German Romantic Nationalism and Indian Cultural Tradition

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in History

By

Alexei Vladimirovich Pimenov, M.A.

Washington, DC
November 18, 2015
Abstract

This Dissertation examines the German Romantic fascination with India, the country thought by many German Romantics to be the original home of the Urvolk, considered by these thinkers to be the direct ancestors of the German people themselves. In analyzing this German Romantic self-representation through India within the context of the Romantic critique of European modernity, the Dissertation considers this phenomenon as a case of the Romantic re-integration project. The Dissertation juxtaposes four figures – Friedrich Schlegel, Otmar Frank, Joseph Goerres, and Arthur Schopenhauer – who are particularly representative of those German Romantic thinkers who were influenced by Indian culture and who applied the Indian models to their interpretations of world history. These interpretations were rooted in the models developed by the missionaries and the Enlightenment thinkers who looked for the original monotheism outside the biblical tradition. The Romantics, however, highlighted not only the religious but also the national dimension of the connection between the original home of the Urvolk and its descendants in the modern German-speaking realm. In tracing the Urvolk’s migration from India to the West, Friedrich Schlegel used as his explanatory model the Brahmanic narrative of the degenerated warriors becoming barbarians due to their failure to observe the dharma. This model was in tune with Schlegel’s understanding of the Indian religion as a misread Revelation, and his understanding of the further world history as a degradation and fragmentation of the human race, but it was at odds with his German nationalist aspirations. With time, the correlation between these two dimensions changed. Frank proclaimed the return to the original Iranian-Indian heritage as the program of a religious and national reawakening of the German people; Goerres developed an all-embracing narrative of the original people and its Weltstaat; Schopenhauer portrayed the religious/philosophical history as a conflict between the “wisdom of all ages” and the “biblical theism”. These theories represented four versions of a German-Romantic understanding of identity and otherness based on the Indian model, which predetermined the dualistic nature of German Romantic nationalism as dividing the human race not into multiple nations, but rather into the original civilization and the corrupt version of it.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter One. India in the Context of the Romantic Re-Integration Project (*The Fragestellung*, Major Approaches, and Research Strategy) ........................................................................... 7

  India within the Romantic Picture of the World: An Alternative to European Modernity .......... 11
  The German-Indian Connection: In Search of Research Strategy .............................................. 20
  The Romantic Social *Weltanschauung* and the Representation through India .................... 28

Chapter Two. Britain’s Discovery of India: The Colonial Rulers and Their Fact-Finding Team ........................................................................................................................................... 37

  The Concerns of the British Colonial Rulers, or The Importance of Learning Sanskrit .......... 38
  The Scholarship and the Public Concern ...................................................................................... 49
  The Epistemological Foundations of the British Indology .......................................................... 56

Chapter Three. The German Indian Renaissance and its Historical Roots ........................................ 63

  India within the German Cultural Landscape .............................................................................. 67
  The Two Indias in the German Mind .............................................................................................. 69
  Goethe’s Ambivalence: The *Reiner Ost* and the God-Beasts .................................................... 74
  Herder’s Enthusiasm: The Equivalency of Hinduism and Christianity ..................................... 79
  The Influence of the Pre-British Scholarship on India on the German Thought: The Sources and Ideological Constructs .................................................................................................................. 84
  The Literary Texts: The Indirect Renditions ............................................................................... 86
  The Ideological Framework: The European Search for Original Monotheism and India ……….. 88
  The Missionaries, the First Indologists, and the Brahmins, India’s Intelligentsia .................... 89
  The Enlightenment Quest for an *Urreligion* in India: *The Ezour Vedam* ................................. 99
  The Model of India for the Romantics to Inherit ........................................................................... 107
  The Romantic Re-Integration Project Begins: The Novalis’ Search for Mediators between Man and Divinity ....................................................................................................................... 109
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 127

Chapter Four. Friedrich Schlegel: Indology as the Key to the National and Religious History of the World .......................................................................................................................... 130

  India in Schlegel’s World .............................................................................................................. 134
  Schlegel’s Strategy: The Philosophy of Language ..................................................................... 140
  Languages and Language ............................................................................................................ 146
  The *Urvolk* Leaves its Indian Homeland: The Evidences and Speculations ......................... 154
  The *Urvolk’s Verfassung* and World History ........................................................................... 161
  On the Verge of a Synthesis: Schlegel’s Reflections on the *Ursprache* and the *Urvolk* before 1808 ............................................................................................................................................. 164
  Schlegel’s India: The Scholarship and the Ideology .................................................................. 168
  The Method and the Topic Synthesized: The Language, the Religion, and the History ....... 169
  Indian Thought as an Exegesis of the Holy Script ...................................................................... 171
  The Language as a Clue to the History ....................................................................................... 173
# Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The topic of this Dissertation is the role that the Romantic fascination with India and Indian studies played in the formation of the early nineteenth century German Romantic nationalist discourse. The years of rapid development of the growing fascination with India represented also the formative period of German Romanticism that, stimulated by a number of factors, such as the opposition to Napoleonic aggression and, later, the policies of the Holy Alliance, by degrees took on strongly nationalist overtones. How were these two developments connected to each other? Did Romantic nationalist aspirations stimulate Indian studies, and vice versa? Did the Indian ideas and cultural models, discovered by the Romantic scholars, influence the parameters of Romantic nationalism? Such are the questions that this Dissertation attempts to answer.

With regard to the German Romantics, pursuing these questions raises a number of more detailed queries. First, what were their specific motivations for addressing Indian studies? How do these motivations compare, for example, with those of the British founding fathers of Indian studies, such as William Jones, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, and Alexander Hamilton?

Second, what factors determined the selection by the German Romantics of the Indian texts to study, and what were the Romantics' attitudes to them? Third, in what ways did the Romantics reconstruct the Indian culture by interpreting the sources they used? What did the Romantics adopt directly from these sources and what did they infer from them, depending on their own purposes and cultural preferences? Fourth, how did they apply the results of their studies and, through them, the Indian ideas and cultural
models to other spheres of their intellectual interests, specifically, to their speculations on the Germanic world? Fifth, how did this synthesis of Indian studies and Romantic nationalism influence the substance of later German nationalism?

This Dissertation attempts to prove the following hypothesis: Indian studies, ideas, and culture influenced German Romantic nationalism profoundly. Specifically, Romantic Indian studies provided German nationalism with new scholarly underpinnings in three major spheres, each particularly sensitive for German nationalist discourse. These three were: first, language; second, identity and otherness; and, third, the understanding of world history.

The nature of these Indian influences in these spheres can be defined as follows: the major ideas that had existed in German culture long before the German-Indian encounter were now provided with new scholarly and philosophical underpinnings. More specifically, the understanding of German as the *Ursprache*, that is, not as one language among other languages but as the primordial language, from which all other languages were deviations, had been widespread in the Germanies since the Renaissance if not medieval times. But the linguistic theories asserting German’s being the Adamic language (*adamitische Sprache*) preceding Hebrew and Arabic had lost any scholarly plausibility by the era of Romanticism. But now, due to their acquaintance with Indian cultural heritage, German Romantic scholars got a new underpinning for the old theory: They discovered in the Indian civilization not only a language surprisingly similar to European languages, specifically German, but also a similar philosophy of language. This similar philosophy considered Sanskrit as the primordial language and, moreover, the only language existing in the world. According to the Brahmanic philosophy of language,
all other languages were merely products of Sanskrit's distortion or splitting. “In the
‘orthodox’ understanding’, Wilhelm Halbfass notes, “Sanskrit is not just one language
among others. There is no independent and parallel potential of meaning and correctness
in these other languages. … The languages of mlecchas (barbarians) represent extreme
cases of deformation or corruption of Sanskrit, the language par excellence.” ¹ Projected
onto the German cultural situation by the Romantic Indologists, this philosophy
of language provided a new underpinning for the German claim of lingual
exceptionalism.

Another new underpinning referred not to the idea of the primordial language, but
to that of the primordial people. The understanding of Germans as the *Urvolk* had been
articulated at least as early as the Renaissance. But again, the Renaissance theories
tracing the roots of Germanendom back to the inhabitants of the ancient Middle East had
completely lost their earlier plausibility by the early nineteenth century rise of German
nationalism. On the other hand, the crucial idea – that Germans were not merely a nation
among other nations, but the *allmenschliches Volk* (all-human people) embodying the
universal ideals of humanity – was central to German nationalist discourse of the era.
And again, it was Romantic Indian studies that provided these universalistic nationalist
aspirations with a new scholarly underpinning.

German scholars discovered in the Sanskrit texts their understanding that Aryan
society represented civilization based on Law and Morality (dharma) and that all other
societies were simply the products of the Aryan society's fragmentation and

barbarization. Incorporated in German nationalist discourse through Indian studies, this Indian understanding of identity and otherness was reproduced by the Romantic nationalist thinkers examined in this Dissertation.

The third Romantic reception of a major Indian concept refers to the German Romantic conception of world history. Attempting to explain why and how the Indian ancestors of the Europeans had appeared in Europe, the Romantic authors, starting with Friedrich Schlegel, explicitly reproduced the Indian narrative on the degradation of some Indo-Aryan clans. According to this Indian narrative, the degradation of these clans led to their moral and cultural barbarization and resulted in their separation from the Aryan civilization. This Romantic interpretation traced the emergence of the non-Indian civilizations, such as ancient Greece, Rome and, later, Christian Europe with the German Empire as its center, along the lines of the Brahmanic theory of the Aryan “separatists” degrading to the status of Barbarians (mlecchabhava) as a result of their failure to observe the dharma. The Dissertation traces how these Indian ideas and models more and more explicitly shaped the Romantic narrative, specifically their understanding of the Germans’ mission as the inheritors and restorers of this primordial civilization.

The Dissertation analyzes four major figures, which combined Romanticism, nationalism, and a fascination with India. The first, Friedrich Schlegel, was a major theorist of Romanticism, including Romantic nationalism, and, on the other hand, the scholar who laid down the foundations of Indian studies in Germany. The second, Otmar Frank, the founder of one of the first departments of Indian studies in Germany (at Munich), was also the first Romantic thinker to explicitly characterize Germans as the descendants of and inheritors to the Indo-Iranian world. The third, Joseph Goerres, a
leading nationalist writer and publicist of the first half of the nineteenth century,
developed an all-embracing conception of world history that was to a significant extent
based on Indian studies. The fourth, Arthur Schopenhauer, was the philosopher to
incorporate the Indian motifs in German philosophical discourse.

The selection of these figures determines the chronological framework of the
research underlying this Dissertation. It begins with the last decade of the eighteenth
century when European scholars for the first time became familiar with Indian texts. This
familiarization stimulated the early Romantic reflections on Indian heritage. The research
continues into the first five decades of the nineteenth century, during which Friedrich
Schlegel, Othmar Frank, Joseph Goerres, and Arthur Schopenhauer published their major
works that were widely debated within the German cultural community.

This Dissertation reviews the major works by the Romantic thinkers and by their
critics (such as, for example, Johann Wolfgang Goethe), including their theoretical and
literary writings, works of journalism, and letters. It reviews also the Indian texts that the
Romantics used as their sources. The objective of these reviews is to determine the
impact that these writings and the controversies surrounding them came to have on the
German nationalist discourse.

As applied to the four figures this study focuses on, its major argument can be
formulated as follows: in spite of the substantial personal, philosophical, political, and
scholarly differences between them (referring, among other things, to their estimations of
the Indian civilization), they displayed at the same time a surprising unity in how they
viewed the place occupied by it the world-historical context and in how they
implemented the Indian ideas, models, and imagery in addressing the key problems of the European, specifically German civilization. It is this India-based complex of ideas going beyond the individual trajectories of these thinkers and representing a significant aspect of their Romantic *Weltanschauung* that this Dissertation attempts to reconstruct.
Chapter One. India in the Context of the Romantic Re-Integration Project (*The Fragestellungen*, Major Approaches, and Research Strategy)

The aim of this chapter is, first, to point to the most distinctive features of the German Romantic fascination with India as a phenomenon of the German Romanticism; second, to review the major scholarly contexts within which this phenomenon has been and can be examined and, third, to characterize the approach of this study. Considered from a more general perspective, the topic in question can be seen as a special case of what Wilhelm Halbfass has insightfully characterized as European interest in India “as part European self-affirmation”. “To what extent”, Halbfass asks, “Does it (the interest in and research of India – A.P.) reflect European perspectives and motivations? How, on the other hand, has the encounter with India, the accumulation of it, affected the European self-understanding and sense of identity? How and why did Europeans become interested in Indian thought? Which questions and expectations did they have concerning India and themselves?” ²

Within this context, the deep involvement of the German intellectual community with Indian thought and imagery ranks among the most powerful developments of nineteenth century cultural history. To be sure, the German-speaking realm was by no means unique in this respect. It was not only the German Romantic scholars who studied the Indian texts. Indeed, they could be not even described as the pioneers of Indian Studies – at first they actually followed the British founding fathers of this discipline. Moreover, in other Western countries as well poets and artists were fascinated by Indian civilization. Nevertheless, a large body of evidence in nineteenth century German

² Halbfass., p. 2.
literature points to distinct peculiarities of the precisely German fascination with India, as to both its scale and its character.

Scholars have more than once pointed to this fact. “The numbers alone are both illustrative and astonishing …”, Robert Goldman notes, “In her collection of mini-biographies of German Indologists … Valentina Stache-Rosen lists 131 scholars between 1620 and 1980…”  

The numbers of professional Indologists illustrate only one aspect of the phenomenon, however. No less astonishing is the interest in the Indian culture beyond the realm of Indian studies. From the late eighteenth century through the post World War Two period, very few German cultural figures, either major or minor, wrote something that lacked any trace of Germany’s fascination with India. On a very rough calculation, the amount of the German philosophers and authors of fiction, including poets, writers of prose, playwrights, and literary critics, in whose texts the Indian motifs are quite visible, amounts to one hundred.

And in spite of the variety of individual cases, one can point to some common features determining the way that the Indian imagery was perceived by the broad circles of the German intellectual community.

__________________________

An insightful description of this phenomenon comes from Heinrich Heine. “I am not the Count of Ganges”, he wrote in his Ideen. Das Buch Le Grand, “Never in my life did I see the holy stream, nor the lotus flowers reflected by the pious waves. Never have I rested dreaming under Indian Palms, nor did I ever lay in praying before the diamond god at Jagernaut… I have been to Calcutta no more than the Calcutta fried meat I had for dinner yesterday… “Nevertheless,’ the poet continued, “I do descend from Hindustan and I feel therefore so well in Valmiki’s wide forests; the heroic sorrow of the divine Rama move my heart as a familiar sadness; the flower-like songs of Kalidasa provoke my sweetest recollections; a lady in Berlin showed me the fascinating pictures that her father who had for a long time been a governor in India, had brought from there, and these gently painted… faces seemed to me as familiar as if I were looking at my own family gallery.”

Note a fascinating detail – in drawing this poetic picture, Heine clearly indicates its scholarly underpinning. “It was’, he stresses, ‘Franz Bopp... who gave me the information about my ancestry, and I know now quite firmly that I was born out of Brahma’s head… I suppose even that the whole Mahabharata with its 200000 verses is an allegoric love letter that my progenitor had written to my foremother.”

By the time that Heine wrote these words, the history of the rapidly growing fascination with India in the German-speaking world had lasted for several decades and it had manifested itself in various ways. If the linguist Bopp had examined the grammar of Sanskrit and demonstrated its similarities to those of Farsi, Greek, Latin, and German, the

---

men and women of letters had gone further in discovering the traces of the multidimensional unity between the Indian and German cultures. Jean Paul had created the mystic image of the island of Teidor – a paradise on earth, bearing distinct Indian features. In his Die unsichtbare Loge, the author not only divided the visitors of the island into four groups, depending on their spiritual levels, along the lines of Indian caste society, but even placed the island created by his poetic imagination within a mystic space. Although the space was located in a lake in Southern Germany, it was said to bewashed by the waves of the Indian Ocean. Novalis had poeticized “India, delightedly blossoming in the North” in his Geistliche Lieder. Friedrich Hoelderlin had portrayed the “Asian motherland” with its shadowy forests surrounding the sacred thousand head Mountain of Meru, the major symbol of Brahmanic tradition, in his Patmos; Othmar Frank had asserted a special linkage between the German and the Indo-Iranian world in his Das Licht vom Orient, and Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hofmann had created the image of the mysterious country of Ginnistan in his Der Goldene Topf.

Even more explicit manifestations were to follow. In his Parerga and Paralipomena (published in 1850), Arthur Shopenhauer would describe India as “the homeland of the human race” (das Vaterland des Menschengeschlechts) and as “the cradle of mankind, at least, of the race we belong to (“die Wiege der Menschheit, wenigstens der Rasse, welcher wir angehoeren”). He would add the definition of Indian religion as the primordial religion of our race “(die Urreligion unseres Geschlechts”).

The latter wording is of particular importance for the subject of this study. How could the idea of a cultural selective affinity between Germans and Indians and, moreover, of the former’s being the descendants of and inheritors to the latter have emerged? An examination of this phenomenon within the framework of German Romanticism presupposes addressing the question of the very nature of the Romantic Weltanschauung.

In reconstructing the key parameters of the latter, scholars have highlighted two aspects of the Romanticism’s agenda: the Romantics’ criticism of the modernity, and the alternatives to the latter that they looked for.

**India within the Romantic Picture of the World: An Alternative to European Modernity**

An attempt to understand the Romantic quests for an alternative to the modern European culture presupposes getting back to the very foundations of the Romantic worldview or, more precisely, to how the Romantics understood their cultural mission. Although through history this mission has been formulated in a variety of wordings, both the adherents of Romanticism and the later students of it have more than once formulated its essence as a search for a myth. “A myth-seeker” – such was the definition that Paul Hoffmann used for Friedrich Schlegel as one of the most illustrious and explicit champions of the Romantic attitude. Schlegel’s own writings completely validated this definition. “Our poetry”, he wrote in 1801, “Lacks a middle point (Mittelpunkt), as it existed for the ancient (poets’) mythology, and all in which the
contemporary art of poetry is inferior to the ancient, can be summarized as follows: We have no mythology.” “But”, Schlegel continued, “We are close to gaining it.”

Friedrich Schlegel’s description elucidates both the Romantics’ vision of the cultural situation in which they had to act and that of their expectations for the nearest future. It was, however, not only about expectations but, more importantly, about the Romantic understanding of a mission that they imposed on themselves.

An insightful definition of this Romantic enterprise has been provided by M.H. Abrams. Characterizing the major parameters of this Romantic project, he wrote in his *Natural Supernaturalism*: “… A number of these writers… put themselves forward as members of the small company of poets-prophets and bards; they measured their enterprise against the earlier revelation of present, past, and future things… and they undertook … radically to recast, into terms appropriate to the historical and intellectual circumstances of their own age, the Christian pattern of the fall, the redemption, and the emergence of a new earth which will constitute a restored paradise.”

One major circumstance to be highlighted in this context was that each of these three parameters – the fall, the redemption, and the restoration of the paradise lost – could be understood in a variety of ways. The last, naturally, depended on what Hoffmann has termed as paradigms (*Vorbilder*) of the projected new mythology that the German Romantics had at their disposal. Characterizing these samples, he singles out three major

---

sources of inspiration: Spinoza, the Antiquities, and the Orient. It is an examination of the role that one of these samples played in the formation of the German Romantic discourse that is the goal of this study. Before addressing the place that any of them occupied within the Romantic Weltanschauung, one should address a more general question – that of the very nature of the Romantic project.

Most generally, the key issue on the Romantic agenda was the relationship between Man and Universe and significantly, this relationship was perceived as fundamentally distorted. Importantly also, although this distortion was believed to include a variety of dimensions, it was, as Wilhelm Halbfass has stressed, “The preoccupation with the merely useful, the calculable, rational, precisely determinable, the loss of faith, enthusiasm, and the sense of unity and wholeness” that “were seen as symptomatic deficiencies of… (the) present.”

Such were the symptoms of the malady; its cause was believed to lie deeper, however. As Jack Forstman puts it, it was “separation and alienation” that had led to “measurement, calculation, manipulation, misunderstanding, collision, mistreatment, and suffering”. Naturally, he continues, “Salvation consists in the ultimate reunification with or of the One – redintegration in unum.”

An impressive poetic definition of how this One was understood belonged to William Coleridge. Describing what he called the Active Universe, the poet wrote: “…

\[\text{References:}\]

8 Paul Hoffmann, Der indische und der deutsche Geist von Herder bis zur Romantik (Tuebingen: Laupp, 1915), p. 60.
9 Halbfass., pp. 57, 76 – 79.
He will know what it is, who believes and feels that every Thing has a life … and that we are all one Life.” Citing these words Nicholas Riasanovsky stresses that “The entire romantic setting tends to fade out in… reabsorption into the Universe.” 11

The question of the tools for this reabsorption became central for the Romantic thinkers. Characterizing the means by which they sought to achieve the projected “redintegration in unum”, the scholars have emphasized the transcendental character of the Romantic attempts to overcome the fatally fragmented culture of the present. “This reintegration”, Jack Forstman writes, “Of course, cannot be accomplished under conditions of this world, time, apace and matter … Thus only a dissolution of these conditions – that is, of this world, can bring about unification.” Characterizing the nature of what he describes as “a vision of reality as a cosmic process of separation from and return to the One”, the scholar defines the Romantic project as an attempt to “set a version of what is, if the term is permissible, the perennial religion”. 12

In addressing the nature of this perennial religion, the scholars have pointed to “pantheism which equates God with the world (the world is God, and God is the world)” or, in some cases, panentheism (the world is part of God) (Riasanovsky) as a common basis of the various versions of the Romantic Weltanschauung. 13 With regard to the German Romanticism and, thus, within the context of this study this all-European phenomenon is of particular importance: as the scholars have more than once emphasized, the pantheistic current was central to the German cultural history of the late-

---

12 Forstman., p. 116.
13 Riasanovsky., pp. 59-60, 71, 80.
eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Frederick Beiser has even stated that the pantheism controversy was “the most important intellectual event” of the era, “next to the publication of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason”.  

Two questions arise in this context: first, that of what pantheism meant to the German religious-philosophical thought of that era and second, what were its sources in Germany. Regarding the first issue, Peter Park characterizes the German pantheism as “a pervasive, if ill-defined, intellectual current…” “Some observers in Germany”, he continues, “Thought that pantheism had the potential of becoming a major problem, as so many prominent Germans were overt or clandestine pantheists.” Concretizing this description, Park cites Beiser’s words that ‘Nearly all the major figures of the classical Goethezeit – Goethe, Novalis, Hoelderlin, Herder, Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Schelling – became Spinoza enthusiasts…”

Significantly, the German pantheists, including the Romantics, emphasized themselves the continuity of this tradition. In doing so, they stressed not only the significance of Spinoza’s heritage as such but also the role of the pioneer of German Spinozism, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. An impressive evidence of the appreciation by the Romantics of Lessing’s importance for the Romantic religious project is provided by Novalis. In a letter to Friedrich Schlegel, having described his intention to found a new religion synthesizing poetry and magic, he stated: “If Lessing were alive, I would not need to begin this enterprise… No one but he could have been able to anticipate the true

14 Frederick C. Beiser, The Fate of Reason : German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 44
new religion to the extent that he was…. Even if one could synthesize millions of particles of this kind in a melting pot, we would not be able to get such an amount of… pure breath of religion, as it was concentrated in Lessing”. 16

The question of the sources of inspiration for the German pantheists, specifically the Romantics, deserves a more detailed discussion, however. For all its crucial importance for Germany and beyond, Spinoza’s heritage represented only a part of a wide intellectual spectrum within which this variety of thinkers including the Romantics looked for and found alternatives to the mainstream culture. If the common pantheistic basis (however different its particular versions might have been) of their religious-philosophical constructs is easily recognizable, the question of pantheism’s cultural roots goes far beyond Spinoza’s immediate heritage.

What, then, were the sources that played particularly important roles in the formation of the Romantic pantheism? According to M.H. Abrams, they can be found primarily in what he characterized as esoteric forms of the Christian (Eriigena) and the Jewish (the Kabbalah) traditions. Describing the common basis of these trends, Abrams notes that its “theological design… is an extraordinarily complex, but nonetheless recognizable, version of the great circle of Neo-Platonic Christianity, according to which the process of emanation ends in its beginning, and the beginning and ending are the One.” 17


17 Abrams., p. 179.
Without necessarily questioning the centrality of this tradition or, more precisely, of this complex of traditions, shaping the core of the Romantic worldview, the other students of Romanticism placed the problem in a broader historical-cultural context. It was “to the thought of classical antiquity and to various Oriental religions and philosophies” that Riasanovsky traced the tradition of pantheism as the major source of Romanticism.  

Within this context, the influence of the Indian religious-philosophical thought on the Romantic writers, specifically the German, as they searched for an alternative to the fatally fragmented culture of then modern Europe, became central to the Romantic Weltanschauung. This influence is the subject of this study.

What were the major distinctive features of this particular influence? Primarily, its radicalism. “The Romantic interest in India was inseparable from a radical critique of the European present,” Wilhelm Halbfass emphasizes. It was, he continues, a “return to the sources of Indian wisdom” that the Romantics proposed as a remedy for… spiritual impoverishment”.

The Romantic answer to the question of what had caused this impoverishment represents a key dimension of the picture. The Romantic thinkers unanimously traced the cultural disaster back to the European rationalist tradition. It was precisely this rationalism, specifically, that of the Enlightenment, that they sought to overcome by turning to the heritage of ancient India. “Dissatisfied with the stifling rationalism of their Enlightenment heritage”, Azade Seyhan writes, “Schlegel and Novalis urged upon their

---

18 Riasanovsky., p. 71.
19 Halbfass., p. 78.
countrymen and fellow Europeans a study of India and Sanskrit as an antidote to the materialism and mechanism in which the Western world seemed to be trapped.”

Bradley Herling adds some important details to this picture. “At a rather early point’, he elaborates, “Prominent figures in German intellectual life associated the “mind” of India… with a crusade against the disenchantment of the world, which had supposedly been caused by the Enlightenment. A primordial source of cultural wisdom, India would provide an antidote to a mechanistic world dominated by Verstand and a rejoinder to an elitist, rarefied philosophy dominated by Vernunft. In response to the degeneration that the Enlightenment had instigated, the ideas and texts of India could promote a German cultural renewal”.  

What were the parameters of the German Romantic perception of Indian mind, on the one hand, and those of the expected German cultural renewal, on the other? Scholars have more than once addressed the variety of dimensions of the role that the Indian heritage played in the Romantic Weltanschauung. Characterizing the most obvious one, Paul Hoffmann wrote with regard to Friedrich Schlegel: “As all founders of religions, he had to display a sample (Vorbild) of how the ideal was to be realized”. Wanted he”, Hoffmann asked, ”To make his own life such a sample, as Christ or Buddha had been able to?” “Yes, he would”, the historian answered, “If his life would not be torn by an

---

internal conflict! He looked therefore around as if he could find a sample of his ideals outside himself. And he dreamed of finding it in India.” 22

This description highlights another key feature of the Romantic image of India. It was seen as a sample of the realization of the Romantics’ ideal, but it represented at the same time an external projection of their own spiritual quests. With regard to this, Leslie Willson has as early as 1964 defined the “mythical image … of India” not only “as a source of inspiration to the poetic imagination of the German Romanticist” but also, “in that role, as a basis for ideal reality.” “The mythical image formed by the Romanticist in his view of India”, Willson continued, “is unreal but it is true in his ideal world and in his imaginative projection of that world… It is dynamic picture which the Romanticist sought to transform into reality through a unification of the wisdoms and a reconciliation of the cultures of the Orient and the West.” 23

An attempt to describe this Romantic projection of the idealized India onto the reality or, more precisely, the realities of Europe, specifically Germany, raises another query – that of subjectivity. How did the German Romantics interpret the relationship between the idealized and mythologized India, on the one hand, and themselves, on the other? “In the context of German Romantic history”, Azade Seyhan notes, “The reconstructed culture of the Orient served as a pretext for theoretical orientation and self-examination. The India of German Romanticism constituted in a way a pre-history of Romantic forms of self-representation.” In this context, the scholar recalls Friedrich

---

22 Hoffmann., p. 72.
Schlegel’s words that “In the Orient we must look for the highest form of the Romantic (das hoechste Romantische)“. 24

This perspective enables one to highlight the way the German Romantics saw their own place in the dreamed of process of the East-West reconciliation. Viewing India as the primordial historical home of Romanticism, they believed to have discovered there not a different civilization, but the source of their own. This discovered linkage needed, however, to be underpinned through scholarly arguments. As the linkage to be proved was believed to exist not simply between individuals but between the two cultures, the question of the Romantic subjectivity becomes at this point a question of identity. But before considering it more closely, one should pose another question: Why India?

The German-Indian Connection: In Search of Research Strategy

The uniqueness of the place that India, or the mythical image of it, occupied within what the Romantic thinkers defined as the Orient, has been more than once stressed by historians. For the Romantic writers, as Raymond Schwab has emphasized in his The Oriental Renaissance, the latter term (coined in the 1840s by Edgar Quinet) “Was interchangeable with Indic Renaissance”. 25

How can one explain this interchangeability? How could India’s place on the Romantics’ map at a certain point expand to the whole Oriental space? In tracing the history of the early modern and modern European discoveries of the Orient, Helmut von Glasenapp has justly noted that “Among the three still living non-European world

24 Seyhan., pp. 76-77.
cultures – the Islamic, the Indian, and the East Asian – the Islamic was the first to become a topic of study in Europe…” After the Islamic world”, the scholar continues, “China became a topic of study in Europe. The Jesuits, who arrived in China early in the seventeenth century, … laid down the foundations of the Western Sinology. The acquaintance with the Wisdom of the Chinese delighted Leibnitz and Christian Wolf who praised the ethics of Confucius…” Finally, Glasenapp observes, “The script of the Hindus became available in the West only since 1785… because of the Brahmans’ unwillingness to familiarize the Western barbarians with their sacred language, Sanskrit.”  

India was thus only the third living Oriental civilization that became a topic of study in Europe. In the context of juxtaposition between the European reflections on it with those on the two previous cultural encounters, one circumstance is noteworthy. The European intellectuals of the Renaissance and Enlightenment had found in the Ottoman Empire and also in the Confucian tradition sources of inspiration. But whatever virtues they believed to have discovered in those civilizations, they never viewed them as their own cultural predecessors. The Indian case was different: not only, as Urs App notes, had “India… for some become… the cradle of human civilization”  

27 but also there had emerged the phenomenon that Paul Hoffmann has defined as the “Germanization of the products of Indian spirit” (die Verdeutschung indischer Geisteswerke).  

28

---

28 Hoffmann., p. 92.
The essence of this Verdeutschung has more than once become a topic of scholarly research. In recent times, there appeared several studies addressing the German Romantic-nationalist-Indological complex of ideas. In this context, the works by Robert Cowan, Douglas McGetchin, and Tuska Benes are of particular interest. Containing numerous observations relevant to the subject of this Dissertation, these studies provide at the same time an opportunity to highlight the novelty of its approach to the topic. This novelty concerns both parts of the connection in question: the nature of the Indian influence on the German Romantic culture, and that of the German Romantic recipients of this influence.

One question that arises in this context is that of agency. What did the India-influenced German Romantics have in common? In his attempt to problematize what he describes as the “the Indo-German identification”, Robert Cowan has described it as “a heterogeneous line of thinkers who would bring together these strains of thought: Romanticism, nationalism, and Indology”. 29

Singling out the nationalist component of this synthesis as it had formed by the early nineteenth century, McGetchin stresses “the links between the study of ancient India in Germany and the origins of German nationalism”. In explaining the importance of these links, he emphasizes the key role of literary and linguistic factors for German nationalist discourse in general. “German nationalists”, the historian recalls, “Constructed their concept of the German nation from literary and linguistic factors rather than geographic homogeneity or a shared political tradition”. On the other hand,

McGetchin finds “particularly odd” that “in this formulation the roots for German culture came from Asia”.  

Tuska Benes examines this “odd” phenomenon within a spectrum of similar phenomena – the contributions of various philological studies to German nationalist root-seeking. Pointing to the centrality of the language studies to German discourse on nationhood, she reconstructs, in particular, the Indo-Germanic connection, “the Orientalist model of German national origins”. “Philologists”, Benes writes, “Drew ethnological implications from the invention of the “Indo-Germanic” language family, tracing lines of linguistic descent back to a primordial Germanic past“. Placing the Indo-Germanic connection within a broader context of German search for national roots, she describes the “Orientalist attempts to pinpoint the German Urheimat as having grown out of a long-standing desire to locate a terrestrial paradise or Garden of Eden in Asia” and justly points out that “the prospect that the first Germans were migrants from the East drew its initial authority from traditional biblical narratives of the dispersal of nations after Babel”.  

In reconstructing the Indo-German (or, more precisely, German-Indian) connection, Benes describes it as “the first of three national genealogies that the German scholars created in the early nineteenth century”, that is, as a case next to two other cases, or, as Benes puts it, two competing national genealogies, the Germanic (Urvolk

---


Germania) and the Greek (Urbild Hellas). 32 Without questioning the importance of such juxtaposition, one should emphasize a difference between this research strategy and that of this Dissertation. Describing the postulated German connection with India as just one particular genealogical project among other projects, such as the Germanic and the Hellenistic, one overlooks at least one circumstance central to the understanding of the specific nature of the Indian influence on the European, specifically German mind. This circumstance concerns a peculiar situation with the sources of information about India that shaped a unique cultural context of the European, specifically German studies of India as well as that of the Indian genealogical project as their ideological outcome.

This peculiarity of the Indian case can be described as follows. In their interpretations of the Germanic heritage, the German nationalist thinkers dealt with their own cultural past without facing any serious problems of lingual interpretation. In studying ancient Hellenic writings, they dealt with an extinct ancient civilization whose heritage had been preserved as a body of texts that had for many centuries had been part of the European cultural tradition. But in the Indian case, by contrast, they dealt with a civilization that, although known in the West since the later Antiquities, had only late in the eighteenth century become a topic of systematic scholarly studies. But even against this background, India represented a special case.

On the one hand, the Indian heritage penetrated the West predominantly through a variety of texts. “The sources of our knowledge of India”, Tatiana Elizarenkova and

32 Ibid., pp. 112-196.
Vladimir Toporov have pointed out, “Differ significantly from those referring to the great civilizations of the Near East… An acquaintance with the latter begins with material artifacts… In the case of the Indo-European civilization the situation is completely different. Here, indeed, “In the beginning was the Word.” … It was always the word that was a source. … Archeology (or any other discipline with the only exception of historical-comparative linguistics) cannot be considered a tool of reconstruction of the elements of the Indo-European civilization, comparable with linguistics.”

At the same time, this centrality of philological materials to Indian studies had also another important aspect. It referred to where the knowledge of the Word came from. In a general way, it can be explained as follows: Philology had a unique role in the studies of Indian civilization because studying Indian civilization then, unlike studying the civilizations of the ancient Middle East (and of Ancient Greece and Rome as well), involved an ongoing interaction with living members of a living Indian civilization. Specifically, reading Indian texts required knowledge of Sanskrit and other Indian languages. For learning these languages, the logical teachers for the European scholars were the Indian scholars.

This circumstance created a variety of issues that simply did not exist for Germanic or Hellenistic studies. The most obvious was the Brahmins’ unwillingness to share the sacred knowledge with the foreigners. Already the Christian missionaries, Europe’s first scholars of India, were concerned about winning the confidence of the

Indian “learned”, particularly the Brahmins who, as Roberto de Nobili wrote as early as the early seventeenth century, “represented India's intelligensia”. 34

From the missionaries, this issue passed to the Indologists of later times. “A Brahmin is… ready to attend me whenever I want him; and from him I find that I can depend on my Persian versions”, one of the British scholars of India, John Shore, described his work during his Calcutta years, recollecting with pride his major accomplishments.” 35 Addressing the issue in a more general way in 1841, Thomas Babington Macaulay praised “the wisdom and moderation” of the British governor-general of Bengal, Warren Hastings as “the first foreign ruler who succeeded in gaining the confidence of the hereditary priests of India, and who induced them to open to English scholars the secrets of old Brahminical theology and jurisprudence.” 36

The issue of confidence represented only a part of a larger problem, however. No less importantly, in interpreting Indian religious, philosophical and other texts, the Europeans needed assistance of the Brahmins and, in some cases, of the adherents of other religions practiced in India. They had thus to deal not only with the texts but also with their exegetes and therefore with the latters’ interpretations of the texts and therefore, with their worldviews and agendas.

34 Roberto De Nobili, Preaching Wisdom to the Wise. Three Treatises by Roberto de Nobili, Missionary and Scholar in 17th Century India. Translated and Introduced by Amand Amaladass and Francis X. Clooney (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2000)., pp. 57, 63.
35 John Shore, Baron Teighmouth, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Baron Teighmouth, by his Son (Charles Shore) (London: Hatchard, 1843)., pp. 103-104.
36 Quoted in: Schwab., p. 34.
With the Brahmins acting in their traditional capacity of the exegetes, although in a new and unusual situation, the inevitable dependence of learners on instructors resulted not only in the European scholars’ idealization of the Indian civilization but also, no less importantly, in the acceptance by the scholars of some key-concepts of their Indian mentors.

One argument that this study puts forward is that, without taking into account these peculiarities of the European-Indian cultural encounter, it is hardly possible to explain how the European, specifically German, thinkers viewed the Indian civilization. In particular, without considering these peculiarities, it is impossible to investigate the unique influence of this encounter on the very message of German Romantic nationalism.

Another point at which this study differs from the prevalent approach refers to the other side of the encounter – the German Romantic recipients of the Indian influence. What kind of phenomenon did they represent in a social context? More precisely, should the German Romantic nationalists, fascinated with India, be described as just a heterogeneous group of illustrious individuals with different motivations and intellectual trajectories? Or did they represent a more consolidated intellectual trend, and can one reconstruct this trend's common ideology?

Most scholars examining this topic are prone to the first of these two viewpoints, and Robert Cowan’s study articulates this prevalent approach with a particular explicitness. “The intellectual careers of the Indo-Germans I examine”, the historian states, “… Are clear examples of the ways in which history is personal It is important to keep in mind, in contextualizing and analyzing the works on Indo-Germans,
the impact personal ideological and spiritual struggles have on attempts to establish
unified national identities.” 37 “Where the personal, the philosophical, and the political
come together for the Indo-Germans”, Cowan continues, “Is in the individualized
compulsion between ancient Indian civilization and the modern German nation… Writers
such as Friedrich Schlegel, the Indo-German par excellence, were engaged in individual
quests to find the religious and philosophical roots for Christian German culture in
South Asia. Other scholars, such as Herder and Jones, were establishing the ethnic and
linguistic roots of this affiliation. What concerned the Jena Romantics and Hegel and
Schopenhauer was the need to establish spiritual… and philosophical connections that
explained how Indian thought had been transformed and re-established on Germanic
soil…” “I believe”, the historian concludes, “That individual
predilections, preoccupations, and tastes have often had a much more profound effect on
world history than might have been imagined… The Indo-German story is testament to
that fact. But… how do we move beyond recognition of that fact?” 38

This is precisely what this Dissertation aims to do.

The Romantic Social Weltanschauung and the Representation through India

The research strategy that this study implements in order to move beyond the
individual trajectories of the thinkers it deals with, aims not only to estimate the
importance of the Indian influence on German Romantic nationalism as one of the
possible cultural influences, but also to highlight the precise composition of this
particular influence. It tries to expose the Indian ideas and models that penetrated the
German thought and the way they affected the Romantic understanding of

37 Cowan., p. 7.
38 Ibid., p. 188.
German identity. It attempts, in other words, not only to explain the motivations for the German Romantics to regard India as the historical homeland (*indische Heimat*) of the Germanic world, but to juxtapose some major parameters of the two cultural landscapes.

Regarding the German side of the encounter, focusing on what Wilhelm Halbfass has defined as the “ideological” interest in India, this Dissertation considers the combination of Romanticism, the fascination with India, and nationalism not as a sum of individual contributions and not as an “intersection of the personal, the philosophical, and the political” (Cowan) but, rather, as a case within the history of *Weltanschauungen*, that is, as an ideological phenomenon par excellence. This understanding of the study’s agenda presupposes that of two aspects: the intellectual structure that is, the correlation of the scholarly and “ideological” elements within the phenomenon in question, and agency.

With regard to the intellectual structure, dealing with scholarship and theoretical thought, this study cannot avoid dealing with the question of the scholarly adequacy of how the German Romantic thinkers portrayed the Indian civilization. Yet this question is not central to the dissertation’s agenda. Rather, the emphasis is placed on the major parameters of the Indian studies-based ideology as the result of their efforts.

This Dissertation’s approach is based on Karl Mannheim’s understanding of ideology presupposing, as the sociologist stressed, being “… alert enough to discover the ideological element in all thinking,” on the one hand and “the non-evaluative insight into history”, on the other. 39 This attitude refers primarily to the understanding of the German

Romantic scholars’ vision of India. Considered from this perspective their knowledge about it was, as any ideologically loaded knowledge, “… by no means an illusory experience, for ideology is not at all identical with illusion. Knowledge arising out of our experience in actual life situations, though not absolute, is knowledge nonetheless. The norms arising of such actual life situations do not exist in a social vacuum, but are effective as real sanctions for conduct. … Such a system of meanings is possible and valid only in a given type of historical experience, to which, for a time, it furnishes appropriate expression.” 40

One such given system of meanings, or a particular Weltanschauung, can, as Andrzej Walicki notes, be defined as “the basic ‘research unit” in a study of an ideology. Outlining the contours of this phenomenon, he writes that “The use of this term (the Weltanschauung – A.P.) implies that it is a comprehensive vision of the world, a meaningful structure and system of cognitive, social, and aesthetic values that are internally coherent within its own chosen framework.” 41 “Weltanschauung conceived”, Walicki continues, “… Differs both from the looser meaning of the word and from philosophical theory, which is always an expression and conceptualization of a particular view of the world, but never identical with it. The same Weltanschauung can be expressed in many philosophical theories, while a single philosophical theory can combine elements from different views of the world, since theoretical coherence does not necessarily imply a coherence of the underlying system of values. A particular Weltanschauung may, moreover, be expressed in theological, economic, or historical

40 Ibid., p. 88.
writings, or its principal vehicle may be works of art... *Weltanschauungen...* find a variety of expressions." 42

Applying this idea to the German Romantic synthesis of the fascination with India and nationalism as one such meaningful structure, this Dissertation examines the variety of ways through which it expressed itself. Partially, this variety deals with a *Weltanschauung*, considered as an ideological phenomenon, as being of not individual but collective consciousness. This is why it puts an emphasis not on the individual Romantic authors’ unique attitudes and contributions but on the complex of ideas they represented as a cohesive phenomenon, as a certain sociocultural group one of the distinctive features of which was a combination of Romanticism, nationalism, and a fascination with India.

The necessity of tracing the formation of this sociocultural group determines the chronological framework of the research underlying this Dissertation. It begins with the late eighteenth century when European scholars for the first time became familiar with Indian texts. This familiarization stimulated the early Romantic reflections on Indian heritage. The research continues into the first five decades of the nineteenth century, during which the distinguished adherents of the trend published their major works that were widely debated within the German cultural community.

No less importantly, this task determines the selection of the individual figures and texts to be examined in the Dissertation. It examines these Romantic scholars’ major works – from Friedrich Schlegel’s *Ueber die Sprache und der Weisheit der Indier* and

---

42 Ibid., p. 2.
Otmar Frank’s *Das Licht vom Orient* through Joseph Goerres’ numerous writings including, in particular, his *Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt* and *Die Japhetiden und ihre gemeinsame Heimath Armenien*, and, later, Schopenhauer’s philosophical works (including but not limited to his *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*). Analyzing these texts by a number of distinguished and highly different individuals, the Dissertation seeks to reconstruct a certain supra-individual thought structure (social *Weltanschauung*). To be sure, this thought structure manifests itself through individual thinkers’ personalities, their styles and attitudes and through their unique cultural productions. Yet again, this study aims to reconstruct primarily not the distinctions between them but, to the contrary, the major dimensions of what the adherents of this particular social *Weltanschauung* had in common. This means, in particular, that whatever differences might have existed among the figures to be examined in their political or other views and, more generally, in their personal trajectories, these factors, for all their significance, are secondary within the context of this research. With Friedrich Schlegel’s being known to have been a champion of the anti-Napoleonic struggle and Otmar Frank’s having dedicated his *Das Licht vom Orient* to the Emperor of the French – with Schlegel’s later evolving to a “valuable functionary of the Metternichian system” (Riasanovsky) and Joseph Goerres’s long struggle against it – and, finally, with Schlegel’s and Goerres’ Roman Catholic aspirations and Arthur Schopenhauer’s creed that György Lukács would describe as “religious atheism” – the focus of this study is the complex of ideas that these thinkers shared, in spite of all these differences.

In reconstructing this complex of ideas, the study singles out the self-consciousness (*Selbstverstaendnis*) of the trend’s adherents as the key element to be
analyzed. In this sense, the main objective pursued by this study is comparable with those pursued by Jutta Scherrer in her reconstructing the religious-philosophical societies in the early twentieth century Russia, and by Andrzej Walicki in his examining the world of Russian Slavophiles. “These associations”, as Jutta Scherrer characterizes the objectives of her study on the early twentieth century Russia’s religious-philosophical societies, “Are examined not only because they are of interest as such.” “Primarily”, she explains, “The following research should contribute to a sociology oriented historiography: since for different periods of Russian history, the history of the Russian intelligentsia contains… questions regarding a variety of groups of the intelligentsia constituted depending on their self-consciousness (Selbstverstaendnis) as a social category, this… leads necessarily to a development of a self-consciousness of such a group, which means that an analysis of this group’s self-consciousness that is, of its knowledge about itself, would help highlight its position.”

