to time and are dependent on a variety of socio-historical factors. Thus, even for a particular context, a single interpretation of a text would be redundant. ‘Textual reciprocity’ then becomes the source of even contextualising a text — which implies that contextualising any iconography in Indian art is similarly a problem of semantic derivation and its interpretation, where a multitude of meanings *always already* reciprocate any single interpretation. Samuel Parker in his important ethnological analysis of Indian textual sources, observed on the notion of *śāstra* or the tradition of Indian textual practices — ‘What is a *Śāstra*? From one angle the answer seems too obvious: *Śāstras* are authoritative texts on specialized topics, preserved from antiquity in the form of palm leaf manuscripts. However, [...] ethnographic observation suggests an answer that is far more complex and richer in implications than might appear at first glance.’ (Parker 2003³). He rightly argued that contrary to what a Western perspective may presuppose, *textuality* in the Indian tradition is a far more complex notion — simply because there is no single text and the semantic value that a text assumes is greater than its face value. Thus, textuality emanates in the real world through the intermediary of individuals, already existing architecture, oral knowledge, local traditions and an array of other ethno-epistemic filters.

In the Buddhist traditions, whose early history was dominated by aniconic practices, the ontology of Buddhism itself can be problematised by the fact that the Buddha never wanted him-‘self’ to be remembered — as the textual sources clearly point out this fundamental aspect of Buddhist thought — it was only on Ānanda’s third request that the Buddha reluctantly laid out the first

structure of his remembrance. It is through a combination of already existing subcontinental visual vocabulary of the masses prior to the beginning of Buddhism (motifs of tree/ nature-worship, the *yakṣas/ yakṣīs*, *kalpalatās* and deities like *Kubera*, *Hārītī* and *Pañcika*) with Buddhist metaphysical thought as well as Buddhist narrative literature—that the subcontinent witnessed the rise of different Buddhist artistic and architectural idioms and complex iconographies that one is familiar with today.

In a perspectival approach, the visual’s value for the non-visual becomes decisive. In other words, a formal ‘resistance’ of vision to language first of all underlies a critique of perception itself, akin to the Baudrillardian ‘visual subsumed in the hyper-visibility of the sign, the total conversion of surplus into discourse’ — which is fundamentally a critique of modernity’s acute entrapment in anthropocentrism and biased logocentrism. ‘Genuine space,’ which is the primordial basis of all spaces, must be articulated with reference, given a possibility of representation to overcome such *rituals originating in piety*. In 1971, Heidegger, referring to the nineteenth century ideas of the German Idealists and the Romantics, noted in the twentieth century — ‘Space — does it belong to the primal phenomenon at the awareness of which men are overcome, as Goethe says, by an awe to the point of anxiety? For behind space, so it will appear, nothing more is given to which it could be traced back. Before space there is no retreat to something else. Heidegger pointed out the shortcomings of literalist descriptions and interpretations of three-dimensional artistic work and its ‘putative linkage’ to the modern European conception of homogeneous space. By exploring this rhetoric, he pointed towards moving beyond it — ‘Once it is granted that art is the beginning-into-the-work of truth, and truth is the concealment of Being, then must not genuine space, namely what uncovers its authentic character, begin to hold sway in the work of graphic art?’ In the case of ontological concerns of Indian aesthetics, the dynamics and formal emanations of *spatio* as such, determines the materiality of the method. Let us take the example of *Citrasūtra* of the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna* in order to understand this.

The *Citrasūtra* of the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna*, considered a seminal text in the history of Indian art theory, overlays the fundamentals of the methodologies of representation that is to be considered ‘art.’ First of all, it must be remembered that ‘The *Citrasūtra* was “discovered” in colonised India. It coincided with the time when the question of arriving at an essentially Indian identity of traditional art loomed large for art historians in the first quarter of the twentieth century.’ (Mukherji 2001⁴) Such a stance, however contextual, exposes the biases at play in epistemology and in the methodology of