In the case of the German Romantic nationalists’ search for an Indian connection, the question of the trend’s self-consciousness acquires a particular importance and sensitivity. Outlining the societal contours of this collective Weltanschauung, one can notice that it never acquired any strict organizational forms. Interestingly also, it did not completely coincide with any of the cultural groups of the Romantic era. On the one hand, the major ideas of the trend are known to have been developed within the Jena circle. The key members of this circle were Novalis, a pioneer of the Romantic Indophilia, as well as some of the important figures to be examined in detail in the

---

Dissertation, such as Friedrich Schlegel (as well as his brother, August Wilhelm). On the other hand, Joseph Goerres as a young man was connected to another Romantic circle, the Heidelberg, whereas Otmar Frank and Arthur Schopenhauer did not belong to any more or less outlined cultural associations. No less importantly, as Riasanovsky has insightfully pointed out, liquidity represented a distinctive feature of the Romantic tradition as well as of their cultural-philosophical constructions. “In Germany, as in England”, he stresses, “Romanticism emerged strikingly – indeed as an explosion – to be followed by a collapse and retreat and to be succeeded by new romanticists, related to the original figures but also distinct and different. What, in effect, took place?” 44

In attempting to explain this, Riasanovsky points to the Romantics’ quests for firmer ideological underpinnings outside the Romantic Weltanschauung for their religious-philosophical, specifically pantheistic and panentheistic aspirations. As he emphasizes, the results of these attempts to “grasp a wall” varied. If, as Riasanovsky justly notes, some, as, for example, Friedrich Schlegel, “grasped at Roman Catholicism”, some, such as Novalis, “Perished before they could grasp at anything”. 45

On the other hand, as scholars have stressed more than once, ideally, a dream about a Romantic unification or an “order” to be created did exist among the Romantics. “At least in the last years of Novalis’ life and shortly after his death the Romantics really dreamed about a creation of a true brotherhood or order”, Viacheslav Ivanov wrote. “In 1803”, he continued, “Werner was asking in one letter whether or not a secret sect had

44 Riasanovsky., p. 67.
45 Ibid., pp. 75, 76.
been founded in Vienna and when the comrades will go on from writing poetry to the great vital cause.” 46

For reconstructing the major parameters of the self-consciousness of this ideal Romantic brotherhood, the three factors described above are of particular importance. These factors are: first, the idea of re-absorption and re-integration as the milestone of the Romantic project; second, the liquidity as a distinctive feature of the Romantic tradition and of the Romantics’ cultural-philosophical constructions and their dependence on external ideological elements; and, third, their aspirations for an ideal universal Romantic brotherhood to be established. It is thus important to analyze how exactly the German Romantics saw the connection between these three factors – the re-integration they dreamed about, the external cultural factors they had to interact with, and the Romantic brotherhood they sought to create.

This analysis focuses especially on their efforts to synthesize the Romantic understanding of subjectivity and that of otherness within the Romantic re-integration project. Azade Seyhan has pointed to the centrality of the question of the relationship between subjectivity and otherness for the very nature of the Romantic Weltanschauung. “The investigation and appropriation of appropriative representation of otherness constitutes the essential gesture of Romantic hermeneutics”, she writes. “In a very basic sense”, she elaborates, “Self-understanding is the first prerequisite for an act of understanding. Posting an otherness by representing a split in subjectivity is the first step

in self-understanding. The subject acquires its understanding of experience through its reflection on the posited object.”

Seyhan’s observations regarding the Romantic self-understanding through appropriative representation of otherness provide an opportunity to formulate the objectives of this study with more precision. This Dissertation's major goal is to analyze how the self-consciousness of this ideal German Romantic brotherhood – as articulated by the selected group of authors – represented itself through an image of the Other that is, through that of India, as the essence of the *Verdeutschung* of India’s cultural heritage.

Summarizing the approach of this study versus the prevalent approaches, one should thus point to three major factors. The first is the emphasis on the ideological, particularly supra-individual nature of the phenomenon in question. The second is that Indian civilization was, unlike ancient Greece or Rome, not an integral part of European discourse inherited from the earlier eras of the European cultural history, but rather a living civilization with which the European, specifically German intellectuals had to interact. This living Indian civilization had, however, its own ideology (ideologies) – a factor resulting in the cross-civilizational contact’s becoming an interaction between two (or more) ideologies mutually influencing each other. The third is the focus on the Romantic projection onto and representation of themselves through the Other, who in this particular case was represented by India.

When the German Romantics considered Indian tradition as being *verdeutscht*, what exactly did they see as distinctive in this tradition? What was the importance of

47 Seyhan., p. 23.
precisely India’s being the Other for them? How did this projection occur and develop?

“In order to strive for a clear depiction of German Romantic involvement with the mythical picture of India, it is necessary to follow the entangled path Indic culture took to the West, specifically to Germany, in some detail”, Leslie Willson emphasizes. 48

An examination of the major landmarks along this entangled path presupposes, first, a reconstruction of the European encounter with the Indian civilization and second, the controversies that this encounter stimulated within the European, specifically German cultural space. More specifically, this examination presupposes a review of the emergence of new British Indology in the late eighteenth century and an analysis of the influence that the British scholarship on India exerted on the German Romantic thought, and of the transformations that the British innovations underwent in the German cultural context. Significantly in the context of this Dissertation, this examination focuses on the interaction between two social Weltanschauungen: that of the founding fathers of the British Indian studies, on the one hand, and that of the recipients of the British influence, the German Romantics, on the other.

**Chapter Two. Britain’s Discovery of India: The Colonial Rulers and Their Fact-Finding Team**

This chapter examines the major parameters of the European, specifically British encounter with Indian civilization that started in the 1780s and led to a variety of long-term cultural consequences one of which was the stimulation of the German Indian studies and, more generally, the intensification of the German interest in India. In doing so, the chapter examines the controversies that marked the British attitude to the

---

48Willson., p. IX.
colonized Indian territories and, among other things, determined the approach of the British scholars to the Indian cultural heritage. “Were all Orientalists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries doing the same thing? Were the dominant trends in Indic studies the same in England as they were on the continent?” Robert Goldman asks. \(^{49}\) Examining this question within the chronological framework of this study, the chapter addresses the differences between cultural contexts within which the studies of India by the European scholars were developing. It addresses, in particular, on the one hand, the question of what was new in the approach of these pioneers of European Indology to and their vision of the Indian civilization and, on the other hand, the features of the latter’s image that they had inherited from the earlier eras of European cultural history.

**The Concerns of the British Colonial Rulers, or The Importance of Learning Sanskrit**

The developments that unfolded in the mid-1780s can be defined as a watershed in the history of Europe’s cultural encounters with India. One key factor at work was a newly acquired availability of the Indian sources to the European scholars, unprecedented in the history of the West-East relations. “It was only after 1785”, Helmut von Glasenapp stresses, “That the Indian texts gradually became available to the West because the Brahmins… had concealed their sacred language, Sanskrit, and the literature in it from the Western infidels… Until that time only a few translations from the South Indian languages could have been used as sources… All this explains why the eighteenth century thinkers dealing with India, had to confine themselves to summarizing the facts

\(^{49}\) McGetchin et al., p. 29.
that had been discovered by that time, and that were mostly ethnographic rarities. In the realm of Western intellectual life India had no place yet.”  

Among numerous features of how India had found a place in the European cultural life in the mid-late eighteenth century, one was particularly striking: the momentum (speed) of the encounter. Within a decade, a series of events took place that completely changed the very character of the European knowledge of the Indian civilization. In November 1784 Charles Wilkins’ translation of a major text of Hinduism, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, appeared in Calcutta under the auspices of the newly created Asiatic Society of Bengal. A year later, the translation was published in London with a foreword by the governor-general of Bengal, Warren Hastings. For the first time, a direct translation of a major Indian work from Sanskrit into a European language became accessible for the Western reader. Later in the year, another translation by the British scholar appeared in London: this time, it was a volume of Indian fables, the *Hitopadesha*. In 1789, Wilkins’ colleague, William Jones, translated a masterpiece of Sanskrit classical drama, Kalidasa’s *Shakuntala*, to be followed by numerous retranslations and adaptations in a variety of European countries. In 1792, Jones finished his translation of a major work of Indian mystic love poetry, the *Gita Govinda* by Jayadeva. This list of the first big events of the earliest stage of modern Indology can be completed by naming Jones’ translation of the fundamental text of Hindu law, the *Manavadharmasastra*, the *Laws of Manu* that appeared in press in 1794.

This series of cultural sensations did not represent an isolated phenomenon. “Although the number of volumes of travel literature concerning India was
sizable before 1750”, Leslie Willson recalls, “Examples of this literary genre increased mightily between 1750 and 1800. They were a generally widespread and favorite reading matter in the second half of the eighteenth century. Collections of books of travel began to appear as early as 1747, and by 1780 there were six multi-volumed collections available. A number of periodicals of the era, too, carried either reports about or excerpts from travel books. The collections contained mainly reprints of older accounts of travels, but concurrently there appeared from the pens of contemporary travelers a multitude of journals, histories, narratives, memoirs, and communications, some not and some most authoritative.”

Nevertheless, the accomplishments of the British Indologists represented something new and extraordinary against this background. In this context, the contribution of William Jones as a pioneer of Indian studies and, to a great extent, the ideologue of a whole group of the latter’s founders, is of particular interest. “Jones”, Wilhelm Halbfass stresses with regard to this, “Was fully aware of the fact that his efforts, together with those of his countrymen working in Bengal, had raised Indian studies to an entirely new level.” And, as one can see, William Jones expressed this awareness with full frankness and explicitness: in studying Indian cultural heritage, he wrote, it was necessary “to forget all that has been written on the subject, by ancients or moderns, before the publication of the Gita.” And indeed, no less striking than the momentum was the novelty in approach. The efforts of the British founding fathers of

---

52 Williams, p. 23.
53 Halbfass, p. 63.
Indology had not simply provided the European readers with an access to the authentic Indian texts – no less important were the changes in research strategy.

Most apparently, these changes related to two aspects: first, the treatment of sources and, second, the character of the scholarly community. With regard to the first aspect, the scholarly tradition that the British scholars were establishing presupposed, as Wilhelm Halbfass justly points out, “exploring Indian thought in its original sources and context of understanding.” “These scholars (W. Jones (1746-1794), Ch. Wilkins (1749-1836), and H. Th. Colebrooke (1765-1837)”, Halbfass notes, “Turned to the original Sanskrit texts, and the use of Persian and other intermediary languages became obsolete.”

No less important was the change in the organization of scholarship. “No longer isolated achievements”, Halbfass stresses, “Their effort led to the establishment of institutionalization of a research tradition – the tradition of modern Indology. William Jones’ founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 is exemplary in this respect and points in the direction which later developments were to take.” 55

The unification of efforts represented only a part of the picture, however. Of equal importance was a change in the very character of the scholarly mission. An insightful definition of this new understanding of the goal for the scholars to achieve belongs to Raymond Schwab. “… Fact-finding teams were encouraged”, he wrote in his The

55 Halbfass., p. 62.
Oriental Renaissance, “Which could produce conclusive results more quickly than individual efforts, however talented”. 56

In explaining this definition in both parts – what reflected the understanding of research as fact-finding and who and why encouraged the British scholars of India, one should address more closely the question of the sociocultural context within which the institutionalization of the new British Indology occurred. The formation of the new scholarly approach – and community – had much to do with the strategies of British colonialism. “As the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was stimulated by the needs of navigation”, Syendra Nath Mukherjee writes, “So Oriental Studies were stimulated by the birth of colonial rule.” 57

The linkage between the former and the latter becomes visible once one addresses a major aspect of the situation, that of agency. “The decisive period in Indic studies”, Raymond Schwab has emphasized, “Began with the arrival of English civil servants in Calcutta around 1780, who, supported by the governor, Warren Hastings, began an extraordinary undertaking.” 58

The nature of this undertaking represented a combination of motifs that has also to be addressed. It is, of course, the strategy of not any but of the specifically British colonial rule in India that one should get back to for a better understanding of the colonial authorities’ motivations for promoting Indian studies. This strategy was determined by a variety of factors. “The initial intention, conversion”, Schwab notes, “Yielded to or was

56 Schwab., p. 34.  
58 Schwab, p. 33.
intermingled with another intention, conquest.” The consequences of this change of landmarks for the intellectual sphere were ambivalent. On the one hand, to use Schwab’s description of the situation, “The aim of the period was no longer to clear a path for knowledge but for administration.” 59

Interestingly, it was precisely this pragmatic approach that had predetermined the British attitude to the Indian culture and brought about the new developments in scholarship. Characterizing this new philosophy of rule, scholars unanimously emphasize the role of British Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings. “The study of the Indian tradition and conceptual world simultaneously aided in steering and controlling the Indians within the framework of their own ways of thought” – such is the wording that Halbfass uses to characterize both Hasting’s understanding of the colonial rule and the place Indian studies were supposed to occupy within the latter’s framework. 60

Syendra Nath Mukherjee describes Hasting’s program with more precision. “He”, Mukherjee stresses, “Had his own ideas of how India should be ruled. He was ready to assert British sovereignty.” “But”, he continues, “This did not mean the introduction of English laws and English ways in India. His idea was to rule the conquered in their own way. This was how the Romans maintained their empire, this was how he could elevate ‘the British name’. … Thus he wanted to reconcile British rule with Indian institutions.” 61

Hastings expressed his motivations with full explicitness. In a letter to the Chairman of the East India Company, Nathaniel Smith, he wrote, recommending the

59 Ibid., p. 33.
60 Halbfass., p. 62.
61 Mukherjee., p. 79.
publication of Wilkins’ translation of the Bhagavad Gita by the Court of Directors, the
governor-general wrote: “Every accumulation of knowledge and especially such as is
obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion
founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state:… It attracts and conciliates distant
affections; it lessens the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection;
and it imprints on the hearts of our own countrymen the sense and obligation of
benevolence.” 62

With regard to these objectives, Hastings’ team felt a similar way. Here is how
one of the British officers, William Jones’ friend, the twenty-three years old Nathaniel
Halhed envisaged the situation. “The importance of the commerce of India and the
advantages of a territorial establishment in Bengal”, he wrote, “Have at length awakened
the attention of the British legislature to every circumstance that may conciliate the
affections of the natives or ensure stability to the acquisition. Nothing can so favorably
conduce to these two points as a well-timed toleration in matters of religion and adoption
of such original institutes of the country, as do not immediately clash with the laws or
interests of the conquerors.” 63

There was one major obstacle in the way of this program, however. A
reconciliation of British rule with Indian institutions demanded a profound knowledge of
the latter. Given Hastings’ intention to keep in force India’s traditional institutes, this
meant a further investigation into the manners and customs of the country, primarily in
the legal sphere.

62 O. P. Kejariwal, The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784-
63 Mukherjee., p. 80.
It was in this context that, as Penderel Moon recalls, Hastings “Endeavored to give his countrymen a truer understanding of their Indian subjects… With him as patron and preceptor, an increasing number of the Company’s servants began to take to oriental studies.”

Characterizing this context with more precision, one encounters a problem that had been relevant to the earlier European-Indian cultural encounters but that had acquired a new importance under the new circumstances: that of interaction. Under the British rule this old issue had become particularly sharp: The English laws were not to be introduced in India and the locals, specifically the Hindus, were permitted to have legal proceedings in accordance with their traditional legal systems. In this situation, a hard reality emerged on a daily basis. The British civil servants, especially the judges, became completely dependent on their Indian consultants and were totally helpless in the case of any contradictions between different legislations.

The search for a solution became a crucial task for the British authorities, and it was this search that had predetermined the formation of the British Indology. At first, Hastings took a palliative measure by demanding a compiled digest of Hindu Law, and it was Nathaniel Halhed who fulfilled the task in 1776. Unfamiliar with Sanskrit but fluent in Persian, he used Bengal-speaking experts who interpreted the Sanskrit texts in Bengali.

---

The Bengali translation then had to be translated into Persian; after which Halhed created the English version. 65

The complications of this procedure were obvious, however, and there was no way to resolve the issue other than to promote Sanskrit studies. Interestingly in this context, it was precisely Halhed who encouraged the future outstanding Indologist, Charles Wilkins, to embark on learning Sanskrit. And was it none other than Governor Hastings who enabled the young scholar to accomplish this goal by sending him to the traditional center of Hindu lore, Benares.

These were only a few episodes of a much larger development – Hastings’ and his assistants’ attempts to resolve the old problem that they had inherited from the earlier historical periods or, more precisely, from the previous European contacts with the Indian civilization. The obstacle that had for many centuries prevented Western scholars from reading Indian original sources was the unwillingness of the Brahmins, mentioned above, to make their sacred texts available to the foreigners. Of course, it would be an exaggeration to say that this wall had no breaches at all; enterprising missionaries at times succeeded in making friends among the Brahmins and getting an access to the secrets of Indian culture. But such cases were exceptional. On the other hand, what occurred in Bengal under Hastings in the late 1770s – early 1780s was unprecedented, and the later generations would come to appreciate it. One of the most impressive evidences of this kind came from Thomas Babington Macaulay. “The Pundits of Bengal”, he wrote in 1841, “Had always looked with great jealousy on the attempts of foreigners to

65 Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, A Code of Gentoo Laws, or, Ordinations of the Pundits (London: Publisher not identified, 1776).
pry into those mysteries which were locked up in the sacred dialect… that apprehension, the wisdom and moderation of Hastings removed. He was the first foreign ruler who succeeded in gaining the confidence of the hereditary priests of India, and who induced them to open to English scholars the secrets of old Brahminical theology and jurisprudence.”  

It was thus this British strategy of which Warren Hastings was a champion that resulted in the creation of two conditions in which the modern Indology could emerge: first, the removal around 1785 of the obstacle for the Western scholars to get an access to the original Indian texts and, second, a change of the scholarly paradigm itself including the formation of the new scholarly community, a fact-finding team.

The latter’s establishment occurred in January of 1784 in Calcutta; it was named The Asiatic Society of Bengal, and it was William Jones who played the leading role in its creation. Significantly, Jones himself emphasized the collective nature of this initiative. As the pioneer of Indian studies confessed, he “Considered with pain that in this fluctuating imperfect and limited condition of life such enquiries and improvements could only be made by the united efforts of many.”

In fact, these many, that is, a group of young officers interested in Asiatic Studies, were actually far from numerous. Among them, Mukherjee recalls, “Were Charles Wilkins, Nathaniel Halhed…, John Shore, John Carnac, Jonathan Duncan, and William

---

66 Quoted in: Schwab., p. 34.
67 Mukherjee., p. 81.
Chambers.” “Most of these”, he stresses, “Were to be the founding fathers of the Society and to contribute to the Society’s journal.” 68

The establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal could hardly be characterized as a prominent event. It was, as Om Prakash Kejariwal relates, thirty gentlemen, the elite of the Calcutta European community that met … “in the Grand Jury Room of the Supreme Court at Calcutta, with Sir Robert Chambers in the Chair, and passed a resolution for the establishment of the Asiatic Society.” “In this modest fashion”, the historian observes, “Was laid the foundation of the great center of learning, the mother institution of oriental Societies all over the world.” 69

Given the importance of the newly established fact-finding team for the British colonial authorities, on the one hand, and its programmatic role in the history of Indology, on the other, the question of the team’s Weltanschauung acquires a particular significance. How did those two, uniting their efforts for the sake of Indian studies, understand the nature of their common enterprise? Specifically, how did the founding fathers of the British Indology position themselves towards India within the context of the British colonial enterprise?

Addressing these questions presupposes a focus on the British Indologists’ motivations. One question in this context is the degree to which the governmental concerns, as expressed by Warren Hastings, determined the young scholars’ attitudes. Clearly Hastings’ personal role in promoting Indian studies was hugely significant. At the same time, there exists a large body of evidence that the strategy of the

68 Ibid., p. 77.
69 Kejariwal., p. 34.
colonial authorities had only partially predetermined the fact-finding team’s agenda. Characterizing the latter, one should not overlook another dimension referring, not to the British colonial practices, but to how the broad circles of the British intellectual class reacted to them.

**The Scholarship and the Public Concern**

For a better understanding of these reactions, one should take a brief excursion into the latter’s formative period, which can be traced back to 1765. The key event in that year was the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II’s bestowal of *divani* on the East India Company. This move, as Andrew Rudd notes, resulted in the transformation “of a trading body into a significant regional military and political power. A chartered company of merchants with a minimum of supervision suddenly found itself lord and master of a vast and populous tranche of the subcontinent.”

The consequences of these developments were too far going to remain unnoticed by the public, both in Britain and beyond. Describing them, Rudd continues: “Questions were raised, in Britain and around the world, about the moral propriety of a commercial organization presiding over the welfare of tens of millions of people. Public outrage galvanized around the famine of 1769-70, in which over 10 million Bengalis died of starvation…The Company was accused of the economic exploitation of India through its trading monopoly and depredations and annexations through the force of arms.”

---


71 Ibid., p. 1.
One particularly picturesque detail of this situation was that the public indignation caused a dramatic change in the fate of the main benefactor of the young scholars, Warren Hastings. Three years after the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the enlightened ex-governor stood trial for “high crimes and misdemeanors” before the House of Lords.

The charges against the former governor-general of Bengal included allegations of numerous cases of corruption and peculation, specifically bribes. That was only a part of the picture, however. Next to receiving endless presents, the long list of Hastings’ alleged crimes included the unlawful arrest of a Raja, Cheit Singh, that had resulted in a popular uprising against the British in Benares, the expropriation of the dowries belonging to two begums, the mother and grandmother of Nawab of Awadh, and even sending the soldiers for torturing their household eunuchs in order to extract information. Finally, those unmasking Hastings imposed on him the responsibility for having illegally precipitated a war against Roilla Afghans and for ordering the judicial murder of an informer-turned blackmailer, Nandakumar.  

The impeachment and trial of Hastings was one of the most prominent events of that period in Britain’s political life. In particular, it brought unprecedented public attention to the colonial practices in India. Before and during the trial, a public campaign, with Britain’s major political and cultural figures participating, unfolded against Hastings. For many he had become an – if not the – embodiment of shameless corruption and arbitrary rule. Addressing the court, a champion of this campaign, Edmund Burke, portrayed him “as one in whom all the frauds, all the

72 Ibid., p. 28.
peculations, all the violence, all the tyranny in India are embodied, disciplined and arrayed." 73

At the same time, Hasting’s case was seen as that of a much larger issue. Burke, in particular, considered the underlying issue to be a fundamental distortion in the imperial system. “Your lordships”, he said addressing the Chamber of Lords, “… Now have a boundless object. It is not from this country or the other that relief is applied for, but from whole tribes of suffering nations, various descriptions of men, differing in language, in manners, and in rights, men separated by every means from you. However, by the Providence of God, they are come here to supplicate at your Lordships’ Bar; and I hope and trust that there will be no rule, formed upon municipal maxims, which will prevent the Imperial justice which you owe to the people that call you from all parts of a great, disjointed empire.” 74

It was within this broader imperial context that Warren Hasting’s critics and judges regarded his role in the East Indian Company-controlled Bengal. This had a number of far-going consequences. On the one hand, the public scandal made the situation in Bengal a matter of a sharp humanitarian concern. The unmasking of the colonial administration’s practices attracted sympathy for its victims, the inhabitants of the far-away colony. This circumstance had both political and cultural dimensions. As Andrew Rudd justly observes, it was precisely because of this India’s status that sympathy with India and its culture became “visible in British literature on the subject.” 75

73 Ibid., p. 33.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., p. 33.
In this context, one should point to one aspect that is of particular significance for this study. The anti-Hastings campaign with Edmund Burke as its main figure had brought to the surface some earlier developments that related to the reflections of the British intellectual spectrum on the Britain-Indian relationship. The founders of the British Indian studies were part of this spectrum, and addressing these developments will help highlight the factors that shaped their attitude to India with more precision and thus added a new dimension of their understanding of their scholarly mission.

From this perspective, William Jones’ personal trajectory represents a particularly illustrative case. One important circumstance to be mentioned with regard to the issues raised by the Hastings trial is the fact that Jones’ personal acquaintance with Edmund Burke had started a decade before Burke's attack on the ex-governor of Bengal. It was in 1778, six years before Jones’ arrival in Calcutta, that the thirty two years old scholar and man of letters serving in the capacity of Commissioner for Bankrupts, was offered a post of judgeship in Calcutta. “Jones”, Mukherjee writes, “Turned his attention to India. He listened carefully to the debates on India and studied the laws of the country. Soon he came to be recognized as an authority on India.” It was during this time period, formative in many ways for Jones’ own interest in Indian culture, that Burke invited him to breakfast to discuss the Bengal Bill. The relationship between the two thinkers continued after that breakfast. As evidence of those relationships and of Burke’s direction to the younger official regarding his service in India, one can recall a letter that Burke wrote to
Jones In March 1782. “The natives of the East”, he wrote, “To whose literature you have so much justice, are particularly under your protection for their rights.” 76

It was thus the protection of the rights of the Indian subjects of Britain that Edmund Burke expected the young scholar to focus on. Importantly, these expectations completely matched Jones’ own attitude; independently from his senior colleague, he had developed a very similar vision of the British-Indian relationship. Interestingly, Jones’ vision of the colonial rule in India was based on his earlier experience as a juridical practitioner. Characterizing this vision with more precision, one can define it as a misgiving about a possibility of corruption of the British society by adopting the practices developed in India. Describing the scholar’s concerns, Mukherjee stresses: “Like many Englishmen of the age, Jones had little sympathy for the East India Company.” “He shared”, the historian explains, ”The general suspicion that British rule in India might corrupt freedom-loving Britons and endanger freedom in Britain. In Pembrokeshire in the summer of 1780, he saved a man who was prosecuted for raising a false alarm. One of the two magistrates who prosecuted the man was an Indian (meaning an Englishman from India). In his speech Jones mingled ‘many bitter reflections on the state of his country at the time of the alarm, and on the attempt… to import the Indian laws into England by imprisoning and indicting an honest man.” 77

This episode sheds light on the sociocultural context for the discussion of justice for India or, in other words, of the applicability of the British law to the Orient. More specifically, it brings one back both to the strategy of ruling the conquered in their own

77 Mukherjee., p. 47.
ways by reconciling British rule with Indian institutions, of which Warren Hastings was a champion, and also to the reactions that this strategy provoked in the British society. Interestingly, it was precisely the one who would later be involved in the fulfilling of Hastings’ plans, the future founder of the British Society of Bengal, William Jones, in whose writing one finds an explicit critique of Hastings’ ideas.

As a particularly illustrative evidence of this critique, one can recall a document of the previous decade, the scholar’s notes on the margins of The Extract of a Letter from the Governor and Council at Fort William to the Court of Directors (of the East India Company – A.P.) In this letter, focusing, in particular, on how to eradicate crime in the British India, Hastings made the suggestion that, for this purpose, the children of criminals should be enslaved. Curiously, he based his argument on the necessity to take the specificity of the non-Western country into account. In India, Hasting stated, “The slaves are treated as the children of the families to which they belong, and often acquire a happier state by their slavery than they could have hoped by the enjoyment of liberty.”

Interestingly, however, William Jones, already then known to have much sympathy for Indian culture, commented as follows on his future boss’ reasoning. “This is the most spurious argument for despotism, which all despots use”

These facts – from William Jones’ key role in the Hastings-inspired and sponsored project of Indian studies to the scholar’s criticism of the very essence of Hastings’ attitude to India – helped inform his own and, to a certain degree and, due to his influence, the founders’ of the British Indology message and scholarly program. As

---

78 Quoted in: Mukherjee., p. 47.
79 Ibid.
one can see, this message and program represented a product of two different, if not opposite influences. To characterize both of them, one should once again emphasize the paradigmatic roles of two antagonistic figures, Warren Hastings and Edmund Burke. If the former had contributed to the scholars’ getting access to the original Sanskrit texts and formulated the political task for modern Indology to fulfill, the latter had articulated the ethical mission for the scholarship on India to perform. And if the former had enabled Jones to put into practice his approach to the sources, the latter had predetermined his understanding of the results of his scholarly work.

As Rudd insightfully notes, “Before and after his arrival in India, Jones’ scholarship systematically attempted to solve problems for a sympathetic appreciation of India in the contested realm of late eighteenth-century mythography. “Whereas Burke”, he continues, “Embarked on an equivalent project with a view to inspiring pity for a suffering nation, Jones’ objective was for the cultural productions of India, excelling in expressions of the passions, to be appreciated by European audiences. As for Burke, this involved positioning India in ways that would optimize the interchange of imaginative sympathy between European audiences and Eastern creativity.”

One question arising in this context is that of what specific aspects of this optimization process were central to Jones’ scholarly work and what were the intellectual tools that he used to perform his own specific mission. Andrew Rudd’s wording defines Jones’ role as “a sustained demonstration that the peoples of East and West shared a

80 Rudd., p. 56.
single epistemological domain”\textsuperscript{81} and it is the way Jones moved toward this goal that will be addressed in the following pages.

**The Epistemological Foundations of the British Indology**

Among the documents illustrating the linkage between William Jones’ and his colleagues’ humanitarian concerns regarding India and their scholarly methodology, the *Memorandum*, a program of Indian studies that Jones had drafted during his travel from London to Calcutta, is of particular importance. Here are the major points of interest that he listed in this text:

“The objects of enquiry during my residence in Asia:

1. The laws of the Hindus and Mahomedans.

2. The history of the ancient world.

3. Proofs and illustrations of scripture.

4. Traditions concerning the deluge, etc.

5. Modern politics and geography of Hindustan.

6. Best mode of governing Bengal.

7. Arithmetic and geometry and mixed sciences of Asiaticks.

8. Medicine, chemistry, surgery, and anatomy of the Indians.

9. Natural products of India.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p. 68.


12. The She-King or 300 Chinese odes.


14. Trade, manufactures, agriculture and commerce of India.

15. Mughal constitution.

16. Maharatta constitution.” 82

Jones’ Memorandum deserves careful examination. At first glance merely a list including a variety of the topics of a possible research, it in fact contains a clearly outlined epistemological program. Analyzing this program, Mukherjee identifies it as an application of Francis Bacon’s classification of human knowledge to the realm of Oriental studies. “This memorandum”, the historian elaborates, “Covered the map of human knowledge as drawn by Bacon, who had divided it into three main branches, History, Philosophy and Poetry. The sixteen branches of investigation as given in Jones’ memorandum may be classified into three parts, History, Science and Arts. Thus the laws, arithmetic, etc., come under the heading of Science where reason reigns (Bacon would call it Philosophy); the scripture, the traditions concerning the deluge, etc., come under History where memory presides; and the poetry, music, trade and commerce

82 Mukherjee., p. 74.
come under Arts, where imagination rules. Thus Jones’ work in Asia was to be divided.” Thus”, Mukherjee concludes, “Bacon methods were extended to Oriental studies.” 83

In light of this program, the nature of the scholarly enterprise that he himself and then the Jones’-founded Asiatic Society of Bengal embarked on gets a fuller explanation. Most obviously, the Memorandum helps explain the collective nature of the enterprise. Not only does it demonstrate why Jones “must have come to the conclusion that his plans for Asiatic studies could not be realized by a single man or by men working independently”84 but also it highlights why by establishing the Society “Jones helped to usher in the age of scientific specialization, by forming a society which would study the Asians at close quarters and draw conclusions about their social, political, and economic institutions from the observations of its members.” 85

Given that this program was expected to be realized by a variety of specialists, there arises the question not only of a sociocultural context within which they had to act but also that of a common philosophy along the lines of which they viewed the subject of research.

What was, indeed, the general framework within which they viewed the Indian civilization? The inclusion of it in a common epistemological domain with the West presupposed a certain philosophical basis. What was this basis? One should point to two major ideas that had shaped the understanding of India that the founders of the British Indology put forward: first, the very idea of such inclusion and, second, the almost

83 Ibid.
84 Mukherjee., p. 81.
85 Ibid., p. 83.
common Enlightenment philosophy, deism. “In some ways”, Halbfass notes, “Jones, Wilkins, and, to a lesser degree, Colebrooke were pursuing questions and lines of thought typical for deism and the Enlightenment.” 86

In this context, the idea of unity between India and other parts of the world, closer to the European culture and better studied by the European scholars, such as Ancient Greece and Rome, became a key idea for the founders of the British Indology. As a document expressing it with a particular clarity, one can recall Jones’ Dissertation titled On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India written in 1784 and published in 1788. Explaining the goal this essay pursued, the scholar formulated it as an intention to “infer a general union or affinity between the most distinguished inhabitants of the primitive world”. “When features of resemblance”, Jones elaborated, “Too strong to have been accidental, are observable in different systems of polytheism, without fancy or prejudice to color them and improve the likeness, we can scarce help believing that some connection has immemorially subsisted between the several nations who have adopted them.” 87 And Jones discovers evidence of such connection by drawing parallels between the Greco-Roman and Indian cultures as reflected in the available texts. He points to a variety of the common features: in doing so, the scholar indicates, for example, that Indian and Roman poems invariably begin with an invocation of a deity (Ganesha and Jupiter). Even more importantly, he observes that both cultures believed in a single

86 Halbfass., pp. 62-63.
divinity (Menu and Saturn) who personified rainfall and fertility and who was also
worshipped as a lawgiver. Interestingly, fulfilling the task he had formulated in the
*Memorandum*, Jones finds in India (specifically, in the Puranic tradition) an account of a
great deluge to cleanse the world from sin, which includes the construction of an ark.
These parallels lead the scholar to the question of a common source of both traditions. In
examining it, Jones in many cases stresses India’s priority. For example, explaining why
the Vedic philosophy bears a strong resemblance to the “Sicilian, Italick, and
old Academick Schools” he refers to the belief that Pythagoras was tutored by the
Brahmins whilst in India.”

In admiring the ancient Indian culture and in emphasizing the similarities between
the Indian thought and that of the antiquities, Jones was not unique. His colleague,
Charles Wilkins, was one of the first to assert that Indian philosophers “have a wonderful
resemblance to the doctrines of Plato.” “I doubt”, Charles Wilkins wrote, “If any of his
(Plato’s) writings are more metaphysically abstract than some of the Hindoos.”88
Significantly also, Wilkins points to “pure deism” that, in his opinion, represented the
common metaphysical background of both traditions. 89

Adherents of deism themselves, the scholars discovered in the Indian texts a
reflection of their own attitudes. In this context, the question of where they placed the
original source of this supposedly common worldview is of particular significance.
“They”, Halbfass notes, “…Were advocates of the view that the mythological, religious,

88 Kejariwal., p. 384.
89 Charles Wilkins, “Two Inscriptions from the Vindhya Mountains” in: *Asiatic
researches...Volume the second. Printed verbatim from the Calcutta edition* (London:
Sewell, 1799), pp. 167.
and philosophical traditions of India were especially ancient and pristine.” On the other hand, they were far from regarding India as the historical source of the deistic philosophy or, more generally, of the Greek and Roman civilizations. As Halbfass notes, according to Jones, “Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India”. “Jones’ views”, he explains, “Were dominated by the idea that India itself was not the original home of the religious and philosophical tradition of the West, but rather represented an old offshoot of an original source common to both East and West.” 90

Generally, to use the wording provided by Andrew Rudd, one can see that in predicing “philosophical, moral and imaginative points of connection between the Indian and the European… traditions”, Jones and his colleagues pursued the “object of showing that the essence of Indian culture was worthy of intellectual attention and, of equal importance, capable of engaging the European mind imaginatively and emotionally.” 91

In the light of the above, one can single out the major parameters of the British Indological project that emerged in the mid-seventeen eighties and that marked an unprecedented breakthrough in Indian studies. The novelty of the new approach consisted primarily in the conviction that an adequate study of India should be based on that of the original Sanskrit texts, and to a great extent entailed a rejection of the previous scholarly endeavors.

90 Halbfass., pp. 62-63.  
91 Rudd., p. 73.
A pivotal feature of the project to be emphasized was the supra-individual nature of the enterprise embodied in the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Given William Jones’ leading role as an ideologue and his major colleagues’ sharing the principles of the leaders, one can describe it as a consolidated scholarly community. The project emerged within the context of the British colonialism, and it was this circumstance that had predetermined the practical necessity for the British authorities to gain knowledge of the Indian society. Specifically important was the legal sphere, and this provided the motivation for getting, for the first time in the history of the European-Indian cultural relation, a systematic access to the original Sanskrit sources.

On the other hand, the attitude that the British “fact-finding team” developed toward the culture to study was only partly based on the colonial interests and practices. Another, no less important aspect of the British scholars’ interest in India, represented a humanitarian concern that the practices of the East India Company had provoked among the wide circles of the British intellectual class. It was within the context of this concern that Jones and his colleagues developed sympathy with India, which to a significant degree explained their motivations for what Andrew Rudd describes as the inclusion of it in a single Asian-European epistemological domain. A path towards a better understanding of the place that the Indian culture was believed to occupy within this domain was found, the British Indologists thought, in their discovery of parallels between the lingual and especially cultural features between the Indian civilization and those of the Greek and Roman antiquities. These parallels supposedly pointed to their distant common origin.
These clearly outlined principles and attitudes embodied in the British Indologists’ scholarly practices offer a possibility of considering the worldview of Jones and his colleagues as a phenomenon with some features of a distinctive social Weltanschauung. And, significantly in expanding its influence beyond the British cultural space, specifically in the process of influencing the intellectuals belonging to other cultures of Europe, this Weltanschauung had to interact with a variety of other Weltanschauungs. The complex of the scholarly ideas that had come from William Jones and his colleagues was placed thus within a foreign discourse where it inosculated with other powerful cultural factors. One example of such inosculation was the emergence and further evolution of the German discourse on India.

Chapter Three. The German Indian Renaissance and its Historical Roots

The diversity of sociocultural contexts was something with which the members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal dealt on a daily basis. Interestingly, a sharp feeling of otherness marked not only their understanding of the differences between the culture they represented and the one they attempted to describe but even to how they viewed their own place within their interaction. “It is not here as in Europe”, William Jones wrote in 1787 to his friend, George John, “Where many scholars and philosophers are professedly without other pursuit; here every member of our Society is a man of business occupied in his respective line of revenue, commerce, law, medicine, military affairs and so forth; his leisure must be followed in great part to the care of his health even if pleasure engage no
share of it, what part of it remains then for literature.” But, “the scholar continued, “The world if they are candid… will wonder that we have done so much.”  

In fact, Jones had no reasons for complaining: it did not take the scholarly world much time to recognize the British scholars’ unique contributions to the studies of India. Importantly, the recognition came from Bengal itself: the local intellectuals considered the role of the Asiatic Society as a milestone in the history of Oriental Studies, primarily in that of their own country. “The Asiatic society”, Om Prakash Kejariwal writes, “For the first time, took up in an organized manner the task of retrieving, restoring, preserving and studying the ancient remains of the country, and so revealing the country’s past.”

The impact of the new British Indology went far beyond, however. It was soon recognized as an all-European phenomenon. Not only did the other nations’ intellectuals admire the English colleagues’ success (as well as the new world that the members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal had opened up to them) but they were also eager to take the road the British had discovered. Among many examples of a major success, two are particularly striking, those of the Bhagavad Gita and Kalidasa’s Sakuntala. A year after Wilkins’ version of the former had been published it was retranslated in France by Abbe Parraud. Shortly thereafter, the Bhagavad Gita appeared in a Russian translation (from English): the champion of the Russian Enlightenment, Nicolai Novikov, published Baguat-Geta, or the Conversation between Krishna and Arjoon (Baguat-Geta, ili Besedy Krishny s Arjunom) in his publishing house. Another topic of common admiration was Sakuntala. In Germany, Jones' translation of the play

92 Quoted in: Mukherjee., p. 88.
93 Kejariwal., p. 221.
was retranslated by Georg Forster and became a favorite reading and a topic of passionate discussions among the German cultural community. In Russia, Nicolay Karamzin translated the Kalidasa’s drama (from the Forster’s German version) alongside with the Goethe’s motto and published it in his Moskovsky Journal and later, in his Pantheon inostrannoi litatury (Pantheon of Foreign Literature).

Of a particular interest in this context is in what terms the European intellectuals, within the British cultural space and beyond, interpreted the British discovery of the Indian culture. In estimating the all-European impact of this phenomenon, they juxtaposed it with the Renaissance. “Since the Renaissance”, wrote, for example, the prominent scholar of Sanskrit literature, Arthur Macdonnel, “There has been no event of such world-wide significance in the history of culture as the discovery of Sanskrit Literature in the latter part of the eighteenth century.” 94

Interestingly, however, it is precisely the parallels between the British Indologists’ contributions and the Renaissance that shed light on the differences between the cultural contexts, within which the discoveries that William Jones and his colleagues had made were perceived and interpreted. If Jones’ own methodology could be traced back to a Renaissance philosopher, Francis Bacon, the others, while comparing the British scholars’ contributions with the Renaissance, understood the latter phenomenon in a different way.

An impressive illustration of such alternative provided Edgar Quinet. About half a century after the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the French writer

declared the European discovery of the Indian culture to be the second Renaissance in the history of Europe. In his *The Genius of Religions*, he wrote that the arrival of the Hindu manuscripts in the West produced an effect equal to that produced in the fifteenth century by the arrival of the Greek manuscripts and the Byzantine commentators after the fall of Constantinople.

Significantly however, the essence of this second, Oriental Renaissance, as Raymond Schwab would term it in the twentieth century, was interpreted as substantially different from that of the first, classical Renaissance as well as from the British view of India. If the founders of the British Indology considered India as a part of a common West-Eastern intellectual realm, some of the receivers of their influence considered the Oriental Renaissance as an alternative to the first and the Indian heritage, as that to the Western. “The orientalists”, Schwab emphasized, “Proclaimed that, in its entirety, an antiquity more profound, more philosophical, and more poetical than that of Greece and Rome was emerging from the depths of Asia.”

In fact, Quinet went even further. Asserting that the second Renaissance marked the close of the neoclassical age the way the latter had marked the close of the medieval age he expected it to bring about “a new Reformation of the religious and secular world.”  

In explaining these aspirations, Raymond Schwab points to Quinet’s “German masters” – the strong German Romantic influence that the French writer had undergone. And as it was, indeed, the German-speaking realm that became the center of what has been described as the Oriental, specifically Indian Renaissance representing a reception

---

95 Quoted in: Schwab., p. 11.
of the British scholarly influence and simultaneously, a cultural-philosophical alternative to the British understanding of India.

**India within the German Cultural Landscape**

On the first stage of their encounter with the Indian cultural products, German cultural community confined itself to an enthusiastic reaction to the influence of the British Indology. “The materials on India that England now supplies us with … inspire me to draw one day a silhouette of this country so foreign to us”, Georg Forster, the German translator of Sakontala, wrote to Herder in May 1791.  

Many shared Forster’s feelings and followed his example. As Paul Hoffmann emphasizes, “The Indian treasures that the Englishmen were importing were immediately translated into German.” “In 1795-1797”, the historian continues, “A resident of Erlangen, Johannes Fick translated Jones’ *Essays on Asia*. In 1797, Huettner translated *The Laws of Manu* from English, and in 1802, Friedrich Majer translated the first canzones of the *Bhagavadgita*… These (translations) were published in (Julius) Klaproth’s *Asiatisches Magazin* that appeared first in 1802.”

That was, however, not only the beginning of the German fascination with the Indian culture but also, no less importantly, that of a large German controversy over it. In the same year when Majer’s translation of the fragment of the *Bhagavad Gita* appeared in the press, Friedrich Schlegel wrote a letter to Ludwig Tieck in which he clearly articulated the German Romantic understanding of the Indian Sanskrit heritage. “It is there (in Sanskrit) that lays the source of all languages, all thoughts, and all poetry of

---

96 Quoted in: Hoffmann., p. 9.
97 Ibid., p. 37.
human spirit; everything, everything with no exception originates in India. I got a completely different view of many things after becoming able to scoop from this source”.  

This enthusiasm for India was far from unanimous, however. Some major figures in the German intellectual community demonstrated the opposite attitude. Immanuel Kant, for example, associated “unclear thinking and overweening enthusiasm with the “Oriental”.  

His attitude to the Orient reflected precisely the rationalist paradigm that Schlegel and other Romantics sought to overcome: “Would to God that we could be spared this Oriental wisdom; nothing can be learned from it; the world has received no instruction from them but a kind of mechanical artifice, astronomy and numbers. Once we had Occidental education from the Greeks then we were able to lend some rationality to the Oriental scriptures, but they would never have made themselves understood on their own.”  

These two opposite statements highlighted two extreme positions within a larger controversy about India that unfolded in the German-speaking realm in the last years of the eighteenth century and continued well into the first half of the nineteenth century. This debate among the participants of which one encounters a number of major German cultural figures, was due to a variety of factors. Among them, two ones were of particular importance: first, the sources on which the German thinkers relied in

---

99 Herling., p. 87.  
interpreting the Indian heritage and, second, the cultural traditions and specific cultural needs that had to a substantial degree predetermined their purposes in doing so.

**The Two Indias in the German Mind**

On May 17, 1791, Georg Forster sent his translation of Sakontala to Herder. “My dear and deeply respected friend”, he wrote in the accompanying letter, “I am sending you my Sakontala… I am happy to think that this stepdaughter of mine will provide you who has so much understanding of the blossom of the Oriental imagination, another couple of good hours. You will find the Asians with refined sensibility there; even more valuable is, however, the authenticity (Wahrheit) of this sensibility. And all this (had emerged) at the Ganges, a hundred years B.C! If Lessing were still alive!”

Herder reacted enthusiastically. Not only did he review the translation in an issue of his *Zerstraeute Blaetter* (where another Forster’s submission, his translation of Wilkin’s version of the Indian volume of didactic fables, the *Hitopadesha*, was also published), but he also composed a motto for the translation of *Sakontala*, a short poem that can serve as a clue to his understanding of India: “Wo Sakuntala lebt mit ihrem entschwundenen Knaben,/ Wo Duschmanta sie neu, neu von den Goettern empfaengt, / Sei mir gegruesst, o heiliges Land, und du Fuehrer der Toene, / Stimme des Herzens, erheb’ oft mich im Aether dahin.”

Herder was, probably, the first German author to describe India as a “holy country” (*heiliges Land*). “For Herder”, Paul Hoffmann observes, ”India was the country of his own soul. It was his own nostalgia for a country inhabited by the souls as gentle

---

101 Quoted in: Hoffmann., p. 9.
and beautiful as his own … seems to have found… a realization in his Ideen. Thus, Herder makes Hindustan a country of the German poetic nostalgia to remain that for many German Romantics.” 103

Soon, however, the term “heilig” as applied to India was to acquire a more explicit religious connotation. If Jones and Wilkins juxtaposed the Indian gods and goddesses with those of Hellas and Rome, Friedrich Majer found the Indian tradition similar to the Old Testament. “The more one familiarizes oneself with the spirit of the most ancient Indizismus, that is, with Brahmanism, with the latter’s all branches, flowers, and fruits,” he wrote in 1803, “The more…one becomes convinced that the question (that Herder has posed in his immortal Ideas) – how the Elohim had taken care of Man, that is, how had they instructed, warned, and educated him? – … Has for eight millennia been perfectly well answered with it and through It (Hinduism – A.P.)”. 104

Approximately four years earlier (no later than 1799), Novalis went even further: in his Geistliche Lieder, the great poet of the German Romanticism associated India with Jesus Christ: “Hat Christus sich mir kund gegeben, /Und bin ich seiner erst gewiss, /Wie schnell verzieht ein lichtes Leben /Die bodenlose Finsterniss. /Mit ihm bin ich erst Mensch geworden,/Das Schicksal wird verklaert durch ihn,/Und Indien muss selbst im Norden /Um den Geliebten froehlich bluehn.” (Once Jesus revealed himself to me, /And I am one of his faithful, /The light quickly destroys/ The bottomless darkness. /It is

103 Quoted in: Hoffmann., p. 8.
104 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
only with Him that I have become a man./ It is He who transfigures life./And even India delightedly flourishes in the North /Around the Beloved One.”\textsuperscript{105}

This Romantic enthusiasm represented only one side of the coin, however. To get a fuller picture of what India was associated with in the European, specifically German mind, one should point out that there existed also another image of India, and this image had nothing in common with that of \textit{heiliges Land}. A curious manifestation of this other image and its meaning in the context of the era's ideological struggles became a huge scandal in the German intellectual community. It occurred in 1790, a few months before Georg Forster had finished his translation of \textit{Sakontala}.