interpretation from Coomaraswamy and Sivaramamurti to Kramrisch. The concept of foreshortening (kṣayavṛddhi) in the thirty-ninth *adhyāya* of the *Citrasūtra* pertains to and addresses the problem of re-presentation of three-dimensional figures on two-dimensional surfaces with different perspectives for painting or sculpture in relief. These methods, nonetheless based on an interpretative discourse, which is fundamentally at odds with Western constructs of theorising visual perception as such. From here onwards emphasis shifts in the *Citrasūtra* towards a subjective turn, after following the forty-fourth *adhyāya*, which concerns the typology of various figures. In the ultimate forty-fifth, as it concludes, 'the *Citrasūtra* brings within its focus the *citra rasas* or the sentiments to be portrayed in art.' (Mukherji 2001) The praxis of *rasa* depends on the precision of juxtaposing objective qualities with a subjective imperative — hence it addresses the *communicative* aspect of art practice so well. Here, the *communicative*, acts as a seed which remains dormant but becomes active the moment material interacts with the mind. That it is a depository of semiotic value and signs over the ages is true, but when the same thread of the *communicative* is carried forward to distinguish the *sign* from the *symbol*, the latter being in a privileged semiotic status, we overlook the perceptual trends to develop what may be called 'a culture of vision.' The transformation and translation of the 'cognitive core' which gives orientation and substance to judgment, without considerations of it being intuitive or explicit and reflective, has been a preoccupation in the Western canon of phenomenological interpretations. It is quite clear that 'for Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan and Dufrenne, much as they appear to privilege the pre-reflective nature or intuitiveness of visual art, their accounts tacitly pre-suppose complex knowledge of sameness and difference vis-à-vis artistic styles.' (Crowther 2013⁵) A methodology, which Crowther calls a post-analytic turn in phenomenology, is in other words based on the premise that 'the phenomenological tradition can show how picturing and sculpture as art forms engage with some of the deepest factors in the human condition- the ones that define who and what we are, and our relation to Being.' Since language is the house of the truth of Being, it is essentially through language that alienation takes place, which promotes the 'bivalence' in methodology.

An understanding of the idea of the *madhyamsūtra* is significant in our purpose of an ontological critique. The *sūtra* itself, to which the whole image or sculptural body refers to, is a linear emanation of the *bindu* which is the formal locus, as well as, what can be called the centre of *emergence* of the icon (*vigraha*) — the latter in a purely theocentric epistemological sense. We can observe more rigorously the phenomenon of *emergence* from an

epistemological perspective in the 'unfinished' structures of Mamallapuram, to which scholarly interpretations (Coomaraswamy, Zimmer, Kramrisch) also attributed a mode of transcendence where the 'unfinished' works have been intentionally left 'unfinished' to evoke the *emergence* of 'form from the formless.' However later scholarship (Joanna Williams,⁶ Samuel Parker,⁷ Vidya Dehejia⁸) on the 'unfinished,' did acknowledge the complexities of philosophy and practice in the social sphere and the subsequent impacts on heterogeneous modes of image production in ancient and early-medieval India.

The term 'transcendental body' achieved prominence in the study of Indian art history and aesthetics, following Coomaraswamy's theses. His attempt is nonetheless grand, which is aimed at countering the hegemony of Western art in the study of art-history by premising the metaphysical qualities of Indian arts and aesthetics. In the case of Western art, a study of form/content, medium/message dialectics may suffice, but that won't do much in understanding the metaphysical and structural unity of Indian art. His understanding of Asiatic art, especially Indian and Chinese art is founded upon a philosophical perspective that all Asiatic art is ideal in the mathematical sense, like Nature, 'not in appearance but in operation.' This also points out the grand mistake that we make in supposing that Asiatic art represents an ideal world, or 'a word idealised.' If Greek art is ideal according to Hegel, because of a perfect harmony of medium and content, Asiatic art is not concerned with the medium and the content, as it deprioritises appearance, as appearance is only a secondary quality that is to follow, once the primary has been accomplished. Asiatic art in its sheer evocation of the Ideal, doesn't represent it but rather only invokes it, i.e., presents it as a possibility. This is what is meant when it is said that Asiatic art is ideal not in appearance but in operation. The 'ideal world' image of Asiatic artistic representation is also an outcome of circumscribed 'Orientalist' academic interest, which was aimed at exotifying the East. Metaphors of vision aside, like the preoccupation of the Western eye with perspective and surfaces, while the Asiatic (Indian & Chinese) eye, with structural unity; the artist's mind proceeds to visualising the image and becomes one with the image; this *becoming* is the locus of Coomaraswamy's metaphysical treatise. This may be called *yoga* or *sadhanā*, which primarily aims at bringing the 'inwardly known' truth-knowledge-purity aspect (*jñāna-sattva-rūpa*) outside, in manner of contemplation or trance through the work of art. Meister Eckhart, who had considerable influence on Coomaraswamy's understanding of the metaphysics of Augustine and also his understanding of Christian and scholastic art, who's *Sermons* is at times compared with the Upanishads; shared majority of Coomaraswamy's

views on the role of the artist. Since the artist and the spectator and the divine form a complete whole, each incomplete without the other, the *becoming* of the artist is the transcendental force that gives birth to form. This is the process of acquiring the quality of *sadṛśya* or semblance (similitude) with the Divine/the Eternal; and with this, a work of art can achieve its *rasa*, or essence or tincture which is nothing but a mode, a glimpse of that which may trigger transcendence through a kind of induced spiritual *aporia*— a state of indecision that prevails in both the artist and the spectator before the state of transcendence, which induces a kind of contemplation, hard to be articulated in modern philosophical terminology but may be provisionally compared with the contemplation on the ‘Original face’ as we find in Zen philosophy, signifying a non-duality of the subject and object. Since form already exists within the formless and the formless within form, as Eckhart also pointed out in his example of chipping out the sculpture from the stone as if it was already there; in Indian aesthetics, transcendence is innate to the artist as much as it is innate for the spectator. However, like Tagore, Coomaraswamy had a clear stand on the responsibility of the East and the West to each other, as he makes clear in the very first essay titled ‘The Theory of Art in Asia’ in his collection of essays titled *The Transformation of Nature in Art*⁹ (1934) that a reconciliation and proper understanding should prevail between the Orient and the Occident. Since such distinction and dichotomy of the Orient/Occident is only that of appearance and as the metaphysical principles that govern the religions and civilisations of both are the same *a la philosophiaperennis*; a study and proper understanding of the historical points of divergence would necessarily point towards the same conclusion.

In order to understand the process of *becoming* of the transcendental body in Indian art, of its acquiring form, we get to the epistemology of a transcendental perspective regarding the understanding of Nature and Art. Since knowledge is threefold — of the sensible, of the intelligible, and anagogic or transcendent; of which the first two are not considered true knowledge in the metaphysical sense and called *avidyā*, while the last is true knowledge (*vidyā*) — immediate and absolute. Thus, the idea of the poetic genius or artistic intellect which comes innate to a human being is not discarded as an added advantage, but is rather an essentiality. Such symbolism aimed at true knowledge and the various procedures of communicating to the layman, also at once points to a social order with a deep philosophical insight, thus comes the idea of *parokṣa* in Indian iconography, which has its philosophical roots in the treatises on the nature of consciousness, of its primary function as witness (as is the underlying notion in Husserl’s pure phenomenology¹⁰).

And thus, the depiction of a lotus in Indian art of is not the lotus of sensible experience; it is *parokṣa* — a concept not easily graspable by anyone unfamiliar with subcontinental aesthetic philosophies. This is the point of identification of the *trace* of our study. The reiteration remains that ‘Asiatic thought can hardly be presented in European phraseology without distortion’.

The idea of the ‘transcendental body’ stands at a peculiar juncture in the twenty first century. On the one hand, it became the corollary and an antidote to the rising formalist perspectives in Western art history in the twentieth century; while on the other hand, it came to be representative, albeit through later developments, of a ‘narrowness and narrow reading’ of South Asian art history, an overt generalisation that is no longer ‘acceptable’ in the twenty first century owing to tremendous developments in the fields of archaeology, iconography and epigraphy. Twentieth century developments in the discipline of art-history in the Anglophone world were groundbreaking in terms of proffering alternative approaches to art viewing and art criticism. While in the previous century, it was the Romantics who offered a breakaway from dominant rationalist and empiricist notion of art and the aesthetic, in the twentieth century it was the rise of formalism in British art criticism pioneered by Roger Fry that presented, for the first time, a new notion of the aesthetic, grounded in its time but thoroughly disruptive to many established and culturally ‘conditioned’ aesthetic stances of the period. It is from this tradition that Bell inherited the roots of his formal approach, going as far as to proclaim that Fry’s formalism ‘... was the most helpful contribution to the science that had been made since the days of Kant.’ (Bell 1914: ix)¹¹ On the other hand, a thorough departure from the formalism of Clive Bell and Clement Greenberg implied no possibility, whatsoever, to be achieved through a continuation of the Kantian aesthetic tradition — a presage somewhat methodologically new but rhetorically limited and constrained view that gained ground in the later part of the twentieth century culminating in Hal Foster’s magnum opus *The Anti-Aesthetic* in 1983 — a period when the divide between ‘art history’ and ‘visual culture’ was already cemented — but not irrevocably. Thus, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of it, we see an overall transformation in the interpretation and reception of Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*. What started as a new methodological intervention in the discipline, through a close study of the *Critique* in combination with the application of formalism, was soon turned on its head due to the potential of possible interpretations it left open: especially in terms of being read as a limited and constrained epistemic scope being presented through a narrow and curtailed reading of the third *Critique*. Also,