The incident in question represented an episode in the struggle between different groups of the adherents of the Enlightenment, the \textit{Aufklaerers}. Among numerous cultural figures involved, directly or indirectly, in this scandal that shocked the German cultural community, central roles were played by one of the most radical \textit{Aufklaerers}, Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, an internationally celebrated physician and influential man of letters, Johann Georg Zimmermann, and the outstanding German playwright, August von Kotzebue.

The campaign that the Berlin \textit{Aufklaerers} had unleashed against Zimmermann, a doctor known to have consulted Friedrich of Prussia and corresponded with Catherine the Great, was due to a combination of political and personal factors. Carl Friedrich Bahrdt, a sharp writer, had published a harsh pamphlet attacking Zimmerman. It was, however, not

\textsuperscript{105} Novalis, \textit{Werke, Tagebuecher und Briefe} (Munich: Hanser, 1978)., p. 181.
this pamphlet but a reaction to it that had caused a particularly loud scandal: a play published in 1790 and titled *Doctor Bahrdt mit der eisernen Stirn* (Doctor Bahrdt with the Iron Forehead).\(^{106}\)

One particularly scandalous detail of the episode was the question of the play’s authorship. The name of the author appeared on the front page as Freyherr von Knigge, although Adolph von Knigge, a prolific writer and a personality of all-German recognition, had nothing to do with the play. It took the investigators several months to unmask the mystification. The true author of the play was Zimmermann’s friend, the distinguished playwright August von Kotzebue, and this story turned out to be in many ways fatal for his future reputation. \(^{107}\)

Kotzebue’s falsification infuriated Knigge and many others. They were angered not simply by the falsified authorship, but also by the character of the play. As Sten Gunnar Flyght notes, it represented “little more than a string of the most crude indecencies imaginable”. \(^{108}\) The first scene of the play is of particular interest. “The first scene opens in Doctor Bahrdt’s room in the vineyard. In the background are Bahrdt’s lares and penates, specifically a lingam. … A servant enters to announce a visitor. Here is how he does so: “There is something outside that seems to belong to the class of marine crabs. It has the humped back of a cat, a monkey-face, a lot of arms and legs with


\(^{108}\) Flyght., p. 315.
claws attached, and a set of false teeth in its maw.” The visitor, a journalist named Lichtenberg, is followed by a number of characters such as Nicolai, Mauvillon, Biester, Gedike, Kaestner, Campe, Trapp, and others. (All are members of the Aufklärer-circles, well known to the German public, and they appear in Kotzebue’s play under their real names). They start a Seven Minutes War with Bahrdt, which Bahrdt ends by uniting them against Zimmermann. When Lichtenberg discovers that they are in danger of being suffocated by their noxious vapors, they adjourn in the garden where a foul orgy takes place. Eventually Bahrdt summons the crew to order by exhorting them to undertake the campaign against Zimmermann, saying that he will do his part by accusing Zimmermann of being not a knight but a varlet. They all confirm the conspiracy by an oath on the lingam.” 109

How to explain this grotesque detail? Neither Bahrdt nor any other individual placed by Kotzebue in his scandalous dramatic pamphlet was known to have displayed any interest in Indian Studies. Instead, however, they were very much involved in the sharp religious-philosophical debates of the German Enlightenment era including, as Peter Park notes, “criticism of orthodox religion and… the rational and historicist critique of the Old and New Testaments.” This criticism, the historian clarifies, involved “questioning the historical authenticity of scripture and helping to replace scriptural religion with a rationally acceptable one”. In doing so, some adherents of the Enlightenment “argued for the historical and cultural relativity of the Bible and explained it as God’s accommodation to the Jewish and Greek peoples.” 110

109 Ibid.
This “culturally relativistic interpretation” with regard to revelation naturally provoked sharp reactions from the adherents of orthodoxy, both Lutheran and Roman-Catholic. In this context, the lampoonist caricatured of the targeted Aufklärers as individuals going in their rejection of Christianity so far as to clandestinely worship the lingam, that is, to practice the Hindu rituals in their supposedly particularly scandalous version. This caricature sheds light on a circumstance of particular importance for this study: as early as 1790, at the very onset of the period of the German fascination with India, the image of India could acquire sharply negative ideological connotations.

One can thus conclude that it was not one but two contrasting images of India – that of the heiliges Land inhabited by the gentle Romantic souls – and that of the shameful pagan practices – that were in the air in the late eighteenth century Germany. Understanding what this dualism meant to the German culture requires examining the intellectuals who reflected on these two images and juxtaposed them in their creative work. The one who articulated this controversy with a special depth and expressiveness was Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

**Goethe’s Ambivalence: The Reiner Ost and the God-Beasts**

To begin with, it was Goethe who enthusiastically supported the publication of Forster’s translation of Sakuntala and even composed a short poetic motto expressing his admiration of the play: “Willst du die Bluethen des fruehen, die Fruechte des spaeteren Jahres, /Willst du, was reizt und entzueckt, willst du, was saettigt und naehrt, / Willst du
den Himmel, die Erde mit Einem Namen begreifen, / Nenn ich, Sakontala, dich, und so ist alles gesagt.” 111

The message of this short poem by no means represented an exception in Goethe’s work. In many cases, he did not spare his words to express his admiration of the Indian culture and its importance for himself as an artist. “Although I was able to touch the realm of Indian literature only superficially’, Goethe wrote to Count Sergey Uvarov in 1811, “My earlier love for the Vedas has always been fed anew through Sonnerat’s contributions, Jones’ industrial efforts as well as through the new translations of the Gita-Govinda.” “Some legends”, Goethe continued, “Inspired me to elaborate them.” 112

Indeed, the traces of India’s influence in Goethe’s poetry are numerous. Not only did he compose, after reading Sakuntala, The Prologue in Heaven (Prolog im Himmel) to his Faust, but he also wrote several poems, such as Der Gott und die Bajadere and, later, Der Pariah, based on Indian legends. At the same time, no less numerous and expressive are the evidences of what Paul Hoffmann has characterized as the poet’s rejection of the Indian spirit (ablehnung vom indischen Geiste), which are scattered in his poetic works, specifically the later ones. 113

In 1819, two decades after Herder’s death, Goethe published his Das West-Oestliche Divan, a volume of Orient-colored poetry inspired by the cultural treasures of the Middle East and accompanied by the poet’s lengthy commentaries in prose. A delighted interpreter of Arabic and especially Persian poetry, Goethe found much more

112 Ibid.
113 Hoffmann, p. 36.
critical words for India. From this perspective his explicit juxtaposition of the Persian and Indian worlds is particularly illustrative. “Very little seems to have strayed from the West to even the nearest East”, he wrote, “But India was observed with particular interest. To Persian venerators of fire and the other elements, the insanely monstrous religion of India was no more acceptable than an abstruse Indian philosophy was to a Persian man of the world.” 114

It was not surprising that such remarks infuriated the Romantics looking at India with Herder’s eyes, to use Paul Hoffmann’s words. “What do you say about Goethe’s Divan?” Friedrich Schlegel asked his brother August Wilhelm in a letter written in November 1819. “Are you going”, he continued, “To let him, an outsider, get away with imprudently vilifying everything Indic?” 115

Schlegel’s wording is noteworthy in two respects. First, Goethe is characterized as an outsider, which possibly refers to both his anti-Romantic position and, more specifically, his not sharing the Romantic attitude towards the Indian culture. In both these respects the adequacy of Schlegel’s definition is indisputable. There remains another question, however: to what degree his accusation of Goethe of “imprudently vilifying everything Indic” was just?

An interesting evidence of the poet’s general attitude to the Indian culture is provided by one of his conversations with Eckermann. “If we trust the information that comes from the Brits”, Goethe stated, “There nothing foreign to us in this (Indian)


115 Quoted in Willson., p. 64.
philosophy.” “Rather”, he continued, “It repeats the eras that we all have gone through. As children, we are all sensualists; when in love, we attribute the one we love the features that he (she) basically does not have; we are therefore idealists. Once our love starts shaking, once we begin to doubt about the beloved one's faithfulness, we immediately become skeptical. Toward the end of the life, we become indifferent… end, like the philosophers of India, we end up as quietists.”

In light of these words, Schlegel’s definition of Goethe as an “outsider” appears partially adequate. Relying on the information provided by the British scholars, Goethe regarded India as a culture with no serious difference from his own. More specifically, he by no means considered it as an alternative to the West. On the other hand, Eckermann’s account does not explain Goethe’s ambivalence towards India. An opportunity to do so provides the *Zahme Xenien*, a volume of poetry published a year after the *Divan*, where Goethe articulates his attitude to the Indian spirituality with particular clarity. In this series of maxims, epigrams, and poetic invectives, the poet makes no disguise of his criticism of both the Orient and its Western admirers and emulators: “Sonst warst du so weit vom Prahlen entfernt, / Wo hast du das Prahlen so grausam gelernt?"/ Im Orient lernt ich das Prahlen. / Doch seit ich zurueck bin, im westlichen Land;/ Zu meiner Beruhigung find ich und fand/ Zu Hunderten Orientalen.”

Having expressed this anti-Oriental message, the poet explains the reason and this reason relates to his interpretation of the Indian understanding of divinity: “Gott hat den Menschen gemacht/ Nach seinem Bilde;/ Dann kame er selbst herab,/ Mensch, lieb und milde. / Barbaren hatten versucht/ Sich Goetter zu machen; Allein sie sahen verflucht/ Garstiger als Drachen. / Wer wollte Schand und Spott/ Nun weiter steuern?/ Verwandelte sich Gott/ Zu Ungeheuern?”

The poet spares no words to express his aversion to polytheistic idolatry, specifically in its Indian version: “Und so will ich, ein-fuer allemal, / Keine Bestien in dem Goetter-Saal! / Die leidigen Elefanten-Ruessel, / Das umgeschlungene Schlangen-Genuessel, / Tief Ur-Schildkroet im Welten-Sumpf, / Viel Koenigs-Koepf auf einem Rumpf,/ Die muessen uns zur Verzweiflung bringen, / Wird sie nicht reiner Ost verschlingen.”

Surprisingly, however, it is precisely the delightful glorification of this reiner Ost that follows the gloomy picture of the Indian idolatry: “Der Ost hat sie schon laengst verschlungen:/ Kalidas’ und andere sind durchgedrungen; / Sie haben mit Dichter-Zartlichkeit / Von Pfaffen und Fratzen uns befreit. / In Indien moecht ich selber leben, / Haett es nur keine Steinhauer gegeben. / Was will man den vergnueglicher wissen! Sakontala, Nala, die muss man kuessen; /Und Megha-Duta, den Wolkengesandten, / Wer schickt ihn nicht gerne zu Seelenverwandten!”

118 Ibid., pp. 614-615.
119 Ibid., p. 615.
120 Ibid., p. 615.
Put together, the evidence reviewed above provides a clue to the combination of admiration and aversion that characterized Goethe’s attitude to the Indian spirit. One factor to be emphasized in this context is the influence of the British scholarship. On the other hand, the poet’s vision of India is explicitly dualistic: he sees it not as one but as two conflicting cultures. These are, first, the nightmarish world of “Bestien in dem Goetter-Saal” and the “abstruse philosophy”, and, second, the “reiner Ost” represented by the inspiring images of Kalidasa’s poetry and other cultural treasures of India that Goethe admired.

Considering this Goethe’s ambivalence within the framework of the larger German controversy about India, one can see that one major question remains unanswered: where had the picture of the two contrasting Indias come from? More specifically, what was the source of the Romantic image of the heiliges Land? Exploring this question requires addressing the major parameters of the picture of the Indian civilization drawn by the pioneer of Germany’s fascination with India, Johann Gottfried Herder.

Herder’s Enthusiasm: The Equivalency of Hinduism and Christianity

The evidences of Herder’s admiration of the Indian civilization are scattered in a variety of his works. It was, however, in his Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit published in 1774 that he expanded his understanding of India’s place in world history particularly fully and systematically. “The Orient”, Herder asserted, “Is the cradle of human race.” “It was there”, Herder elaborated, “That human spirit acquired the first forms of wisdom and virtue with such modesty, strength
and highness that, frankly speaking, had nothing in common with our philosophical, cold, European world." 121

Importantly, Herder explains this role of the Orient, specifically of India, by emphasizing the role of its societal institutions including religion. “The religion of the Brahmin”, the philosopher stressed, “Deserves a special consideration… because it created the most unusual and, perhaps, the most durable government in the world, namely the formation of the Indian nation as consisting of four or more tribes (Staemme) and ruled by the Brahmins as the first tribe. It would be improbable that they could have established this rule by forcible coercion: they (the Brahmins) are not the warriors’ tribe of this nation… It is through their origin that they (the Brahmins) rule the people because they (are believed) to have originated out of Brahma’s head… The promotion of the tribe of the sages and priests to the highest status is something that we can observe in many nations. One could think that on this stage of culture, this state of affairs is typical since wisdom prevails over force; in any era the priests’ tribe acquires almost all political wisdom…” “Unusual”, Herder continued, “Is the impact that this order (the Brahmins) has for millennia had on the people’s minds… The character, the way of life, the customs of the population… including the people’s thoughts and speech… is (the result of) their (the Brahmins’) work.” 122

In evaluating the Indian sociocultural system, Herder by no means ignores its grim aspects including numerous superstitions and brutal practices, such as the sutti.

Condemning them, he notes, nevertheless: “The question of whether something is good or bad in all human arrangements has many sides. Undoubtedly, the Brahminic system, as it was arranged, was good; otherwise, it could not acquire … such depth and duration.”

One aspect of this system remained in Herder’s essay without explanation, however. What did its merits and weaknesses look like in comparison with those of the other civilizations, specifically of the one to which Herder belonged himself? The philosopher addressed this issue later, in 1802, and, significantly, he placed it in a religious context. This essay of 1802 was titled Gespraeche ueber die Bekehrung der Indier durch unsere europaeischen Christen. It represented a debate between a European and an Asian (unmistakably Indian) over whether or not the Indians should convert to Christianity. And interestingly, it was the Indian whose role in the dispute consisted of articulating Herder’s standpoint.

The main points of the two opponents are as follows:

The Asian: “Do you want to convert the peoples … that you have subjugated and whose land you have taken away? What if somebody would come to your country to announce what you hold for sacred to be most shameful?”

The European: “… We have power, ship, money, cannons, and culture.”

The Asian: “Do those peoples have no culture? One could think (they have) the finest (culture) among the mankind… Read their poets, listen to their sages.”
… The European: “… It is your terrible mythology of innumerable deities that makes the Europeans break their heads! What unknown, long and difficult names! What … fairy tales! Down with them: there is only one God.”

The Asian: “Would a Brahmin deny that? Do you (themselves) not have your… ideas regarding the most sublime Being that an average European is unable to understand?”

The European: “But the commoners (in your country) stick with the Pagodas, the pictures of gods and goddesses, and the customs.”

The Asian: “Do your (people) not do the same thing? And what do your sages stick with?”

The European: “The commoners have no such pure ideas; they stick with fables, fairy tales, stories, festivals and formless, sometimes bestial images of divinity.”

The Asian: “Is there any people to which this does not refer?…”

The European: “Our narratives… are different.”

The Asian: “Definitely. … (In that case) how difficult would it be for an Indian to think of a Jewish narrative! It would be as difficult as to imagine the snow without having seen it!... There remains a religion for anyone designed for him.”

Addressing the Herder’s viewpoint articulated by the Asian, Paul Hoffmann describes it as a “surprising mixture of the doctrines of Vedanta, the ethics of Bhartrihari, 123

123 Same, Gespraeche ueber die Bekehrung der Indier durch unsere europaeischen Christen. Saemtliche Werke in vierzig Baenden. Bd. 34. (Tubingen: Cotta, 1853), pp. 117-118.
and the Herder’s humanism.” 124 This mixture deserves a more detailed analysis, however. As one can see, the reasoning of Herder’s Asian is based on two major ideas: first, the equivalency of Christianity and Hinduism and, second, the coexistence in each religion of two different levels. On the one hand, every religious tradition is only a case in a wide spectrum where each system of beliefs is designed for a certain people. On the other hand, each tradition represents, in fact, not one but two forms of spirituality, the lower and the higher. The former, regardless of its localization, is based on the narratives and characterized by polytheism, idolatry, and superstitions. The latter, also regardless of its historical localization, is unavailable to the commoners and represents a teaching based on the idea of the most sublime Being.

These ideas of Herder raise also another question. For all the differences between his and Goethe’s understanding of the Indian spirit, the dualistic picture of the Indian culture was what both of them, as many others, shared. Where had this dualistic picture of Hinduism come from or, more precisely, what were the sources it was based on?

This question makes one return, in particular, to that of the role and limits of the British influence on the German understanding of the Indian civilization. The German scholars enthusiastically studied the works by the British scholars and retranslated their translations of the Sanskrit texts. Nevertheless, some of them, specifically Herder, had become fascinated with India at least a decade before their acquaintance with the new British scholarship on India. No less important were the conceptual differences between Jones and his colleagues, on the one hand, and their German disciples, on the other. On the one hand, having based their studies on scholarly realism and humanitarian concern

124 Hoffmann., p. 22.
about India, they could not provide the German writers with materials for a demonization of the country’s culture (the case of Kotzebue) or for the Goethe-like rejection of the Indian spirit. At the same time, they could only partially have created a basis for the Herder-like and Romantic idealization of it. Although they had drawn parallels between the ancient Indian gods and those of the ancient Greece and Rome, they had never associated the Indian heritage with the Old let alone New Testament traditions.

These circumstances make one think that the German authors, both those fascinated with and repelled by the Indian civilization should have had other sources for developing their ideas about India. What could they have taken these other sources from? Addressing this issue, one should note that, although, as Hoffmann observes, for a student of Herder it is in many cases difficult to identify his sources, the major difference between Herder and others in Germany can be described as follows. If the founders of the British Indology insisted on the necessity to use the original Sanskrit texts and therefore, on that to break with the earlier stereotypes regarding the Indian civilization, the German thinkers relied to a great extent on the sources inherited from the eras much prior to the era when, to use Raymond Schwab’s formula, “Europe learned Sanskrit”.

**The Influence of the Pre-British Scholarship on India on the German Thought: The Sources and Ideological Constructs**

Characterizing the history of the cultural relationship between Europe and India prior to the late eighteenth century, one should recall that India had entered the Western cultural world and become a matter of intellectual debates and even ideological struggles
among the Europeans long before the British scholars got an access to the authentic Indian texts.

Interestingly in this context, some insightful observers described the emergence of the original-Sanskrit-sources-based Indology as a farewell to millennia-long stereotypes. One of these observers was Hegel. “Without being known too well”, he wrote… “It (India) has existed for millennia in the imagination of the Europeans as a wonderland. Its fame, which it has always had with regard of its treasures, both natural ones, and in particular, its wisdom, has lured men there.” 125 Citing these words, Halbfass notes: “In Hegel’s view, the beginnings of modern research… mark the end of this search for India’s mythical wisdom”. 126

The questions of the historical-cultural roots and the later trajectory of this search have been more than once addressed by scholars. As Helmut von Glasenapp stresses, even “In 1498 when Vasco da Gama landed in Calcutta… he discovered… a world that was new and familiar at the same time. It was already the ancient writers such as Ktesius, Herodotus, the historians of Alexander’s expedition, Megasphenes, Bardesanes and others who had told a lot of interesting things about India and its culture.” 127

Indeed, the Indian world had penetrated the Western culture since the late Antiquities and it was predominantly literary texts that represented the major tool of that penetration. The texts had moved in both directions: not only had the ancient authors left

---

126 Halbfass., p. 2.
127 Glasenapp., p. 3.
accounts of the far-away oriental country, but also the Indian texts had made their way to Europe, although indirectly.

**The Literary Texts: The Indirect Renditions**

As one example of such indirect penetration, which was the first chronologically and which is particularly illustrative culturally, one can recall the *Panchatantra*, an ancient Indian volume of parables and short stories. This work of classical Indian prose (its Sanskrit original is believed to have been written in the third century A.D.) made its way to the West through a sequence of translations: at first, into Pahlavi, then, consequently, into Arabic, Hebrew and Spanish (the latter, in 1251). In 1480, in the Germanies, the text was translated into Latin and, one year thereafter, into German. This German translation by Antonius von Pforr, titled *Das Buch der Beispiele*, was published in 1481 to be followed by another version that appeared in 1483 as the *Das Buch der Weisheit*. 128

Similar were the trajectories of some other Indian texts that made their way to the West in later times. It was the European travelers, merchants, missionaries, and officers who brought them to their home countries and in some cases translated them (not from Sanskrit but from the other Indian languages into which these texts had been translated from Sanskrit) into Latin or the national languages of Europe.

---

128 See Willson., pp. 11, 37.
Such were, to provide two more examples, the fates of a number of the maxims of Bhartrihari translated by Abraham Rogerius (the mid-seventeenth century) and of the fragments of the Shatapathabrahmana translated by J.Z. Holwell in 1764.  

Yet these translations represented only a part of the endeavors of the earlier European enthusiasts for India. Of no lesser importance were their own writings in which they opened up this far away and at that time completely enigmatic country to the Western reader. From the late medieval period towards the Renaissance, there appeared a number of accounts, such as those by Marco Polo (1254-1323??), Nicolo Conti (1419-1444), Pietro della Valle (1586-1652) and others that provided the Europeans with not always trustworthy but always intriguing information about India. One should add that the tradition of the travel books on India continued in later times. “It was in these books”, Willson notes, “That the Romantic mythical image of India had its inception, for from them were culled the opinions and assumptions and beliefs which, when gathered and sorted and combined by theorists who were compelled by an attitude of philosophical humanism and bursting with a longing for primal verities, resulted in the development of that mythical image.”  

With regard to the purposes of this study, this observation reflects, however, only one aspect of a larger problem. In tracing the trajectory of the Romantic idealization of India back to its roots, the difference between inception and retranslation is significant. Therefore, in examining the factors shaping what Halbfass defines as the ideological interest in India, one should, among the variety of sources, focus on those reflecting this
ideological interest in a particularly concentrated form. To such type of the literature on India belonged, in particular, the works by the European missionaries. Since the aim they pursued consisted of converting the Hindus, their motivations differed fundamentally from those of the later British Indologists. Exploring how their efforts along with the difficulties they faced in pursuing their goal, contributed to the formation of the Romantic mythical image of India, requires addressing the larger question of what Urs App describes as “Europe’s discovery of Asian religions”.

**The Ideological Framework: The European Search for Original Monotheism and India**

Historians have more than once stressed the importance of this process for both the development of the European interest in the Orient and the developments within the European cultural space.  

This discovery – a significant aspect of the whole era of the Discoveries – brought about the Europeans’ gradual familiarization with the non-Abrahamic religions, which caused new challenges to what App has insightfully defined as the “Bible-based perspective”. The major development that these challenges had caused was, as he stresses, the relativization and marginalization of the “biblical frame of reference”. “After the discovery of America and the opening of the sea route to India”, App elaborates, “… It was difficult to establish a connection between hitherto unknown people and animals and Noah’s ark. … An equally tough nut to crack were the Chinese annals… Asian phenomena and texts, invented or not, were operative not only in the European discovery of Asian religions but also in that of Europe’s own religions, languages, and cultures. Just as a people on an isolated island tends to question its own origin and customs only after contact with aliens, Europe’s changing worldview and

---

obsession with origins were intimately linked to its confrontation with other cultures and religions – particularly with non-Abrahamic religions far older than Islam and possibly even than the religion of Abraham.” 132

The first reactions to this new situation entailed the attempts to incorporate the ancient Asian cultures and religions into the Bible-based scenarios. As App recalls, “All the religions of the world had to originate with a survivor of the great deluge… because nobody outside Noah’s ark survived.” But the next stage of this process was characterized by a rather new phenomenon: the quests for a firmer and more universal cultural underpinning for monotheism or, in other words, by the attempts to find its historical precedents outside the biblical tradition. And it was in this unprecedented context that the missionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had to act.

The Missionaries, the First Indologists, and the Brahmins, India’s Intelligentsia

The main problem they faced was that of cross-cultural interaction. Here is how Roberto de Nobili, a Jesuit friar preaching in Goa, characterized the situation in his Narratio submitted to the council of Goa in 1619: “The basic missionary principle is that those conditions must be fulfilled which make it possible for the persons addressed to listen to proclaiming the Christian Gospel. To achieve this, it was not enough to merely learn the language of the intended listeners, it was also necessary to penetrate into their way of life, to gain their «pia affectia» and their esteem in a human and social sense…” 133

Singling out those among the missionaries whose contributions were of particular significance for the creation of the image of India in the European culture, one should

132 App., pp. 3-4.
133 Quoted in: Halbfass., p. 41.
recall Abraham Rogerius, a Protestant missionary from Holland to Pulicat, the first Dutch settlement on the Indian mainland. Rogerius is known to have spent ten years on the coast of Coromandel and then five years in Batavia. In 1647, he returned to his home country where he wrote his account on India titled *De Open Deure tot het Verborgen Heydedom* and published in Leyden in 1651 and shortly translated into German and French.

In attempting to learn more about the religion whose influence he sought to overcome, Rogerius worked with the Indian informants, particularly the Brahmins. And, although they were forbidden to reveal the mysteries of their religion to foreigners, Rogerius is known to have persuaded a number of them to take him into their confidence. The first of these individuals, a certain Radmanadha, appears to have been in conflict with his fellow-Brahmins, which might have provided a motivation for him to share his knowledge with a foreigner. Radmanadha is also known to have brought some other informants to the Dutch missionary.

Rogerius must have been impressed by his Brahmin acquaintances. His book contains delightful descriptions of the Brahmins as “People gifted… with excellent understanding and aptitude, whose wisdom even Pythagoras and Plato were not ashamed to seek out.” No less importantly, Rogerius asserted that “Both of the latter… derived all their philosophy (from India) and transmitted it to the Greeks: for which reason… (the) Brahmins are even today considered the most adroit, intelligent, and commodious among the heathen.”

---

This Rogerius’ reasoning is interesting in a number of respects. On the one hand, he regards the Brahmins as heathens. At the same time, he characterizes them as the best ones among the heathens. On the other hand, he was one of the first (if not the first) of the early modern European authors to juxtapose the Brahmins’ philosophy with that of Pythagoras and Plato. In doing so, he posed the question of the nature of the Brahmins’ tradition, which, less than two centuries later, the pioneers of the British Indology would discuss, although with different conclusions.

The later scholars spoke highly of Rogerius’ contribution to Indian studies. As Willem Caland emphasized, his work… “Contains an impressive and objective description of Hindu religious rites, in general free from the restrictive and zealous criticism which brands the works of many other missionaries.” ¹³⁵ No less importantly, Rogerius’ observations can be identified as one of the first examples of the inevitable dependence of a contemporary Western scholar of India on the perspectives of those who were the intermediaries between him and the culture that he attempted to understand.

Of even greater significance for the formation of the picture of the Indian culture that would become embedded in the European discourse was the contribution of Roberto de Nobili (1577 – 1656). Halbfass describes de Nobili as “one of the most famous and at the same time controversial figures in the history of the missions”. “Like few others”, Halbfass continues, “He exemplifies the idea and the problematic nature of the encounter

¹³⁵ Caland., p. xxii.
between Christianity and Hinduism and, more generally, the hermeneutic ambivalence and dialectic in missionary reaching and scholarship.”  

If in Rogerius one finds the observations regarding the Brahmins’ wisdom, de Nobili developed a methodology of converting the Hindu and, based on this, a theory of how the whole phenomenon of the Indian religious thought was to be interpreted. Insisting that «the proclaimer of the Gospel must be prepared to «set aside the customs of his homeland and to be an Indian among Indians»  

137, de Nobili came to the conclusion that the general success of the Christianization of India would depend on converting “India's intelligentsia”, the Brahmins. This circumstance had predetermined his particular attention to this group and its role within the Indian sociocultural spectrum. Significantly, knowing Sanskrit, de Nobili was able to interpret the Brahmins’ philosophy and way of life by studying the major sources of the classical Indian thought, such as, for example, *The Laws of Manu* and other *dharmashastras*.

Characterizing in detail all varnas, the scholar singles out the Brahmins as constituting the particular hereditary class, or, “the order of the learned”.  

138 Interestingly, defining the Brahmins’ distinction from other classes, de Nobili cites the formula provided by *The Laws of Manu*: “The consummate perfection of the Brahmin is learning”.  

139

In the context of de Nobili’s agenda, of pivotal importance was the question of the doctrine to which this order adhered. If Rogerius had delightfully compared the

---

136 Halbfass., p. 38.
137 Ibid., p. 41.
138 Roberto de Nobili., pp. 57- 63.
139 Ibid., p. 64.
Brahmins’ discourse with that of the philosophers of ancient Greece, his Jesuit counterpart went further: from his perspective, the Weltanschauung of India’s intelligentsia practically did not differ from the Western tradition.

In characterizing the ideal of the Brahmin, de Nobili addresses the Sanskrit texts, specifically the Parashara Smriti. "A love of work”, he cites the Indian source, “A bridling of the passions, piety, liberality, truthfulness, fortitude, a learner's receptiveness (discipline), a compliant disposition, science, wisdom, a readiness to embrace truth from others, (from any quarter) – all these elements enter into the definition of the authentic Brahmin.” And according to de Nobili, this description «Recalls the portrait of the wise man which Tullius (Cicero) often draws in his Tusculan works and elsewhere, and which we find also in Seneca and other ancient writers». 140

Without confining himself to one particular text, the scholar refers also to other evidences. "There is”, he continues, “…Another definition of the perfect (or full-fledged) Brahmin, set down in The Laws of Manu; it adds not a little weight to the remarkable statement given above, and like its predecessors appears on good grounds to agree with the definition of the perfect sage, as traditionally set down by our western writers.”141

In this context, de Nobili provides a highly impressive description of the qualities of a good Brahmin. “Among the Brahmins”, he explains, “Those are reputed to excel and to be perfect who are really wise and proficient in the sciences; among scientists, those who to other intellectual attainments add an expert knowledge of the ways of acting

140 Ibid., pp. 66-67.
141 Ibid.
with uprightness and prudence; among these, such as actually behave virtuously; finally, those are perfect who are given to the contemplation of the true God.” 142

But what is the Brahmins’ understanding of the true God? De Nobili’s explanation of this is based on his linguistic observations, on the one hand, and on his comparison between the Indian and the Christian, specifically Roman Catholic scholastic traditions, on the other. As he asserts, the Brahmins’ understanding of God is identical to that of the Catholic scholastic philosophy. Addressing in this context the variety of the connotations of the Sanskrit key term for the sacred, brahma(n), he stresses: “For the word ‘brahma’ with the short final syllable – is taken to signify not any limited and false god, but God as such, in the most comprehensive sense.” 143

De Nobili’s major argument is that this term has nothing specifically connected to paganism and idolatry. “By fairly common usage”, the Jesuit scholar elaborates, “The term does serve to denote that true unique and immaterial God who can be known by the light of natural reason. Since this is the case, I do not see what in this definition is lacking of those elements by which our Christian authors, e.g., St. Thomas in the Summa Theologiae I-II.3 and II-II. 180, and other theologians too, define the happiness of man in this life – where he is in a state of imperfect comprehensions – primarily and, so today, essentially, consists in the contemplation of God, while secondarily and by way of preparation consists in man exercising himself in the speculative sciences, together with using his practical intellect and the practice of the moral virtues?” “Now”, de Nobili

142 Ibid.
143 Ibid.
concludes, “All four elements are distinctly presented in the definition of the perfect Brahmin I have adduced…” 144

The most general argument that de Nobili puts forward to explain the possibility for India’s class of the learned of teaching a doctrine in which the understanding of God does not differ from that St. Thomas, is thus that the natural light of reason shines in India as it does anywhere. Of no less importance, however, is his second, more concrete argument. “It should be clear”, he emphasizes, “How undeserved and groundless is the condemnation … that the Brahmins are nothing but teachers of the superstitious laws prevalent in this land. … The function and status of the Brahmin consists in treating of wisdom as a whole. In virtue of their professional calling they truly are and may be called philosophers or wise men, like those who were labeled such by our ancient writers who – as tradition has it – contributed to the thought of Pythagoras and other philosophical documents.” 145 In explaining what the Brahmins actually teach, de Nobili lists a variety of disciplines: the science of language (shabdashastra); literature, specifically poetry (kavya), historical sources (puranas), dialectics (nyaya), natural philosophy (cintamani). Where is the place for theology within this spectrum? As de Nobili points out, in the Indian society there are “Not one but several schools of theology, each holding different doctrines according to the various religious sects to which they belong …” In this context, he singles out three major ones: Buddhism, Vedanta, and the Idolaters. 146 In other words, the supposedly consolidated religion of the Hindu represents

144 Ibid., pp. 67-68.
145 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
146 Ibid., pp. 87-89.
in fact a plurality of groups and trends; each has its Brahmins, but among them the idolaters represent only a minority.  

It is thus only a rather small faction of the Brahmins’ community that deals in fact with the idolaters and their superstitious practices. Instead, as de Nobili explains, they deal in with a wide variety of trends and disciplines including the sphere of Hindu law. But, as he clarifies, the law books “Are concerned with civil law of the commonest type…” “Those… laws”, he stresses, “… Are neither entirely superstitious nor in their entirety the distinct monopoly of one peculiar sect, since to a large extent they are common to all by reason of their purely civil and moral character…” “For these… reasons”, de Nobili concludes, “Let it be a sure and firmly established fact that the Brahmin order is of itself none other than an order of wise and learned men, wise with a wisdom understood in general terms.”  

Evaluating this conclusion, Halbfass justly characterizes de Nobili’s treatment of the Brahmanic culture as a “search for expressions of a pristine, natural, monotheistic, and non-“idolatrous” sense of God.”

With respect to de Nobili’s approach, his interpretation of the Sanskrit religious-philosophical terminology, specifically of the term Brahma (Brahman) appears as simultaneously insightful (particularly, displaying the scholar’s knowledge of Sanskrit, unique for that era) and problematic. Indeed, to what degree does his statement that this term serves “to denote that true unique and immaterial God who can be known by the light of natural reason” and that “this definition is not is lacking of those elements by which… St. Thomas … and other theologians” had defined human happiness reflect the

\[147\] Ibid., p. 96.
\[148\] Ibid., p. 107.
\[149\] Halbfass., p. 40.
real Brahmanic philosophy? De Nobili’s distinction between the two forms of the term “Brahma, the neutral form (which “is usually written as brahman today) and Brahma, with a final long “a”, that, as the contemporary commentator of de Nobili’s texts justly notes, “Refers to the creator god who is a personification of divine creative power”, may be beyond doubt. But his interpretation of brahman as a term relevant to the Christian understanding of the divine is at least disputable.

With regard to this, one should stress that, as Halbfass recalls, “The conclusions de Nobili reached (specifically his attempts to discover “a pristine, natural, monotheistic, and non-“idolatrous” sense of God”) were presented with a much greater eye towards their practical missionary application.” 150 This converting the Brahmins, upon which the missionary insisted, definitely represented a major factor determining his conviction that their beliefs were, within the reach of reason, already close to those of the Christians. This is why, in pursuing the practical goal of conversion, de Nobili believed that, given the Indians’, specifically the Brahmins’, unwillingness to embrace a new foreign doctrine, the missionaries should take another road. They should represent the Gospel not as something new for the Hindu to convert to, but on the contrary, as a rediscovery of their own tradition. Concretizing this idea, he suggested that the Gospel should be interpreted as the true Veda given by God, but later lost due to the Brahmins’ neglect. 151

Having put forward this idea, de Nobili did not spare his efforts to put it into practice. As Halbfass notes, de Nobili himself became known in Madurai as the “Guru of the lost law”. He called upon the Brahmins “to become his pupils in order to learn about

150 Ibid., p. 41.
151 Ibid., pp. 23, 235, 238, 266.
the ‘lost Veda’.” Halbfass emphasizes that in de Nobili’s lifetime, the reaction to the missionary’s initiative on the Christian side was controversial and even predominantly negative. In the context of this study, another circumstance is, however, of particular importance. Regardless of the practical results of de Nobili’s endeavors, the picture that he drew of the Indian culture, specifically of India’s “class of the learned”, the Brahmins, strongly influenced, albeit mostly indirectly through the works by other missionaries, the creation of the image of India that would become embedded in the later European discourse.

In order to estimate this influence, one should briefly summarize the major features of de Nobili’s portrayal of the Indian civilization, specifically religion. This system can only partially be identified as paganism: in fact, it represents a variety of schools and sects united by their adherence to Hindu law, which represents a purely legal phenomenon. Only one of these groups actually practices polytheistic idolatry.

It is the class of the learned, the Brahmins, which plays the leading role in the Indian sociocultural system. Typologically, they represent the same phenomenon as the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome.

The doctrine of the Brahmins is fundamentally monotheistic within the reach of natural reason. In this sense, their understanding of God is identical to that of St. Thomas.

In order to evangelize the Brahmins and then the other Indians, one should use their own cultural paradigms for the missionary purposes. In particular, one should
propagate revelation, the Gospel, not as the key text of an alien religion but as the lost true Veda containing the pristine version of Hinduism to be restored.

As one can see, the picture drawn by de Nobili displayed a number of similarities to the portrayal created later and under different cultural circumstances by Herder. Yet there was one major difference: the former was concerned with the conversion of the Indians, whereas the latter would deny its necessity. If de Nobili considered the Brahmins’ understanding of the divinity as true only within the reach of natural reason, Herder insisted on full equivalency of the Indian and the Christian traditions.

For this further transformation to occur, the European cultural situation had to undergo a serious change. This change occurred on the next stage of the European search for records of monotheism outside the biblical tradition. It was in the eighteenth century, in the cultural atmosphere of the Enlightenment, that the process entered this stage. And it was in this context that de Nobili’s idea of a lost and rediscovered Veda acquired a new and unexpected form.

**The Enlightenment Quest for an Urreligion in India: The Ezour Vedam**

If the missionaries’ endeavors had been aimed at converting the non-Christians outside Europe, the Enlightenment thinkers pursued a completely different goal. In attacking the Church, they sought to portray Western Christianity and thus the biblical tradition as only one specific version of monotheism among many. It was this intension had determined their interest in the non-European, specifically non-Abrahamic religions. As Halbfass observes, “The Age of the Enlightenment was characterized by a very distinct association between a general interest in non-European traditions and the motif of
criticizing contemporary Christianity and Europe. One shape which this criticism of Christianity took was the attempt to trace it back to older, more original traditions, or the view that a more pristine religious consciousness could be found in Asia, specifically in India.” ¹⁵²

In mid-eighteenth century Europe, a (if not the) key champion of this quest of the original monotheistic religion was Voltaire. As App notes, “Voltaire’s eye was set on a true universal religion, a pure theism forming the root of all creeds… Voltaire thought that a pure, uncluttered monotheism suited to the taste of modern deists had existed in the remote past and that traces of it could be found in the most ancient cultures”, App states.¹⁵³

It was within this context that Voltaire considered India. “If India”, he wrote in his Essay sur les moeurs et l’esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l’histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu’à Louis XIII, “Of which the entire world is dependent and which alone is not in need of anybody, must, on account of this very fact, be the most ancienctly civilized religion, then it must also have had the most ancient form of religion. It is very likely that for a long time this religion was the same as that of the Chinese government and consisted only in a pure cult of a Supreme Being, free of any superstition and fanaticism.” ¹⁵⁴

A task central to Voltaire’s attempts to reconstruct this pure original monotheism “founded by the Bracmanes” and “subsequently “established in China” was to underpin

¹⁵² Halbfass., p. 69.
¹⁵³ App., p. 55.
¹⁵⁴ Voltaire, The general history and state of Europe from the time of Charlemain to Lewis XIV with a preliminary view of the oriental empires. Quoted in: App., pp. 55-56.
these assumptions by factual evidences. It was in this cultural atmosphere that Chevalier de Maudave related (in 1760) to Voltaire a French translation of the *Ezour-Vedam* (seen at first as a translation of one of the four Vedas (the Yajur-Veda) from Sanskrit into French). It was a text that was to become, in the view of the Western Enlightenment audiences, a key document supposedly representing the Indian version of original monotheism.

Voltaire’s reacted enthusiastically. “I have in my hands the translation of one of the most ancient manuscripts in the world”, he wrote. “It is not the Vedam which in India is so much talked about and which has not yet been communicated to any scholar of Europe, but rather the *Ezourvedam*, the ancient commentary by Chumontou on the Vedam, the sacred book which was given by God to humans, as the Brahmins pretend… translated from the sacred language into French.”  

Interestingly, already the composition of the discovered text reflected a crystallized picture of the Indian dualism of the true Brahmin’s alleged pure monotheism and the idolater’s polytheistic superstitions, as it had existed in the missionaries’, specifically de Nobili’s, discourse. “The Ezour-Vedam”, App observes, “Is set up as a conversation between Chumontou (Sumantu) and Biache (Vyasa)… Chumontou presents himself as a reformer who wants to restore primeval monotheism to its pristine purity. The interlocutor Biache represents the degeneration of primeval purity into idolatry, polytheism and priestcraft.”

---

155 App., pp. 52-53.
156 Ibid., p. 50.
Chumontou, indeed, expresses an explicitly monotheistic standpoint. Moreover, the worldview he articulates is not only creationist but also anthropocentric. “In creating man”, he asserts, “God has created everything for his use. The animals have been created to serve him. Trees, plants, fruit, the different foodstuffs and in the end everything on earth has been made to cater to his needs. The distress and pain that animals feel is inseparable from their state…; but they are not an… effect or consequence of sin… Trees, etc., do not have a soul and thus are incapable of committing sins. However vile and despicable man may be, he has a soul and is always endowed with reason. He has a propensity for sin, commits it, and after death he reaps eternal punishment. Likewise with virtue: a good man practices it during his life; and at the moment of death is the happy instant when he begins to taste the fruit and to enjoy it in all eternity.” 157

Of no lesser importance for Voltaire and, more generally, for the Enlightenment discourse was to explain the roots of the other, idolatrous side of the Indian religion represented by Biache. “The Brahmins”, Voltaire wrote with regard to this, “Have more and more degenerated… Their ritual… is an assemblage of superstitious ceremonies, at which anyone will laugh if he did not happen to be born on the banks of the Ganges or the Indus… A Brahmin’s entire life is devoted to these superstitious ceremonies. The have them for each and every day of the year.” 158

Significantly, Voltaire addressed the question of how these idolatrous practices had developed alongside of the “pure cult of a Supreme Being”. According to him, it was in a very early stage, long before Alexander the Great’s expedition to India that it had

157 App., p. 55.
158 Ibid.
begun to degenerate. The main reason why was that the religion “became a job”, which resulted in the priests starting to compete with each other and in the divinities multiplying.

In tracing the trajectory of this degeneration, Voltaire advocated the idea of the antiquity of the *Ezour Vedam*. “This… Commentary on the Vedam”, he insisted, “… Seems to me to have been written before Alexander’s conquests; for in it appear no none of the names which the victorious Greeks imposed on the rivers, towns, and countries. India is called Zomboudipo mount Immaus is Merou; the Ganges is Zanoubi. These ancient names are no longer known, except to the experts of the sacred language.” 159

As App justly emphasizes, the *Ezour Vedam*, a presumable “record of India’s ancient pure monotheism, had fallen precisely into the hands of the person whose religion resembled it most.” Describing the career of the Ezour-Vedam in Europe to which Voltaire’s endeavors were central, the historian stresses the ideological nature of the enterprise. “Voltaire”, he clarifies, “Used this text for his campaign to marginalize Judeo-Christianity by claiming Indian origins”. 160

Voltaire’s *Ezour Vedam* campaign was quite successful: the publication of the monotheistic Veda in 1778 became a sensation among the enlightened audiences of Europe. Significantly in this context, a year after being published in Paris, the first German translation of the *Ezour Vedam* appeared in press. And curiously, even after a

---

160 App., pp.13, 64.
French naturalist and writer, Pierre Sonnerat, had in 1782 declared that it was a forgery, the triumph of this alleged evidence of India’s pristine religion continued.

A number of scholars have pointed to a Western origin of this text. “There are good reasons”, Ludo Rocher stresses, “To look for the author among Europeans rather than Indians”. 161 Interestingly, already Chevalier de Maudave who had acquainted Voltaire with the manuscript of the Ezour Vedam is known to have expressed doubts about the text’s being an authentic Indian document. Indeed, as App justly notes, one hardly can imagine anything more un-Indian than Chumantou’s statements, specifically those regarding the difference between man and animal. 162

Given this, the question of the source of the monotheistic ideas of the true Brahmin, Chumantou, is of particular interest. These ideas so much resembled those of Roberto de Nobili that, according to Leslie Willson, it was precisely the Brahmin of the lost Veda from Madurai who had compiled the Ezour Vedam.163 Although this particular attribution has never been proved, the fact that, to use Halbfass’ wording, “The French text of this false Veda… had probably been conceived (though never employed) as a device for the Christianization of the Hindus”, can be regarded as firmly established. “The temptation to compose a Veda was very much in the air…”, Ludo Rocher stresses. The reasoning of some missionaries of the era represented, he continues, “nearly… an invitation” to do so. In this context, he cites the words of one such missionary, La Croze, who had stated that the successes of the Europeans in converting the Hindu would be much greater if they “had a translation of the Veda into Latin or some other European

161 Rocher., p. 57.
162 App., pp. 50-51.
language.” “Most probably”, Le Croze wrote, “One would find in it a number of antiquities which the superstitiously arrogant Brahmins withhold from the peoples of India whom they regard as profane, and to whom one should show more than the exterior of religion wrapped up in legends.” 164 Curiously, in 1822 a British scholar, F. W. Ellis, published his An Account of a Discovery of a Modern Imitation of the Vedas that relied on the claim that the Ezour Vedam was only one of a group of “Pseudo-Vedas” that had been either produced or solicited by the Jesuits in India. 165

In spite of the scholarly unmasking, in the late eighteenth and even early nineteenth centuries many outstanding European intellectuals, such as, for example, Felicite-Robert de Lamennais and even the champion of Indian philosophical studies, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron, refused to be convinced by Pierre Sonnerat’s arguments. In particular, in Anquetil-Duperron’s Oupnekhat (for details see Chapters Six of this Dissertation) the Ezour Vedam still figures as a source to be consulted on Indian philosophy. «His magisterial assertions”, Anquetil Duperron wrote on Sonnerat, “Cannot be trusted when it comes to erudition about India”. 166

How to explain this firm and widespread belief in the authenticity of the pseudo-Veda? Generally, it represented an aspect of the Enlightenment ideology presupposing the existence of monotheism outside the biblical tradition. More specifically and no less importantly, the dualistic picture of India’s two conflicting religions, the original, pristinely monotheistic and the later, superstitiously idolatrous, that this text contained, was deeply embedded in the Enlightenment discourse.

164 Rocher., p. 73.
165 Halbfass., p. 46.
166 Rocher., p. 15.
One curious illustration of how widespread this picture was is provided by a poem by a Russian late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Enlightenment thinker, Alexander Radishchev. In his *The Historical Chant* (Pesn' istoricheskaia), reviewing the ancient eras of mankind's history, he placed India within a wide spectrum of the world civilizations. Next to the ancient sages representing the other cultural-religious traditions, such as Moses, Zoroaster, Confucius, and the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome, he addressed those of India. Here is how the poet described them: "Here they are, the ancestors of the wise Brahmins, /The prisoners of the obnoxious villains,/ Who, observing the sacred succession, /Preserve their law (enunciated) in the *Ezour Vedam* /With the script of ancient Sanskrit, / (That is) the remnant of their (former) glory/ And the witness of their humiliation."  

The significance of this latter evidence goes far beyond the very fact of the poet’s explicit mention of the *Ezour Vedam*. Importantly also, Radishchev’s verse reflects the major parameters of the Enlightenment vision of the Indian civilization: the poet associates the positive image of the Indians with their being the descendants of and the successors to the ancient Brahmins, the inheritors of their wisdom.  

The key elements that this “sacred succession” (chereda sviashchennaia) entails are, first, the Indian’s being the inheritors to the ancient Brahmins; second, their observance of the inherited law as exposed in the *Ezour Vedam*; and, third, their adherence to the ancient language, Sanskrit. Significantly, this former glory and this adherence to the sacred tradition are contrasted in the poem with the current status of the

---

Indians as the “imprisoners of the obnoxious villains”. Who are these villains? At this point, Radischchev provides neither names, nor any other historical details. But, given the context of the poem, specifically its focus on the ancient history, one can suggest that the villains the poet spoke about were neither later Muslim conquerors of India, nor even its later Western colonizers. Rather, it was those professing the superstitious idolatrous practices of polytheism, such as the Ezour Vedam’s Biashe, whom he viewed as the villains who imprisoned the descendants of the wise Brahmins of the past.

**The Model of India for the Romantics to Inherit**

The evidence reviewed above helps explain not only the reasons why the influence of the *Ezour Vedam* on the European Enlightenment audiences was so powerful. More generally, it provides a clue to the very model of the Indian civilization, one version of which this text had provided.

The major parameters of this model can be summarized as follows. First, this model was fundamentally dualistic, that is, it viewed the Indian culture, specifically, India’s religious system, as representing two completely different, even contrasting types of religiosities. One continued the pure original theism, and the other was the result of the latter’s subsequent degeneration into idolatry, superstitions, and priestraft.

Second, with this upper level seen as a source of inspiration, idealized and mythologized, and the lower, rejected and caricaturized, the European intellectuals developed a conceptual model for their religious-philosophical quests for an original monotheistic religion.
Third, in tracing the trajectory of the development of this dualistic picture, one can clearly see two distinctive stages – one represented by the works of the missionaries, and a second, by those of the Enlightenment thinkers. At the former stage, the missionaries interpreted the original monotheism outside the biblical tradition, specifically the allegeable Indian original monotheism, as that within the reach of natural reason, that is, the monotheism available for those not granted revelation. At the second stage, the thinkers of the Enlightenment interpreted the monotheism supposedly discovered in India as a revelation equivalent to the biblical.

Such was the all-European phenomenon which the German cultural community, primarily Herder and its followers, the Romantics had inherited from the earlier eras of the European culture history. Significantly thus, this understanding of India’s religious phenomena had come to the Romantics from the Enlightenment that they rejected and whose legacy they sought to overcome.

In this context, one should emphasize the additional importance that the Enlightenment idea of a plurality of revelations acquired within the context of the specifically German Enlightenment also arguing for the historical and cultural relativity of the biblical tradition.

One significant factor at work was the centrality of religious-historical matters to the German Aufklärers’ agenda. As Park notes, explaining biblical tradition as God’s accommodation to two particular peoples, the Jewish and the Greek, and questioning the Bible’s historical authenticity, the German Enlightenment thinkers, not satisfied...
with either revelation or reason, attempted to resolve the conflict between them by historicizing both.\textsuperscript{168}

Such were the major parameters of the long-term cultural framework within which the German Romantics started their re-integration project, with the Indian heritage playing a central role in it. What did they add to their inheritance? Posing this question, one should emphasize one major difference in motivation between the Romantics and all the previous seekers of the original monotheism outside biblical tradition. It may be that the missionaries had used this idea for the cause of Christianization of the Hindus, and that the Philosophers of the Enlightenment had used it for the marginalization of Christianity within European culture. But the Romantics now utilized it for another goal: the creation of their own, “perennial religion” (Forstman). And it is this Romantic project that will be examined below.

The Romantic Re-Integration Project Begins: The Novalis’ Search for Mediators between Man and Divinity

Characterizing Friedrich Schlegel as a myth-seeker, Paul Hoffmann justly adds that the myth that the philosopher had in mind was a new one, a myth to be created. This anticipation of a myth to come was a feature of the whole early German Romantic circle’s Weltanschauung. And, going on to reconstructing the way the Romantics used the inherited image of India for their own religious project, this study finds its point of departure in Novalis, not only because of his pivotal role in the early German

\textsuperscript{168}McGetchin et al., pp. 84-90.
Romanticism (Manfred Frank)\textsuperscript{169} but also due to a special place he occupied in the history of the German fascination with India. “For Novalis India never attained the central importance that would have led him to strive a more detailed knowledge”, Halbfass asserts. \textsuperscript{170}

Nevertheless, it was precisely Novalis who, without being an Indologist, was the first German Romantic thinker to formulate the major parameters of the precisely Romantic understanding of India. “He looks at India with Herder’s eyes”, Hoffmann writes about Novalis. \textsuperscript{171}

This accurate observation needs a clarification, however. Having been influenced by Herder, the author of the \textit{Huemnen an die Nacht} and the \textit{Lehrlinge zu Sais} seriously modified his vision of the Indian civilization by making it an integral part of the Romantic religious project. Importantly in this context, Novalis was quite explicit in outlining it as precisely that of a new religion. «My project of the Bible is not a purely literary project”, he wrote in a letter to Friedrich Schlegel in June 1797, “It is precisely a Bible project: it is fully religious.” “I intend”, he continued, “To start a new religion and, moreover, to contribute to its promotion because even without me it will come and triumph. My religion is not going to absorb philosophy and poetry. To the contrary, I am more than willing that these primordial arts and scholarly disciplines (\textit{Wissenschaften}) remain sovereign, in friendly and harmonic relations, although I do think that the time has come for them to exchange some of their qualities (with each other). Nevertheless… I

\textsuperscript{170} Halbfass., p. 74.
\textsuperscript{171} Hoffmann., p. 62.
believe that there exist objects that cannot be a topic of neither poetry, nor philosophy. I believe God to be such an object, and I have developed a new viewpoint regarding him. The best philosophy would characterize him in an absolutely dry and earthbound way or it would attempt to place him outside its borders. In my opinion, it was the main accomplishment of Kant and Fichte that they had brought philosophy to the verge of religion and stopped there." 172

In his response, Schlegel demonstrated his full support of his friend's endeavors. "Religion, my dear friend, is not a joke but the most serious thing”, he wrote to Novalis in December 1798, "This is the most important matter… I see very clearly… the beginning of a new era; (this beginning) is modest and obscure, as the ancient Christianity with regard to which it was impossible to imagine that it would shortly absorb the Roman Empire…” 173

This reasoning raises the question of the essence of the religion Novalis was projecting. How did he see, in particular, its relation to Christianity? The question of the poet’s religious position as reflected in his poetry, prose and theoretical fragments, has been a topic of a long scholarly debate. In her study on Novalis’ Geistliche Lieder, Margot Seidel provides an interesting illustration of this controversy: a list of interpretations of the Lieder’s religious message expressed in the scholarly literature. As she demonstrates, depending on one’s scholarly viewpoint, Novalis’ spirituality has been interpreted in a variety of ways: as religiously colored Naturphilosophie (Wilhelm Dilthey), as protestant, as displaying the traces of a Roman-Catholic influence, as

173 Ibid., p. 151.
pietistic, as being outside any Christian confession, as putting forward the idea of a universal synthesis of the Jewish and pagan traditions, and as being a revelation of a pantheistic worldview. ¹⁷⁴ One can add that Novalis’ own numerous statements on religion, scattered in his poetry, prose, theoretical fragments and letters, displayed the centrality to the poet’s Weltanschauung of the question of a possibility of a super-confessional synthesis. In particular, not only did Novalis address “the religion of the (an) unknown god in Athens”¹⁷⁵ and insisted explicitly on a reconciliation of the Christian religion with the pagan¹⁷⁶ but he went even further by asserting that “There is no religion, which would not be Christian”.¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, the poet emphasized the novelty of his project versus Christianity. “Christianity”, he stated in a letter to Friedrich Schlegel, “Is too political, and its politics are too materialistic”.¹⁷⁸ Curiously, however, Novalis by no means rejected the very idea of a connection between religion and politics. “A symbolical-mystical politics”, he admitted in the same letter, “Is quite acceptable, and it has its meaning…”¹⁷⁹

How can one then characterize the nature of Novalis’ religious project? One well known major issue in this regard is the absence in Novalis’ heritage of a comprehensive theoretical work: a student of the poet’s religious-philosophical views can deal only with a variety of fragments as sources for research. Nevertheless, among these fragments there are at least two that provide a possible clue to an understanding of how he viewed the basis of the religious synthesis that he dreamed about.

¹⁷⁷ Same, Fragmente und Studien, p. 531.
¹⁷⁸ Dmitriev., p. 151.
¹⁷⁹ Novalis., op. cit., p. 531.
It is in these fragments that, having clarified that his pantheism is not that “in its common sense”, Novalis introduces a concept central to his understanding of religion, that of the *Mittelglied* (mediator) between Man and Divinity. “Nothing is as inevitable for true religiosity”, he explains, “As a mediator that connects us to divinity. Without it (a mediator) man hardly can establish a connection with it (divinity)”. In terms of finding a mediator, the establishment of a connection to divinity is, according to Novalis, a matter of human choice. As he emphasized, in choosing a mediator, man should be free. “A slightest coercion would damage his religion,” Novalis clarifies. On the other hand, the ways people choose the mediators depend on a number of factors including education. “The choice (of a mediator)”, Novalis states, “Is symptomatic and the sophisticated individuals would choose similar mediators. On the contrary, the uneducated people would normally (make their choice) randomly (*durch Zufall*).” At the same time, as the philosopher emphasized, “Only few people are capable of making a free choice”. It is because of this incapability, he continued, that “Some mediators become more common and widespread”. And, as Novalis concluded, this is “Such was the way the local religions (*Landesreligionen*) emerge.” More generally, according to Novalis, the character of a mediator correlates to a great extent with the level of Man’s freedom. “The more independent the man is, the more it decreases the quantity of the mediators”, the poet asserted, “At the same time, their quality becomes more and more refined and his (the man’s) relations to them, more diverse and advanced: fetishes – stars – animals – heroes – idols (*Goetzen*) – gods – one God-Man. And soon it becomes visible how relative these choices are and (it becomes also visible) that the essence of
religion depends not on these peculiarities of the mediator but that it consists merely of his (man’s) views, of (his) relation to it.”

The key problem is thus that of distinguishing between the mediator and divinity in itself. In examining this problem, the Romantic philosopher singled out possible errors of religious thinking representing, as he states, different cases of mistaking one for another. “It is a worship of the idols (Goetzedienst)”, Novalis explained, “Where I mistake this (particular) mediator for God himself”. “On the other hand”, he continued, “This is an erroneous religion (Irreligion) if I see no mediator at all. Analogically, it is a superstition or idolatry, or unbelief, or theism, as an example of which one can recall the ancient Judaism… that (are) erroneous religion(s)… The true religion (wahre Religion) is the one that perceives its mediator and at the same time considers it as an organ of the divinity (that is) as its (the divinity’s) perceivable manifestation.”

At the same time, Novalis pointed to a larger problem going far beyond these aberrations of religious thinking. If mistaking the mediator for divinity, or ignoring it at all, are errors caused by a lack of education, superstitions or unbelief, this larger problem refers to very nature of the true religion. Significantly, this is precisely the question of pantheism. The true religion, the philosopher explained, “Represents an antinomy between Pantheism and Entheism. … Pantheism puts forward the idea that anything can be an organ of the divinity. To the contrary, entheism defines the faith in a way that there is only one such organ in the world.”

---

182 Ibid.
The quest for a resolution of this antinomy becomes central for Novalis’ philosophy. Characterizing this problem as incompatible (unvertraeglich) with the truly religious consciousness, Novalis expressed his hope at a possibility of a synthesis of these two opposite views. As he stated, a possible scenario of such reconciliation could consist in the entheistic mediator becoming a part of a larger spectrum that he describes as the pantheistic “middle world” (Mittelwelt).  

In the context of this reasoning, the roots and essence of Novalis’ project become more understandable. His conception of mediator and, based on it, his classification of the types of religion, reproduces some major parameters of the Herder’s dualistic picture. At the same time, it represents the latter’s further development. Instead of the two levels of religiosity that Herder had singled out, it contained a more complex hierarchy of the types of religious thinking from the worship of fetishes to the idea of God-Man. On the other hand, Novalis’ conception of mediator sheds light not only on his understanding of the religions as they existed in human history but also, no less importantly, on the way he viewed the nature of the religion that he was projecting himself. Significantly in this context, pantheism meant to him not a true religion to preach, but rather the appreciation of the multiplicity of the mediators between Man and the divine. More generally and more importantly, according to Novalis, the true religion represented not a certain doctrine to which to adhere, but rather a certain understanding of the very essence of religion.

It is in this context that Novalis addresses the question of the place occupied by India within his religious universe. Among the philosopher’s numerous fragments where

---

he touched upon this issue, one is of particular significance: *the Materialien* for his incomplete *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*. Among the major points of the plan of the further chapters that never were written the poet lists:

“The appearance of Isis.

… The coming of the Greek gods.

The initiation into the mysteries.


The cosmogonies of the ancient. Indian deities (*indische Gottheiten*)”.

As one can see, this plan was nothing but a list of the mediators between Man and divinity or, in other words, of the religious traditions to form the expected synthesis. Significantly, Novalis’ plan identifies the Indian deities as one such mediator. It is therefore important to address the major factors to determine precisely India’s role in the Novalis’ scenario.

The most obvious dimension of the picture of India in Novalis’ world was the spatial: India was seen as a destination of a journey for the poet to embark on. It was to the far-away Hindustan that Novalis’ hero, the Singer, a messenger of Poetry, “born under Hellas’ blessed heaven”, set out “with his heart drunken with love”. Here is how the poet described India’s landscape and inhabitants: “The Siesta of the spiritual world

---

(die Siesta des Geisterreiches) is the world of flowers. In India, people are still serene and their holy dream is of a garden washed by the seas of sugar and milk.” 185

On the other hand, Novalis provided very exact remarks regarding India’s sociocultural system, focusing on the leading role of the Brahmins. “In India”, he observed, “The (position of) military commander and the priest are sometimes separated from each other, and it is the military commander who plays a subordinate role.” 186

Next to the spatial, Novalis’ picture of India had a no less important temporal dimension referring to India’s place within the world-historical process. An impressive evidence of how the poet viewed this place can be found in his Huemnen an die Nacht. “It was”, Novalis emphasized, “Among a people spurned by all who had matured too early and remained therefore alien to the blessed innocence of the youth, that a new world… emerged… It was the punishing… wisdom of the Orient that recognized first the beginning of a new era.” 187

India embodied thus the blessed childhood of the human race, the earliest stage of humanity, the root of world history to which mankind is expected to return in curing its spiritual diseases. At the same time, put in a broader context of Novalis’ discourse, his understanding of India had also a third dimension having to do with how the Romantic philosopher viewed the relationship between the Romantic subjectivity and India. As he once noted, “Poetry is an oriental female (Morgenlaenderin)” and indeed, as can be seen from his theoretical fragments, given specifically his numerous references to and

185 Ibid.
186 Same, Vermischte Bemerkungen, p. 340.
187 Same, Hymnen an die Nacht, pp. 36-43.
glorifications of the eternal Orient (*das ewige Orient*), he interpreted the Romantic journey to India not only as a travel in space (or even in time), but also as a metaphysical phenomenon beyond spatial or timely limitations. As such, he viewed India as a spiritual entity capable of influencing the poetic souls wherever they are, regardless of their locations. “The country of poetry, the Romantic Oriental country (*Morgenland*) has greeted you with its sweet sadness”, Klingsohr said to Heinrich von Ofterdingen, though geographically the events in the narrative unfolded far from the Orient.

No less interestingly, this Novalis’ conception of India’s universal metaphysical nature had a distinctively linguistic aspect: India’s sacred language, Sanskrit, was, as he stated, not a language in the usual sense of this term but rather the essence of language as such. With regard to this, one should mention that Novalis associated this essence with the very process of speaking. And, he asserted, it was precisely what the nature of Sanskrit consisted in. “The true language of Sanskrit”, Novalis wrote, “Would speak just in order to speak, because speaking is its… essence.”

Thus Novalis’ India exists in space (as a country), in time (as the earliest stage of human history) and beyond both of them in eternity (as a metaphysical essence of spirituality including language and poetry) for which the soul of the poet longs and by which it seeks to be absorbed. Within this context, the general issue of Romantic subjectivity displays another aspect of it, that of identity. The poet’s longing for India appears in Novalis’ discourse as nostalgia (*Heimwheh*). This motif relates also to his understanding of the very nature of philosophy. As he emphasized,

---

188 Same, *Fragmente und Studien*, pp. 565-566.
“Fundamentally, philosophy is (kind of) nostalgia (Heimweh), a desire to be at home everywhere”. 189

An illustration of the way the poet viewed the essence of this nostalgia or, in other words, the fundamental reality of which this nostalgia reminded the human soul, is his reasoning on the language of music. While listening to music, Novalis stressed, “The spirit becomes free… everything seems to it to be so familiar, so fatherland-like (Vaterlaendisch) and for a few short instances it is back in its Indian Motherland (indische Heimat).” 190

Attempting to summarize the dimensions the indische Heimat in the Novalis’ discourse, one should emphasize one curious circumstance. On the one hand, the poet’s image of India clearly displayed its trans-empirical features: as a part of Novalis’ Weltanschauung, India represented not a country but the country of spirit whose influence was seen as universal. At the same time, Novalis’ India was not a completely abstract essence: for all its metaphysical connotations, the poet’s image of the ewiges Orient preserved the major characteristics of India as a concrete and unique civilization.

The way these two aspects combined in Novalis’ discourse provides a motivation for a more detailed analysis of how he applied the image of the indische Heimat to his philosophy of history and, more specifically, to his critique of the European modernity. And, with India having, according to Novalis, been the earliest stage of world history and, on the other hand, the stage to reemerge to replace the European modernity, the

189 Same, Allgemeines Brouillon, p. 491.
190 Ibid., p. 456.
A natural framework within which this dimension of Novalis’ discourse can be revealed is his universalistic aspiration. Did his religious project, intended to synthesize a variety of the mediators between Man and Divinity, include a significant political component? As one can notice, the Romantic philosopher was quite explicit in stressing the political or, more precisely, statist aspect of his universalistic religious program. “The world state”, he wrote in 1997-98, “Is the body that the beautiful world, the friendly world spiritualizes. It is a necessary organ. (Der Weltstaat ist der Koerper, den die schoene Welt, die gesellige Welt – beseelt. Er ist ein notwendiges Organ).”

A year later, in 1799, in a key document of his Weltanschauung, Die Christenheit, oder Europa, Novalis traced the fate of the universalistic state within the context of European history. He did so by addressing the heritage of the medieval Roman-German Empire. “There were wonderful … times”, the Romantic philosopher wrote, “When Europe was one Christian country and when one Christendom inhabited this… part of the world.” Significantly, Novalis very precisely described the social basis of this all-pervasive communion. “One great common interest united the most distant provinces of this wide spiritual empire (geistliches Reich)”, the philosopher clarified, “With no large secular land possessions existing (in the country), one master… united the powerful political forces.”

---

191 Novalis, Vermischte Bemerkungen, p. 323.
192 Same, Die Christenheit, oder Europa, pp. 499-500.
It was thus this initial unity of the Roman German Empire at its earlier stage that had secured, according to Novalis, the “peace of the soul and health of the body”. “Every member of the society was fully respected…”, the Romantic philosopher stated. And, as he emphasized, the condition of this social harmony was the spiritual discipline, the basis of which was the inseparability of the secular and religious authority. “Rome itself was Jerusalem”, Novalis stressed. 193

This all-embracive character of the state-church system had determined the authorities’ responsibilities, particularly in the religious sphere. “The wise master of the church”, Novalis explained, “Justly opposed the rude human claims at the expense of the holy doctrine… He opposed the courageous scholars’ public assertions that the earth represented just an insignificant… star because he knew perfectly well that, having lost a respect for the earth as their fatherland, people would also lose that for their heavenly home and their home and ancestry (Geschlecht).” 194

What should have happened to prevent this system from having been preserved forever? In Novalis’ opinion, it was primarily the lack of people’s education that had brought about the old order’s crisis. “The people”, the poet complained, “Were not educated enough for this wonderful empire, however”. On the other hand, he continued, “It was the selfish concerns” that had caused an “internal split” of the primordial unity. 195

193 Ibid., pp. 500-501.
194 Ibid., p. 500.
195 Ibid., p. 501.
This split – the major historical outcome of which was the Reformation – led, according to Novalis, to a variety of consequences fatal for Christian Europe. It was, he asserted, “The Reformation” that had determined the fate of Christendom.” As the poet observed, not only had the split of the formerly consolidated church brought about religious anarchy but also, even more tragically, it had resulted in the Christian religion being “locked within the state borders”. 196

At this moment of despair, there appeared a new force to oppose the evil, however. “… Luckily for the old order, there emerged a new … order… that provided the old (tradition) with new armaments.” This order, unmistakably the Jesuits, though Novalis never mentioned this explicitly, represented, as he asserted, a unique historical phenomenon. “In the world history”, he stressed, “There had never been such a society. Even the Roman Senate could not have projected a conquest of the world with greater seriousness. This society will forever be a sample for any secret societies.” 197

Among a variety of the features of Novalis’ glorification of the Jesuits’ activities, one deserves particular attention: as he emphasized, in performing its mission, the order had placed the emphasis on the non-European world. “…They sought”, the poet stressed, “To… get back in other parts of the world (including) the far West and East … what had been lost in Europe…. They established everywhere their schools, they occupied the pulpits, and gave tasks to the journalists; they became poets, men of wisdom, ministers and martyrs… from the Americas to China.” At the same time and, importantly, within the same context, Novalis expressed his hope that the formerly powerful order would

196 Ibid., p. 504.
197 Die Christenheit, oder Europa, p. 506.
reappear as a powerful force in European history. “It is sleeping now, this frightening order”, he regretted. “But perhaps”, he continued, “It will reemerge with a new force in its old motherland, possibly under a different name.” 198 

Such was the large historical framework within which Novalis placed his critique of the European modernity. Interestingly, in his view, it was not the Enlightenment but the earlier Reformation having brought about the collapse of the Roman German Empire that had predetermined the fate of Christianity. On the other hand, as he insisted, the Enlightenment had marked a deepening of Christian Europe’s degradation. “The result of today’s intellectual atmosphere”, the Romantic philosopher emphasized, “Is the hatred of not (only) the Bible or the Christian faith but that of religion in general.” 199 

That was, however, only one side of Novalis's vision of the cultural crisis of the European modernity. The other, representing a powerful counterpoint to the first was that it was precisely in this atmosphere of the crisis (“A true anarchy”, he noted, “Is a productive element for religion) that he anticipated an upcoming religious Renaissance. 

Interestingly, Novalis expected this Renaissance to be an all-European and, at the same time, distinctively German phenomenon. “With regard to other countries of Europe, one can merely predict (the further development of this process)”, he stated. “But for Germany”, the poet emphasized, “One can firmly assert that the signs of a new world are quite visible.” 200

198 Ibid., p. 507.
199 Ibid., p. 508.
200 Ibid., pp. 511
Characterizing the spiritual rise in the German-speaking world, Novalis pointed to a variety of factors including, in particular, the scholarly sphere (“The realm of science and scholarship had never been in better hands… “). But importantly, he considered the variety of the Germans’ intellectual accomplishments as an indication of an even larger development. As he anticipated, “They… (these signs)” displayed (the formation) of “a universal individuality” and the “readiness for a new Messiah”.

To what extent were this universal individuality in the making and this new Messiah to come expected to be all-European, and to what extent, specifically German? In Die Christenheit, oder Europa, Novalis did not address this question explicitly. On the other hand, he did so in a variety of his theoretical fragments. In addition to his reasoning cited above on the Roman-German Empire as the embodiment of the European Christian unity, one possible clue to his understanding of Germanendom can be found in his Vermischte Bemerkungen. “Germans”, Novalis wrote there, “Are there anywhere. As little as Romanendom, Greekness, or Britainness, is Germanendom (Germanitaet) limited to a particular state; there exist universal human characters that become common here and there.” In concretizing this idea, Novalis addressed the distinctive features of Germanendom (Deutschheit) in comparison with the other human characters. “Germanendom”, the philosopher asserted, “Is the true popularity (Popularitaet) and therefore an ideal”.

It was thus in this context of the supposedly beginning all-European-German spiritual Renaissance that the image of India appeared in the Novalis’ essay devoted to

---

201 Ibid., p. 512.
the fate of Christian Europe. In anticipating this decisive turning point in human history, the upcoming arrival of a new Messiah for which, as he emphasizes, Germany displays a unique readiness, the contrast between the gloomy past and the new era for mankind to enter had become visible as never before and, significantly, it was the image of India that helped the philosopher highlight this contrast.

As Novalis emphasizes, the era to come displays its essence only against the background of and in comparison with the era that it is expected to replace. On the other hand, the previous epochs of ignorance and disbelief were, as he states, justified in the light of the expected spiritual recovery. This circumstance becomes a condition of what he describes as a historical reconciliation of the past and future. And it is in this context that India plays its part in the poet’s global scenario.

“Now”, Novalis declared, “We stand high enough to… recognize the remarkable crystallizations of the historical material. We will gratefully shake the hands of those scholars (of the past, specifically of the Enlightenment) because these (their) illusions (Wahn) must have emerged for the best of the future generations. Poetry (now) has become more inspired and colorful the same way as the beautiful and charming India stands in contrast to the cold and dead Spitzbergen to that (their) Stubenverstand. For India to be located in the middle of the globe and (to be) so warm and wonderful, there must exist a cold and freezing sea, the dead cliffs, the mist instead of heaven with stars, and a long night that make uninhabitable both edges (of the world)”. 203
This reasoning marked a substantial transformation of the German discourse on India. If Herder had insisted on equivalency between Christianity and the Indian religion, Novalis considered India as the original homeland of spirituality and emphasized the Oriental, specifically Indian nature of the Romantic spirit itself. Synthesizing the spatial, temporal and metaphysical dimensions of the mythical image of India, he used within the context of his discussion of the fate of Christian Europe’s (interestingly, in doing so, he glorified the activities of the Jesuits in whose circles the idealized image of India had crystallized) and made it the symbol of the dreamed about spiritual transformation of the world, of the expected religious synthesis.

No less interestingly, in making the image of India the representation of the Romantic spirit, he made it, though indirectly, that of the precisely German Romantic spirit. Put together, all these factors help draw a fuller picture of the religious synthesis projected by Novalis. This synthesis includes the role that the image of India and, more precisely, of the Indian and Indian culture-based imagery played within the Novalis’ spectrum of the mediators between man and divinity. Concerned about how to overcome the split of the formerly united European Christendom by projecting a universal religious synthesis, Novalis believed he had discovered in India not only another mediator between Man and Divinity among many, but something of much more importance. He thought he had found the indische Heimat of the German Romantics including himself, a cultural entity to represent the very essence of the Romantic spirit and to be, spatially, metaphysically (including the metaphysics of language) and historically (including the modernity) not a part but the very center of the whole synthesis.
Conclusion

Returning to the European discovery of India in the late eighteenth century and
placing the developments that this discovery stimulated within the European cultural
contexts, one can observe substantial differences between the two European approaches
to Indian culture, the British and the German.

The influence of the new British Indology on the German thought was profound.
The German intellectuals reacted enthusiastically to the discoveries by the British
scholars and soon were able to create their own school of Indian studies. At the same
time, the British and the German discourse (including but not limited to the British and
German scholarship) on India developed within two different ideological contexts. In
particular, to use Andrew Rudd’s wording, the British and the German scholars placed
the Indian materials within two different epistemological domains. This
circumstance was due to the fact that in their dealings with the phenomena of the Indian
culture, the British and the German intellectual communities were resolving different
cultural problems.

These differences were rooted in the different nature of the interest in India
between the British and the German cultures. The former’s motivation for studying India
was based on the colonial practices, on the one hand, and on the humanitarian concerns
about the consequences of these practices, on the other.

The German attitude to India had other intellectual underpinnings: the German
intellectuals, regardless of their views on the Indian culture (including enthusiasm,
aversion and ambivalence), considered the Indian cultural products within the context of
its own deep religious-philosophical needs. If, for instance, William Jones’ poems
emulating the Indian glorifications of the Hindu gods and goddesses represented a kind of cultural entertainment, Herder’s reflections on the fundamental equivalency between Christianity and Hinduism, Goethe’s ambivalence toward the Indian spirit let alone Novalis’ understanding of poetry and philosophy as the nostalgia for the indische Heimat were all determined by the very essence of their philosophical concerns.

The differences between the two attitudes to India were to a great extent based on those in the sources. If the founders of the British Indology insisted on using exclusively the original, specifically Sanskrit, texts and therefore on the rejection of the earlier stages of the European scholarship on India, no such break occurred in the German-speaking realm. The German picture of the Indian civilization was to a significant degree based on the sources inherited from the previous eras, including the indirect renditions of the Indian texts and the works by the missionaries.

This difference in sources of information predetermined that in ideological framework. The German image of India that appeared in Herder’s works, which was then developed by the Romantics, had emerged in the context of the earlier European search for the original monotheism outside the biblical tradition. It was within this process that there had developed the dualistic picture of the Indian civilization as representing two contrasting traditions, the upper, that of the primordial monotheism, and the lower being the result of the latter’s subsequent degradation.

Tracing the development of this picture, one can distinguish between two different stages, the earlier represented by the works of the missionaries and the later, by those by the Enlightenment thinkers. If the missionaries considered the Indian (the
Brahmins’) supposedly monotheistic religion as a worldview within reach of pure reason without revelation, the philosophers of the Enlightenment, specifically Voltaire and a variety of the Voltaire-influenced thinkers, regarded the Brahmins’ wisdom as a revelation equivalent to and preceding the biblical.

It was from these earlier eras of the European cultural history that this image of India had come (through Herder) to the German Romantics. Thus, importantly, the picture of India that they described as the highest form of Romanticism by no means, in fact, represented a Romantic discovery or invention. On the contrary, the Romantics had inherited its major parameters from their main enemy, the Enlightenment.

On the other hand, the Romantic used this inheritance for their specific purposes, which strongly differed from those of both the missionaries and the Enlightenment. If the missionaries’ goal consisted in the evangelization of the non-Christians outside Europe, and the Enlightenment scholars’ in the marginalization of the Christian tradition within the European cultural space, the Romantics applied the inherited image of India to their re-integration project. In the case of the specifically German Romanticism, particularly in Novalis, this project acquired the form of a universal religious synthesis, of a synthetic religion of the future, of which the German Romantics considered themselves champions.

Such were the developments that marked the formation of the German Romantic discourse on India. These developments were stimulated by the influence of the new British Indology. But no less importantly, they were deeply rooted in Europe’s earlier cultural history, including the earlier European encounters with the Indian culture. It was
the persistence of these earlier all-European influences that had strongly contributed to
shaping the specifically German context within which the German Romantic fascination
with India developed.

Significantly, however, at the stage described above these processes
unfolded when the German scholars were basing their interpretations of the Indian
thought exclusively on the English translations from Sanskrit, without one single major
text translated by the Germans directly from Sanskrit into German. This initial stage
lasted until 1808, when Friedrich Schlegel published his *Ueber die Weisheit und Sprache
der Indier*. What did the German Romantics’ addressing directly the Sanskrit sources add
to their understanding of the Indian culture and how did it modify the picture inherited
from the past?

Such is the question to be examined in the chapters to follow.

Chapter Four. Friedrich Schlegel: Indology as the Key to the National and Religious
History of the World

This chapter examines the place occupied by Indian studies in the intellectual
career of Friedrich Schlegel and their importance for his endeavors as a religious
philosopher and German nationalist thinker. The youngest of the three Schlegel brothers,
each of whom is known to have in some way contributed to Indian studies, he remained
in the history of German thought in a variety of capacities. A theorist of art, an historian
of literature, a literary critic, a translator, a philosopher, a linguist, an author of fiction,
and a poet, Schlegel belonged to those cultural figures with regard to which any strict
definition seems insufficient. One definition is beyond doubt: among the German
Romantics, he was the one who most extensively expressed the ideology of Romanticism
in a theoretical form. And significantly, it was this all-round thinker who became the first German Indologist.

One should point also to another circumstance making Friedrich Schlegel a figure of particular importance within the context of this study. This circumstance refers to the correlation of the scholarly and ideological components in his discourse on India. It is not only Schlegel’s analysis of Indian languages, religions, and philosophies as a scholarly phenomenon and not only the role of this analysis as an intellectual underpinning of his efforts as a religious and nationalist thinker that determin the value of his works for an examination of the linkage between the German fascination with India and German nationalist thought. Of a crucial significance is the fact that within the entanglement of these components constituting Schlegel’s discourse on India, the differences between them remain visible in his reasoning. Applying the results of his Indological research to resolving the issues beyond the realm of Indology, such as examining what he described as the religious degradation of mankind and tracing the origin of the German people back to the India-rooted *Urvolk*, he distinguished with surprising clarity between these undertakings. The major consequence of this was Schlegel’s being much more cautious in his religious and nationalist conclusions in comparison with the other figures examined in this Dissertation. On the other hand, this was, perhaps, why unanswered questions are so numerous and internal contradictions so obvious in the world-historical picture he drew. In part, this circumstance that had predetermined the fact that Schelegel’s religious-nationalist synthesis remained a synthesis in the making, was due to his unique intellectual integrity preventing him from easily transcending the border between examining and juxtaposing other narratives and inventing his own.
Another factor at work was a heterogenous background of Schlegel as a thinker. His intellectual formation represented a result of interaction between two different intellectual trends: as a scholar of India, he was a student of the British school, young but already prominent among the European audiences. The other, much larger component of his discourse as a scholar of religion and philosopher of history was his being a founding father of the German Romanticism.

On the biographical level, this cultural encounter began under curious historical circumstances. “It is a remarkable fact”, Ludwig Alsdorf wrote, “That Indology came to Germany not through London or Oxford, as one thinks usually, but through Paris: not only Friedrich Schlegel as well as his brother, August-Wilhelm, but also Franz Bopp, the founder of comparative linguistics, and his less prominent contemporary, Othmar Frank, studied Sanskrit in Paris.” Curiously enough, in Friedrich Schlegel’s case, the study of Sanskrit began in an extraordinary situation, and it was in fact the rivalry between France and Britain that provided the learning process with a unique historical context.

On May 23, 1803, Emperor Napoleon signed the decree on the establishment of the Continental Blockade. Among numerous other consequences, this emperor's decision turned out to be of importance for Indian studies. Less than a year before, after the suspension of the hostilities between Britain and France that resulted in in signing of the Peace of Amiens, one of the members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Alexander Hamilton, had taken the opportunity to travel to Paris. Now, the decree issued by the Emperor of the French unexpectedly turned the British scholar into a prisoner of war.

---

Among the British community of Indologists, Hamilton occupied a special place. An India-born son of a Scottish merchant, after serving for several years in the navy of the East India Company, joined The Asiatic Society of Bengal and learned Sanskrit in Calcutta. Among other contributions to the newly emerged field of Indology, his role was particularly outstanding in teaching this subject. In 1790, he petitioned the British government for facilities to study Sanskrit. Seventeen years later, Hamilton took over the professorship of Hindu Literature and Asian History at the East India College, Fort William, and became the first Indologist to teach this subject in an institution of higher learning in Europe. 205

One event between these two landmarks was Hamilton’s encounter with Friedrich Schlegel in 1803, in Paris, where the retired British officer happened to be detained indefinitely. As Thomas Trautmann writes, “Hamilton was treated most liberally by the French authorities, being allowed to live wherever he liked in Paris and to move about freely.” Quite naturally, he, as Trautmann notes, “spent the time in the company of Orientalists”. 206 It was among these Orientalists that the forty-one years-old British scholar encountered two people, one eleven, the other, ten years younger, who made use of his unique experience, specifically, of his knowledge of Sanskrit. The former was the Parisian scholar of Iran Antoine-Leonard Chezy, the latter, Friedrich Schlegel.

Three years later, Schlegel would express his gratitude to Hamilton. “For the knowledge that I had a chance to get”, he would stress in the Preface to On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians, “I am indebted predominantly to the friendship of Mr.

---

206 Ibid., p.39.
Among other numerous details, one illustrates Hamilton’s and, through him, the Asiatic Society’s role in the German Romantic thinker’s encounter with Indian civilization with a particular clarity: in Schlegel's pioneering book, the transliterations of almost all Sanskrit names and terms are unmistakably Bengal.

At the same time, beyond the sphere of linguistics, Schlegel was far from always sharing Hamilton’s opinions. The latter criticized, for example, another British Indologist’s, Francis Wilford's, view, according to which the ancient Indians had migrated to Egypt and contributed to its civilization. On the other hand, the author of *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* strongly supported this idea.

This particular disagreement reflected a bigger picture, and this picture was Schlegel’s general attitude to India marked by his Romantic Weltanschauung. If the British-influenced Sanskrit learning provided him with the philological tools of research, the specifically Romantic, more precisely, German Romantic attitude determined the nature of his interest in the Indian materials.

**India in Schlegel’s World**

In examining the question of the place that India occupied in Schlegel’s Weltanschauung, one should focus on two major factors. The first was the trajectory of his development as a Romantic thinker and the peculiarities of the version of the Romantic subjectivity that he represented. The second comprised the cultural influences he underwent (besides the

---

influence of the British Indology) known to have shaped his picture of the world, with his attitude to India being one of this picture’s segments.

“Friedrich Schlegel's place in European history is secure”, Peter Park writes. “He is remembered”, the scholar lists, “As the theoretical founder (along with his brother August Wilhelm) of literary Romanticism in Germany. He also has the distinction of being named the singularly most important person in establishing 'the Oriental Renaissance'. In the history of linguistic science, he is credited with publicizing what was to become the Indo-Germanic or Indo-European thesis in Germany, propagating Sanskrit studies there, setting forth the programme of the comparative study of languages, and employing the term 'organic' as a normative category in comparative linguistic science. He is also acknowledged as having attempted 'to place Indian and Oriental thought in general into one basic historical and systematic context together with European thought and thus to sketch out the possible repercussions which the study of India and a synoptic view of culture could have upon the thinking of his European present.’”

At this point, the scholar adds another dimension to this spectrum of Schlegel’s historical roles. “I shall argue,” Park continues, “That Schlegel should also be recognized as one of the sharpest critics of the Protestant Reformation in Germany or, equally, as one of the ablest defenders of Roman Catholicism.”

It is worth mentioning that already Schlegel’s contemporaries wereawidely discussed this aspect of Friedrich Schlegel’s role. “He not only introduced us to the study of Sanskrit but also justified that action”, wrote, for example, Heinrich Heine in his

---

210 Ibid.
Romantische Schule. No less importantly, the poet clarified his view of the nature of this justification: “Schlegel’s work on India was written in the interests of Catholicism.”

What did Indian studies and an advocacy of Roman Catholicism have in common? As Heine observed, “These gentlemen (the Romantics) regarded Hindustan as the cradle of the Catholic world order; they viewed it as a paradigm for their hierarchy. ... It was the elephant-like medieval era that they discovered in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Indeed, when the king Vishvamitra quarrels with the priest Vasishtha, the reason is the clash of the same interests because of which our emperor had a conflict with the pope, although in our case the matter of the quarrel was called the Investiture whereas they conflicted over the cow named Sabala».

Without citing these Heine’s remarks, Peter Park shares his interpretation of Schlegel’s central work on India and adds some clarifications. “There are grounds”, Park stresses, “For interpreting On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians as a Catholic critique of Protestant theology.”

Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi considers Schlegel’s Indian ideal in a more complex way; he places it within a context of the philosopher’s interrelated religious and nationalist aspirations and emphasizes the importance of a political dimension. “Both the religious interest with which he (Schlegel) began the project and the political one with which he finished it are reflected in the final outcome of the book,” the historian asserts. Characterizing this final outcome, Tzoref-Ashkenazi justly points to the

---

212 Heine, Die romantische Schule, pp. 240, 246-247.
213Park., p. 84.
way Schlegel interpreted “the relationship between India and the European peoples”. In attempting “to uncover the political role of this relationship in the constitution of Schlegel's book”, the historian notes: “Schlegel wanted to show that both Germanic culture and the constitution of estates (the Staendestaat) had originated in ancient India. His purpose was to give both of them the legitimacy of an antiquity more formidable than ancient Greece. This legitimacy was meant to lift the status of Germanic culture and the Staendestaat as against French culture and French Republicanism and Caesarism, which saw themselves as heirs to the Greco-Roman heritage.” 214

The observations reviewed above provide an opportunity to pose the question of India’s place in Friedrich Schlegel’s Weltanschauung more concretely. After addressing the historical roots of the Indian Renaissance in the late eighteenth century German lands (see Chapter Three), the fact that the understanding of India as an antiquity more formidable than ancient Greece was something that Schlegel had inherited from the Enlightenment and Herder and that he shared with his fellow-Romantics, specifically Novalis, does not need a detailed explanation. Another story is the combination of the religious, sociopolitical, and nationalist motifs that constituted the addition to this inheritance by the founder of the Indian studies in the Germanies. How did these dimensions coexist and interact in his discourse?

As described earlier, this combination of motifs was to a certain degree visible already in Novalis. Yet Schlegel’s case was different in two fundamental respects. One

---

214 Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, “Comments on chapters two to four”, in: McGetchin et al., pp. 108, 126.
was that, unlike Novalis, Schlegel was a Sanskritist translating a variety of original Indian texts. The other was the longevity of his career and of his intellectual evolution.

This latter circumstance determines the necessity of placing the question of Schlegel’s attitude to India within a temporal framework. In doing so, scholars have more than once juxtaposed different periods of his career as a thinker with regard to the place occupied by the Indian topics in the context of his scholarly activities. More specifically, some of them question the centrality of this place to Schlegel’s discourse after 1808, that is, after the completion and publication of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*.

A good illustration of this approach provides Tzoref-Ashkenazi. According to him, the appearance of the book introducing the German reader to Indian studies was followed by “a decisive break” in the philosopher’s intellectual interests. «After the publication of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*”, Tzoref-Ashkenazi asserts, “Schlegel retired from Indian studies in order to devote his entire energies to medieval studies, which culminated in the *Lectures on the History of Ancient and modern Literature* in 1812.” “These lectures”, Tsoref-Ashkenazi continues, “Contained a chapter on Indian literature, but the Indian origin of the Germans was not even mentioned.” “In fact”, Tsoref-Ashkenazi states,”It was not only the Indian origin of the Germans that disappeared but also the belief in India's primacy among the ancient civilizations. Schlegel says in the chapter on Indian literature, that indeed there were many similarities between all the ancient civilizations of the Orient, but there was no reason to suppose that India was the origin of them all. 'The communication of ideas between the Indians and other ancient peoples, that had a share in the ancient
tradition and in the earliest knowledge, or that otherwise were among the most civilized, might very well have been mutual.” “Schelegel's myth of the Indian origin of the Germans did not live long”, the historian concludes. 215

A curious attempt to explain the factors that might have caused this break can be found in Paul Hoffmann’s book on the connections between the Indian and the German cultures. “Having no force to start a religion, Friedrich Schlegel expected to gain salvation from India”, the scholar stressed. “Did his expectation”, he wondered, “Come true?” 216

Hoffmann’s answer to this question was negative. As he asserted, “Instead of a new religion he (Schlegel) was nostalgic for, (he found)... a harbor in Catholicism”. “In fact”, Hoffmann explained, the little book, that had opened way for Indology, represented a manifesto of disillusion. (Schlegel’s) passion and imagination had been able to transform the beautiful Herderian dream of India into a religious Fata Morgana. But then the Verstand came, Friedrich Schlegel’s constantly hungry Verstand, and the ideal of the dreamed of country on the Ganges disappeared... before the naked... reality. The radiant and fascinating things remained as before but now Friedrich Schlegel saw also the ugly ones, and he knew ... that India was unable to make his ideal come true.” 217

To be sure, there exist also other opinions. For example, according to Ursula Struc, Schlegel's retirement from Indian studies was not necessarily due to a change in Weltanschauung. From her viewpoint, the theorist of Romanticism simply had a habit of

216 Hoffmann., p. 77.
217 Ibid., p. 78.
changing topics frequently. Curiously, her version echoes the words of Friedrich Schlegel’s wife, Dorothea: “Being too focused on something is at odds with your nature”, she wrote to her husband.

Yet pointing out to the changeability of Schlegel’s topics does not exclude the existence of persistent motifs in his work. Did his interest in Indian studies belong to them, or it was merely a short-term episode in his long intellectual career? An attempt to answer this question requires linking Schlegel’s discourse on India to that on other topics, or, more precisely, examining the place that his understanding of India occupied within his larger picture of the world. An attempt to understand this presupposes not confining oneself to an analysis of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*, despite the centrality of this work to any understanding of Schlegel’s attitude to the Indian civilization, but beginning with his earlier works illustrating the formation of the complex of topics and issues central for the long-term trajectory of his theoretical thought. Importantly, thematically, this process started as unfolding within two different fields: first, the philosophy of language and, second, the world historical studies with an emphasis on ethnic history.