what is seldom acknowledged is that the culmination springs from not just narrow readings of Kant's third *Critique*, but as a phenomenon can also be attributed to the constrained readings of Hegelian aesthetics — though unlike Kant, Hegel's writings on art are more informed and presented a global ambit at its time and context. It was not just in the West that these ideas were to be rejected by the middle of the century but also in the non-West, for almost contemporaneously similar ideas — the contra-'aesthetic' approach, had already taken roots, as presented through the writings of A. K. Coomaraswamy. What initially started as a gradual unintended marginalisation in the Anglophone world, due to the perceived limitations of the view propagated by Bell and Greenberg, would have a definitive and much larger impact on the study of art history and 'philosophy of art' in the larger global South, especially South Asia. The sort of 'untouchable' status that the field of 'aesthetics' has now been relegated to, owes largely to the development of narratives and methodologies from the non-West which rejected such stances. In the field of analytic philosophy, 'aesthetics' became cornered as a logical outcome and rational progression due to its emphasis on objective empiricism, which disapproved of any connection with a field of philosophy which, after Kant, has been solely concerned with an inherent individualistic jurisprudence. During the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, when art history was beginning its disciplinary journey in India as a result of archaeological explorations, the dominant approach of the period was formalism and the air of Eurocentrism based on notions of superiority¹² — 'What started as a democratisation of art, at least from the point of view of reception, according to Clive Bell — formalism only required one to have a healthy pair of eyes to understand art — became increasingly rarefied and lapsed into elitist aestheticism which was vigorously critiqued by Coomaraswamy ... is significant given the fact that when art history entered into the curriculum of Indian universities under the aegis of colonialism, it was formalism that was the dominant method adopted by art historians in India.' (Dave Mukherji 2002)¹³ The rise of the study of art history in India and the larger South Asia, through the lens of an Oriental-Occidental complementarity as propagated by aesthetes in the likes of A.K. Coomaraswamy, Rabindranath Tagore, Johannes Itten, Wassily Kandinsky etc. was firmly grounded in a metaphysical approach that endorsed the idea of the 'transcendental body.' This was seen as a vehicle for a holistic appreciation of South Asian art and artistic philosophy in the absence of any concrete rooting, which was a precursor for the needs of a renewed, re-imagined methodology.

On the other hand, the efforts of intellectual societies

like the Theosophical Society at Adyar, which played an immense role in the dissemination of Indic culture to the West, received little scholarly recognition owing to the nature of the activities of the society, for most parts of the twentieth century. The air of the early twentieth century, fertile with ideas of Oriental-Occidental cultural exchange, was also defined by the works of two prominent art-writers of the period: Stella Kramrisch and Sister Nivedita. It was also around this period that the first definitive and specialised studies on Indian iconography began to emerge, led by TA Gopinatha Rao in the south and Haraprasad Sastri, Benoytosh Bhattacharyya and Nalini Kanta Bhattacharya in Bengal: marking the departure of the discipline of art history in the subcontinent from an anthropological and comparative shadow of the Eurocentric *logos* too, developing a distinct identity of its own — not through imaginary and theoretical backlashes, but through concrete material evidences based on archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics and iconography.

In terms of methodologies of interpretation in the Western canon to situate an episteme of *Kunstgeschichte* (art-history) itself, a similar exercise can yield interesting insights into the premises pre-supposed in art-history writing. Didi-Huberman explored the Vasarian conclusions on the glorification of antiquity, the decay of the Middle Ages and the revival of philosophy in the High Renaissance (*rinascita*). He acknowledged and questioned the fundamental flaw in Vasari's *Lives* — the dogmatic and pedagogic documentation of the life of the artist in fifteenth century Italy puritanised art as a device of knowledge rather than the image subsisting as a vehicle of thought as such. Also, in *Confronting Images* (2005) he deconstructed Panofsky's two-fold aspect of humanism to identify the 'sphere of *nature*' from the 'sphere of *culture*' to assert the existence of deeper meaning behind the image. This essentially challenged Panofsky's faith in iconology and his dependence on the symbiotic relationship of the subject matter to an allegorical syntax of meaning. The whole problem of course being to discern the economy of this *just the same* and to think the status of this '*something*'¹⁴ is based on the premise that meaning is embedded in perception itself. A reconciliation of subject-hood between the East and the West is fundamental in understanding the constitutive process involved. Huberman's perspective, nonetheless Occidental¹⁵ in endorsement and pre-dominantly Judeo-Christian in focus, brings together strands in discourse for the purpose of a renewed collective global contemplation on the origin of the art-historical *episteme*.