**Schlegel’s Strategy: The Philosophy of Language**

Two names signify two major influences decisive for the formation of Schlegel’s agenda as a Romantic thinker: Novalis and Fichte. “It is you whom I name before all others”, wrote the twenty-six years old Schlegel to his friend. You are not hesitating on

---


219 Heinrich Finke (ed.), *Der Briefwechsel Friedrich und Dorothea Schlegels. 1818-1820* (Munich: Koesel & Puestet, 1923) p. 211.
the boundary; Poetry and Philosophy have synthesized in your spirit. To me, your spirit is the closest one... to the truth that is not comprehended yet. Every knowledge of the eternal Orient belongs to all artists.” ²²⁰

Schlegel's view of Fichte was completely different. “Fichte is the most dangerous of the thinkers’, he wrote in another letter to Novalis. “Fichte”, he continued, “Is the most dangerous of the thinkers I know... It is your destination to protect the new independent thinkers from Fichte’s magic.” ²²¹

Nevertheless, an interaction with Fichte’s philosophy became a major dimension of Schlegel’s (as well as Novalis’) discourse. Moreover, it was a point of departure for one of the key elements of Schlegel’s reasoning – his philosophy of language.

Schlegel’s earlier reflections on the nature of language, containing the ideas that he would later develop in his book on India, could be traced by addressing two groups of sources: first, his letters to his brother, August-Wilhelm, and, second, more importantly, the Koelner Vorlesungen (1804-1806), a document, which Alois Dempf characterizes as “a clue to the development of the agenda of all idealism” with regard to language. ²²² Indeed, it is the combination of the young Schlegel’s observations on the nature of language and his attempt to place these empirical observations within the context of the tradition of German idealism that makes this document particularly valuable as a source.

The centrality of linguistic issues to Schlegel’s formation as a thinker distinguished him from the majority of German philosophers of the era. As expressed in a

²²¹ Dmitriev., Literarurnye manifesty, p. 149.
letter to August-Wilhelm in December 1795, his initial reflections on the essence of language concerned the role of sound as its basis. “The animals’ sounds”, he wrote, “seem to be the basis (Grundlage) of language... and the human voice, a product of a long training and a later formation (Bildung). Could language have emerged without a desire to speak, (that is) without an organic tendency (expressed in) the animals’ sounds?”

The Schlegel’s thesis is thus that in a certain way the phenomenon of language or, some, at least elements of it, should have emerged before the human race, and they are common to man and animal. The feature distinguishing human speech from the animals’ sounds is different: if the latter are determined by stable physical and physiological factors, the former is variable.

Schlegel calls this variability unbestimmte Bestimmbarkeit (undetermined determination) – human speech can be evaluated upon the criterion of perfection of perfection as perfect or corrupt. Significantly, in attempting to find an explanation of this fact, Schlegel turns to the principle of free will. Indeed, it is the invention of arbitrariness (Erfindung der Willkuer) (Schelling) that marks the emergence of human language. “It is an inherent advantage of human body”, the young Schlegel joked, “That it can get crazy”.

In what does the importance of this possibility of arbitrariness for precisely the human ability to speak consist? As Schlegel stresses, it is the possibility for man to freely change the direction of his attention. “It is the ability of freely directing our attention to

---


224 Nuesse., pp. 18, 19, 21.
this or that object or to (one’s) self (das Ich) that I could define as the ability to double
the self or to reduce it.”

It is at this point that Schlegel’s reasoning enters the Fichtean context. Postulating
free will as creating the possibility for man to form and use language, the young
Romantic thinker’s thought moves along the lines of Fichte’s understanding of
subjectivity (Ichheit). Using a brief wording provided by Heinrich Nuesse, this
understanding can be formulated as follows: “One is clear: the object can exist only for a
subject”.

It is from this Fichtean perspective that Schlegel considers the question
concerning the very essence of language – that of the connection between the word and
the object that this word signifies. But as he applies the Fichtean conception to the sphere
of language, rather foreign to Fichte himself, he faces a variety of issues pointing to some
limitations of the Fichtean model. Thus, Schlegel views the connection between the word
and the object as a case of the Fichtean object-subject connection. Its product – that is,
the object’s ability to exist for (or to be reflected by) the subject – is what he defines as
the meaningful appearance (sinnhabender Schein). As Nuesse stresses, Schlegel
identifies “Schein” with meaning. Why does this new term become necessary? According
to the Romantic philosopher applying Fichte’s scheme to the philosophy of language, a
special language-focused term is designed to highlight the active character of the
establishment of the subject-object connection that makes it identical with the process
of denotation: “The active (process of) denotation (Zeichengebung) by man and the

---

225 Quoted in: Nuesse., p. 20.
226 Ibid., p. 25.
connection between sign (Zeichen) and denote (das Bezeichnete) in which this process results become a model for the laws of the world of phenomena.”227 Analyzing this process, Schlegel puts an emphasis on a circumstance to become crucial for his further theoretical reasoning.

This circumstance is the distance between the sign and its object. “What does the word ‘sensibility’ have in common with this phenomenon?” Schlegel asks. A picture or a word’, he continues, “That connect one spirit with another and bring (this connection) to a community (Gemeinschaft) has itself absolutely nothing in common with the concept that one spirit conveys to another by doing so.... A picture or a word has thus no similarity to the object that it signifies and (at the same time) it is not an empty appearance.”. 228

This examination of what determines the possibility for the sign’s to be a medium between the object and the subject leads Schlegel to some fundamental conclusions. One is the possibility of considering the sign as something analogous to the word. The second is a reinterpretation of the Fichtean understanding of subjectivity: representing a part of a language, any word acquires a meaning only within a lingual community (Sprachgemeinschaft). “The (Fichtean) Transcendental Self (das transzendentale Ich) does not differ from the Transcendental Us (von dem transzentalen Wir)”, Schlegel asserts. 229

227 Ibid.
228 Ibid.,
229 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
This latter conclusion was of crucial significance for Schlegel’s further activities both within the sphere of the philosophy of language and beyond it. Speaking generally, as early as around 1805 he had made the examination of language the starting point of his philosophical work. This fact had two major consequences. First, the young Schlegel had discovered the inevitability of dealing with the lingual issues within the agenda of German idealism and thus made the analysis of language part of philosophical discourse. Second, and of no lesser importance, was his emphasis on the collective nature of language. Notably in this context, in 1806, a year later after completing the *Koelner Vorlesungen*, he significantly concretized his understanding of this collective essence of language by pointing to the phenomenon of nationality as language-based. Specifically, he viewed the fact of “today’s aspiration for the national unity, (by expressing which) we understand under a nation not the fellow-citizens of one state but the comrades in speaking the same language, and even the descent is seen as something subordinated”, as the “highest possible recognition of the dominance of thought and word”. 230

Indeed, in light of Schlegel’s deep interest in ethnicity and his later prominence as a proponent of nationalism, one should emphasize his reflections on these topics being deeply rooted in his earlier philosophy of language. As to its key question being of particular importance for Schlegel’s theoretical thought, one should point to the question of the multiplicity of languages. Schlegel’s answer to this question was his theory of the *zwei Hauptgattungen der Sprachen*, that is, the two fundamentally different types, into which, as he believed, all the languages of the world were divided.

230 Ibid., p. 36.
Languages and Language

The question of why, instead of speaking one common language, mankind spoke many different ones, was an issue that the Romantic linguists and philosophers had inherited from the classical antiquities. Back in the fourth century B.C., the characters of Plato’s *Cratylus* discussed why the Hellenes and the Barbarians had different words for the same things. 231

In the times of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, with their focus on the unity of the human race, the question of a universal language acquired a new importance. As the philosophers searched for universal cognitive schemes, common to all humans, regardless of race and cultural identity, the question of a common language to articulate the knowledge that was regularly being acquired arose inevitably. One of those who expressed this view with particular clarity was Schleiermacher. “The identity of the principle of thinking for all people and the direction towards the identity of the common process of cognition”, he wrote, “is a belief, that is a significant conviction of all people, that determines the principle of their actions ”.232

At the same time, the scholars approached this issue from different perspectives. For some, the universal language (*Universalsprache*) meant a language to be created by gradual elimination of the differences among the existing languages. According to them, the question was whether this goal could be achieved. 233 Schlegel’s attitude was different: he focused rather on the question of whether or not a universal language had existed in the past. And he attempted to find the answer to this question by

---

233 Ibid.
juxtaposing the existing languages. In the most brief and general way, the philosopher’s answer can be formulated as follows: the *Universalsprache* had been there, and represented the original, primordial language of mankind (*Ursprache*). In the course of the subsequent history this primordial language disappeared, however. The nature of the *Ursprache* as well as the processes that produced the emergence of multiple languages spoken by the peoples of the world became central for Schlegel. As early as 1805, in the *Koelner Vorlesungen*, he provided a detailed description of his approach to this issue, and kept returning to it over and over again in the course of his long intellectual career.

In the later *Dresdner Vorlesungen* (1815), the philosopher would illustrate the role of the *Ursprache* by drawing a geological parallel. “In the formation of a flatland”, he wrote, “One can differentiate between the younger sedimentary rocks and the primitive rocks (*Urgebirge*). The latter are called *Urgebirge*, because they undoubtedly belong to an earlier era ... versus the alluvium. But they also had formed, and they have the traces of their formation. Nevertheless, it is impossible to find a path from the sedimentary rocks to the center of the planet”.[234]

With regard to what Schlegel characterized metaphorically as the path to the center of the planet that he sought to discover, one should note that, as Nuesse stresses, the philosopher used the term *Ursprache* in two different senses. At times, he used it for such languages as Latin or Greek, pointing to their roles in the emergence of the languages of Europe. Similarly, he pointed to the role of Sanskrit in the formation of the Asiatic languages. At the same time, already in the *Koelner Vorlesungen*, Schlegel clearly

[234] Ibid.
formulated another, more fundamental understanding of this term. This understanding referred to the emergence of the original language in the strict sense, which in Schlegel’s discourse was identical with the emergence of language as such. More precisely, it concerned the question of the source of language, and one can characterize the philosopher’s approach to it as a combination of the lingual-historical and the metaphysical dimensions. As one shall see, it was this combination that represented a clue to his interest in India.

A – if not the major – premise of Schlegel’s understanding of how the multiplicity of the world languages came into being was his passionate insistence on the impossibility for them to have emerged in one and the same way. “(It is) a fully arbitrary and erroneous premise”, he would emphasize later in On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians, “That language and the development of Spirit had started everywhere in one and the same way. The variety... is so great also in this respect, that one could find a confirming example for every hypothesis regarding the emergence of language...”

Yet, justly characterizing this Schlegel’s conception as “a polygenetic theory... of the strangest kind”, Heinrich Nuesse stresses that the philosopher’s emphasis on the variety of the ways for languages to have emerged referred exclusively to one specific, though highly numerous group of them. In the Koelner Vorlesungen, defining these languages as mechanical (mechanische Sprachen), Schlegel pointed to such languages as having “the traces of a rather handicapped (duerftig) und crude (roh) descent”. “They emerged”, he continued, “Not at once but gradually, and (they emerged) out of two

236 Nuesse., p. 55.
elements – the perception of the sounds and the emulation of the sounds”. “Later”, he added, “comes, however, the principle of an arbitrary, reason-based coordination.”

Such is, according to Schlegel, the common source of all the languages he defines as mechanical. As he states, they came into being in the process of man’s adjustment to the environment and his effort to survive. And, as he concludes, such languages, since they represent a product of human activity, are artificial; they contain no organic life (kein organisches Leben besitzen) and are therefore unable to develop on their own.

A detailed explanation of Schlegel’s understanding of the criterion of a language’s inorganic character is to be found in On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians: “The derivative meanings (Nebenbestimmungen der Bedeutung) are indicated either through an internal change of the stem sound, (that is) through a flexion, or (it is indicated) every time by adding a special word for plural, past tense, oughtness in the future.” It is this agglutinative morphological structure where words are formed by adding the unchangeable affixes to the stems that the philosopher considers an unmistakable evidence of the language’s artificiality. One should add that, according to Schlegel, this structure and, therefore, the inorganic character are the only two features that all such languages have in common. In a variety of his texts, Schlegel emphasized their surprising diversity as well as their being represented in any part of the world. Curiously, as to the most striking example of such a non-organic language, Schlegel

---

237 Quoted in: Nuesse., pp. 55-56.
pointed to Chinese. “The Chinese script”, he asserted, “Is perhaps completely a result of (human) arbitrariness (ein Werk der Willkuer), as well as the language itself.” 239

Both this diversity of concrete cases and the common principle of the organization of such languages are, as Schlegel emphasizes, due to one fundamental fact: each of them is a product of human efforts and, as such, that of man’s adjustment to his environment. The key idea that Schlegel puts forward at this point is that this is not always the case: “… This natural principle of emergence does not refer to those most ancient languages (passt nicht auf jene ältesten Sprachen) that, as we observe them, display a greater and greater advancement and artistic character (die je hoher wir sie verfolgen, eine groesere Ausbildung und Kunstmaesigkeit verraten.)” 240

Expanding his description of this kind of languages, Schlegel expressed his admiration for the treasures of Sanskrit: “It (this kind of language) originated not out of a purely physical shout and not out of … the attempts to emulate the sounds or to play with them, in which later some reason … developed. Rather, this language in itself is a proof (of the fact) that… being man not everywhere starts with a bestial stupidity (tierische Dummheit), that later is followed by some reason as a result of long and wearisome efforts.” 241

Such a language whose grammar is based not on agglutination but on flexion, that is, on the changeability of the word’s stem, is, as Schlegel emphasizes, “beautiful, able to an unlimited development, artistic and, at the same time, simple”. “The stems and the

---

239 Ibid., p. 153.
240 Ibid., p. 161.
241 Ibid., p. 169.
grammar structure”, he clarifies, “... match each other and represent a unity because both originated from one and the same deep feeling and lucid sense.” 242

His answer to the question of where this deep feeling and lucid sense had come from Schlegel gave a few years before the publication of On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians. “For such (languages)”, he emphasized in The Koelner Vorlesungen, “One must postulate a different source of origin, and this source is the Revelation (Für diese muss ein anderer Ursprung angenommen werden und dieser ist – Offenbarung)” 243

This principle, according to which, as Heinrich Nuesse emphasizes, the origin of a certain class of languages was due immediately to God’s intervention whereas another class (of languages) was believed to have emerged as a result of man’s self-protection, became the basis of Schlegel’s whole Weltanschauung. Linguistically, it was far from being unanimously shared by Schlegel’s contemporaries. Franz Bopp, for example, insisted that Schlegel’s theory was due to an insufficient linguistic training. “You have perfectly well proved”, he wrote to Wilhelm Humboldt, “That Sanskrit, too, creates its grammar forms through agglutination, and the differentiation between the languages that Friedrich Schlegel makes, is an error caused by (Schlegel’s) imperfect knowledge of the language.” 244

Interestingly Humboldt, who also strongly opposed Schlegel’s linguistic dualism went deeper in interpreting the latter’s nature. “I confess”, he wrote to August Wilhelm

242 Ibid.
243 Quoted in: Nuesse., pp. 48-49.
244 Ibid., p. 49.
Schlegel, ”That I have never been able to share your brother’s opinion regarding these two classes of languages. Until today, I... have encountered no language without agglutination... At the same time, (it is) a question): could a language have started with flexion?... With regard to this, I could not agree with your... brother’s idea of the peoples coming on the stage ... not only with superhuman or, at least, advanced-human abilities but with such accomplishments, such as (their) languages. As any announcement of a miracle, it (this idea) cuts off any scientific (wissenschaftliche) research and represents exclusively a postulate of pure reason.” 245

This remark of Humboldt linking Schlegel’s classification of languages with his understanding of man and its culture highlights another key dimension of Schlegel’s reasoning. For all the centrality of the reasoning on language to Schlegel’s discourse, this reasoning unfolded within a larger context. As Heinrich Nuesse justly notes, for the Romantic philosopher, “The origin of language and the origin of man represent one and the same process”. 246

This was why the universal history of the human race, with a strong emphasis on its earlier stages and ethnic aspects, represented, next to the philosophy of language, another key component of Schlegel’s research. Importantly also, as the former, he had addressed the latter before he started working on On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians, and if his reflections on the nature of language created a methodological framework for his understanding of India, his examination of the world-historical process helped him outline the contours of the topic.

The earliest work where Schlegel expanded his view on the world history in a comprehensive form was the *Vorlesungen ueber Universalgeschichte*, which he composed in 1804-1806. Formulating his task as an attempt to trace “the essence of the development of man as a whole (im Ganzen)” the philosopher stressed that “The universal history (die Universalhistorie) begins with the formation of human race”. 247

It was at this point that Schlegel addressed the notion that became a key concept of his philosophy of history, that of the original people, the Urvolk. “A variety of scholars”, he noted, “have derived it (the universal history) from an original people that had lived in the North and from which all the peoples of the earth originated.” “This people”, Schlegel continued, “Is believed to have been highly advanced in scholarship and art. They (the scholars) link this (idea) to the Greek legend on the island of Atlantis. It is this (island) that should have been this excellent country of the North, but it was destroyed by a great revolution, and the people disappeared; all the scholarship and art that still exist today, are thus only a remnant of that original Nordic formation.” 248

Schlegel mentions also another legend, placing “the savage people”, from which, as he stresses, some French scholars believe “all the nations to have originated”, in the middle of Asia. His evaluation of both hypotheses is far from favorable. “This (latter) opinion”, the philosopher states, “Deserves neither mentioning, nor refutation whereas the former has no proofs at all.” 249

---

248 Ibid.
249 Ibid., p. 19.
The clue to the discovery of the Urvolk lies in the study of language and language-based spheres of culture, Schlegel asserts, and this way points to India. “In a much more reliable way”, he explains, “The analogy of the language and… of legislation, religion and mythology, leads us to (the idea of) a kinship between all educated nations and India”. “The Persian and the German, as well as the Greek and the ancient Roman Languages and cultures can be derived from the Indian.” Here the philosopher makes an important remark. “Usually”, he notes, “Egypt was considered the most ancient educated country, but even here the whole education, religion, liturgy, cosmology, and legislation represented an exact copy of the Indian (culture)... Not only the division into castes but also the whole order was in Egypt the same as in Indian, with some local modifications.” “These reasons”, Schlegel concludes, “Give us the right to look for the origin of the formation of man in India rather than... in the North.”

The Urvolk Leaves its Indian Homeland: The Evidences and Speculations

This thesis raises a new question, however: how had the Indian civilization brought its beliefs and social models to other countries? At this point, Schlegel introduces for the first time his view on the ancient India’s expansion that he would later develop in a variety of texts. According to this view, the ancient Indians had two different tools of expansion: first, colonization and, second, migration (Auswanderungen).

In the formation of the Egyptian civilization, Schlegel sees an example of the former. His argument is that, although, as the philosopher asserted, the Egyptian religion and social order were identical with those of ancient India, the Egyptian language by no means resembled Sanskrit. As Schlegel points out, a change of language of the country

250 Ibid.
251 Ibid., p. 20.
did not occur due to the small amount of the newcomers from India. He clarifies: the foundation of a colony, a phenomenon rather typical for ancient history, did not demand a massive migration. “With the priests participating”, the philosopher explains, "such an enterprise was quite possible; a small number of priests can enlighten the numerous barbarians and bring them the constitution of the (priests’) fatherland." 252

Schlegel’s argumentation deserves special discussion. On the one hand, he is perfectly aware of the fact that the practice he describes is at odds with the Brahmanic tradition. “One could object”, the Romantic philosopher admits, “(By asking), how is this (scenario) in agreement with the today’s Indians’, specifically those belonging to the class of Brahmans, of traveling, especially of see travels?” This objection, pointing to one the most distinctive features of the Brahmanic tradition, threatens to undermine the very basis of Schlegel’s hypothesis. He responds by putting forward two arguments. On the one hand, he argues that, as “a product of the later times, this aversion should be not applied to the earlier period”. No less importantly, he asserts, “Even today, there exists a sect among the Brahmins, whose task consists in enlightening the savage peoples (wilde Nationen) living on the islands.” 253

A much bigger place within the Schlegel’s reasoning is occupied by the other avenue of the expansion of the ancient Indians, the migration resulting, as he believed, in the expansion of their language. And in this context, he for the first time addresses a problem to become central to the very essence of his understanding of Indian and world

---

252 Ibid.
253 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
history. This problem is that of the ancient Indians’ motivation for leaving their home country and migrating to the West.

It is hard to understand, Schlegel admits, “How such an extremely numerous group of people could have migrated”. Moreover, as he stresses, this idea of “the migration... causes a big problem: one could think of that to better countries but how could (this idea) have come to the inhabitants of the most beautiful and wealthiest country on the earth?” ²⁵⁴

In attempting to explain how this migration that was never recorded in any historical sources was possible, Schlegel points to climatic and demographic factors. He draws historical parallels, in order to prove that similar developments more than once took place in different parts of the world. Interestingly, the first parallel he draws is to Germany. “Let us admit”, he writes, “That, since their resettlement, the German nations (die deutschen Nationen) have doubled their populace a number of times, because physically, even Germany is a favorable country for the population.” “The Romans”, he continues, “Came to know us Germans primarily due our numerous population, and, in explaining the (Germanic) influx, they pointed precisely to the excess of (the Germanic) population.” ²⁵⁵

Yet, as one should bear in mind, the issue of migration exists for Schlegel as linked to that of the language expansion. How did India’s language penetrate in Europe? In looking for an answer to this question, Schlegel traces what he describes as “the

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 21.
²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 21.
journey from India to Rome”. Interestingly, he compares his work with that of a
mineralogist exploring seashells to realize the contours of the dried-up sea. 256

As the point of departure he postulates the North Western part of Hindustan from
where, as he argues, “all those nations” originated”. As to the to next region on the India-
rooted peoples’ way westward, Shlegel points to neighboring Persia extending “to the
Caucasus and the Caspian See”. This latter circumstance had particularly expedited the
advancement: it is in Asia Minor that the philosopher places the roots of the Roman
people. With regard to this and without explicitly mentioning the Aeneid, he recalls “the
Romans unanimously locating their origin in Asia Minor”. On the other hand, he
considers the Greek narrative on the Greeks’ origin “completely wrong”: According to
Schlegel, the Greeks had their historic home in Asia Minor. 257

Similarly, the roots of the Germanic peoples are also in Asia, Schlegel
emphasizes. “It was all the Scandinavian tribes”, he clarifies, “Who preserved the legend,
(according to which) they had come out of Asia.” Furthermore”, the philosopher stresses,
“Their whole mythology concerns the Ases, the inhabitants of Asia.”258

The establishment of the Europeans’ Asiatic origin and even the trajectory of the
Indian migration to the West represent, however, only the first part of this historical
reconstruction. Another, no less important question Schlegel raises is that of how this
Indian migration determined the course of European history. Examining this, he returns
once again to the very beginning of the process – to the factors that had caused the great

256 Ibid., p. 23.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid., p. 23.
migration. If his earlier pointing to the demography referred rather to the possibility for
the migration to have started, his new intention is to explain the cultural nature of this
development as well its contribution to the foundation of the European peoples. And,
significantly, Schlegel discovers the roots of the Indian migration to the West primarily in
the religious processes that, as he believes, unfolded in ancient India.

“For the foundation of of those (the later emerged) nations”, the thinker notes, “A
few millions of people should have left (India). It remains only to answer the question of
what made it possible for them to leave... such a benign country... In the history of
migration, one can find... numerous examples of such streams (of people) migrating back
and forth.” “These are, however”, Schlegel continues, “Nomadic... peoples whose
migration looks as something... quite natural. In such cases, reasons are simple: the lack
of food, pursuit of wealth, etc.” 259

According to Schlegel, these factors could have been at work in the Indian case as
well. He finds them rather secondary, however. Instead, the philosopher points to another
possible motivation. “When one addresses the way of thought of the ancient times”, he
emphasizes, “It is easy to observe: it was primarily religious.” 260

In explaining the possibility of a connection between the religious processes in
ancient India and the Urvolk’s migration, Schlegel refers to the Indian narrative on the
sacred mountain of Meru. “In the Indian religion”, he recalls, there exists (a tradition of)
the worship of the mountain of Meru (located) in the High North... According to their
(Indian) beliefs, this mountain of Meru is the earthly heaven.” Given this, the philosopher

259 Ibid., p. 24.
260 Ibid., p. 25.
asks, “Would it be not probable for a sect to have embarked on a journey towards this blessed country?” 261

Next to the legends of the Mountain of Meru, Schlegel refers also to other developments in Indian cultural history. One of them is the emergence of new religions, specifically Buddhism. Its adherents, highly numerous in ancient times, live today mostly outside India, the philosopher observes. In this context, as he elaborates, it is easy to imagine how the country might have split into a variety of sects, some of which might have left the homeland. With regard to this possible scenario, Schlegel argues that the Indian texts contain explicit references to a religious war caused by a sect of the Yavanas. (In a number of cases he emphasizes the role of the religious wars and civil conflicts in ancient India’s history and underpins his view by pointing to the greatest Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, as a narrative on a civil war.) 262

Who were, however, these Yavanas that Schlegel refers to? According to the description he provides, they “Worshipped the nature and fertility as the Supreme Being and as the fundamental principle... The aversion of the Indian adherents of the old religion to this new teaching caused a war that resulted in the Yavanas being expelled.” 263

At this point, Schlegel adds another important detail to the picture. The term “Yavanas”, he points out, ”Was precisely the one that the Indians used for the Greeks ”.

---

263 Ibid., p. 25.
This description of the Yavanas in the *Vorlesungen* of 1805 was, probably, the earliest case when they appeared in Schlegel’s historical work. Since then, this group, mentioned in a variety of sources, would occupy a highly important place in the philosopher’s picture of world history. In the *Vorlesungen*, he did not provide yet any detailed explanation of the Yavanas, based on the data of the Indian texts, confining himself to a brief reference to William Jones’ article published in the *Asiatic Researches*.  

In his later works, specifically in *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*, Schlegel would more than once return to this topic, adding more and more details. But already in 1805 he put forward his hypothesis regarding the Yavanas’, representing the key element in the process of the transmission of the Indian beliefs and institutions westward and, thus, in the formation of the Middle-Eastern and, later, the European cultures.

Here is how Schlegel describes the Yavanas’ religion that, as he supposed, had caused their expulsion from India and migration to the West. “This religion that one has in mind (in this case)”, he wrote, “Should be the identical to that which we know from Babylon: this latter (religion) moved almost exclusively round the worship of Mylitta whom the Phoenicians called Astarta or Astaroth. It is also beyond doubts that the religion of the Romans and Greeks was originally the same. In the ancient times, the Romans considered die Venus as the progenitress of their tribe whereas the Greeks worshipped this goddess under different names.” “Probably”, Schlegel concludes, “This

---

264 Ibid.  
265 Ibid.
people (Nation), of the Yavanas of which the ancient Indian books tell did the same thing.” 266

Interestingly, the Indian narrative is not the only one to which Schlegel refers in this case. Significantly, in attempting to underpin his hypothesis, he cites also Voltaire tracing the origin of the Greeks to Yavan identified with a Noah’s son, Jaiphet. But Schlegel goes further. “Undoubtedly”, he asserts, “... Manu (to whom, as he recalls, the Indian tradition ‘attributes their legislation’), ... Is identical with Noah of the Hebrew people and with Minos of the Greeks.” No less importantly, he follows Voltaire in identifying Noah (and also Moses) with Bacchus. And, finally, he links the Indian god of war, “Skondoh or Skanda” (Skandha), to Scandinavia. 267

In sum, for Schlegel, all these identifications represented the fragments of the former unity of the Urvolk and the alleged continuity between them and the peoples who allegedly emerged in the process of the Urvolk’s migration to the West. Another aspect of the larger picture he created was an attempt to reconstruct a social institution that he believed that the other peoples, including the European, to have inherited from the Urvolk.

The Urvolk’s Verfassung and World History

Curiously, it is precisely at this point that Schlegel’s reasoning for the first time addresses explicitly the specificity of the Germans’ place within the world-historical context. “Strikingly”, he emphasizes, “In accordance with all the relations and analogies, back to the most ancient times, the government system in India was always monarchical;

266 Ibid., pp. 25-26.
267 Ibid., p. 29.
that was, however, not the way (the monarchy) existed among the Scythians but the way it existed among the Germans and, earlier, the Persians. Although, as he notes, “…one encounters… the division into castes among the Persians at an earlier stage and (although) one can find the traces of this constitution even among the ancient Greeks, “The strongest likeness the Indian legislation (indische Verfassung) displays to the German land tenure system (Lehnverfassung)” 268 The distinctive feature of this system Schlegel views in a certain kind of the relationship between the estates, specifically the clergy (Priester) and the nobility (Adel). “A monarchy”, he notes, “Where the priests and the nobility are so separated from each other, as in the Indian, and where everyone has so clearly outlined priviliges, can be justly defined is an estates-based (staendische) monarchy.” 269

Schlegel provides a detailed description of this clergy-aristocracy-relationship. “In the Indian case, the caste of the nobles had a prevalence”, he argues. “Later”, he continues, “It would be a consequence of the national character that among the Persians and Germans the nobles had a prevalence over the priests…. It might be well the case that the (source) of the immigration to these countries was predominantly this caste.” For all the similarities between the three cultures, they differ in some respects, however. “Among the Persians”, Schlegel observes, “This prevalence of the nobility softened a little; to the contrary, among the Germans it acquired almost the same importance as among the Indians.” 270

268 Ibid., p. 28.
269 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
270 Ibid., p. 29.
This observation constitutes a framework within which he traces the trajectory of the Urvolk’s expansion to the West in a more detailed way. One clarification is needed here, however: the philosopher traces not only the migration of the people, but also, not to a lesser degree, the transmission of their social institutions from the historic home in India to Europe. After Persia, he goes on to what he considers the next stage of this process – the “Scythian and Germanic nations”. \(^{271}\) “The Scandinavians and Germanic (tribes) came also from Asia”, the philosopher stresses, “But their path… laid through the Caucasus to the Danube.” \(^{272}\) Following the track of these peoples believed to have brought the Urvolk’s original civilizations to Europe, Schlegel faces a curious issue. If the original civilization’s becoming common to both eastern and western peoples was due to a migration, should this fact not lead to the conclusion that it was the nomads who had played the key role in this process? In response, Schlegel emphasizes the necessity to differentiate between different groups on the nomads. “The Asian nomads”, he insists, “Are… completely different from the African and American… They display … a… great superiority over them.” “This (superiority)”, Schlegel supposes, “Could have been caused by the climatic factors; also, possibly, the Asian nomads might be… of nobler descent.” “The mountaineers”, Schlegel argues, “Are always more free, more strong, and more courageous.” \(^{273}\)

Among these mountaineers whose roads westward are known to have more than once intersected, Schlegel singles out two groups, the Scythian and the Germanic tribes. As the former’s descendants, he identifies the Tatars, the Turks, as well as the

\(^{271}\) Ibid., p. 46.  
\(^{272}\) Ibid., p. 47.  
\(^{273}\) Ibid.
Hungarians and, hypothetically, the Slavs. In this context, the philosopher points to confusing between the Scythians and ancient Germanic peoples as to a widespread mistake.

Another, even more serious error refers, in Schlegel’s opinion, to the studies of the Germanic peoples’ migration. He emphasizes the issue of timing; according to him, the scholars following the Roman narrative on the Germans penetrating the Roman Empire, due to the excess of population, erroneously consider this development as the beginning of the Scandinavians’ and Germanic peoples’ arrival in Europe. In fact, Schlegel stresses, the ancestors of the Germans appeared on the European stage incomparably earlier: as to two evidences proving his thesis, Schlegel points to, first, “the most important narrative of the Nordic mythology on the journey of Odin” and, second, to the story of the conquest of Troya which, as he emphasizes, “has a universal-historical significance”. “The assertion of the publishers of the Nordic traditions, relying on the Romans’ (sources) and prone to view the Pompey’s wars as the cause, due to which those peoples left the places of their original residence, is wrong because they (the Germanic peoples) had participated in the wars in the much earlier times”, Schlegel argues. As he clarifies, the arrival of the Germans’ ancestors in Europe should have occurred no later than ca. 600 B.C. 274

On the Verge of a Synthesis: Schlegel’s Reflections on the Ursprache and the Urvolk before 1808

Such were the major features of the India-originated Urvolk as Friedrich Schlegel portrayed it in 1805. The theorist of Romanticism localized this Urvolk’s historic home

274 Ibid., pp. 49-50.
in the North-Western India and postulated its migration westward as the process to
determine the course of world-history. More specifically, he interpreted the emergence
of the peoples and cultures localized to the West of India, as the stages of the Urvolk’s
expansion. In this context, Schlegel differentiated between the two forms of this
expansion: first, the colonization and, second, the migration. He viewed the former as
resulting in the adoption by the colonized of the Urvolk’s religious believes and social
institutions but not in them switching their language to that of the Urvolk. As an example
of such a colony Schlegel considered ancient Egypt, whose religion and social order he
viewed as borrowed from India but whose language did not change under the Urvolk’s
influence.

It was precisely the migration of the Urvolk to the West that Schlegel considered
as the avenue of the formation of a variety of peoples and cultures based on the original,
Indian civilization. As a key aspect of the continuity between the Urvolk’s social
organization and those of the peoples originated in the process of its expansion
(specifically, the Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Germans’), Schlegel viewed the estates
(Staende) system that he considered as based on the Indian hierarchy of the castes.

Significantly, within this sequence of the inheritors to the Urvolk, Schlegel
singled out the Germans as the closest one. He explicitly described precisely the
Germans’ institutions as particularly resembling those of the Indians. No less
importantly, he revised the chronology of the Germanic tribes’ arrival to Europe.
Pointing to the Scandinavian mythology (the Odin’s journey) and the legend of the
conquest of Troya as to reliable historical evidences, he dated the Germans’ settlement in the West from a period much more distant than that indicated by the Roman sources.

Emphasizing the universal-historical significance of this process, Schlegel focused on its initial phase, the beginning of the Indian migration to the West. The question of the motivation for the ancient Indians’ resettlement (Auswanderung) was central to his historical reconstruction. In examining this issue, the philosopher took a variety of factors into account. Among them, he discussed, in particular, the climatic and demographic ones. It was, however, not the climat and demography but the religion that he believed to have played the key role in the process.

Tracing this process hypothetically unfolding in ancient India, Schlegel explained it by pointing to the conflicts and even wars among a variety of Indian sects. In his view, it was these upheavals that might have forced some of them to migrate and to start a new life outside India. In this context, he considered different possibilities. One was a hypothetical journey to the North, to the sacred Mountain of Meru that a sect might have embarked on. One should note, however, that in discussing this version Schlegel did not provide any detail.

Another hypothesis which the philosopher analyzed in a much more detailed way, concerned a hypothetical sect worshipping the nature and professing a cult of fertility. According to Schlegel, this cult, unacceptable to the adherents of the orthodoxy, might have caused the sect’s expulsion from the homeland.
Of a particular significance for Schlegel’s understanding of this sect’s role in the Indian and, more generally, world history, was the fact that he associated it with the Yavanas, a term signifying the Greeks in a number of Indian sources. This circumstance gave Schlegel the opportunity to link this sect to the non-Indian peoples and cultures and, thus, underpin the idea of the latter’s Indian origin. It was precisely the Yavanas’s fate in which Schlegel believed to have discovered a key element linking the Urvolk to the Middle Eastern, Greek, and Roman civilizations.

An important aspect of this historical reconstruction represented the arguments with which Schlegel underpinned his hypothesis. In doing so, he followed the Enlightenment’s, specifically Voltaire’s scheme; in accordance with this inherited scheme the Romantic thinker juxtaposed the Biblical, Greek, Roman, and Indian traditions and drew parallels between their characters. No less importantly, Schlegel attempted to prove his arguments by referring to a variety of original sources, including the Mahabharata, the Aeneid, and the Scandinavian sagas.

One should point to another feature of Schlegel’s reasoning, however. This feature can be described as follows: in the Vorlesungen of 1805, Schlegel’s reflections on the Urvolk’s migration westward unfolded completely within the intellectual framework inherited from European thought. Although the philosopher addressed the Indian sources, he looked at them in search of the evidences of the events allegedly occurred in India but not in search of the Indian ideas. His explanatory models remained within exclusively the European discourse. Whatever factors he addressed, the demographic or the
religious, he did not pose the question of a possible Indian view of these developments of the distant past.

Curiously in these historical Vorlesungen, the reflections on language occupied a rather modest place. Although at the beginning Schlegel pointed to the lingual similarity between the Indian Urvolk and its European descendants, he did not return to this issue later in the Vorlesungen. In other words, at that time the philosophy of language and the world-historical studies represented two separated trends within his reasoning. An attempt to synthesize them occurred later, in the On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians, and this attempt will be analyzed in the following pages.

**Schlegel’s India: The Scholarship and the Ideology**

“One of the most striking examples of how the cultural-historical (geistesgeschichtliche) significance of a work surpasses its … scholarly value” – such is the wording that Heinrich Nuesse uses to characterize Friedrich Schlegel’s central work on India. 275 To understand the cultural-historical significance of this book, which, as Heinrich Heine emphasized, “Not only introduced Indian studies to us Germans but also justified this work”, one should attempt to reconstruct the book’s message. Specifically, given the longevity of the intellectual career of its author, it is important to demonstrate the place that this book occupied within this framework. More specifically, one should demonstrate what it added to Schlegel’s earlier texts (such as, for example, the Vorlesungen of 1805) and, on the other hand, how the ideas developed in it it influenced his later works.

---

275 Nuesse., pp. 40-41.
In a number of ways, the year of 1808 represented a turning point in Schlegel’s biography. In addition to the publication of his epoch-making Indological study, it was precisely that year that he made a decisive move in terms of what Riasanovsky characterizes as “grasping the wall”: he converted to Roman Catholicism. Within the same year, Schlegel moved to Vienna where, a year later, he obtained the position of secretary at the Emperor’s chancellery.

These circumstances (reflecting, first, Friedrich Schlegel’s, as well as many others German Romantic artists’ and thinkers’, evolution towards Catholicism and, second, the specifically Schlegel’s strong pro-Austrian stand) represented the visible framework within which his development as a philosopher and scholar unfolded, including his Indian studies. What was the place that Indology occupied within this ideological context?

**The Method and the Topic Synthesized: The Language, the Religion, and the History**

Reading just the first pages of *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*, the reader becomes aware of Shlegel’s own consciousness of the seminal role of the mission he was undertaking, specifically, within the German cultural history. In the Introduction, briefly outlining the tradition of Indian studies, he started with the German missionaries (Heinrich Roth and Hanxleden), providing another illustration of the continuity between the pre-British scholarship on India and the German Romantic discourse on it. Curiously also, among his predecessors in the field he recalled his oldest brother. “I would like to mention”, the philosopher wrote, “That in the last years of his life, my oldest brother, Karl August Schlegel who passed away on December ninth 1789 in Madras, had, through
his travels and communication with the locals, started a study of the country, (its) law and (its) spirit, which was too early interrupted by his death.” 276

Even these preliminary remarks shed some light on the synthetic nature of Schlegel’s project intended to systematize the experience of the previous scholarship on India. But that was only a part of a larger task: the goal that Schlegel pursued consisted in constituting Indology as a scholarly discipline and in explaining the role it should play in the cultural situation of the era as “a necessary component” among the other disciplines studying “the insightful spirit of the middle ages that the whole order (Verfassung) of our today’s life is based on” and the Greek studies. 277

In pursuing this objective, it was necessary to achieve a synthesis within Indology as a discipline or, more precisely, put together the scholarly fields that formerly existed separately. And the very composition of Schlegel’s central work on India demonstrated that this was precisely his intention. Starting with the language (the first chapter was titled *On the Indian Language in General* – “Von der indischen Sprache ueberhaupt”), the author went on to India’s religious philosophy (“On the Philosophy”) and, finally, to the history (“The historical Ideas”). The final part of the third, historical chapter contained a discussion of “the oriental and the Indian studies in general and of their value and objective” (“Vom orientalischen und indischen Studium ueberhaupt und dessen Wert und Zweck”).

276 *Studien zur Philosophie und Theologie*, p. 111.
277 Ibid., p. 317.
For a better understanding of the nature of the project, it is helpful to address first this final part of the book, in order to outline a bigger picture of how Schlegel viewed the value and the objective of Indology.

**Indian Thought as an Exegesis of the Holy Script**

One important difference in approach between the *Vorlesungen* of 1805 and *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* is that, explaining the importance of Indian studies in the latter work, the philosopher poses the question of the relation of the “Oriental way of thinking (*orientalische Denkart*)… to the European and (of) the influence that the former can have on the latter” as the starting point. 278 No less importantly, he places his reasoning on this subject within a larger context of the relationship between the Bible-based perspective and the other traditions. “The Holy Script”, the philosopher emphasizes, became the true bond through which… the European way of thinking and cultural formation (*Bildung*) is connected to the Oriental antiquities.” 279

This observation raises the next question fundamental for Schlegel’s discourse – that of a relation (and correlation) between “the Indian antiquities and the Mosaic tradition and, more generally, the Revelation.” “The Mosaic tradition”, Schlegel stresses, “Tells us … (of) what is most important and… necessary to know for the religion, and it tells of that with such clarity that no other narrative could obscure it: (it tells) that Man is

---

278 Ibid., p. 295.
279 Ibid., p. 297.
created in the image of God, but he, at fault of his own, has later lost the celestial bliss and the pure light that he enjoyed originally.”  

This thesis determines the Schlegel’s understanding of the place occupied by the Indian narratives in the religious history of mankind. According to him, “They show us the roots of the error, the first products (Ausgeburten) of it which the (human) spirit retreating from the simplicity (Einfalt) of the God-given knowledge, more and more refined… and from which, amidst the darkness and superstitions, remained, nevertheless, such marvelous traces of the (original) light.” In this sense, Schlegel concludes, “The history of the oriental way of thinking as the most ancient philosophy is the most beautiful and instructive exagesis (Kommentar) of the Holy Script.”

In explaining in what this role of the Indian thought consists, the philosopher points to what he considers the reflections of the light of the Revelation in the Indian spirituality. These traces, Schlegel observes, are to be found in three major spheres. First, it is the content of the Indian religion; here he points to some Brahmanic ideas, such as, for example, the Indian trinity (the Trimurti combining Brahma, Siva, and Vishnu) and the idea of the immortality of the soul, interpreting them as the “traces of the divine light distorted…in the later times”. The second sphere in which Schlegel discovers the traces of the divine light, is the common history of the Asian and European peoples. “In the history of the peoples (Voelkergeschichte)”, he stresses, “The inhabitants of Asia and the Europeans should be considered not separately but as the members of one family.” Finally, the third, most fundamental sphere is that of language determining, as Schlegel

---

280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
more than once emphasized, the very character of thinking. Importantly, the philosopher
insists, different languages perform this function not equally effectively. “In the
languages forming their grammar through suffixes and prefixes, the construction… is
hard, and the train of thoughts easily confuses”, Schlegel states. “In the languages that
work by using auxiliary and prepositions”, he continues, “… The composition… is easy
and understandable but often formless…” “But”, he stresses, “The languages, such as the
Greek and the Indian, which designate the entirety of the modifications of the original
meaning through the internal flexion, produce a fine form in a natural way (fuehren von
selbst zur schoenen Form)”. 282

This idea of a language, whose forms create, due the very nature of this language,
particularly adequate ways for human thought to be articulated, amplified Schlegel’s
erlier reasoning on the organic languages. Back in the Vorlesungen of 1805, he had
interpreted them as a product of the Revelation. But in On the Language and the Wisdom
of the Indians, within the context of his juxtaposition between the Revelation and the
Indian thought, he developed this idea in a much more detailed way.

The Language as a Clue to the History

The common features of the languages indicate their common origin and,
therefore, that of the peoples that speak this languages – such was the starting point of
Schlegel’s philosophy of history as expanded in his central work on India.

It was not for the first time that he put forward this idea. But if in the
Vorlesungen of 1805 he had articulated it as that of two fundamentally different types of

282 Ibid., pp. 313-315.
languages, one of which represented a result of the Revelation, in 1808 that he explicitly made the idea of the *Ursprache* the clue to the *Universalgeschichte*.

Again, in outlining the contours of the original unity both lingual and historic, Schlegel starts with pointing to the similarities between the languages and it is in this context that the language of ancient India appears in his reasoning. “The old Indian Sanskrit (*das alte indische Sanskrito*)… is related greatly (*hat grosse Verwandschaft*) to the Roman and Greek as well as to the Germanic and Persian languages”, the philosopher observes. “The similarity”, he explains”, consists not only in a great number of common stems, but it stretches to the most internal structure (of the languages) and the grammar.”

This observation leads Schlegel to two major conclusions: first, this affinity “Is not accidental, that is, (it is not) due to a mixture (of the languages), but it is essential and reflecting a common origin of the languages. Second, the comparison of these languages demonstrates that the Indian language is the oldest among them; it is the language from which the younger languages originated.

As Schlegel observes, the languages belonging to this family differ in their closeness to the Indian progenitor. “The Indian (language’s) relation to the Armenian, the Slavic and… the Celtic languages is either minor, or it has nothing to do with the great affinities displayed by the languages mentioned above”, he states. Interestingly, within the same context he considers the possibility of the Hebrew language belonging to those rooted in Sanskrit. His answer is negative, however. “In the Hebrew language and in the

283 Ibid., p. 116.
related tongues”, he writes, “One could find enough Indian stems (there), as well as in Coptic. This (circumstance) does not prove (the existence) of an original kinship (ursprüngliche Verwandtschaft) because this (similarity) can be a result of a mixture.” Schlegel clarifies that “The grammar of those languages is as far from that of the Indian as that of the Basque.” If this the case, the philosopher concludes, any possibility of a common source from which the different languages could have originated, is excluded.284

This refers also to the speakers of these languages. And since the major objective of the project is, as Schlegel reiterates, “to trace the most ancient history of the peoples and their earliest migrations through the comparison of the languages”, it is important to examine the way the philosopher viewed the linguistic tools enabling him to examin this historical problem.285

As to the first indication of the common origin of the Sanskrit-rooted languages, the philosopher points to the common stems. “I will recall first”, Schlegel writes, “Some Indian words akin to German.” He provides numerous examples: “Shrityoti – ‘er shreit’ (he shouts); vindoti – ‘er findet’ (he finds)... Onto – ‘das Ende’ (the end), Monuschyo – ‘der Mensch’ (the man),... Rotho – ‘das Rad’ (the wheel)”, etc.286

Without confining himself to to the Sanskrit-German parallels, Schlegel adds a variety of examples from other Germanic languages, such as, for example, Icelandic. On the other hand, he emphasizes the importance for the analysis of the data of the earlier historic stages of precisely the German language, such as Low German (Niederdeutsch).

284 Ibid., pp. 116-117.
285 Ibid., p. 117.
286 Ibid., p. 119.
(“The Low German”, Schlegel stresses, “Is important for the etymology because it is precisely there that the older forms are preserved.”) 287 Nevertheless, the Germanic languages represent only a segment of a larger lingual family whose major features Schlegel attempts to reconstruct. Pointing to the evidences of the original lingual unity, the scholar particularly singles out the common kinship terms. “All these languages”, he indicates, have “common words for father, mother, brother, and daughter.”288

At the same time, Schlegel underscores the differences within the family. (He notes, in particular, that “In Latin, and … German, and Greek, the Indian words undergo incomparably less change (than in Persian). As the major conclusion from these comparisons, Schlegel formulates his central thesis: “The … juxtaposition (of all the languages in question) demonstrates that the Indian form is always the oldest among them”. 289

Proving his argument, Schlegel points to the words in the Sanskrit-related languages, specifically in Latin, whose meanings cannot be explained within this language itself, which, as he asserts, indicates these words being inherited from the parent languages. Curiously, according to the philosopher, the very name of Rome “should be Indian”. More generally, as to a “particularly instructive sign of common origin from the Indian (language)” Schlegel points to a number of the noblest (vornehmste) words signifying the spirit, thinking, knowledge, and speaking. “Manas”, he specifies, “Is the Latin ‘mens’; the word ‘monyote’ (he thinks) can be recognized in the German ‘meinet’. 287

---

287 Ibid., p. 121.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid., p. 127.
“Mitih is the Greek ‘metis’… A form related to a German word represents the background of “Amodoh”, the word for pleasure… Atmoh (atman) (signifies)… spiritus in Greek and German (atme and Atem)… Of a similar kind is the stem ‘Vedo’, from which vetti, the German ‘wissen’; … the Latin ‘video’ originated”. 290

Nevertheless, Schlegel admits, even these striking similarities do not represent necessarily a reliable proof of Sanskrit being the source of the other languages. As the decisive factor in proving this role of the ancient India’s language the philosopher considers the internal structure (innere Struktur) of the languages or the comparative grammar (vergleichende Grammatik), which, as he asserts, “Will provide us with completely new insights into the genealogy of the languages the way the comparative anatomy sheds light onto the advanced natural history.” 291

Schlegel discovers numerous traces of the original common structure (viele Spuren der alten Sprachform) in a variety of the grammatical forms from the declension and conjugation to the comparison. Again and again he emphasizes the distinguished role of the Germanic languages. “If we add … the grammar of the old tongues, (such as) Gothic and Anglo-Saxon for us Germans and of the Icelandic for the Scandinavien branch of our language, then we will find not only the pure past perfect tense (rein Perfektum) with augment (as in the Greek and Indian); the dual, the more precise

290 Ibid., p. 131.
291 Ibid., p. 137.
definitions of gender end relation in the participles, and the (forms of) declension lost today, but also many other flexions which are… less known nowdays”. 292

In explaining why these grammatic treasures disappeared with time, Schlegel makes two points of particular significance for his whole reasoning. On the one hand, he asserts that the “artistic (kunstreiche) structure is easily lost due to the deterioration of the common usage, especially in the times of barbarization (Verwilderung)”. 293 On the other hand, he points to the key feature of Sanskrit as the original and, therefore, ideal language. This feature is the exclusively inflexional character of its grammar, distinguishing it from even the languages particularly close to it. “In Greek”, Schlegel states, “You still can find at least an appearance of the possibility of the mood-signifying syllables having originated from the particles that fused with the word… In the Indian, however, the last appearance of such a possibility disappears, and one should conclude that the structure of the language is constructed organically, that is, through the flexions or through the changes… of the stem… in all its meanings”. 294

This exclusively organic nature of Sanskrit determines, in Schlegel’s view, a variety of its merits. “The case of Sanskrit”, he explains, “Demonstrates in the best way that such an artistic grammar can be, nevertheless, very simple.” This simplicity, the philosopher points out, consists in this grammar not having any pre-requisites or preconditions, to which it could be traced back. 295

292 Ibid., p. 143.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid., p. 149.
295 Ibid., p. 151.
As an unmistakable sign of Sanskrit’s perfectness and noble simplicity Sclegel considers its script. As to a fact central to the essence of the ancient Indian language, he points to its script being “Not a hieroglyphic one that copies the objects of the nature, but the one denoting them with the letters with this denotation being based on the letters’ internal character.”

Importantly, expressing his admiration for this perfect language structure, the philosopher stresses its uniqueness. “In many other languages and, moreover, in the majority of languages”, he clarifies, “We find the signs… of a completely different, even opposite (system of) grammar.”

Schlegel provides numerous examples of this opposite system. As before, he points to Chinese as to the most advanced case of it. As he emphasizes, Chinese has no flexion at all. One should note, however, that On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians portrays the inorganic languages in a more detailed way than his earlier writings: next to Chinese, their list includes such languages as Malayan, the native languages of the Americas, Basque, and Coptic.

No less importantly, Schlegel addresses the question of the possibility for the organic and inorganic language to influence each other. As a result of such influence, he singles out the languages combining the features of both types. According to Schlegel, one such language is Arabic: considering it as belonging grammatically to the inorganic ones, the philosopher admits, at the same time, that “through mixing or artistic learning

296 Ibid.
297 Ibid., p. 153.
(durch Mischung oder kunstreiche Ausbildung) this language has “in some details adopted the elements of another, higher character”. 298

Interestingly, in rejecting the possibility of him being unjust towards the inorganic languages (“I would be totally misread”, the philosopher writes, “If one would think that my intention is to praise one major group of languages and downgrade the role of the other.”), Schlegel points to precisely Arabic and Hebrew. “Who would deny”, he asks, “The high artistry, dignity, and sublime might of the Arabic and Hebrew languages? They stand unmistakably on the hight of… perfectness within their group, to which they do not belong completely, however.” 299 Nevertheless, as Schlegel stresses, “Due to their origins, the (inorganic) languages lack a kernel of spontaneous growth (Keim lebendiger Entfaltung); the (formation of) auxillary is always difficult, due to which the artificiality… increases”. “Seemimg opulence”, Schlegel reminds, “Is in fact poverty, and such is (the essence of) these languages, whatever crude (roh) or advanced (debildet) they are”. 300

This latter remark regarding the illusory opulence of the inorganic languages, unable to spontaneous development and incapable of overcoming their limitations, brought Schlegel back to the very essence of each of the two groups of languages. One should recall that back in 1805, Schlegel had already addressed this subject. In the Vorlesungen, he had introduced his conception of the two groups of languages as two fundamentally different phenomena with one representing a result of human adjustment
to the environment and the other, that of the Revelation. Also, he had pointed to the
diversity of the inorganic languages and emphasized that being inorganic was the only
thing that they had in common. In his pioneering book on India, he systematized and
developed his views of this subject.

Clarifying his approach, Schlegel makes an important point: “We argue not
against (the idea of) a natural origin of languages but only against (that of their) original
equality, (the adherents of which) assert that in the beginning they (the languages) were
equally wild and rough.” 301 Significantly, he opposes this latter idea not from a
pluralistic but from a dualistic perspective. “We should be satisfied”, he writes, “With
the fact that the flexion-based languages are rooted in a common source; the amorphous
diversity of the other languages cannot be traced back to (any kind of) unity.” 302

Schlegel finds the examples of this amorphous diversity everywhere. “In the
scarcely populated Northern Asia”, he relates, “We find four completely different lingual
families of the Tatar, Finnish, Mongol, and Tungus… descent.” “One could add”, he
continues, “The Tangut, or Tibetan language as well as the Sinhalese and the Japanese”.
And, as Schlegel emphasizes, one should abandon any idea of any common origin of
these languages. “Here is”, the philosopher clarifies, “Another fundamental difference
between the two types of languages. The affix-based languages are very numerous and
different; the more advanced historically are the cultural achievements of the flexion-

301 Ibid., p. 169.
302 Ibid., 161.
based languages, the more internal kinship (*innere Verwandtschaft*) and mutual connection they demonstrate*.  303

As Schlegel explains, the two types of languages have “opposite trajectories of the… grammatical formation”. “An affix-based language”, he continues, “Is absolutely unartful in the beginning, but then it becomes more and more artistic… to the contrary, in the flexion-based languages, the beauty and the artististry of the structure…is lost by degrees, as we see it when we compare some Germanic (*deutsche*), Roman, and contemporary Indian tongues with the older forms, from which they originated.”  304

In explaining this phenomena Schlegel turns again to the question of the source of the original lingual structure. And, although his general answer to it was given back in the *Koelner Vorlesungen*, he adds a number of new key elements to the picture. Emphasizing that “this (original) language is in itself a proof (of the fact) that the formation of man not everywhere began with the bestial stupidity, to which here and there a little intellect was added as a result of tiresome efforts”, Schlegel asserts that “If not everywhere, then, at least, here, where this research brings us, the clearest and most internal insight (*Besonnenheit*) took place in the beginning”.  305

In attempting to explain what this *Besonnenheit* looked like, Schlegel points to “a deep feeling and clarity of the spirit”, along with which “the language was given as well”. “With an insightful look at the natural meaning of the words”, he clarifies, “And with the feeling of the original expression of all sounds that the man could use as (his) language

---
303 Ibid.
304 Ibid., p. 163.
305 Ibid., p. 169.
tools, a fine sense of visuality was given to him (as a result of which) he became able to
divide and combine the characters (Buchstaben) and the most significant syllables, which
is a mysterious and striking part of the language”. As Schlegel stresses, this ability
became “an animated yarn that kept growing through the internal might”. “Such was the
way”, he concludes, “This fine, artistic and, nevertheless, simple formation, the
language, the stems and the grammar structure emerged, (and it) matched the feelings of
the man of that era.” 306

This picture of the emergence of the original language raises another question
central for the linguistical-historical reconstruction Schlegel undertakes: How did the
interaction between the original-language-granted people and the others unfold? In
examining this problem, Schlegel turns to an Indian narrative, the Mahabharata. “The
legend of Ramo (Rama), who is portrayed as the conqueror of the wild tribes of the
south”, the thinker relates, “Suggests that back in the earliest times the Indian language
underwent a significant foreign penetration, due to the annexed peoples.” Further,
Schlegel outlines the geographical contours of the Sanskrit’s original home. “The proper
area of the Indian culture and narrative is in the northern kernel of the country”, he notes,
“(Whereas) on Ceylon we find the alien tribe of the Sinhalese even today”. 307

One additional remark is needed in this context. Schlegel not only points to the
historical circumstances under which the ancient Indian civilization’s linguistic (as well
as cultural) interaction with the neighboring peoples unfolded, but he also touches upon
another, although related subject: the way the Indian narrative viewed this interaction. In

306 Ibid., pp. 169-171.
the pages to follow this subject will be examined more profoundly. At this point, it is important to summarize the philosopher’s observations regarding the uniqueness of the place occupied by the Indian language and civilization in world history.

Schlegel’s central thesis is that, in spite of all the foreign interventions, not only India’s ancient language but also the whole Indian Verfassung have come down to us largely the way they existed within millennia. “As the customs and the order of the Indians have changed much less or (changes) much slowlier than those of the other peoples, it seems historically probable that the same could refer to their language, which is too deeply imbedded in the Indian way of thinking and order to be as easily… neglected, as it happens so easily among the other peoples.”\(^{308}\)

Next to the Indian civilization’s conservatism, the philosopher points to the specificity of Sanskrit as a language. “Almost the whole Indian language is a philosophical or rather religious terminology”, he points out, “And, perhaps, no other language, not excluding even Greek, is as transparent philosophically and as sharply defined as the Indian; at the same time it represents a not volatile play of arbitrary abstractions but a steady system where once sacralized meaningful expressions and words mutually highlight each other”. \(^{309}\)

This review of the distinctive features of Sanskrit brings Schlegel to the question linking his linguistic reasoning with the realm of history. What were the transformations that this perfect original language should have undergone to make way to the later

\(^{308}\) Ibid., p. 173.  
\(^{309}\) Ibid.
multiplicity of languages? “Where did this great diversity of languages come from”, Schlegel wonders, “If originally they were one?”

A clue to the disintegration of the original linguistic unity Schlegel sees in the distortion caused by a foreign influence. “All … the languages representing the derivates (of Sanskrit), endured, as the peoples (who spoke these languages) themselves, a variety of foreign interventions”, Schlegel observes. “This (fact) should have inevitably caused an alienation among them themselves as well,” he concludes.

This process unfolded along a variety of intersecting trajectories. Interestingly, one of them was the Germans’ ancestors’ path from their Indian homeland to the West. And it was this great historical transition that Schlegel sought to reconstruct by means of the comparative analysis of languages. In outlining the spatial-temporal contours of this task, he focused on the “great Zwischenraum (space between) between the point of departure and the destination, the ancient northern India and the modern Western Europe. “In the realm of language”, he wrote, “One can find … many things filling the great Zwischenraum and making it smaller or marking, at least, the points of transition”. As one such point of transition he notes, for example, the “close relation of German to Persian showing clearly where this branch separated from the trunk”.  

“I speak here”, Schlegel clarifies, “Not of the isolated traces of German discovered in the Crimea, in the Caucasus, and on the Caspian coast, … but of the major languages still existing and flourishing today, of the… families of languages that fill, due

310 Ibid., p. 177.
311 Ibid., p. 179.
312 Ibid.
to their mixed character, … the Zwischenraum between the Indian and Persian languages, on the one hand and the German, Greek, and Roman, on the other.”  

Such were the contours of this historical reconstruction of the Urvolk’s common past and the trajectories of its further disintegration. Schlegel sought to trace these processes by comparing the vocabulary and structure of the original language, Sanskrit, and those of the languages that originated from it. That was, however, only the first, initial part of Schlegel’s project, referring and confined, as he wrote, “Only to what can be explained out of the language itself”.  

Another part of the project concerned was written in that language and this is what will be examined in the following pages.  

**The Schlegel’s Indian Philosophy: The Revelation Misread**  

Although the second chapter of Schlegel’s book was intended to expand the observations of the first to another sphere, the way the philosopher examined the sphere of Indian mythology, religion, and philosophy, differed from his approach to the lingual matters in two major respects. First, as the philosopher underscored, “Here we leave… the comparative way of the first chapter and, instead of a comparative analysis of the mythologies, which it would be too early to undertake now, provide… a description of the specifically Oriental way of thinking, with the emphasis on its most important stages and distinctive features.”  

This change of focus was particularly important in connection to that in approach.  

If the philosopher’s view of the language of the Indian civilization represented a

---

313 Ibid., p. 181.  
314 Ibid.  
315 Ibid., p. 197.
combination of surprise and admiration, his vision of its content was deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, he did not spare words to express his delight about the treausures of the Indian spirit. At the same time, he viewed them as the first move from the original Revelation-inspired spiritual harmony towards the later, specifically modern disharmony. Considering the Ursprache as the ideal language of the human race and contrasting it with the further lingual plurality, Schlegel considered what was said and written in this language as the first stage of the world-historical degradation. Moreover, it was precisely this idea of a gradual retreat from the original truth towards the more and more erroneous worldviews that served Schlegel as a guide in his attempt to trace the evolution of the Indian religious-philosophical tradition. And, importantly, in doing so he highlighted the major stages of this process.

Here is how the author of On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians traces the trajectory of this evolution. “The most important epochs of the Indian and, generally, Oriental philosophy and religion are the following”, he writes, “First, the system of emanation that finally degraded to the astrologian superstitions and fanatical materialism; (second) the theory of the two principles, the system of dualism that later transformed into pantheism.” 316

For a better understanding of the picture that Schlegel draws it is necessary to review each of the stages of religious thinking that he singles out. Considering what he views as the initial stage of the Indian religious history, the emanation theory, which he termes with more preciseness as “the system of the transmigration of souls and

316 Ibid., p. 253.
emanation”, Schlegel points first to its being the second-oldest in the world after the Mosaic tradition. In reconstructing the major features of this ancient teaching representing, as he more than once emphasizes, the basis of the Indian Weltanschauung, the thinker turns to The Laws of Manu as the most authoritative document.

Interestingly, the theorist of Romanticism characterizes the teaching articulated in Manu’s law code as a kind of poetry. “It is not worth making efforts to argue with this system in a dialectical way”, he asserts, “…because it is based not on the underpinning of this kind but…rather it has a form of an arbitrary poeticizing, as well as the other purely poetical cosmogonies.” 317 Here is how Schlegel describes the flavor of the text he analyzes: “After praising the creation of all the forces of the nature (die Erschaffung aller Naturkraefte), creatures living, animals, and plants, … Manu concludes with the following observation: ‘Wrapped with darkness is the reward for your deeds; everyone granted with joy and sorrow, is aware of the end.’”318

Using this verse as a point of departure, the philosopher outlines the major parameters of the Indian conception of karma as determining the individual’s condition’s dependence on his deeds in his previous lives. More specifically, Schlegel points to the role of this conception as the framework within which the emanation theory developed. In outlining the Indian understanding of the correlation between the deeds and the rewards determining the human condition, the Romantic thinker makes one important observation central to his interpretation of what he views as the key principle of the Brahmanic worldview. Schlegel describes this principle as the law of worsening (Gesetz

---

317 Ibid., p. 199.
318 Ibid., pp. 201-203.
der Verschlimmerung). With time, the world condition gets worse and worse – such is the
general law of the Universe, and this law refers, in particular, to the transmigration of
souls. “This law of the constant worsening, deterioration, and endless despondency
(caused by) the feeling of guilt and death represents the spirit of that system”, Schlegel
stresses. 319

This pessimistic spirit pervading the whole body of the Hindu religion, displays
itself in a variety of ways, Schlegel notes. Within this variety, he specifies three major
dimensions that could be defined as the temporal, the social, and the spatial-
metaphysical. As to its first, temporal dimension the philosopher points to the conception
of the four eras (yugas), the sequence of which determines, according to the Hindu
doctrine, the essence of the world process. “Hence”, Schlegel points out, “The theory of
the four eras, of which every next one was in some respect less perfect … versus the
previous one, with the contemporary, fourth era being that of complete deterioration.”

The same principle determines the Indian social order, Schlegel continues.
Referring to the conception of the four varnas, he emphasizes these levels of the social
hierarchy representing, at the same time, the stages of the gradual wain of the human
virtues. As Schlegel concludes, “The hierarchy of the four estates is portrayed… as a
deeper and deeper immersion into the mundane imperfectness”.

No less important is the third, spatial-metaphysical dimension reflected in the
Indian theory of the three gunas, which Schlegel describes as that of “three worlds, into
which the universe is divided (Troilokyon), or the three fundamental elements

319 Ibid., p. 205.
(Grundkraefte)” ruling it. As he relates, “The first of these fundamental elements (can be
categorized as) “trueness or “faithfulness” (sotwo (sattwa)); “The other, rojo (rajas), is
mystifying by shining appearance, and the third and last is darkness (tomo (tamas))”.

At the same time, as Schlegel demonstrates through addressing the same text, The
Laws of Manu, the content of the Indian religion goes far beyond the framework
described above. Here is he characterizes way the Manu’s text describes the world
process: “Manu produces the Spirit going out of the self of the endless essence – out of
the Spirit of Self… for the Spirit is the second Creator, and after Brohma (Brahma) has
produced the universal elements of the Spirit, Manu creates all individual beings. “

Further, Schlegel portrays the Indian gods and their roles in the universe. “Among
the deities of the Indian narrative”, he specifies, “It is Brohma (Brahma) who is of special
importance for this system. As the Monu’s (Manu’s) low code tells of him, Brohma is the
eternal spirit, the endless self, the king and master… and, as he is also named in the later
texts, the father and progenitor of the universe. He is the eternally incomprehensible, the
only independent one, the genuine self, or the god as such. In the later texts, the same
refers to Sivoh (Shiva) und Vischnu, with these texts being (composed) by the…
adherents of these deities; but in the Monu’s (Manu’s) law code Brohma (Brahma)
occupies the first place ”.

Schlegel’s attitude to the system he describes is deeply ambivalent. “We can see
the degree to which the superstitions, at times of a horrible and frightening kind, pervade
this whole system of their (the Indians’) way of thinking and life”, he stresses. This is

320 Ibid., p. 203.
only one side of the picture, however. “We cannot deny completely (the fact of) the ancient Indians’ knowledge of the true God because all their old scripts abound with sayings and expressions (that are) as dignified, clear, sublime, meaningful, … and significant, as it is possible at all to speak of God in a human language.” 321 “What could be more surprising”, Schlegel continues, “Than the discovery of… the purest notions of the divinity… (mixed with) the roughest superstitions?” 322

This portrayal of the Indian tradition raises a question central to the further reasoning: “How can this sublime wisdom coexist with this entirety of error?” Looking for an answer to this question, Schlegel characterizes the Indian case as not matching any understanding of God known to the scholars. The uniqueness of this situation brings him to two major conclusions, first that it is impossible to interpret the Indian religion as a result of the natural factors, which points to its being that of the Revelation and, second, that the Revelation was misunderstood. “Considered as a natural development of reason, the Indian emanation system is absolutely incomprehensible”, the thinker insists. “As a misunderstood Revelation”, he continues, “Everything it contains is completely understandable.” 323

How could the Revelation be given in this case, and, no less importantly, how could it be misunderstood? “Not as of an instruction by the father, expressed in a picture and articulated word could one think of this original Revelation”, Schlegel explains, “But as of a rise of an internal feeling. Where this feeling of the truth once appears, there the

---

321 Ibid., p. 203.
322 Ibid., p. 205.
323 Ibid., p. 207.
words and signs come easily as well without any further help.”\textsuperscript{324} If so, how could the divine truth be misinterpreted? In explaining this, Schlegel points to the fundamentally dualistic nature of human civilization. “(There is) no other option”, the philosopher stresses. “Without the Revelation”, he clarifies, “The man would… have remained an animal, perhaps, the first but, at the same time, the wildest and unhappiest”. But this is only one part of the picture: “Without a free usage and his own understanding of the divine truth he would be reduced to (being) a blind tool.”\textsuperscript{325}

This free understanding of the truth creates the possibility of error and, as the Romantic thinker asserts, it is precisely this “initial error caused by the misuse of the divine gift, by the darkening and misinterpretation of the divine truth that we find in the Indian tradition.” As Schlegel states, “… This was the first system that replaced the truth”. \textsuperscript{326}

It is important to underscore, however, that Schlegel did not confine himself to just pointing to this initial stage, but traced also the further stages of the process. It was his analysis of what he viewed as the entire process of India’s religious evolution that placed his portrayal of the Indian religion within a larger historical-philosophical context.

**The Trajectory of Error: From the Emanation Theory to Pantheism**

“The best way for me to describe the system of emanation is to define it as a theory of a return”, Schlegel writes. In outlining this form of the understanding of the divine, the philosopher underscores its being reflected in a variety of works of poetry

\textsuperscript{324} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid., p. 207.
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid., p. 209.
including the Kalidasa’s famous *Sakuntala*. “Everywhere, one perceives (the idea of) the divine origin of Man as a motivation for recalling (the possibility) of a return and setting the goal of a reunion with the divine as the only goal determining the man’s deeds and aspirations”, Schlegel observes. What are the forms that this idea acquires and the practices that the man uses in pursuing this goal, however? As the philosopher stresses, “The superstition and error mingled early (with the idea of a return to the divinity)”.

It was in the situation determined by these two factors that the idea of the transmigration of souls developed, Schlegel states. As he observes, “The idea of hierarchy and the classes of beings embodied in such a variety of images and (the idea) of their gradual approximation to to the common original source (of origin) and of their separation from it resulted in the emergence of the conception of the transmigration of souls (including) the theory of (the souls’) previous life… and the sublime ideas of (their) divine perfectness in the past”.

The consequences that these ideas had were various. One of them was that in the cyclical nature of the world process, which, in turn, resulted in the understanding the world as having no final goal (*zwecklos*). “The conception of the world as aimless and representing exclusively a game played by the god”, Schlegel explains, “Is fundamentally connected to the idea of the eternally cyclical character (of the world process)”.

One result of this cyclical understanding of the Universe was what Schlegel describes as the artificial diffusion of the fatalistic worldview among the Oriental

---

327 Ibid., p. 213.
328 Ibid., p. 217.
peoples. In this context, he turns to the practices, illustrating this worldview with particular clarity. “Astrology along with... augury... spell, and dark magic practices”, the philosopher underscores, “(Reflect) this noteworthy phenomenon of the antiquities, whose exorbitant influence has remained strong until the modern period”. 329

For Schlegel, this development of the magic practices is a sign of a materialistic distortion of the religion. “From worshipping the divinity”, the philosopher emphasizes, “The man can... degrade to praying to a wild element of the nature, (that is, he can switch) from the creator to a creature.” 330 Schlegel provides a number of examples of this materialization of the divinity. As to the earliest Indian example of it he points to the cosmogonical world-egg theory expressed in *The Laws of Manu*. Further, he reviews the frightening forms that the materialized understanding of the sacred acquired in some later teachings and practices of Hinduism viewing and worshipping the nature as an infinite beast (*unendliches Tier*) and having transformed the ancient cult of fertility into that of the elements of destruction. “The cult of Sivo (Shiva) and of the horrible Durga”, Schlegel observes, “Provides us with the images (representing) a dreary mixture of death and voluptuousness, bloody human sacrifices and bacchanal dissoluteness.” “What makes this worship of the nature and this materialism so terrible, differing so strongly from a pure sensibility of some most primitive peoples (*Voelker im Zustande der einfachsten*)”, he underscores, “That should be precisely this added... idea of the infinity, (which) is of a

329 Ibid., p. 219.
330 Ibid., p. 201.
better origin, because it is precisely the most sublime and noblest things that, if barbarized and degraded, always turn into scary caricatures of themselves.”  

By the better origin of the idea of the infinity, making the Shaivits’ practices so demonic, the Romantic philosopher meant the Revelation. As a product of the man’s gradual retreat from the original truth, every religious phenomenon represented in his view a combination of the traces of the divine light and of those of its distortion. And if the emanation theory whose most degraded version Schlegel discovered in the Shaivistic mythology, represented the first stage of this gradual combination, the second, in some ways opposite to the first, was dualism.

“The system of dualism, the Oriental theory of the two principles and of the eternal struggle between the Good and the Evil, emerged in a strong contradiction to the ways of thinking reviewed above ”, Schlegel writes. “(It emerged)”, the thinker specifies, “As a restoration of the original light of the divine truth”. If the emanation theory degraded to materialism, the spirit of dualism, as the philosopher explains, “Is fully idealistic”. This teaching considering the Universe as the stage of an eternal conflict between two ethical principles, the good and the evil, recognizes therefore the existence of the evil “as separated from the divinity and existing outside it or, more precisely, as another, independend kind of divinity. On the fnal stage of the world process this split of the universe is expected to be resolved, however, “with the principle of the evil being

---

331 Ibid., p. 203.
surmounted and Ahriman and Ormuzd, the gods of the good and the evil, respectively, achieving reunion and reconciliation.”

Interestingly, Schlegel finds this teaching of dualism close to the European philosophy. “The true match with what European philosophy tells”, he explains, “Consists in in the fact that this (dualistic) view recognizes activity, life, and freedom as the only reality whereas the static condition is viewed as non-existent.”

Representing two opposites in many ways, the emanation theory and the dualism had one crucial common feature: according to Schlegel, both phenomena had their roots in the original light of the truth, although distorted. As to an unmistakable sign of this connection he points to them being widely represented in a variety of religious practices, such as, for example, the cults of Mithra and Varuna in India.  

In Schlegel’s view, both the theory of emanation and dualism represented, however, the two earlier stages of the distortion of the original truth. According to the philosopher, the traces of the divine light are still visible in them. In this context, he addresses the issue of pantheism, which he considers as the later stage of the religious degradation. Here any connection to the revelation is lost completely, Schlegel asserts. If “the other Oriental … conceptions are based on the divine myracles and the revelation”, he points out, “… Pantheism is the system of pure reason.”

---

332 Ibid., p. 229.
333 Ibid.
334 Ibid., p. 231.
For Schlegel, the centrality of this issue refers, in particular, to the fact that the whole “Indian system, especially the system of emanation” is widely considered as identical with pantheism. “Specifically to those accustomed to the dialectic form of the younger European philosophy”, the Romantic thinker emphasizes, “The fantasy (that they discover in) every Oriental system appears… as phanteistic and, in fact, in the later times there were enough connections (between these two phenomena).” 335

Opposing this view, the Romantic philosopher stresses the differences between what he considers as the genuine Oriental thought and pantheism. “The system of emanation”, he explains, “Inspires a free courage through the feeling of an endless hidden guilt and faith…; the theory of the two principles (the dualism) and of the conflict between the good and the evil … represents a powerful inspiration for … a struggle and an invincible source of morality.” To the contrary, he emphasizes, “Pantheism denies inevitably the distinction between the good and the evil.” 336

With regard to this latter difference, Schlegel points to one crucial ethical-psychological consequence. It concerns what can be defined as the man’s awareness of the very fact of the religious degradation that Schlegel examines. If “In the system of emanation … the world is considered as fundamentally deteriorated and the human condition, as a tragic retreat from the … divine essence”, the pantheistic view is opposite.

335 Ibid.
336 Ibid.
“Pantheism”, the philosopher underscores, “Teaches that everything is good and that what we regard as a sign of wrongness or evil represents a pure illusion.” 337

As one can see, Schlegel’s juxtaposition between the Indian and, more generally, Oriental religious thought on the one hand and pantheism, on the other, goes far beyond the subject matter of Indology in the strict sense of the term. At the same time, the reasoning on pantheism places the Schlegel’s analysis of the Indian system within a larger framework of the universal religious history. In criticizing pantheism, the philosopher examines the last act of the drama of the religious degradation that started in ancient India and continued in modern Europe. Significantly, in doing so, he outlines the very topic and the objective of Indian studies within the context of the cultural situation of the era. How can one characterize the major parameters of his understanding of the Indian religious-philosophical tradition as the misread Revelation within the European context?

Interestingly, the scheme of the original true religion and its further degradation, inherited from the Enlightenment, specifically Voltaire, remains central to the reasoning of the leading theorist of the German Romanticism. At the same time, in Schlegel’s central work on India this scheme acquires a number of important new features. If Voltaire explained the decline of the original monotheism by pointing to the selfishness of the priests, the Romantic philosopher interprets this process in a much deeper way. The starting point of the historical reconstruction he undertakes is the analysis of the language and it is on this level that the drama of the degradation begins. In Schlegel’s

337 Ibid., p. 201.
analysis, it is not quite clear whether the disintegration of the God-given original
language structure necessarily preceeds that of the original religious truth
chronologically, but logically the latter process very much resembles the former. In light
of this resemblance, one could say that the drama of the world-historical decline unfolds,
in Schlegel’s view, on two levels, the lingual and the religious-philosophical.

Next to these two levels, that of the language and that the ideas, there remained a
third one, however, that of the actors. At some points, Schlegel addressed the
anthropological factors while analyzing the linguistic and the religious developments.
Specifically, he singled out the man’s free will as a key factor creating the possibility of
misreading the revelation. Within the context of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the
Indians*, these remarks represented the philosophical premisses of a more detailed
examination of a problem inseparable from those of the original language and original
religion – that of the trajectory of the *Urvolk*. Schlegel analyzed this problem in the third
chapter of his book.

**The Actors: The *Urvolk*’s Warriors Colonize the West**

“On the earlist migrations of the peoples” (“Von den aeltesten Wanderungen der
Voelker”) – such was the subtitle of the third, historical chapter of Friedrich Schlegel’s
central work on India. “For the most ancient times”, he explained, “The history of
religion can be considered separately from that of the migrations of the people to an even
lesser degree than for the modern.”

\[338\] Ibid., p. 257.
Illustrating this idea, Schlegel points to a variety of examples. “Through how many intermediate links (Zwischenglieder) lost today the theory of the transmigration of souls should have passed before it got from India to the Druides of the ancient Gaul? ” the Romantic thinker wondered. “If even today”, he continued, “We find in Peru a royal clan of the children of the sun and an ancient empire based on the worship of the God of the Sun as well as some other Indian traces, then we, like the Chinese historiographers, can only hypothesize about how all this could have been lost.” 339

This statement, although rather extravagant in the context of the contemporary scholarship, brings Schlegel back to two key questions: that of the tools for finding the lost intermediate links between the Urvolk and its descendents and that of the forms of the Urvolk’s trajectory. “The first indication is … the language”, Schlegel reiterates, “With its internal structure being more important than… the stems, to which one turns usually while looking for the similarities.” 340

With regard to the second question, the philosopher returns to his idea articulated back in 1805, stressing the role of the colonization of the countries to the West of India by the original people as the major tool of its expansion. Moreover, as he asserts, it was this process that had predetermined the course of world history however surprising this idea might seem. “One should recall”, Schlegel writes, “The enormousness and strength of the Egyptian and Indian architecture contrasting with the fragile smallness (gebrechliche Kleinheit) of the contemporary buildings (in these countries) to find the idea that the mightiest empires and the most advanced nations have originated from the

339 Ibid., p. 275.
same root and represent the colonies of one and the same people, that is, the colonies of India, although indirectly.”  

As the Schlegel indicates, world history abounds with similar examples of colonization leading to fundamental changes in language and culture. As to two particularly convincing analogies he points to the expansion of the Roman Empire that was accompanied by that of Latin and resulted in the emergence of the variety of Roman languages and to the Arab conquests.”Just think”, Schlegel writes, “Of how the Latin language … spoken primarily only in central Italy…expanded almost over the whole globe. In its daughters, the Roman languages, it still prevails in all parts of the world, with Italian being the language of trade in the Orient and Portuguese, on the African and Indian coasts and with Spanish having become the language of a great part of the New World.” “One should remind also”, Schlegel continues, “Of the social influence of the French language and of the usage of the dying out Latin as the language of learning and scholarship … as well as that of religion (the way Sanskrit, or, at least, some formulas of it are still in use in the liturgy in Siam und Tibet.” “Even further than the Romans”, the philosopher adds, “Did the Arabs expand their influence over a great part of Asia, through conquest, trade, and colonization.” Could something similar occur to the Indians in a much earlier period, although they newer were conquerors?” Schlegel asks and answers affirmatively. As he asserts, “We do have reasons for asserting (this), and we can, at least, point out in a general way how this was possible”.  

342 Ibid., p. 275-277.
343 Ibid., p. 277.
Examining this possibility, he goes back to his earlier differentiation between the two types of colonization. «The colonies were not necessarily migrations», Schlegel reiterates: If initiated by the priests, intended to civilize the barbarian neighbors, they did not lead to significant resettlement and, therefore, to the changes in language. As before, Schlegel points to Egypt as to an example of such a colonization by the priests (Priesterkolonie), the major proof of which is, as he clarifies, the «absolutely non-Indian character of the Coptic language». As before in attempting to find an explanation of the Urvolk's migration to the West, which resulted in the emergence of the Sanskri-based languages and the Indian-Urvolk-based peoples outside India, Schlegel emphasizes the role of the other type of colonization, that by the warriors (Kriegerstand). 344

In On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians, the philosopher poses the old issue of the reasons of the Urvolk’s migration to the West in a more concrete way than before. The key question of what had caused “the separation of the Romans and Greeks and, to even more extent, the German peoples, from their motherland” acquires a distinctive social dimension. Essentially, this question transforms into that of what had caused the specifically warriors’ migration from the Indian original home. And, with regard to the records of this process, Schlegel underscores: «We do have an evidence (Denkmal) of India's earliest history, and (this evidence) is more reliable than any other… This is the Indian Verfassung itself». 345 Scharakterizing this Verfassung in his central work on India, Schlegel amplifies a number of observations that he made back in 1805. As before, his central thesis is that it was the introduction of the severe Brahmanic

344 Ibid., p. 279.
345 Ibid., p. 281.
religious discipline with its numerous restrictions, specifically the strict vegetarianism that brought about the migration of a variety of Indian tribes. Schlegel notes in this context that it was primarily the lower groups that started leaving the places of their residence. He adds, however, that, possibly, the circle of the migrant groups was even broader, due to the deterioration caused by the conflict tearing the country. 346

According to Schlegel, these restrictions represented only one, although highly important part of the picture. The other one, rooted in the very nature of the Brahmanic Verfassung, was the fact of the “unlimited dominance of the hereditary priesthood” that provoked a violent reaction from the warriors’ class, the Kshatriyas. “A bitter struggle should have preceeded the Kshatriyas’… separation from the hereditary priests”, Schlegel asserts and, as before, he finds the evidences of this alleged struggle in the Indian narratives. One of them, particularly impressive, is that on a Vishnu’s avatar, Parasurama (Rama with the axe) punishing the impious kings for the disobedience to the Brahmins. “It was with good reason that Porosramo (Parasurama) was glorified for having destroyed the evil kings, punished the degenerated aristocracy and limited their power”, Schlegel emphasizes. 347

Some major parameters of how Schlegel portrays the conflict between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas that caused allegedly the latter’s resettlement can be traced back to his Vorlesungen of 1805. It is not this portrayal as such but its scholarly underpinning that represents the novelty of On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians versus Schlegel’s earlier writings. How to prove, indeed, that it was precisely the

346 Ibid.
347 Ibid., p. 283.
migration of the ancient Indians, specifically the Kshatriyas, that resulted in the
separation of the Romans, Greeks, and Germanic peoples from their Indian home? As
Schlegel’s central work on India demonstrates, he attempts to find the answer in the
major text documenting the indische Verfassung, The Laws of Manu.

The Romantic Philosopher and the Indische Verfassung: Schlegel Interprets The Laws of Manu

Here is what Schlegel considers as the major evidence proving his hypothesis. “In
the tribal books of the Indians,” he relates, “It is not infrequently written of this or that
breed (Geschlecht) that degenerated (ausgeartet) into the barbarians, the Mlecchas, that
is, left and passed over to the other peoples regarded as savages. The Laws of Manu (X,
43 – 45) tells us about a sheer group of such feralized Kshatriyas’ clans that had become
barbarians, among which we find the names of the multiple great and famous nations: the
Shaka, the China, and the Pahlava; the latter could be the ancient Pehlevians, or the
Medians (Meder)… Then follow the Yavana (Yavaner); … although the Puranic texts
depict them… as just a sect of adherents of a cult of nature and sensuality who (are
known to) have fought for the sake of religion, this (version) does not contradict to the
fact that they are considered along with other feralized Ksatriyas, and the two versions
are compatible.” 348

Some components of this picture are easily recognizable, specifically the Yavanas
whom Schlegel described in his earlier lectures. Yet the way he portrays the process of
their separation differs from the Vorlesungen of 1805 in two major respects. First, the
evidence cited in On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians identifies the Yavanas

348 Ibid., pp. 283-285.
as a part of a larger group of the non-Indian peoples. Second, the document identifies all these non-Indian peoples as former members of the Indian society, the outcast, specifically the Kshatriyas that lost their status.

Following the text placing the Yavanas within this group, Schlegel traces their alleged path westward. “If it is proved”, he writes, “That the Indian books identify the Yavanas as a variety of peoples traveling westward and professing a sensual worship of the nature, then we should… search for their path up the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, through Phoenicia and Asia Minor, and it was (this path) along which the Asian tribes with their Indian language and ideas expanded to Greece and the Central and Lower Italy.” 349

The way Schlegel traces the further path of these groups’ alleged migration westward demonstrates that, according to him, it was these impious Kshatriyas who brought the Indian Verfassung to the regions far beyond the Urvolk’s historic home. For the Middle East, he links this alleged key-role of the ancient Indian migrants to the pre-Semitic population of Babylon and Phrygia; curiously also, he discovers some features of the Kshatriyas in the Roman Patricians; more precisely, he describes them as a hereditary priesthood combining their priesterly functions with warfare. 350

How does this historical reconstruction correlate with the data provided by The Laws of Manu and to what degree does it match the context of this document? Before examining this question, one should first briefly summarize the major parameters of the

349 Ibid., p. 287.
350 Ibid., p. 291.
picture that Schlegel draws in his book. First, Schlegel bases his explanation of why and how the Greeks, Romans, and Germanic tribes separated from their Indian motherland, on the evidence of an original Sanskrit text, the *Laws of Manu*. Second, following this text, he describes a number of groups (including, in particular, the major neighbors of the ancient India and the Yavanas identified as the Greeks) as degenerated Indian Kshatriyas who lost their status and migrated westward. Third, Schlegel points to the severe *Verfassung* of Brahmanism as the major motivation for them to do so. Fourth, he portrays the Yavanas as the adherents of a cult of sencuality. Fifth, he views the conflict between the hereditary priesthood, the Brahmins, and the hereditary warrior estate, the Kshatriyas, as the form in which the process of their separation unfolded.

In order to evaluate this hypothesis of Schlegel, one should juxtapose his interpretation of the Indian text with what this text exactly tells.

**The Degenerated Kshatriyas in On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians and in The Laws of Manu**

Here is the full quote of the *The Laws of Manu*’s fragment that Schlegel cites, in order to prove his hypothesis:

“43. … In consequence of the omission of the sacred rites, and of their not consulting Brahmanas, the following tribes of Kshatriyas have gradually sunk in this world to the condition of the Sudras;

44. (Viz.) The Paundrakas, the Kodas, the Dravidas, the Kambogas, the Yavanas, the Sakas, the Paradas, the Pahlavas, the Kinas, the Kiratas, and the Daradas.
45. All those tribes in this world, which are excluded (from the community of) those born from mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet (of Brahman), are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the Mlecchas (barbarians) or that of the Aryans.”

Again, this is the fragment, on which Schlegel based his interpretation of the factors that had contributed to the Urvolk’s migration westward, and this is the only Indian source that he quoted directly. How should one evaluate this interpretation? This question is hardly answerable without placing the fragment within a larger Indian context. As a starting point, one can raise this question: what do the groups listed in the text have in common? Some of them are Indian (for example, the Paundrakas, the Kodas, and the Dravidas). At the same time, the list includes a number of unmistakably non-Indian peoples and, as Evgeny Medvedev emphasizes, “It is particularly noteworthy” that (this list) classifies the foreign conquerors (the Yavanas (Greeks or Greco-Bactrians)), the Pahlavas (Parthians), the Shakas (Skytheans), the Daradas, and the Paradas… as Indian peoples.”

What were the criteria of this classification? To understand them, one should address the phenomenon that Wilhelm Halbfass defines as the traditional Indian xenology (the term coined by Duala M’Bedy), that is, the Indian understanding of otherness or, “more specifically, the traditional Hindu ways of dealing with, or avoiding recognition of, foreigners». Again and again», Halbfass explains, «Non-Indians have interfered with the course of Indian history… After the Aryan invasion … the foreigners have come to

India in steady succession – Greeks, Persians, Central Asians, different waves of Muslims…There was the remarkable and still enigmatic phenomenon of 'Greater India' – the spread of Indian institutional and cultural phenomena and the establishment of Indianized empires in other parts of Asia.»

Another story was «How was this steady succession of contacts with foreigners and foreign challenges reflected in traditional Indian thought». «…In the documents of the Vedic period», Halbfass relates, «We do not find any conspicuous interest in foreign countries and cultures. But there is a clearly recognizable, somewhat mythical awareness of the surrounding world and of foreign hostile powers.»

In examining the distinctive features of this understanding of identity and otherness, the historian notes that, referring to themselves «as aryas, 'pure', 'noble', or manusas, the descendants of Manu, the progenitor of the 'Aryans'», the ancient Indians «Defined their identity against its (the Indian subcontinent's) original inhabitants, the dasyus or dasas». «In the perspective of the 'Aryans'», Halbfass clarifies, «These… represent … the other as such and in its negative connotations. They appear as the enemies of the gods… They are excluded from the Aryan community…and its ritual performances». Another term for foreigners was mlecchas, and, as Halbfass stresses, with time it gained «increasing prominence». Similar to that of Dasyu, it referred, as the historian specifies, «To a foreigner, the outsider who is not part of the ritual, religious,

353 Halbfass., pp. 174-175.
354 Halbfass., pp. 175-176.
social and linguistic community of the Aryans, who does not speak Sanskrit and does not follow the Vedic norms of the 'order of castes and stages of life (varnasramadharma).»  

Such were the major parameters of the Indian xenological model. There was, however, another key aspect of it, referring to the border between the world of the Aryans, where this Brahmanic order had to be observed, and that of the mlecchas. Where did this border lie? As Halbfass points out, with time it underwent certain changes: «A peculiar Vedic scheme … refers to 'five tribes' or nations (ksiti, krsti, jana, jata)… comprised certain groups within mankind, such as the four theoretical casts (varna) and, in addition, the (group of) nisada or nisadha…» Nevertheless, the historian emphasizes, «One aspect is highly important… since a very early period of Indian history (at least, since fifth century B.C.), it (the world of the Aryans) «may include the totality of terrestrial and celestial beings in general».  

This universalistic dimension conjoined smoothly with the geographical one. “Bharata, India, is the area in which the arya has his true and proper home, which supports and upholds his status as an ‘Aryan’”, Halbfass notes, and the statement of The Laws of Manu demonstrates clearly the connection between these two aspects of the Brahmanic worldview. «From a Brahmana, born in that country», the Indian law code indicates, «Let all men on earth learn their several usages». Further, with regard to the geographical dimension, the text clarifies: “That land, where the black antelope

355 Ibid.
356 Ibid., p. 175.
maturally roams, one must know to be fit for the performance of sacrifices; (the tract) different from that (is) the country of the Mlecchas.” 357

Another, no less important dimension of the Indian *Verfassung* can be defined as socioanthropological or referring to the human nature of those supposed to observe the *Verfassung*’s principles, to their duties and, therefore, their social roles. How did the Indian law code view the human nature with regard to the human duties? Interestingly, the issue of sensuality central to the Schlegel's portrayal of the Yavanas was central to the Brahmanic philosophy of law as well. «Neither (the study of) the Vedas», the text formulates, «Nor liberality, nor sacrifices, nor any self-imposed restraint, nor austerities, ever procure the attainment (of rewards) to a man whose heart is contaminated (by sensuality).» 358

This statement raises a further question, however: what determines the heart’s being contaminated by sensuality or not? The answer is rooted in the very basis of the Indian understanding of human identity, more specifically, the differentiation between the pure and the mixed castes, the products of the inter-varna unions.

The essence of this differentiation based on the understanding of marriage and offspring, explains Louis Dumont. «In the theory of the 'mixed people'…””, he writes, «Two categories are distinguished according to whether the father is of superior or inferior status to the mother: in the first case, the union is *anuloma* literally, 'following the hair', or as we should say, 'with the grain', which means the conformity with the natural order (the woman being … inferior to the man). In the opposite direction the

357 Buehler., p. 33.
union is 'brushed the wrong way' or 'against the grain', pratiloma. In both cases the offspring of such a union have inferior status… but the natural order gives rise to offspring superior to those of unions which go against the nature.»

The Laws of Manu provides numerouse illustrations of how this general principle works in a variety of concrete situations. «(8) From a Brahmana with the daughter of a Vaisya», the text specifies, «Is born (a son) called Ambashtha, with daughter od a Sudra a Nishada, who is also called a Parasava. (9). From a Kshatriya and the daughter of a Sudra a being, called Ugra, resembling both a Kshatriya and a Sudra, ferocious in his manners, and delighting in cruelty.»