Along different points in the trajectory of the Western arts of modernity, such ideas that seek to foreground the episteme in the larger play of contextualism and historicism, as we find in Indian aesthetics, re-emerge

— the philosophical development of which can be traced to Kantian notions of ‘end-in-itself’ which is a pre-requisite of the rational subject in the age of Reason. Various Modernist art-movements put forward and critically examined the nature of *being* in artistic production and reception in the context of the modern condition. An interesting example can be the Malevich squares¹⁶ and the paintings of James Hayward which have become a matter of much debate regarding the existence of a concept which one can think of but not actualize — bringing forward the duality of conceiving (conception) and materialising (appearance) and the role and scope of representation and non-representation in modern art — that continued to influence contemporary expanded visual art practice. The imperative being that the transcendental perspectivism is sewn this time in the language of the painting itself (rather than in the subject or in materiality as previously) — ‘To make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can neither be seen nor made visible: this is what is at stake in modern painting ... As painting, it will of course “present” something though negatively; it will therefore avoid figuration or representation ... it will be “white” like one of Malevich’s squares.’ (Lyotard 1985¹⁷)

The ‘transcendental body in Indian iconography, nonetheless implicit with the politics of challenging, firstly, colonial hegemony, and then becoming synonymous with an ahistorical bias and re-prioritization of Eurocentric episteme that metaphysics (and thereby formal analysis) in general is today co-related with, and has become the *je ne sais quoi* of Indian/South Asian art history in the twenty-first century¹⁸; was actually an attempt towards a ‘pure phenomenology’ of Indian art. The stakes become further significant in recent times as our imagination of ‘transcendence,’ and that of the East and the West, evolve through Internationalism and collaboration in the artistic, socio-cultural and philosophical spheres. In this moment of hermeneutic transformation, the knowledge paradigm of art undergoes, again, a sweep or a *kehren*, waiting to be caught in translation into theory as well as praxis. The relationship between philosophy and arts need not be always the influence of the former on the latter; but art itself shapes philosophy, as is evident in our above discussion on the ancient Indian arts and *sāstras*: an interdependence that continues in the twenty first century, albeit in different forms and arenas.

Notes

1. Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969 [1929]).

2. This is in contrast to Renaissance artists, where the ‘individual’ was positioned at the origin of artistic production — which culminates from the *Aufklärung* emphasis on the completeness of the faculty of reason.
3. Samuel K. Parker, ‘Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective,’ *Artibus Asiae* 63.1 (2003), 5-34.
4. Parul Dave Mukherji, *The Citrasūtra of the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna*, (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2001).
5. Paul Crowther, ‘Conclusion: A Preface to Post-Analytic Phenomenology’ in *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision: A Post-analytic Turn* (Bloomsbury, 2013).
6. Joanna Williams, ‘Unfinished Images,’ *India International Centre Quarterly* 13.1 (1986), 90-105.
7. Samuel K. Parker, ‘Unfinished Work at Mamallapuram Or, What Is an Indian Art Object?’ *Artibus Asiae* 53.
8. Vidya Dehejia and Peter Rockwell, ‘A Flexible Concept of Finish: Rock-Cut Shrines in Pre-modern India.’ *Archives of Asian Art*: 61-89.
9. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New York: Dover, 1956).
10. “To begin with, we put the proposition: pure phenomenology is the science of pure consciousness.” — Edmund Husserl (*Ideas- 1: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, 1913).
11. See Bell, Clive (1914) *Art*. New York: Frederic A. Stokes Company.
12. Mostly that of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gāndhāra in comparison to the artistic practices of the rest of the subcontinent — its high-point manifested through the culmination of Ludwig Bachhofer’s two-volume title *Early Indian Sculpture* in 1929.
13. See Dave Mukherji, Parul (2002) ‘Bodies, Power and Difference: Representations of the East-West divide in the comparative study of Indian aesthetics,’ *Filozofski Vestnik*, XXIII(2), 205-220.
14. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).
15. ‘Undecidability is not a weakness, but a structural condition of narration ... the target is not merely the petit bourgeois good conscience, but the symbolic and semantic system of our entire civilization, it is not enough to seek to change contents, we must above all aim at fissuring the meaning system itself- we must emerge from the Occidental enclosure’ — Roland Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, 1975.
16. Kazimir Malevich, *White on White*, 1918.
17. Jean-François Lyotard and Geoffrey Bennington, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
18. Notwithstanding the historicist bias that has engulfed the discipline of South Asian art history itself in the last two centuries.