The condition of such mixed groups is not absolutely hopless, however. Here is one example of how the situation can be improved: «If (a female of the cast), sprung from a Brahmana and a Sudra female, bear (children) to one of the highest cast, the inferior (tribe) attains the highest caste within the seventh generation.» Thus, the text concludes, «A Sudra attains the rank of a Brahmana, and (in a similar manner) a Brahmana sinks to the level of Sudra». The offspring of the pratiloma mariages have no such hope. As The Laws of Manu indicates, «…Men excluded (by the Aryans), who approach females of higher rank, beget races (varna) still more worthy to be excluded, low men… still lower races». 

As a special case within this group of the lower races, the law code classifies the Vratyas or «those (whom the twice-born (the Aryan) beget on wives of equal caste,

360 Buehler., pp. 403-404.
361 Ibid., p. 404.
362 Ibid., p. 409.
but who, not fulfilling their sacred duties, are excluded from the Savitri (the community of the Aryans)».

Interestingly, among the groups classified this way *The Laws of Manu* names a number of major lingual and territorial entities. One of them is, for example, the Dravida, a major group of the Indian South. «… From a Vratya (of the) Kshatriya (caste), the … Dravida (is born)», the text indicates. 363

This definition of the Dravida is not the only passage in the text that deals with this group. The low code mentions them also in the part focusing specifically on the Kshatriyas neglecting their duties. This latter passage that places the Dravida next to the Yavana, and it is precisely the part of the text, on which Schlegel based his reconstruction of the *Urvolk*'s migration and the latter's historical results.

These observations provide an opportunity to analyze the differences between the two contexts, within which the fragment of the Indian law code on the feralized Kshatriyas can be considered: first, that of the traditional Indian xenology and, second, that of the interpretation of the Indian source provided by Schlegel. To describe these differences one should go back to the way the Indian tradition treated the phenomenon of otherness. Specifically, one should emphasize the understanding of the Indian system as universal, with its regulations being mandatory everywhere, regardless of place. Within this system not recognizing the very fact of foreignness and considering the non-Indian entities as the segments of the Indian society, any foreign group could interpret only in terms of separation, specifically unlawful, from the Aryan community. This latter circumstance resulted in what Evgeny Medvedev describes as the Brahmins’ practice of

inventing a status within the hierarchy of the varnas for those who, in fact, never had it before and, therefore, of switching the real trajectories of such groups to the opposite ones. 364

It was from this perspective that the compilers of the Indian law codes considered those whom they called Yavanas. As Halbfass notes, “The Indians probably borrowed the term when they came into contact with Greeks during the reign of Darius I. … The connotation 'Jonians', i.e. Greeks, or at least 'invaders from the North-West' is obvious”, the historian clarifies. 365 As Medvedev underscores, from the Indian perspective, the ambiguity of the Yavanas' status was due to the fact that «as the Indians' military enemies and the ruling class in a number of conquered regions of the North-West, they were regarded as Kshatriyas, but, as they stood outside Hinduism, they had to be qualified as the degenerated Kshatriyas». 366

Importantly within a larger context of the history of the Kshatriyas as a group of the Indian society, the story of the Yavanas, with its being, in fact, that of inclusion but mistaken for that of separation, represented a rather typical case. “He who rules in a stable way, and places himself under the Brahman, is a Kshatriya», Dumont underscores. «…The particular place given to power in the system», he continues, «Has had notable and lasting results: in the first place, the polygyny and meat diet, which does not correspond to the Brahmanic ideal, has been quietly preserved at this and lower levels until quite recently; in the second place, since the function is related to force, it was easier

364 Medvedev., p. 110.  
365 Halbfass., p. 176.  
to become king than Brahman; Kshatriya and Untouchable are the two levels at which it is easy to enter the caste society from outside.»

Such was the way the Indian tradition viewed the Yavanas, on the one hand and the historical factors that determined this vision, on the other. In this context, it is important to summarize the major parameters of the interpretation provided by Schlegel.

The first question in this context is that of genre. In reconstructing the process of the separation of some groups of the Urvolk from their Indian motherland, the Romantic thinker relied on the law code categorizing the men's duties and the punishments to be imposed on them for the violations of the rules of marriage, as on a narrative telling the stories of the violators.

Two circumstances are of particular importance in this context. First, Schlegel interpreted the fate of the feralized Kshatriyas in terms of migration. This was, however, precisely what his source did not tell. What it told about was a decline in social status but not a migration in space. This latter interpretation represented a Schlegel’s invention.

At the same time, Schlegel’s interpretation of the Indian law code reproduced a key aspect of the Indian understanding of identity and otherness. Supposing mistakenly that he was adopting the facts of Indian history, Schlegel adopted a milestone of the Brahmanic ideology. It was the Brahmanic tradition of inventing a status within the Indian sociocultural system for the foreigners by interpreting them as degenerated members of the Hindu society that provided Schlegel with a new (versus his earlier writings, specifically the Vorlesungen of 1805) underpinning of his reconstruction of the

Urvolk's expansion to the West. More specifically, this tradition provided Schlegel with a model of explanation of the emergence out of the India-based original civilization of the sequence of the civilizations outside India.

At the same time, this model created a problem for Schlegel, and this problem was particularly sensitive for him as an adherent of the German Romantic nationalism. It referred to the place that the ancestors of the Germanic peoples had occupied among the variety of the groups of the Kshatriyas allegedly migrating from India. And in the final pages of On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians the philosopher returned to the question of the circumstances under which the ancestors of the Germanic tribes had left their original homeland.

_Toward the Mountain of Meru: A Special Scenario for the Germans_

“Nothing can raise so many doubts”, Schlegel wrote, “As a story of a people (Voelkerschaft) migrating from the most fertile and blessed part of Asia to the Scandinavian Far North… And there should be an explanation (of this fact), especially with regard to such a numerous tribe as the Germanic peoples.”

Why did Schlegel feel it necessary to return to the question of the specifically Germanic migration, although he had more than once addressed it before? Interestingly in this case, he particularly emphasized the insufficiency of the data provided by the historical scholarship (Geschichtskunde). A possible explanation of the new centrality of this issue to the Schlegel’s major work on India can be found in the new role of the Indian original sources in his historical reasoning. Schlegel believed to have discovered

---

368 Schlegel, _Studien zur Philosophie und Theologie_, p. 291.
the clue to the historic connection between the *Urvolk* and its European descendants in
the Indian source. But the discovered scenario could hardly match the nationalist
aspirations: according to it, the ancestors of the Germans should have had the same
motivation for the separation from their Indian motherland, as those of the Greeks and
Romans. This motivation was rooted in their failure to observe the severe Indian
*Verfassung*, due to their sensuality, and resulting in their degradation to the status of
barbarians. In this situation, the question of a special motivation for the precisely
Germanic separation from the Indian homeland acquired a particular importance for
Schlegel, and he attempted to find an answer in the Indian tradition.

This time Schlegel turned not to a law code but to a mythological narrative. He
believed to have discovered an alternative scenario in the Puranic texts, specifically in the
*Skondopurano (Skanda Purana)*. Here is how he described this supposed alternative. “In
the Indian mythology, one can find something that can explain this (the Germanic tribes’
migration’s) direction to the North”, Schlegel wrote. “This is”, he continued, “The legend
of the miraculous mountain of Meru where the God of Fortune, Kuvero (Kubera) has his
throne.” “Could this idea emerge out of a misunderstood narrative or out of what had
emerged for a dark cult of the nature and (out of) superstitions?” the philosopher
wondered. “Enough”, he answered, “This sublime respect for the North and for this holy
mountain is there, and this is not simply a peripheral component of the whole system of
the Indian way of thinking but a favorite idea articulated repeatedly in all the works of
poetry.” It would be”, Schlegel stressed, “Not the first and not the only case in which the
poetic legends and old chants, deeply rooted in the most intimate feelings and beliefs of
religion had a stronger influence on the features of the heroes and on their adventures
than those who, of all the matters of history accept exclusively politics would like to believe.”

Such was the way Schlegel attempted to explain the spicificaly Germanic motivation for the migration northward. “Not only the external pressure of need but some miraculous idea of a high dignity and splendor of the North, as we find it everywhere in the Indian legends, led them (the Germanic tribes) northward”, he wrote. “I would”, Schlegel specified, “…Trace the path of the Germanic tribes from the Turkhind, along (the river of) Gihon (the river issuing out of the Garden of Eden) towards the northern coast of the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus.” Further, Schlegel proclaims a detailed search for the trajectory of the further Germanic migration westward as a key question that he expects “our national historical scholarship (unsre vaterlaendische Geschichte) to explore”.

At the same time, one can observe significant differences between how he underpinned these two hypotheses with the Indian sources. If his analysis of the Yavanas as a Zwischenglied between the Urvolk’s original historic home in India and its further modifications outside the Urheimat was based on his interpretation of The Laws of Manu, his special version of of the specifically Germanic migration did not have a comparable underpinning. Curiously, while tracing the hypothetical Germanic drive to the North back to the Indian worship of the holy mountain of Meru, Schlegel provided no one single quotation from an Indian source.

369 Ibid.
370 Ibid., p. 293.
371 Ibid.
Within Schlegel’s discourse, both versions performed a similar function, however. Each of them was intended to underpin the historic continuity between the earlier Indian and the later European, specifically German phases of the Urvolk’s history. At the same time, the two versions focused on different aspects: the former, on the Germanic tribes (and, therefore, the Germans) being the inheritors to the original civilization (in the linguistic, religious, and socioanthropological respects); the latter, on their ethical superiority over the other parts of the Urvolk.

The juxtaposition of these two versions explains the nature of Schlegel’s interest in the Indian civilization and, more specifically, the way he justified (to use Heine’s wording) the Indian studies in the German-speaking realm. One should emphasize that from the outset Schlegel’s interest in India included a substantial ideological component; for the understanding of On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians, the first Schlegel’s and, more generally, first German book on India based partially on the original Indian sources, this ideological dimension is of particular importance.

The question central for Schlegel’s major work on India, synthesizing the results of his earlier studies on the philosophy of language and the history of the peoples, is that of India’s heritage representing a civilization most ancient and the closest one to the original civilization that disintegrated with time. In his book, Schlegel traces three dimensions of this disintegration: the lingual, the religious, and the ethnic-historical.

One key aspect of Schlegel’s discourse on India represented the correlation between the Indian heritage and the biblical Revelation. Unlike Novalis idealizing and explicitly mythologizing “the eternal Orient”, Schlegel considered the Indian religious
tradition as a product of the Revelation granted but misunderstood. This idea explains the ambivalence of Schlegel’s understanding of the Indian heritage; the philosopher discovers the traces of the original divine light in the Indian beliefs and myths but, at the same time, he views the trajectory of India’s history as that of the gradual spiritual degradation. In attempting to explain the formation of the European, specifically Germanic peoples as a result of their separation from the India-based original civilization, Schlegel adopts explicitly the Indian model of the degradation of the Kshatriyas to the status of the Barbarians.

This latter circumstance created a problem for Schlegel's Romantic nationalism. According to the logic of the process interpreted along the lines of the adopted Indian theory, the peoples that emerged in the process of the separation from the original civilization, migrated as a result of their failure to observe the severe Brahmanic Verfassung and represented, therefore, the products of a decline, with the Germanic peoples being a of this decadent spectrum.

In this situation, Schlegel suggested another version of the precisely Germanic migration from the Indian historic home. This version based on the Indian legends of the mountain of Meru, created new problems, however. Not only was its scholarly underpinning incomparable with that of the Yavana version based on the interpretation of The Laws of Manu, but conceptually the idea of the hypothetical Germanic drive to the North had no connection to the theory of the Urvolk's expansion through colonization. As a result of this circumstance, Schlegel's central work on India ended with two conflicting interpretations of the Urvolk's separation from its Indian motherland. This
conflict between the two interpretations makes the question of the further fate of the theories that Schlegel developed in *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*, that of particular interest. This question intersects with that of the place occupied by India in the philosopher's later works.

**Schlegel's Discourse on India after 1808: The Aryan Urvolk and Urstaat**

These two questions bring this study back to the subject touched upon earlier: Did Schlegel really retired from Indian studies after the publication of his pioneering book? Did *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* express the Romantic thinker's disappointment with India, as Paul Hoffmann asserts? Did Schlegel's decisive break with India as a source of inspiration take place, as Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi insists? Or Schlegel's reflections on the Indian civilization still remained important for his further theoretical work?

Addressing this subject, it is helpful to outline it more clearly. Given the strong ideological component of Schlegel’s interest in India, it is not the number of pages on India in his later texts but rather the ways he applied the theories he had developed within the realm of Indian studies to other, more general contexts that one should consider the criterion for the evaluation. And as one can see, the Indian-studies-based explanatory model outlined in *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* continued to influence his discourse on the subjects central to him as a philosopher of history.

Among the texts helping demonstrate the major parameters of how Schlegel placed this model within a larger world-historical context, two are of particular significance: first, Schlegel's review of J.G. Rhode's book *Ueber den Anfang unserer*
The former text summarizes and systematizes the topics that Schlegel defines as those of key importance for the understanding of the initial stages of world history. Interestingly, the scheme that determined the composition of his book of 1808 is easily recognizable in how he reviews these topics. As before, Schlegel’s focus is on the correlation between the biblical tradition (specifically the Mosaic narrative) and other narratives. And, as in his central work on India, he raises the question of the juxtaposition of these narratives, in order to reconstruct the most distant past of mankind. Following the scheme of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*, Schlegel formulates the key topics of this research, such as the original home of mankind (*Urland*) and the original language (*urspruengliche Sprache*). At the same time, he concretizes this scheme in some significant respects. Specifically, he examines the *Urvolk*’s original location and its further trajectory in a more systematic way than in 1808.

One significant modification of Schlegel's understanding of the *Urvolk* concerns the latter's name. With regard to the *Avesta* as a text reflecting the earliest stages of human religion and, more specifically, to the language of this text, Schlegel emphasizes the importance of considering this issue in terms of the history of the peoples. «We should wonder about the people (*Volk*) that spoke this language, and so we move from … the remarks regarding the original language (*Ursprache*)… to … the *Urvolk*… and the places of its original residence», he stresses. Of no lesser importance for Schlegel is the

---

372 Ibid., p. 477.
question of the *Urvolk*’s proper name. «What was» the name of this people… that resided in the land of Ari?” Schlegel continues. “The ancient (peoples) called it by the land of residence (due to which the name of the people was) the Aryans (*Arier*).»³⁷³

Schlegel reviews a variety of examples of where and for whom the name of Aryans was used in the ancient times. In particular, he points to its modifications within the Iranian context and demonstrates this term's role as the original name of this civilization. On the other hand, Schlegel emphasizes its being the common name of a «large and widespread family of peoples». In this context, he goes back to The Laws of *Manu*. «In the Indian law code of Menu (Manu)», he points out, «The land of the Aryans, Aryaverta (Aryavarta) is described as a… vast country… expanding through the mountains of the Northern India to the seas of the East and West.» ³⁷⁴

At the same time, Schlegel emphasizes a special connection between the ancient Aryans and the Germans, specifically in the realm of language. «Undoubtedly, the … Indian stem ‘ari’ is a German, specifically a modern German one as well… (It exists) in both the language and life; how could one describe it in a different way, (if this word means) ‘honor’, (and if) … this stem would become the name of a people today… This name would mean as much as ‘the noble ones’», he specifies.³⁷⁵

In using the linguistics as *a* – if not *the* – key to the history, Schlegel applies it now to a particularly sensitive situation. «In the earlier and the gothic forms (of) German», he writes, «This stem sounds as ‘ario’ or ‘ari’, and those who have noticed how

³⁷³ Ibid., p. 518.
³⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 519.
³⁷⁵ Ibid.
widespread these stems… are in the old German history and lore… would be not surprised if I would add that… our Germanic ancestors, while still in Asia, should be identified as those having the name of Aryans.” «The old narrative on… the kinship between the Germans, the Germanic, and the Gothic peoples, on the one hand and the Persians, on the other, got a new historical underpinning», Schlegel concludes. 376

In analyzing this underpinning, he returns to the social dimension of the historical linkage between the Germans and their Asian ancestors, specifically to both the ancestors and the descendents as representing a distinctive people of warriors (Kriegervolk). This idea acquires now a more concrete form than before: stressing the prevalence of the military elites in both societies, Schlegel juxtaposes the specific groups in each one. In particular, he compares the terms signifying the hereditary warrior classes, such as the Mahratten (Marathas, or the Grossrajas) and the Rasputten (the Rajputs, or the Sons of the Rajas) in India and the «Teutonen… i.e. the Kings, the Princes, the Masters, the Nobles…» in the Germanic realm. 377

This juxtaposition of the military ruling classes in the two societies representing, in Schlegel's view, two stages in the history of the Urvolk, brings him to the question of the original state, the Urstaat. In the text of the Avesta, Schlegel finds an underpinning of the idea that the ancient Aryans not only represented the original people but also had a common state. The Avesta, he clarifies, describes the Aryans as a people living in one country clearly outlined geographically and historically, with all other countries portrayed as having joined it. As Schlegel points out, the borders of the «first and

376 Ibid., p. 520.
377 Ibid., p. 521.
original land of the Aryan people (*der erste und ursprüngliche Stammland der Arier*) were Sogdiana (the Central Asian region divided today between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – A.P.), in the North and Armenia and Northern Assyria, in the West. With regard to the southern part of Ariāland, he points to what the Avesta identifies as *Hapte Heando* (Seven Indias) «surpassing all other world-empires (*alle anderen Weltreiche*) in greatness and scale. ³⁷⁸

In emphasizing the role of India as an inseparable part of the common Aryan world, Schlegel returns to his favorite Indian text, *The Laws of Manu*. Moreover, he recalls the same passage on the degenerated Kshatriyas on which he based his earlier explanation of the original people's drive to the West. «The… Aryans are described quite clearly in an Indian source as well», Schlegel stresses. «That much spoken of passage of the Manu's law code telling about the feralized castes of the warriors that had separated from the Brahmins due to (these castes') neglect of the Brahmanic norms and customs and about the peoples that originated from them», he specifies, «Ends as follows: 'All those are the Dasyu («Or the robber peoples used for warfare», Schlegel clarifies) whether they speak the language of the Mlecchas or that of the Aryans.'» «The Mlecchas», Schlegel recalls, «Are the barbarian peoples foreign to the (Aryan) Indians in origin and language.» «And if (this passage)», he stresses, «Opposes them and the Aryans explicitly, this (opposition) can mean as much as if it would be said that they all

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 526.
are feralized and fallen robber peoples whether they are barbarians or … related to the Aryans in origin and language.»

As one can see, the context in which Schlegel addresses this *The Laws of Manu's* fragment on the degenerated Kshatriyas differs from that of the *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*. In this case, he turns to it not as to an evidence of the European peoples' having originated from the India-based *Urvolk's* but as to an illustration of ancient India's belonging to the larger Aryan world, a concept not existing in Schlegel's book of 1808. At the same time, his interpretation of this fragment acquires another important aspect. As Schlegel concludes, it was not only the degenerated Aryans who had migrated from India to the West; as he points out, in addition to them, the multitude of the outcast could easily include the genuine Mlecchas.

Even viewed only within the context of Indian studies, this latter observation made in 1819 illustrated Schlegel's becoming increasingly focused on the theme of interaction between the Aryans and the barbarians. Evidence of the significant place occupied by this topic within a larger context of his discourse is provided by Schlegel's last major work, his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (*Vorlesungen ueber Philosophie der Geschichte*). Schlegel delivered these lectures in Vienna late in 1828, shortly before his unexpected death in January of 1829. Importantly, it was in this culminational work of his life that he made the story of the degenerated Indian Kshatriyas the clue to his Bible-based philosophy of world history.

---

Ibid.
**The Two Urvolks: The Urvolk Scenario in the Context of the Bible-Based Perspective**

These lectures represent the most comprehensive expression of the late Schlegel’s religious-philosophical reflections on world history and, in many respects, a synthesis of his earlier efforts in a variety of fields. As more than once before, Schlegel develops the theme of the world historical process’ being that of the *Ursprache*s and *Urvolk*s disintegration and degeneration, and as before he poses the question of a comprehensive juxtaposition of the variety of the narratives in order to reconstruct this process. “It was a historically erroneous limitation of the understanding”, he underscores, “When (the scholars) viewed any coherence (among the different peoples’ narratives on the most ancient history) as if… this was taken from the Mosaic tradition.” According to Schlegel, “It would be more realistic (to suggest) that these peoples might have borrowed something from an older tradition.” 380

Since this older tradition can represent only a possible result of a desirable scholarly reconstruction in the future, the philosopher unfolds his general picture of world history within the framework of the narratives available. As to the starting point of mankind’s gradual degradation he points to the fall of Man. As before, the philosopher emphasizes Man being granted with free will as the key factor. “With mankind’s having been once involved in the (process of) deterioration and decline”, Schlegel stresses, “It is impossible… to establish the limits within which he will sink from one level to another”. 381

---

381 Ibid., p. 34.
In this context, Schlegel amplifies the thesis put forward in his earlier writings: as the first consequence of the decline of human nature he considers the division of mankind as an originally homogeneous entity into a multiplicity of languages and peoples. “The very next consequence”, he writes, “Is the division of the human race into number of nations, accompanied by the (emergence of) a variety of languages.” “As long as the internal harmony of the soul was not disturbed… and the light of the Spirit not darkened, there could be only one language”, Schlegel asserts. “However, after the internal God-given word… had darkened for Man”, he continues, “A confusion of the external language had to follow as well…. That was how … this plurality of languages not understandable to each other emerged.” 382

As to another result of the same process Schlegel points to the division of mankind into a variety of races. As the key factor at work he singles out the climate. “When Man falls… under the power of the nature”, he explains, “He becomes depending of the … climatic differences. The plants or animal species acquire completely different forms in America or Africa and one can speak of the human races in a similar way.” 383

For Schlegel, this changeability represents only a consequence of a more fundamental process. In explaining the essence of the latter, he goes back to his major theme of the degeneration. “Being of the same origin as… the noblest and most advanced peoples”, he underscores, “All the so-called savages… grew wild gradually and sunk deeper and deeper into bestial roughness”. 384

382 Ibid., pp. 34-36.
383 Ibid., p. 35.
384 Ibid., p. 37.
Schlegel illustrates this thesis with a variety of examples reflecting, in his opinion, the variety of the levels of Man’s degeneration. “Far under the Negro who, due to his organic strength… as well as (his)… mostly good-willing temper, stands far from the lowest stage of mankind”, he places “the formless Patagonians”, “the almost insane Pescheraehs”, and “the frightening cannibals of New Seeland whose very picture ignites fear”. And, as he emphasizes, for all of these cases, “We should keep this thread of explanation, relying on the solely true human view (einzige menschlich richtige Ansicht)”.  

His explanation of in what this solely true human view should consist Schlegel bases on reducing this plurality to a fundamental duality determining, according to him, the essence of human history. As Schlegel asserts, this duality is rooted in Man’s free will as the primary condition of human existence. As he stresses further, the fundamental choice that the human race had to make on the outset was that between God and the nature and it was this necessity to choose that caused a conflict to predetermine the whole trajectory of human history. “There are two wills in (Man) after the split occurred…”, Schlegel emphasizes, “… With one will being divine (goettlich) or, at least, God-seeking and with the other, being nature-oriented, nature-desiring and power-seeking.”  

In the context of the Viennese Lectures, Schlegel’s understanding of the Urvolk undergoes a serious modification. “The fundamental content of the whole initial history (Urgeschichte) is the conflict of two antagonistic Urvolks opposing each other”, he states. These are, the philosopher explains, “Two completely different types of men: on one

---

385 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
386 Ibid., pp. 38-39.
side, the tribe of God-seeking, peace-loving people living in patriarchal simplicity and morality… On the other, the tribe of giants strong, violent and audacious, alleged sons of God or the giants storming the heaven…”. And, as Schlegel emphasizes, “This most ancient split occurred within the whole human race, with some local differences”. 387

As the “first historical evidence of this split” Schlegel considers the biblical narrative on the murder of Abel by Cain. According to him, it was the curse of Cain that represented the true starting point of world history. And as he specifies, it was the Cainites to whom the narrative attributes the invention of the major human institutions and practices, such as the hereditary estates, on the one hand and the crafts and arts, specifically those based on the use of metals, on the other. At the same time, as Schlegel stresses, “This tribe produced not only the inhabitants of the cities but also the…nomadic peoples of East Asia”. 388

As to the progenitor of the other, God-loving tribe Schlegel points to the Adam and Eva’s third son, Seth. «On the other side», he writes, «There emerged the tribe of peaceful patriarchs… started by Seth.» And, as Schlegel asserts, «this second progenitor of mankind occupies an important place in the narratives of the other peoples (of the world).” 389

Within Schlegel's reasoning on world history, this episode not only explains the initial divisions of the human race but it becomes also the key to the understanding of the further trajectory of mankind. «This… difference between the two tribes, or peoples … is

387 Ibid., pp. 39-41.
388 Ibid., p. 39.
389 Ibid.
(usually) not considered as the key factor (and interpreted as) just as that between a nobler and a lower race», he admits. «A German student of the bygone generations of the peoples that still exist today would find this division into two classes everywhere”, Schlegel points out, “From the noble Celts to… the miserable Mongols». «But in those ancient times”, he emphasizes, “This conflict represented rather… a division into two hostile parties». «It was», Schlegel specifies, «A conflict between the true religion and the wrong one, but (expressed) in the gigantic dimensions of the Urwelt”. 390

What do the narratives available tell about this conflict? As Schlegel admits, «The Mosaic tradition provides us with a few words almost enigmatic although meaningful”. Given this, he points to other sources of information, that is, to “the narratives of the other peoples” among which he singles out the Greek and the Indian. 391 The evidences provided by these two traditions are not equally detailed, however. The former, Schlegel relates, “Represents these two states (of human nature) … as alternating with the generations and, on the other hand, as descending from one stage to another, as the world sinks ever further in its deterioration.” 392

The Indian sources tell a more detailed story. “The Indian legends”, Schlegel points out, “Represent the relationship between the two original tribes as an ongoing war always starting anew, (a war) in which the… impious giants and the pious Brahmanic clans defeat each other interchangeably. The noblest and god-inspired heroes protect the

390 Ibid., p. 41.  
391 Ibid., p. 37.  
392 Ibid., p. 43.
latter and win astonishing victories over those hostile forces, and such is… the content of all the great epic poems of the Indians”. 393

At this point, Schlegel goes back to his central thesis. Who are these impious giants defying the law and order? In explaining this, the philosopher returns once again to the old theme of the feralized Kshatriyas. “In accordance with their today’s order of life and way of thinking”, he writes, “They (the Indians) portray those violent giant peoples as the barbarized warrior tribes. In the later historical eras some of (their names) got prominence as those of the peoples, such as the Chinese, the Pahlavas (the people representing the root of the ancient Medes and Persians), and the Yavanas, or the Jonians, the Asian term for the original Greek people.” 394

In drawing this parallel to the Indian narrative (based, as before, on the scheme outlined in *The Laws of Manu*), Schlegel interprets the Cainites as a degenerated Kriegerkaste, the descendants of Seth, as analogous to the Indian Brahmins, and the relationship between the Cainites and the Sethites, as another local version of the conflict described in the Indian epics. No less interestingly, in proving his hypothesis, he points to two details of the biblical narrative displaying a certain resemblance of the Indian. The first is the community’s fear of mixing with the Cainites (another parallel to the Aryans-Mlecchas relations as reflected in *The Laws of Manu*), the other, the biblical explanation of the Flood as a punishment for this mixing. 395

---

393 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
394 Ibid., p. 43.
395 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
Within a larger context of Schlegel’s general resoning, this juxtaposition between the biblical narrative on the curse of Cain and the Indian epics on the degenerated Kshatriyas becomes the major underpinning of his central thesis. Here is how he formulates this thesis: “The contradiction between the Sethites and the Cainites and the interaction between these two tribes represents the true clue to the initial history of the whole ancient world… as well as (the explanation) of the deepening degeneration of the human race”. 396

Conclusion

This analysis of the texts reviewed above, specifically the Vienna Lectures of 1828 as the text reflecting the final stage of Friedrich Schlegel's long career as a thinker, brings this study to a number of observations. First, Schlegel's interest in India represented not an episode in his intellectual biography but a key element of his discourse from the early 1800s through the final days of his life. The role of the Indian segment in Schlegel's thought can be described as follows: not only did he introduce Indian studies to his compatriots but he also projected the models that he had discovered within the realm of Indology, onto a larger realm of his world historical and philosophical-historical reflections.

Second, after the publication in 1808 of his pioneering work on India, he amplified significantly the major conceptions that he had developed in this book, specifically those of the Ursprache and Urvolk, emphasizing the Indian and Indo-Iranian roots of both phenomena. Moreover, during this later period he concretized substantially his understanding of the Indo-German (now, more precisely, Indo-Iranian-German) reflection. 396

Ibid., p. 96.
In this context, he added the concept of the larger Aryan world of which India was an inseparable part, to his general picture of the original home of the *Urvolk*. On the one hand, he juxtaposed the Indian and the German warrior clans, in order to demonstrate the special connection between the Asian ancestors and their German descendants.

Third, after 1808, Schlegel clarified his reconstruction of the *Urvolk's* migration westward. The place that his earlier version of the specifically Germanic migration (the drive toward the Mountain of Meru) occupied in his portrayal of the process, diminished. To the contrary, his hypothesis (based on his interpretation of *The Laws of Manu*) of the feralized *Kshatriyas*, specifically the *Yavanas* as the key element of the picture, became a substantial component of his philosophical-historical discourse.

Fourth, Schlegel's study of the Indian sources, specifically *The Laws of Manu*, resulted in his adoption of the Brahmanic xenological model (based on the opposition between the *Aryans* and the *Mlecchas* and on that of the *Kshatriya* groups separating from the former and joining the latter, due to their neglect of their duties) as the explanatory model for the *Urvolk's* migration. In his later works, Schlegel projected this Indian-tradition-based explanatory scheme onto the biblical narrative and made this scheme the basis of his general understanding of the historical process. This understanding comprised four major components: first, the idea of world history as the degeneration of the originally perfect human race caused by Man's retreat from God; second, the conception of the lingual and racial plurality as representing a result of this degeneration; third, the view of the split of the originally homogeneous human race into
two conflicting groups (the God-seeking vs. the nature-worshipping) as the fundamental
division of mankind; and, fourth, the attitude to the Indian tradition as the oldest and most
reliable source of knowledge of the initial stage of world history.

This understanding of world history explained the unique place that India
occupied within Schlegel’s Weltanschauung. The Sanskrit texts provided the first
German Indologist not only with valuable information about another civilization, but also
with the model of description of his own.

There remained, however, one contradiction within this India-based picture of
world history. On the one hand, it was designed to trace the historical continuity between
the Urvolk and Schlegel compatriots, the Germans. On the other hand, it illustrated the
religious and moral degeneration of mankind. How did these two processes interact?
Schlegel left this question open. To trace the way the nationalist and religious trajectories
intersected with one another, one should address Friedrich Schlegel’s contemporaries and
younger contemporaries who modified his ideas in a variety of ways.

Chapter Five. Otmar Frank: A Breakthrough to the Alleged Iranian-Indian Roots
of the Germans

Frank’s Message: Bonapartism, Orientalism, and Nationalism

Notwithstanding its uniqueness as a scholarly and religious-philosophical work,
On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians of Schlegel was not the only German
book that appeared in 1808 to announce the beginning of the Indian Renaissance in the
German-speaking realm. Another one titled Das Licht vom Orient (The Light from the
Orient) was published that year simultaneously by two German publishing houses,
Lechner at Nuremberg and Besson at Leipzig. As a manifesto of Oriental studies, this book resembled Schlegel’s in a number of respects. At the same time, it differed significantly from Schlegel’s central work on India, both scholarly and ideologically.

One such difference referred to the book’s political message. Here is how the author articulated this message in the lengthy dedication: “To the powerful avatara of the time, to the conquering and formative radiant energy of nations; to the former luminosity of the people’s community, finally once more becoming evident, that with brilliance and the strength of light sends forth to all areas of the world enormous change, lofty life, and new ideas in endless colors and transmutations; to the sublime which as an enormous sacred national blaze has broken through the chaotic clash of darkness in Germany as well and which before the night was rent a sunder came to rest among the Germans, filling their sacred shrines with ruin and death; to the ancient godly words newly spoken before an astounded Europe so that the State in which the center dissolves and falls dark within its entire body and sinks away into shame might elevate the luminous power of the heart of an entire nation above itself; to that brilliance that in Germany would fling up a temple to the sun in which the indivisible Germanic people should be sent together with the Gallic band; to that luminosity revealing mysterious beams of oriental light who shall weigh the scales of humanity so as to achieve free intercourse of the people and once again open to us the ancient paradise of our ancestors….

To all this in the greatest humility the writer dedicates his work.”

Das Licht vom Orient dargestellt von Othmar Frank, Professor der Philosophie zu Bamberg. I Theil. (Nuernberg: Lechner; Leipzig: Besson, 1808), pp. I-IV.

235
The author of the book was Othmar Frank, a professor of philosophy at Bamberg, and „the radiant energy of nations“, Emperor Napoleon, the Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine. Characterizing him as an avatara, the eloquent philosopher added a noteworthy reference to avoid misunderstanding: “in the Brahmanic sense” (*im Sinne der Brahmanen*).

In 1808, Frank’s Bonapartist enthusiasm contrasting with Friedrich Schlegel’s strong pro-Austrian stand represented, perhaps, the most obvious feature distinguishing the author of *The Light from the Orient* from that of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*. This enthusiasm went far beyond a just political fashion statement; throughout his book, Frank amplified his pro-Napoleon and, generally, pro-French position. Not only did he associate “all heroic deeds (*alle hohe That*) of the modernity” with the Emperor of the French describing him as “the powerful genius of the world, not foreign to Heaven”, but, no less importantly, he placed this role of Napoleon within a broader framework of the specifically French contribution to Oriental studies. “It is indisputable that France has… most of all advanced the knowledge… of Persia and India”, Frank wrote. “Even William Jones, the president of the (Asiatic) Society in Calcutta, had to admit that. It was France that sent Le Gentile and Sonnerat to Asia…Anquetil du Perron… accomplished more than all the others in the field of Persian antiquities…” In describing these activities, Frank particularly emphasized the

---

398 *Das Licht vom Orient.*, p. 20.
399 Ibid., p. 48.
importance of Napoleon’s leadership by pointing to the foundation by him of “a new
department of Persian language studies at College de France”. 400

Within the larger context of the era, this position of Frank towards Napoleon and
France had several dimensions. Politically, a pro-French and even pro-Bonaparte
standpoint was not surprising for a Bamberg professor of the first and well into the
second decade of the nineteenth century. “All the official circles of southern and western
Germany were… greatly indebted to the French…” – this is how Veit Valentin
characterizes the situation a few years after the publication of Frank’s book. The German
intellectual community was as deeply divided over Napoleon as were the governments;
although, as Valentin notes, “Academic circles realized the necessity of the struggle for
German freedom and German rights… it was only in northern Germany that Napoleon
was thoroughly hated as oppressor and exploiter; in the west and in the south admiration
for the contemporary Man of Destiny was prevalent, and he was regarded as a hero who
belonged to German history also”. 401 If such was the the situation at the peak of the anti-
Napoleonic liberation struggle, in 1808 immediately after Napoleon’s 1806 triumphs
including the creation of the Rhenish Confederation, the very fact of Frank’s glorification
of “the genius of the world” was rather understandable.

Another story was the very way the Bamberg professor glorified the Emperor of
the French. Although Frank’s enthusiasm about Napoleon evaporated in the post-war
situation, his message articulating the German national reawakening in the Oriental terms

400 Ibid., p. 117.
401 Veit Valentin, The German people. Their History and Civilization from the Holy
went far beyond the political circumstances of 1808. If one variable of the equation, “the powerful avatara of the time” with regard to the French Man of Destiny, lost its meaning after the political circumstances had changed, the other parameters of this equation, such as the idea of “the former luminosity of the people’s community” assigned to “break through the chaotic clash of darkness in Germany” and “fling up a temple to the Sun” for “the indivisible Germanic people”, remained completely in force.

To understand this complex of ideas articulated in *The Light from the Orient*, one should address first the personality of Othmar Frank within the German cultural spectrum of the era.

**Frank’s Scholarship: The Oriental Studies in the South German Context**

In terms of his significance for German culture, Othmar Frank was hardly comparable to Friedrich Schlegel. Unlike the author of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*, he could not be characterized as a dominant intellectual figure of the era. His influence in the German cultural community was limited to the field of Oriental studies. Moreover, even here his contribution was far from indisputable. But although Frank was a much lesser figure than either Schlegel or Novalis, nevertheless, he merits attention because of the extremism of his statements. Where Schlegel tries to find factual evidences and juxtaposes various possible explanations, Frank jumps to conclusions without even questioning the scholarly validity of his reasoning. This unshakable belief made him much more radical and explicit in advocating the special connection between the Indian (or, more precisely in this case, Iranian-Indian) ancestry of the Germanendom and contemporary Germans.
One should also emphasize another difference between Othmar Frank and Friedrich Schlegel. Frank’s roots differed significantly from those of the Schlegel brothers. Contrary to these Hanover-born Lutheran-priest-sons, he was a Bambergian and, thus, Franconian, a genuine representative of the German South. As a Southerner in the field of Indian studies, he is often juxtaposed with his compatriot and younger contemporary, the famous linguist, Franz Bopp. “It was two South Germans, Othmar Frank and Franz Bopp”, Ernst Windisch recalls in his *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*, “Who, supported by their government… almost simultaneously engaged in the Sanskrit studies in Paris.” “And then”, he continued, “Each of the two published… his grammar of Sanskrit, Frank, in 1823 and Bopp, in 1827, the former in Latin, the latter, in German.”

Although this recollection refers to a later period, the juxtaposition between Frank and his fellow Bavarian subject, Bopp, highlights some particularly distinctive features of Frank’s biography and personality. One of them is the importance of the regional factor for the understanding of his scholarly career. Unlike his twenty one-year younger Mainz-born colleague and rival, Bopp, who in 1821 obtained professorship at Berlin and a year later, became a member of the Prussian Royal Academy, Frank’s academic trajectory unfolded exclusively in his native South. Born in 1770 in Bamberg, he studied philosophy at the Bamberg University and became Professor of Philosophy there. Later, Frank taught at Wurzburg as Professor Philosophiae ac Philologiae Orientalis. In 1814, granted with a financial support from King Maximilian Joseph of Bavaria, he moved to Paris where he spent three years, and then to London. Interestingly, in the prefaces to his

---

later works, Frank did not provide much detail about his stay in France. In a much more detailed manner he described his visits to London and his encounters with the founding fathers of the British Indology, Wilkins and Colebrooke.⁴⁰³

Upon his return to Wurzburg, Frank published two works, both in Latin and both dedicated to King Maximilian Joseph. One was his work the *Conspectus Chrestomathiae Sanskritae* (1817) the other (1823), the *Vyakarana Sastracaksus/Grammatica Sanscrita*, the first grammar of Sanskrit published in the German-speaking realm.⁴⁰⁴ Three years later, Frank was invited to become Professor at the newly created University of Munich; since then through his final days (he died in 1840) all his scholarly activities developed in the Bavarian capital.

Beyond the Bavarian cultural establishment, Frank’s reputation as a scholar was far from indisputable. If Bopp found the *Grammatica Sanscrita* full of mistakes, some others went even further. “Staying calm while studying this book would be a testimony of a very strong brain”, the young Indologist, Christian Lassen wrote to Friedrich Schlegel’s brother, August Wilhelm.⁴⁰⁵

The later authors expressed also little enthusiasm about Frank’s scholarly contributions. “Otmar Frank who advocated fantastic theories … in his *Licht vom Orient*” – such was the wording used by Helmut von Glasenapp.”⁴⁰⁶ Ernst Windisch expressed a similar opinion, although with some clarifications. As he underscored, it was “during the

---

⁴⁰³ Windisch., p. 64.
⁴⁰⁴ Othmar Frank, *Conspectus Chrestomathiae Sanskritae* (Munich: Monachii, 1817); *same, Grammatica Sanscrita* (Munich: Monachii, 1823).
⁴⁰⁵ Windisch., p. 65.
⁴⁰⁶ Glasenapp., p. 30.
first period of his work” that Frank’s “writings had a philosophical-fantastic character” whereas later, as he admitted, the author of *The Licht vom Orient* “acquired a noteworthy knowledge of Sanskrit”. Nevertheless, characterizing Frank’s place in the history of Oriental studies, Windisch emphasizes his “lack of strict philological training”. 407

These weaknesses widely and sharply criticized, could not undermine the outstanding role of Otmar Frank as a pioneer of Indology in the Germanies, however. Not only was he the author the first Sanskrit grammar and the first publisher of the Sanskrit texts and in the German-speaking realm (among these texts, one should point to the fragments of the *Mahabharata*, specifically the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and *The Laws of Manu* as well as to Sankara’s comments on the *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad*) 408 but he also started the first German periodical dedicated completely to Indian studies. (Curiously, Frank presented the first issue of this journal titled *Vyasa, Ueber Philosophie, Mythologie, Literatur und Sprache der Hindu* in 1826, on the occasion of the foundation of the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, and this presentation provided a significant argument for the royal decision to appoint him to the professorship.) No less importantly, in 1835 he published the Sanskrit original of the *Vedanta-sara* by Sadananda accompanied by his translation and thus gave the German lay reader his first opportunity to familiarize himself with an Indian philosophical text translated from Sanskrit by a German scholar. 409

407 Windisch., pp. 63-64.  
408 Ibid., p. 64.  
Placed within a larger context of Frank’s scholarly work, this latter fact highlighted one key feature of Frank’s interest in the Indian heritage, distinguishing him from some of his colleagues, specifically Bopp. This interest was predominantly philosophical. If Bopp, as Windisch justly emphasizes, “was purus putus Grammaticus”, Frank’s focus was on the content of the Sanskrit texts he studied.  

This remark needs a clarification, however. Not only was Othmar Frank interested in the ideas expressed in the Indian texts rather than in the grammatical forms of the Sanskrit language, but also, no less importantly, his philosophical interests went at times far beyond the philological matters in the broadest sense of the term. As the very titles of Frank’s writings verify, their list included not only those dealing with the languages and texts but also those focusing on the philosophy of nature (Naturphilosophie), specifically geographical matters. One such example provides his work published in 1813 and titled Persia and Chile as the Poles of the Physical Ground Line and the Key Ideas of the Earth Sciences in an Address to Chamberlain Alexander von Humboldt (Persien und Chili als Pole der physischen Erdbreite und Leitpunkte zur Kenntniss der Erde in einem Sendschreiben an den Herrn Kammerherrn Alexander von Humboldt). Thematical thus, Frank’s study of the Oriental cultural heritage represented only a segment, although highly important, within a much larger framework of his scholarly claims.

---

410 Windisch, p. 63.  

242
The contours of this general framework including a strong and explicit tendency to unlimited generalizations are quite visible in Frank’s writings. “Frank… believed too easily to have understood the sense of a philosophical text”, Windisch stresses. He explains this weakness of Frank by pointing out that he “Worked isolated and had insufficient knowledge of the philosophical usage of the (Sanskrit) language”.

“Understandably”, the historian concludes, “…The grammarians, such as Bopp and the philologists, such as Lassen, did not want to recognize him”. 412

On the other hand, it is precisely these features of Frank as a scholar, due to which he more than once became a target of sharp criticism that make him a figure of particular interest within the history of the Weltanschauungs. His tendency to generalization in interpreting the Indian materials and, specifically, the straightforwardness with which he traced the German language and culture back to those of the Indo-Iranian antiquities made his writings a valuable document for a reconstruction of the linkage between the Indian studies and the German Romantic nationalism.

This ideological component of his scholarly work is especially visible in The Light from the Orient. In many ways, the message of this book echoes that of On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians. As the Schlegel’s masterpiece, Frank’s work focuses on the continuity between the Urvolk and Urstaat, on the one hand and the Germans of the Romantic era, on the other. As the Schlegel’s study of the Indian civilization, it seeks to reconstruct the original religion of mankind. As the book by Schlegel, it is intended to outline the proper place that the Indian studies should occupy within the German culture.

412 Windisch., pp. 64-65.
Nevertheless, resembling in some ways the Schlegel’s work in message, *The Light from Orient* differs significantly from it in how this message is articulated. Where Schlegel posits questions, reasons, and hypothesizes, Frank preaches, admires, and condemns. And although this style provides an additional illustration of Frank’s vulnerability as a scholar, it highlights his role as an ideologue. To understand the major parameters of his ideology, one should take a closer look at how he portrays the linkage between the original “luminosity of the people’s community” and “the indivisible Germanic people” of his era in *The Light from the Orient*.

**Parsism as Historiosophy**

Reading just the first pages of *The Light from the Orient*, one becomes aware of another significant difference between the Frank’s and the Schlegel’s understanding of the trajectory of the original civilization. If in *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* the Urvolk’s great track starts in the North-Western India with Iran being the first stop on the original people’s path westward (it was only later, in the review of the Rhode’s book that he identified Iran as the cradle of the Indo-Aryan world), in Othmar Frank’s work Iran becomes the starting point of the historical process. “From one land the earth was populated”, he asserts, “And the light issued forth in colorful wealth to all corners of the earth. From Iran its beams reached India, Egypt, Greece, Germany, and all of Europe.”

With the same clarity Frank identifies the special place occupied by Germany within this picture. “The Germans”, he emphasizes, “Have their own ancient attitude

---

413 Frank, *Das Licht vom Orient*, p. 4.
toward orientalism, their original character being Persian, which is proven by the prominent inner kinship between the German and Persian languages.”

The way Frank described and explained the expansion of the initial civilization displayed both a fundamental similarity to and a significant difference from that provided by Schlegel. As Schlegel, Frank viewed the disintegration of the original unity of mankind as a result of a degradation. What distinguished Frank’s understanding of this process from the historical reconstruction undertaken by Schlegel, was his understanding of the nature of this process. If Schlegel’s writings, starting even before On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians, focused on the historical explanation of the pathes of and the motivations of the Urvolk’s migration, the author of The Light from the Orient underpinned his vision with naturphilosophical arguments. Unlike Schlegel who traced the Urvolk’s migration from the Urheimat to the religious processes, Frank viewed these religious transformations as caused by a natural cataclysm. For a better understanding of Frank’s philosophy of history, one should address first this naturphilosophical background of his reasoning.

**Light as the Essence of the Universe**

The very title of Frank’s work – The Light from the Orient – expressed explicitly and literally the key concept of Parsism which he defined also as Magism. This concept was that of light as the essence of the Universe, determining the direction of the world process including the human thoughts and deeds. Here is how Frank describes this cosmic process: „As the heavenly world... exists eternally (through) irradiating itself and creating the new worlds of light (Lichtwelten) … (existing) … in the sacred darkness as

---

414 Ibid., p. 4.
planets longing for the all-creating light, … producing this light… out of themselves… and reuniting again and again… with the world of light from whose irradiations they were produced originally.” “(The same way)”, he continues, “This limited time expressed itself as the world year (Weltjahr)… in the multiplicity of the big and small nutation”.

“The planets and comets”, Frank explains, “Are driven by their inborn love for Sun… and (it is) the degree of their attachment to it (that is) is determine their positions relative to the Sun.” And, as Frank he stresses, human history unfolds not just within this light-animated Universe but also in full accordance with its laws: “The creative might of Man and the cradle of the human race are determined by the luminous impulses (Lichttriebe) of the earth”. In bridging his naturphilosophy and philosophy of history, Frank introduces his concept of self-illumination (Selbstbeleuchtung). “What manifests the nature of light in the world of the phenomena is (in fact) an expression of the eternal self-illumination (Ausdruck der ewigen Selbstbeleuchtung), he explains. “The life of all everything illuminated consists in self-illuminating”, he clarifies, “And this life is the light that shines in the illuminated”. “But”, Frank emphasizes, “… The illuminated (phenomena) are unable to comprehend the All.” At the same time, he explains, “What does comprehend (the nature of the All) … becomes the divine light itself. It is born not from flesh and blood but from God, and (it is) as eternal as He is”.

Within this picture, Light is not the only force acting in the Universe. The other one is its antipode, Darkness within which it shines. According to Frank, Darkness is as active and divine as Light. Light and Darkness are two essences manifesting themselves

---

415 Ibid., p. 2.
416 Ibid., p. 121.
417 Ibid., p. 122
through various phenomena and, no less significantly, interacting within them. And, as Frank asserts, it is this interaction between Light and Darkness that determines the fundamental parameters of the Universe, such as space, matter and spirit, and it is their correlation within each phenomenon that determines the place occupied by this phenomenon in the Universe.  

For a better understanding of Frank’s philosophy one should point to how he views the way this interaction occurs. Importantly in this context, he considers all phenomena that the Universe comprises not as passive and willingless objects but as active participants of the world process. Their activity has only one direction, however: “After Light has penetrated all things, their destination is to return to it” and it was precisely this drive back to Light that found its expressions in the images of the Indo-Iranian deities, such as Mithra, Ormuzd and Ahriman, Frank asserts.

One component of this picture needs a clarification, however. What had caused the necessity to return to the Light? What had upset the balance between Light and Darkness in the Universe and thus distorted its original harmony? According to Frank, this distortion represented a result of a cosmic catastrophe, and in portraying this catastrophe he lays down the foundation of his understanding of the world historical process.

---

418 Ibid.
419 Ibid., p. 125.
420 Ibid., p. 126.
The Original Lichtreich and the Drama of Human History

Here is how Frank describes this prologue to world history: “The earthly spark godly flickering in the human beings, dwelled originally… in the pure essences of Light (reine Lichtwesen), and it was from their bosoms that it flew to the Sun. These god-like people, still aware of their origin, sublimated the human to the divine”. 421

The end of this blessed initial era had predetermined the main problem of human history. “There came a time”, Frank explained, “When the terrestrial axis changed its direction (angle) and the divine came down to the human level and became extinct, whereas the people… (began to) worship the divinity that had flown from them to the sky – the light that had separated from them.” 422 And as Frank asserts, it was this separation that led to the extinction of divine in the man or, to use his wording, to the man’s “secession from self-illumination”. 423

At this point, Frank formulates his central thesis: the love of every human being for the natural light represents in fact the nostalgia for the initial stage of the world process. As he specifies, historically, this nostalgia is represented in a variety of forms. But whatever form it acquires, it is the natural light that is «the eternally fruitful source of any religion, science, art, and statehood». 424

Frank emphasizes the unique role of light in the world process. “The sound dies away”, he writes, “The empty wording wisps away; anything created arbitrarily, breaks down… But the eternally fresh life of the light, the all-forming world soul blossoms for

421 Ibid., p. 3.
422 Ibid., pp 3-4.
423 Ibid., p. 135.
424 Ibid., p. 6.
ever … (and) its original form (*Urform*) comes back in all (things), and it is impossible to resist to its power.”  

It was, Frank continues, a special connection to this all-forming world soul that had predetermined the global role of the Iranian-Indian civilization. As Light has one source, the Sun, the human civilization had only one original cradle, from which it widespread all over the world, he asserts. The fact of Iran’s being this historical home and the single source of civilization has, according to Frank, been proven by the very character of the Iranian ancient religion representing the cult in its purest form.

According to the author of *The Light from the Orient*, it was the cosmic-geological factors that shaped this religious phenomenon. “There existed”, he states, “Only one… land that, due to the geogony itself was predetermined to become the place of the origin of mankind; it was from the divine light inborn to this people (inhabiting this land) that the worship of Light emerged.” Significantly, Frank describes the ancient Iran as not just the oldest civilization in the world but as the only civilization of which all other peoples and cultures are the branches. “In Persia”, he stresses,” There shone the light of the original world (*Urwelt*) containing the whole sublime and mysterious knowledge of the previous world. In Parsism (the Iranian religion), the religions of the most famous peoples of the Orient fused, and from the Orient (*Morgenland*) the Magism went to the lands of the Occident (*Abendlaender*); it was from its light that the (other) peoples carried the sacred sparks of wisdom.” This statement brings Frank to a conclusion central to his whole reasoning: “In its origin, it (the ancient Iranian religion)

---

425 Ibid.
cannot be regarded only as the history of the wisdom of one people but it should be considered as the history of the human race and even as world history in general.” 426

In clarifying the way Frank interpreted this initial Iranian wisdom, one should note that he differentiated between the original Magism and the later Iranian religion documented in the Avesta. Moreover, he criticized the other scholars for considering the latter as a text containing the original religion of Light and, no less importantly, for identifying the Urreligion with the later dualistic religion that portrayed the world process as a struggle between the Good and the Evil. “Wrapped up in unresolved contradictions”, Frank wrote, “One found only the same uncompromising struggle in the ancient pure Magism and completely misunderstood the nature of the inseparable, light-creating original roots (Urkeime)... This wrong view of the Oriental antiquities was underpinned by the later exoteric teaching, and the predominantly liturgical books of the Zend-(Avesta) that we have at our disposal ... represent just a small and not the best part of the Avesta, and, in addition, they are distorted. Even the best (scholars) were tempted by these false information on Magism, due to which (they interpreted) the bad Ahriman as... as an active force, (according to) the pure Magism.” 427

According to Frank, although this dualistic teaching derives from the original tradition, it represents a distortion of it. Ther fragments of the Avesta containing this teaching shoud be regarded thus as a later interpolation in the original text, he asserts. 428 “(The fact) that the pure theory of Light (Lichtlehre) as it... originated in the ancient times, of which we have explicit proofs in the available fragments of the Zend (Avesta),

---

426 Ibid., pp. 4,8.
427 Ibid., p. 7.
428 Ibid., p. 61.
darkened only later, due to the later additions”, Frank explains, “And (the fact that) everything… referring to the conflict between the Good and the Evil, the internal darkening of the light or the physical emanation… is, beyond doubt… completely foreign to it.” 429

What did then this original Magism look like? In addressing this question, Frank singles out a number of dimensions. Primarily, he points to the all-embracing nature of the Lichtreligion, determined by the location of Iran in the heart of the subsolar world. In his context, Frank stresses the centrality of astronomy and astrology to the ancient wisdom. “As the power of light (Lichtreich) and its visible reflection, the animated sky of stars, was the pattern, soul, and energy of the All in the most ancient world, the astronomy and pure astrology was deeply imbedded in the life of philosophy, poetry, statehood, and religion.” 430

In describing the Lichtreich, Frank portrays it as an integral spiritual unity. “One must never forget”, he specifies, “That in the most ancient times poetry was as little separated from philosophy as state, from religion and nature, from history. In ancient Persia, the light of reason…flowed into the music of the living word, and the sensible word did not differ from the godly one.” 431 Among other things, this spiritual unity determined the state order: as Frank explains, “The original state (Urstaat) was organized … in accordance with the laws of Light, as it was Light that represented the source of all

429 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
430 Ibid., p. 67.
431 Ibid., p. 66.
purity, virtue, wisdom, and bliss for the original people”). Interestingly asserting this, he cites Xenophon characterizing Persia as a perfect state.)

In outlining the contours of the original country (Urland), Frank emphasizes that it was much larger than the later later Median-Bactrian Empire. As he specifies, it included also Assyria and Babylon in the West, the Scythian lands in the North, and Northern India in the East. More even importantly, Frank stresses the universalistic character of the Urland. The first dimension of this universalism was religious: first, the religion of Light represented, according to Frank, not a local Iranian religion but the original all-human wisdom that contained “the first gentle kernels of all myths”. Of no lesser significance was the second, linguistic aspect; as Frank points out, “Persia’s language, in unity with Sansc...rem, (was) the mother of the other most ancient languages”. Third, the ancient Iranian state was a state of the whole original human race: “The dynasties (of the original state in Iran positioned themselves) not as the kings of Asia but as those of the world”. (This circumstance makes the ancient Iranian history the key to that of the whole ancient human race. “Persia’s chronology”, Frank notes elsewhere, “Is a point of a synthesis … of our ancient chronologies”.)

As Frank emphasizes, the mission of this world state consisted in maintaining the religion of Magism. “The whole symbolism and liturgy of the ancient Persians as well as the constitution of their state (Staatsverfassung) and politics stemmed from the pure comprehension of Light inherited from the earlier wise men”, he asserts. “The

---

432 Ibid., p. 135.
433 Ibid., p. 97.
434 Ibid., p. 136.
435 Ibid., p. 92.
436 Ibid., p. 136.
Magicians”, he continues, “Were so much revered among the Persians as a sublimed kin even in the later times, that (they made) an inscription on the grave of Darius (saying): ‘He was a Magician.’”

It was thus the original philosophy of Light preserved and interpreted by the Magicians that, as Frank points out, widespread over the major part of Asia and shaped the statehood, religious practices, and poetry of a great variety of peoples. In this process, the sacred knowledge underwent a number of metamorphoses, however. “As offspring of the innumerable flowers (of the original Iranian wisdom), the most ancient (uralt) Light appeared in India”, Frank specifies, “But in each one the kernel of the pure Magism is recognizable.” The deities worshiped in the religion of the Brahmins were the same as in the practices of the Magicians: “Parabrahma, Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu are identical to Zaruan (Zervan), Honover, Ormuzd, and Ahriman”. This identification goes even further: not only does Frank juxtapose the transformations of Krishna of the Indians with those of Behram of the Persians but he points also to the Indian influence on China, justly identifying “Buddha of the Hindu” with “Fo of the Chinese”.

In characterizing the portrayal of this process by Frank, one can observe that India occupies a particularly important place within the picture he draws. Significantly, it is not an Iranian text but the Indian Bhagavadgita that he uses as an illustration of the metamorphoses that the pure original religion underwent in different spatial and temporal contexts. In explaining how one teaching could acquire these various forms and images,

437 Ibid., p. 137.
438 Ibid., p. 77.
439 Ibid., p. 78.
440 Ibid., p. 140.
441 Ibid.
he cites the central passage of the poem, the reasoning with which Krishna, an avatara of the all-mighty Bhagavan, addresses to Arjuna: “Since I am the Master of all created things and can (as such) neither be born nor die… I dispose of my own nature and reveal myself… As often as virtue falls and vice and injustice rise in the world”, Krishna explains, “I become visible, and I appear from time to time, in order to preserve the right one, destroy the evil one, and establish virtue anew”. “Everything comes from me”, the avatara continues, “And it was out of my spirit that the seven Maharshis and four Manus were born… from whome all inhabitants of the earth originated”.  

It is thus the concerns of this world that make it necessary for the divinity to appeare in different images. At times, the Urreligion is easily recognizable: for example, Chaldaism, the initial religion of Babylon, was, as Frank asserts, identical to Magism. 

In other cases, the distinctions between the original pure religion of the Magicians and its derivates became more visible. In examining the question of where these distinctions stemmed from, Frank addresses the trajectories of the expansion of Magism around the world.

Similarly to Schlegel, Frank points to the colonies established by the Lichtreich as to the possible tool of the expansion. As Schlegel, he distinguishes between two types of the colonies but in a different way. According to Frank, if some colonies were initiated directly by the original Iranian state the other ones were started by the Indians; their connection to the initial Lichtreich was thus indirect. Interestingly in Frank’s view, Ancient Egypt represented this latter type: it was established not by the Persians directly

\[\text{442} \quad \text{i.e., pp. 78-79.}\]
\[\text{443} \quad \text{i.e., p. 138.}\]
\[\text{444} \quad \text{i.e., pp. 67-68.}\]
but by the Indians. 445 More specifically, Frank portrays the emergence of the Egyptian state as the result of the colonization of the country by the Indian priests. “From Menu, the first Indian king”, he explains, “Menes, the first Egyptian king, came.” This circumstance shaped the Egyptian religion; in Frank’s opinion, “The all-penetrating spirit of the Egyptians is light”. “Osiris and Isis are equivalent of Sun and Moon”, he specifies.446

The expansion of the Lichtreich went far beyond the Middle East, however. Within the context of The Light from the Orient, its North Western direction that Frank traces “in the darkness of the history of the migrations of peoples” is of particular importance. As to a consequence of the migration in this direction he points to the reception of the original wisdom of Light by the ancient Germanic tribes. 447 And, as he emphasizes, this fact represented a result of the precisely Iranian expansion. “The ancient German nation (alteutsche Nation), and (its) mythology and customs came immediately from Persia”, Frank asserts, “And this is beyond doubt due to the kinship between the German language and the Persian.” 448

At the same time, this kinship is far from limited to the sphere of language. As to a circumstance of particular importance Frank points to the continuity in religion: in the beliefs of the ancient Germans, he discovers the same cult of Light and Sun as in those of the ancient Iranians and Indians. “The ancient German mythology and symbolism were greatly akin to Parsism”, he states. “Their (gods and goddesses,) Alfadur, Odin, and Frigga

445 Ibid., p. 140.
446 Ibid., pp. 140-141.
447 Ibid., p. 107.
448 Ibid.
are in fact (the Iranian deities,) Zaruan (Zervan), Ormuzd, and Ahriman”. Frank
specifies. “One should juxtapose the Edda with the Avesta”, he stresses with regard to
this.449

This common essence of the two religious traditions refers not only to the deities
to worship but also to the rites to perform. In this context, Frank points to the practice of
the ordeal by fire equally central to the Iranian, Indian, and ancient German cultures.
Significantly in describing this practice, symbolizing the cult of Sun and Fire, he
emphasizes its role as an expression of national unity (Ausdruck ihrer Nationaleinheit) of
the Iranians, Indians, and Germans. 450

With regard to this latter circumstance, Frank particularly stresses the collectivist
nature of the ancient German Weltanschauung. “(It was) due to this (Weltanschauung)”,
he writes, “That Radbot did not want to be Christian because he preferred to enter not the
Heaven but the hell to be there alongside with other valiant men.”451 It was precisely this
emphasis on the community versus individuality that Frank highlighted as essential for
the religion that the ancient Germans supposedly shared with their Iranian and Indian
ancestors. He went even further: in describing their religious ceremonies, he portrayed
these ceremonies as an expression of the national spirit. Pointing out that the ancient
Germans, similarly to their distant Persian ancestors and contrary to the Greeks and
Romans, had no temples and conducted their ritual festivals in the sacred groves452, Frank
stressed the centrality of one such ceremony, the sacrifice of the white horse, to the

449 Ibid., p. 57.
450 Ibid., p. 72.
451 Ibid., p. 57.
452 Ibid., pp. 74-75.
Germanic religious system. Recalling the description of the Germanic rites by Tacitus, the author of *The Light from the Orient* pointed to the necessity to read the will of Heaven for the sake of the state as to the goal pursued by the priests while conducting this ceremony. More specifically, he interpreted the sacrifice of the horse as a particularly impressive national festival (*Nationalfest*) assigned to demonstrate “the godly idea of the State” and the “humility of all parts of it” versus the integral whole. “One entered it (the ceremony) not freely but tied”, Frank emphasized, “(In order to) demonstrate not the freedom of the individual but the unity of the whole or one’s humility and the sublime of God.” “As the Persian had not sacrilized his own well-being as separated from the common welfare… the German viewed… his fatherland as mirroring the world of Light ”, he resumed.

It was thus three peoples that Frank considered as playing the key-role in preserving the common heritage of Parsism – the Germans, Persians, and Indians. In addressing the question of what had caused the later dissolution of the originally unified tradition and, therefore, the darkening of the “sense of fire” in the modern European, specifically German culture, he pointed to Ancient Greece and Rome. “The Greeks”, Frank asserts, “Borrowed their wisdom from the Orient; the Romans transferred the transferred, especially with the respect of politics.” This borrowing was only partial, however. As Frank stated, “This pure light organization (*Lichtorganisation*), broke down and collapsed… among the Greeks”. “It is not the pure Light but Antagonism that prevailes in the assemblies of their gods (*Goetterversammlungen*) as well as in their

---

453 Ibid., p. 74
454 Ibid., pp. 75-76.
455 Ibid., p. 21.
456 Ibid., p. 12.
popular assemblies (*Volksversammlungen*)”, he specified. “Their state”, Frank continued, “Represents only a darkened picture of the Lichtreich… The unity that you seek to find in the mythology of the Greeks is only a gleam of the oriental Lichtreich.” Importantly for the interpretation by Frank of the later European understanding (and misunderstanding of the ancient history, one consequence of the cultural disintegration predetermined by this darkening of the original Light, was the separation between historiography and poetry. As Frank stated, “The poetry that the Greek history writers bring to their narratives is incomparably more foreign to history than even the later history writers of the Orient”. 457

On the other hand, in explaining what might have caused the degradation of the original tradition, the author of *The Light from the Orient* pointed to the esoteric nature of this tradition. “The Persians and Hindu concealed their knowledge from most of the Greeks, Arabs, and Mongols”, he clarified, “From everyone who had not studied the language of the gods.” As he added, “He who did not master this language could not hope to gain an insight into the mysteries of the Orient”. 458 And it was precisely this circumstance that became central to Frank’s critique of the modern European culture and to the alternative to it that he developed in his book.

**Iran, Greece, and Rome: The Trunk and the Branches**

At this point, the reader of *The Light from the Orient* discovers another major distinction between Frank and Schlegel, and this distinction refers to the place that the Oriental studies are expected to occupy within the realm of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. If according to Schlegel the studies of the Indo-Iranian region represent a major segment of

457 Ibid., pp. 90-91.
458 Ibid., p. 90.
the humanities, coexisting with the studies of Classical Antiquities, Frank’s position is much more radical: within his world-historical reasoning, the breakthrough to the alleged deepest roots of the human race is expected to occur in an uncompromising opposition to the European scholarship on Greece and Rome.

This circumstance is due to how the author of *The Light from the Orient* considers the very approach to world history developed by the students of Classical Antiquities and representing, as he stresses, a fundamental distortion of the real picture. As to the most obvious indication of this distortion Frank points to what he describes as the “lack of the sense of the original unity (*Ureinheit*) of the most ancient history and wisdom”, due to the “one-sided admiration of the Greek and Roman cultures”. The essence of this wrong approach consists “in mistaking the secondary and partial for the original and holistic”. “In pursuing the insignificant deviation (*Ableitung*) they overlooked the mainstream (*Hauptstrom*)” – this is how Frank defines the mistake resulting in the multidimensional European, specifically German crisis, that he examines and seeks to overcome.

Interestingly in describing the scholarly dimension of this crisis, Frank points to the way the cultural community perceives the Oriental studies versus the other disciplines. “Even today”, he regrets, “The study of the Persian language… (is widely) regarded as as an addition to that of Arabic, which is so different from it”. 459 In outlining the contours of the Iranian-Indian studies within the larger context of the humanities, Frank emphasizes their fundamental role. Not only does he stress their centrality to the understanding of the historical process in general but he also points to their significance as the major underpinning of the other disciplines, specifically the Classical Antiquities. He

459 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
explains, in particular, that the most important phenomena of the Greek and Roman cultures had their roots in the Orient.⁴⁶⁰ “The greatest wise men of Greece laid down the foundations (of their teachings) on the wisdom of the Magicians”, Frank points out, “Which is proven not only by their teachings themselves but also by their explicit explanations and their journeys to Persia and India.” ⁴⁶¹

In this context, Frank points to the alleged oriental roots of a variety of emblematic figures of the Greek culture, such as Orpheus, Homer, Hesiodes, Thales, Parmenides, Pythagoras, and Plato whose intellectual efforts are hardly understandable without addressing the influence of Parcism. “The Persian and Indian symbolism provides the key to the Greek and Roman mythology”⁴⁶², he resumes.

This refers also to Frank’s understanding of the biblical narrative. Significantly in this context, Frank’s critique of the theological approach to the Judeo-Christian tradition displays a fundamental similarity to that of the classical studies. Not only does he emphasize the necessity to address the Iranian heritage as a possible source of the Books of Daniel, Ezra, and Esther, but he also criticizes the theologians for considering the Hebrew Bible as a point of departure in their approach to the Orient. “In the best case”, they regarded “the literature and wisdom of the rest of the Orient” as an introduction to the Old Testament, Frank stresses and characterizes this attitude as “treating the trunk and basis (den Stamm und die Grundbildung) as a branch (Nebenzweig).

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 81.
⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 142.
⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 76.
In criticizing this allegedly one-sided adherence to what he defines as the *Nebenzweige*, Frank highlights also a temporal dimension. According to the author of *The Light from the Orient*, the mistake of the European scholarship focusing on them and neglecting their alleged common source, the Orient, is particularly shameful because of the fact that, contrary to these rather short-lived borrowers, the source they had borrowed from still represents a living civilization. As he emphasizes, “Those speaking so much of life in their philological efforts, should not forget… that the Greek and Roman (languages) died out whereas the Persian which is so similar to the German is a living language spoken in the whole Persia and even the whole Asia, and even at the court in Istanbul; (a language) which, after blossoming for millennia, still contains the original (*uralt*) spirit and that there has not been a period in the history of Persia during which it was not spoken.” 463

Within Frank’s reasoning, the consequences of this one-sided attitude to world history go far beyond a merely scholarly error. Pointing out that “Those promoting …the Greek and Roman education and the study (of these) languages appear to be unaware of the (fact that) a part can be only understood within (the context of) the wholeness”464, he stresses also that the neglect of the “Germans’ original lineage to Orientalism” led to their being cut off from their genuine national roots”. “This way”, he regrets, “The European, especially German culture received a foreign color”, which resulted in “loosing the energy”. 465

463 Ibid., p. 12.
464 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
465 Ibid., p. 11.
This latter thesis explains the interpretation by Frank of the very nature of the German interest in the Orient. It represents nothing else than the nostalgia for the lost original homeland. “Why did this nostalgia for the land of the ancestry (Urstammland) of all peoples, for the climate of Paradise, and for the heaven of the original poetry not excite so powerfully the imagination of any other cultured people of Europe (the Crusades were just a half-way initiative), as in the Asians of the North apparently predestinated to the cultivation of the infertile soil?” 466, he wonders. In order to cure “the fragmented spirit” (zerteilte Geist) of the Germans 467, “Should one not revitalize the purely oriental sense in (the German)” “And move (him) along the mysterious path of his original nature?” 468 he suggests. And it is this path along which Frank expects his compatriots to return spiritually to their original homeland that determines the parameters of his program of Oriental studies as the vehicle of the German national reawakening.

The German National Reawakening as the Return to the Original Parcism

In outlining the task that the projected study of the Orient should perform within the context of Frank’s world historical reasoning, it is important to point out that it is expected to be revisited with the focus of three major peoples: the Iranians, Indians, and Germans. “The old histories of the Persians, Hindu, and Germans have to be examined and revisited with a reasonable usage of the trails of the ancient eras that demonstrate themselves in the continued histories of the still living nations”, he asserts. “It is in the most distant eras”, he indicates, “That they (historians) should discover the kinship of

466 Ibid., p. 46.
467 Ibid., p. 22.
468 Ibid., pp. 46-47.
these peoples and the relations between them as much more important (phenomena) than one has imagined ever before.”  

According to Frank, “the true wholeness of the most ancient history in its finest blossoms of the religions, mythologies, and legislations of the ancient Orient and Accident” was precisely what the previous scholarship failed to discover. In describing the reasons of this error, he points to the philosophical limitations of the scholarly mainstream. “The efforts of our critics and philologists do not lead to a re-awakening of the understanding of the ideas buried under the whole system (Bildung) of our era until (these critics and philologists) view these ideas (expressed) in the finest forms of the ancient times only as controversy and nonsense”, Frank states.

In explaining how this original wisdom has to be reconstructed, he stresses the centrality of a philosophical analysis to this undertaking. “The closer a study of history gets to philosophy, the more fundamental, comprehensive, and courageous it becomes”, Frank asserts. The key issue here refers the very essence of his message: in the variety of myths and religions, the philosophical approach enables one to discover one single phenomenon manifesting itself in different ways. And naturally, this phenomenon represents the same original Persism, or Magism, in various disguises.

Within the context of Frank’s reasoning, this postulate becomes not only a description of the processes unfolding in world history but also a universal explanatory model. This model presupposes the interpretation of Parsism/Magism not only as the common source of all mythical-religious-philosophical phenomena but also, no less

---

469 Ibid., p. 87.
470 Ibid., p. 10.
471 Ibid., p. 61.
importantly, as their common internal content. “The unity of all the teachings of wisdom manifested in Magism”, he asserts, “Is based not on the similarities between (some) particular colours but on the identity of their essential ideas.“ “It is impossible”, Frank clarifies, “To portray these sanctuaries with all the variety of their formations, of which the exoteric cult is only a dark reflection, without (examining) the philosophy of Light.”

“Regardless the amount of the material we have for a reconstruction of the ancient Kingdom of Light ”, he continues, “This material will remain dark forever without the philosophy of light… Without (this) all-illuminating star, the separate observations referring to separate aspects would bring about even bigger shadows… If they have to see… the ideas of the all-pervasive spirit (Allgeist), if they have to see the originals and souls of the whole, then they have to articulate this original wisdom (Urweisheit) within themselves”.

This alleged linkage between the cultural objects to examine and the processes unfolding inside the examining consciousness explains the Frank’s understanding of the very possibility of the projected breakthrough to the Urweisheit. “The contemporary attempt to (create) the genuine scholarship on the antiquities, (wahre Alterthumswissenschaft)” becomes possible because, as he emphasizes, “Only the reflections of the original wisdom in the external cult are colored differently due to the distance (between these reflections and) their source)”, but the pure esoteric original light (Urlicht) have always remained the same”.

It is the nature of this eternal wisdom whose major parameters remain unchangeable regardless of time and place that determine the fact that, as Frank points

472 Ibid., p. 10.
473 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
474 Ibid., p. 28.
475 Ibid., p. 139.
out, “The newest philosophy of the Germans, as well as the ancient, is most akin to that of the Persians. This identity of the pure Light can be demonstrated for the most distant (past) and for the newest (phenomena), for those distant in time and space, with all the variety of their forms and colours”. 476

The task of the projected new scholarship is thus to demonstrate this continuity, focusing especially on the “sparks of this ancient inborn life that are often visible in Germany (as) glimmering in the depth of the tribal (life)”. In explaining the strategy of how this task has to be performed, Frank singles out two dimensions: the juxtaposition of the languages and the comparable analysis of the contents of the texts available.

With regard to the first, linguistic aspect of the project the author of The Light from the Orient emphasizes, in accordance to his general approach, the necessity to reconstruct the common features of and the ties between the three languages, Persian, Sanskrit, and German. 477 At the same time, he points to a number of important accomplishments in this field. “It is highly noteworthy that, as we can conclude from… the results achieved by Anquetil, Paulinus, and Jones, German, Farsi, and Sanskrit are akin (to each other) in the deepest way” 478, Frank specifies.

On the other hand, he formulates a much larger task for the new scholarship. “Not solely a facilitation of the Persian language studies, but also a deeper foundation of the German lingual studies and of the ancient history of the German language would be
provided by a deep universal theory of language (allgemeine Sprachlehre) with a constant focus on the Persian and German languages\(^{479}\), Frank explains.

Significantly in this context, it is not Iranian but primarily Indian materials that he considers as central to this project. The reason why is the existence in the ancient India of a highly advanced tradition of linguistics. Pointing specifically to the famous vocabulary of Sanskrit stems, *The Amarakosha* by Amarasinha, Frank emphasizes the fact that “Since the most distant eras this ancient Indian language contains a great amount of theological, philosophical, and physical expressions”.\(^{480}\)

This projected fundamental juxtaposition of the three languages represents, however, only the initial stage of the undertaking. As Frank stresses more than once, “The traces of Parsism are to be found not only in the language of Germans but, more generally, in their old memorials, chronic, myths, and folk legends”.\(^{481}\) And again, in explaining how these traces should be discovered and examined, he points to the Indian texts. Next to the Eddic narrative represented by “the both Islanders, Snorro und Sturla”, he lists “the Puranas, Sastras, Ramayana, (the works by) Amarasinha, as well as The *Sakontala* a translation of which Schlegel had promised”.\(^{482}\)

These aspects of Frank’s reasoning highlight the spatial and temporal contours of his world-historical project and the means by which he expects this goal to be achieved. Another story is the goal in itself. Indeed, what does the expected result of the breakthrough to the original Parsism look like?

\(^{479}\) Ibid., p. 50.
\(^{480}\) Ibid., p. 58.
\(^{481}\) Ibid., p. 100.
\(^{482}\) Ibid., pp. 63, 100.
In answering this question, one should emphasize once again one key dimension of Frank’s project: for all centrality of the Iranian-Indian studies to his undertaking, it can be only partially characterized as a program of Oriental studies. Given Frank’s interpretation of Parcism as a Hauptstrom and Greco-Roman and, to a certain extent, the biblical, traditions, as the Nebenzweige, as well as that of the newest German philosophy, as a return to the original Magism, one can observe that his project represents rather a fundamental revision of the European, specifically German culture on the basis of the Oriental studies. To understand the nature of this revision, one should outline more clearly the areas to be reinterpreted and the parameters of the projected reinterpretation.

Interestingly according to Frank, it is precisely the Nebenzweige that are to be examined anew from the Parsist perspective. Here is how he describes the task of this examination: “The Greeks, Romans, and Jews should become the topic of a more exact research and critique focusing on the information (contained in their texts) on the Orient and the ancient peoples”. “The more the Orient and the ancient Germany… become known from (their) native sources, the more the prestige of Greeks and Romans in these histories foreign to them, will decrease”, Frank emphasizes. 483

This desire to point once again to the historical limitations of the Greek and Roman sources versus the Oriental and Germanic ones represents only one aspect of Frank’s program, however. No less importantly, he seeks to discover the trails of the Urreligion in the Judeo-Christian tradition or, more precisely, to reinterpret it as a branch of the original Parsism. And in doing so, he explicitly points to the “open evidences of

483 Ibid., pp. 92, 144.
Parsism in the Old-Testament texts”. “Judaism”, he continues, “Was … deeply akin to Magism in its origin as well as in its (later) development by Ezra, Nehemiah, and others.”

“An esoteric, magical sense of (Judaism) is expressed in cabalism”, Frank adds.

No less explicitly does Frank place Christianity within the same context of Magism. Here is how he describes the relationship between Parsism and the Christian tradition: “Not only is Christianity akin to the earlier revelation (Offenbarung) in Magism in its tendency as a complete return of the openly (manifested) spirit, or the Light of the State (Staats-Licht) into the minds of the individuals, but, as a greater godly work for us than Judaism, it also is designed to restore at last the reign of the wisdom of Light (Lichtweisheit)… in the Occident.”

On the other hand, within Frank’s world historical conception, Christianity represents only one historically limited version of the Lichtweisheit. The limitation that he attributes to the Christian tradition refers to the Christian understanding of the dualism of the Heavenly and the Earthly. “According to Christianity”, Frank states, “The body penetrated by the divine Light, the Man in whom (this Light) was incarnated originally, flew from the earth to heaven and sent (to the earth) only the active spirit hidden in himself.” “In the earlier world era and in the internally fragmented Occident”, Frank continues, “This spiritual light could not yet appear as a fine state body (als schoener Staatskoerper). This is why the Kingdom of the Christian is not of this world.” At this point, the author of The Light from the Orient formulates his central thesis: “A…remnant of the first divine empire on the earth that outlived the first world era was in Northern

---

484 Ibid., p. 144.
485 Ibid., p. 145.
India. Until the Earthly Kingdom is still not a reflection of the Heavenly, the Christian must suffer from the pressure of the... Night for the sake of the Lichtreich.”

This passage demonstrates Frank’s understanding of Christianity as an imperfect Occidental version of Parsism/Magism, the eternal and all-embracing religion of Light. One detail is noteworthy in this context: “Christ as a mediator (Vermittler) defined the reign of the evil principle as non-existent”, Frank writes. “Those practicing the doctrine of Chist and living in his Kingdom, had defeated Satan”, he continues. “God is Light, and there is no Darkness in Him. This way everyone must make the Lichtreich reign in himself.”

This definition of Christ as a Vermittler between the Divinity and Man indicates clearly the Romantic basis of Frank’s discourse, specifically the influence of Novalis (see Chapter Three). With no lesser clarity, his reasoning illustrates the precisely Frank’s contribution to the Romantic discourse on religion; in outlining his program of the further studies he points to the necessity of the analysis of “Magism in the New Testament”. In this context, he characterizes the Gospel of John and the Avesta as the texts containing in fact one and the same doctrine. The key to this identification is his interpretation of the Gospel’s wording (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”). “The true teaching of John and of the Avesta”, Frank explains, “Is: In the beginning was Honover, und Honover was with Zaruan (Zervan), and Zaruan was Honover.”

---

486 Ibid., p. 146.
487 Ibid., pp. 146-147.
488 Ibid., p. 147.
Frank’s interpretation of the existing religious traditions and philosophies as just versions of one single tradition of Parsism/Magism goes even further. “In Persia”, he asserts, “The esoteric doctrine of the Magicians has still been preserved partially by the Sufi Mohammedans”. And no less importantly, in Jordano Bruno, Kepler, Leibniz, Spinoza and Malebranche, he finds the adherents of the Urreligion within the European Renaissance and early modern philosophy and science. \(^{489}\) It was their efforts that led to the formation of the Romantic Naturphilosophie where the essence of the original Parsism became quite visible again, Frank states. As he clarifies, “It emerged as the elevation of Idealism to Magism and is essentially friendly to it as well as to any kind of the genuine Orientalism.” \(^{490}\)

In tracing the development of this Romantic naturphilosophical trend in the Germanies, Frank points, in particular, to the role of Schelling and considers him within the same Orientalist context. “Far away from the spiritual Orient, (living) in a foreign country… Schelling brought this genuinely Oriental (morgenlaendisch) world flower from the deepest internal sanctuary of the inborn Light” – this is how the author of The Light from the Orient defines the mission that the founder of the philosophy of identity performed in the German cultural space. \(^{491}\)

Nevertheless, portraying the earlier alleged champions of Magism as well as his contemporaries believed to have contributed to the revival of the original Parsist worldview, Frank emphasized that the process of the return to the Wisdom of Light had just started. “We should expect even greater contributions”, he stressed. At the same

\(^{489}\) Ibid., p. 148.
\(^{490}\) Ibid., p. 149.
\(^{491}\) Ibid.
time, the contours of the expected cultural synthesis were quite visible to him, and it would be helpful to summarize them for a better understanding of his conception.

One can single out several dimensions in Frank’s program. The first is the scholarly one, and it refers to opening up the “hidden treasures” of the Orient to the German reader. “The Persian and Indian, as well as ancient German literature must appear … in good translations and with necessary comments”\(^ {492}\), Frank asserts.

What does he expect from these comments or, more generally, in what way should the scholars portray the Oriental subjects for the European audience? In explaining this, Frank criticizes his fellow scholars for excessive focus on detail, which, he says, diverts them from the main issues. “If the original spirit (\textit{Urgeist}) expressed itself in the later one, (the question of) whether the author’s name was X or Y should not divert you from the essence, and you should not lose yourselves in the unnecessary investigations”, Frank writes. “The mind that feels the life and essence”, he continues, “Will provide (you) with the safest guidance even when it comes to the chronological, local, personal, and other definitions”. \(^ {493}\)

This intuitivist approach presupposes the centrality to Franks project of another, aesthetic-artistic dimension. “Only what is true, is real and only the beautiful is true”, he asserts. \(^ {494}\) And, as he specifies, “The so-called philological, doctrinal, and aesthetic critique must not be separated”. \(^ {495}\) Applying this principle to his world-historical project, Frank insists on a full and inseparable synthesis of history and poetry, which he considers

\(^{492}\) Ibid., p. 60.
\(^{493}\) Ibid., p. 61.
\(^{494}\) Ibid.
\(^{495}\) Ibid., pp. 60-61.
a guarantee of the validity of a historical research. “Where Poetry and History still were
united”, he explains, “There were less deviations from the sublime historical
understanding than it was among the Greeks and Romans.” 496

At the same time, the synthesis that Frank discovers in the past and expects to be
restored in the future refers not only to the relationship between the scholarly and artistic
realms but also, no less importantly, to the sphere of arts as such. And, as always, he
points to the original Lichtreich as to the ideal. “The portrayal of Mani combining
sculpture, painting, and music was, perhaps, a later shadow of it (this original synthesis)”,
Frank states. Interestingly in this context, he views music as a sphere where the synthetic
nature of the original art was particularly longeval. “In the music”, he notes, “The
primordial divine harmony sounded at longest – well into the later eras of the Orient.
According to Jones, the Persians and Hindu are still superior to us in (music). They have
more adequate foundations, better compositions and better performance.” 497

Importantly, Frank considers this musical system not as specifically Oriental but
as universal. As he specifies, in the distant past it had existed in the West as well.
Another story that in the modern times it is necessary to turn to the Oriental sources in
order to get access to the common heritage of the human race. Here is how Frank
describes this heritage: “The musical system of the Persians, Hindu, and Chinese, from
which the Egyptian and Pythagorean do not differ essentially, is to be found… in the
texts of the Brahmins who express the harmony of the world and the microcosm of the
human soul reflecting the Universe, through tones… and animate it (this harmony) in the

496 Ibid., p. 89.
497 Ibid., pp. 86-87.
soul, from which… our (fellow German) Kepler got the sublime idea that inspired him. Hence its sacred practice that delighted all ancient peoples.” 498

The fact that the function of this artistic heritage is to “reveal (offenbaren) the ancient Oriental life and Light" 499 determines the third, religious dimension of Frank’s project. What kind of religion does it represent? Is it old or new? As the whole Frank’s reasoning demonstrates, it is both: the original wisdom of Parsism/Magism, the Urreligion, for the first time since the original Lichtreich perceived not in one of its numerous historically partial form but in its full entirety. Significantly in this context, Frank points to another key feature of Magism as the “mediation between the esoteric and the exoteric” (Vermittlung zwischen dem Esoterischen und Exoterischen). One can thus describe Frank’s project as a realization of the potential of the original heritage in the German culture of his era.

This circumstance brings this study to the fourth dimension of his project, national-historical. In examining the original Parsism, Frank addresses the question of the origin of the Germans within the context of world history. “One cannot resolve the problem of their origin”, he stresses, “Without raising the question of the common origin of all peoples and discovering the source whose influences could lead further into the souls of all peoples, (even) without them themselves being aware of (this) origin or the channels close to it.” 500

498 Ibid.
499 Ibid., p. 56.
500 Ibid., p. 94.
This reasoning highlights the nature of the German national reawakening as projected by Frank. “In its history, especially in the distant history, every people has the phenomena incomprehensible (within the context of) the later, ordinary course of this people”, he explains.\textsuperscript{501} And as he specifies, it was one such phenomenon that had predetermined the further trajectory of the German history that he believes to have discovered in the Iranian roots of the Germans. According to Frank, the importance of this fact had no parallels in the later history of the German people: no other development can be even juxtaposed with it. Therefore, the projected revival of the original Parsism should mark an unprecedented turning point in the fate of the Germans. Even the greatest events in the German history, such as the foundation of the first German Reich by Charlemagne and the Reformation are incomparable to it. As Frank asserts, they “mark yet only preliminary and rather negative moments in the great whole”.\textsuperscript{502}

To the contrary, the revival of Magism and, through it, the return to the original roots of the Germans, Frank views as decisive for the German national cause. As he insists, “There is no need to explain” how the breakthrough to the \textit{Lichtreich} would help “develop anew the genuine German antiquities, the honor of our origin, the gentle kernels of our national sublime and inborn virtue… and how the philosophy, arts, state, and religion would benefit from this”.\textsuperscript{503}

This point to the state as benefiting from the revival of Parsism highlights the fifth, state-political dimension of the project. As Frank asserts, “The \textit{Urphilosophie}, or \textit{Phaosophie} (philosophy of Light) seeking to express the eternal Light of the self-
illumination along with the whole Lichtreich, … contains the powerful tool enabling one to form a genuinely vivid state system (eine wahre lebendige Staatsorganisation), analogical to the Lichtreich as it was originally will remain eternally”. 504

This thesis indicates clearly that within the context of Frank’s historiosophical conception, Parsism/Magism represents not only the key to the scholarly interpretation of world and, specifically German history, the understanding of the unity of poetry and history as the way to articulate this interpretation, and the religion he seeks to revive but also, to some extent, the basis for a state ideology. And although the author of The Light from the Orient does not outline the details of this ideology, he highlights “ties between state and religion” as a key feature of the system inherited from the original Lichtreich and projected for Germany in the future.

Conclusion

These observations regarding the ideas articulated in The Light from the Orient help summarize the major parameters of Frank’s world-historical conception. Most generally, one can describe the message of the book as a project of the German national reawakening through a cultural return to the alleged Iranian roots of the German people – to the Iranian-Indian original Lichtreich.

In underpinning his project historically, Frank traces the process through which the Urvolk widespread over the globe. Significantly, his historical conception has a naturphilosophical basis: according to Frank, it was a natural catastrophe, the change of

504 Ibid., p. 150.
the axial tilt, that caused the destruction or degradation of the original *Lichtreich*, which resulted in the migration of the *Urvolk* in a variety of directions.

Similarly to Friedrich Schlegel, Frank considers colonization as the major tool of the *Urvolk*’s expansion. On the other hand, unlike Schlegel, he distinguishes between the colonies sent from Iran and those from India, representing the main continuation of the original Iranian homeland of the *Urvolk*. According to Frank, it was the controversy over the common heritage of the original Iranian *Lichtreich* between these two branches of the *Urvolk*’s migration that had predetermined the essence of the later world history.

More specifically, it was a conflict between two cultures, the German and the Greco-Roman. Within the larger picture drawn in *The Light from the Orient*, these two worlds occupied different places: if, according to Frank, the latter originated from the *Lichtreich through* the Indian influence, the former represented as an immediate continuation of the original Iranian civilization. And in interpreting the civilization of Ancient Greece as a misreading of the original Iranian civilization, Frank considered the domination of the Greco-Roman heritage in the German culture as the factor resulting in the Germans being cut off from their genuine national roots.

This circumstance had predetermined Frank’s sharp critique of the German scholarly mainstream mistaking, as he emphasized, the *Nebenzweige* of world history for its *Hauptstrom*. Similarly, he criticized the European Biblical studies for focusing on another such *Nebenzweig*.

As an alternative to these prevalent approaches, Frank developed his program of the true studies of the antiquities (*wahre Alterthumswissenschaft*) based on the
interpretation of all existing myths, religions and philosophies as versions of the original Parsism/Magism and placing the Iranian, Indian and German histories within one context. Philosophically, Frank’s explanatory model was based on the postulated continuity between the original Iran-rooted religion of Light and the newest German philosophy. Nationally, he considered the projected scholarly-philosophical discipline as the intellectual vehicle of the German reawakening based on the awareness of the Iranian-Indian roots of the German people.

Given this, one can observe significant differences between the Romantic re-integration projects developed by Friedrich Schlegel and Othmar Frank. If the author of *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* considered the Indian (Indo-Iranian) thought as the misunderstood Revelation or, more precisely, as the first retreat from the true religion, the the author of *The Light from Orient* advocated the opposite view. For Frank, the tradition of Parsism/Magism represented not a retreat from the original truth but the only true religion or even the only religion at all. Contrary to Schlegel, he regarded the Iranian-Indian tradition as the true revelation inherited by all civilizations but only partially understood by the founders of the later religions and completely misunderstood by the scholars of modern Europe.

This conception of Parsism had some important consequences for the correlation between the religious-philosophical and the nationalist dimensions of Frank’s discourse. On the one hand, he considered Parcism as the original religion of the whole human race. At the same time, he pointed to the Germans as allegedly representing an immediate continuation of the Iranian Lichtreich. In other words, Frank portrayed the wisdom of Magism as the German national religion/philosophy, the revival of which represented the
essence of the reawakening he was seeking. If within Schlegel’s discourse there remained a certain tension between the religious and the national trajectories of the Urvolk, in Frank’s there was no difference between them at all. Within the larger context of the European discourse on the Orient, his attitude could be described as the absorption of the Bible-based perspective by the Oriental perspective. It was the third figure examined in this study, Joseph Goerres, who attempted to synthesize these two perspectives anew.

Chapter Six. Joseph Goerres: The Orient as the Source of the Urreligion and the Staende-based German Weltstaat

The place of Joseph Goerres in this study is determined by several circumstances. The first is the centrality of his role in the cultural and political history of the nineteenth century German history, specifically, his key role as an ideologue of three movements: the German Jacobinism, Romantic nationalism, and political Catholicism. Significantly, this outstanding political fighter and fervent publicist displayed a deep interest in the Orient including the Indo-Iranian antiquities. Moreover, relying on the Oriental, specifically Indian materials, he developed an all-embracing conception of the universal history of myths and religions viewed as stages and modifications of the original religion (Urreligion). In later times, he made an attempt to synthesize the Indian, biblical and Germanic narratives and created a world-historical narrative portraying the human history as one single process of the transformations of the original people (Urvolk) and original state (Urstaat). Based on this synthesis, he interpreted Germany as the estates-based universal state (Staendestaat and Weltstaat) and proclaimed a restoration of the German Staende-based Weltstaat as the political goal to be achieved in
the future. The combination of these factors makes Goerres a thinker in whose discourse the ideological importance of the German fascination with the Orient achieved its peak.

Joseph Goerres, born four years younger than Friedrich Schlegel and six years younger than Othmar Frank was one of the most controversial German thinkers of the nineteenth century. In some ways he was comparable to Schlegel. The first obvious similarity between them was the longevity of their intellectual careers – Goerres, the younger of the two, lived almost twenty years after Schlegel’s death in 1829.

Another feature that Goerres shared with Schlegel was the breadth and diversity of his scholarly interests. “He can be regarded as the representative of German Romanticism in the full sense of the term”, Georg Buerke writes about Goerres. “No one”, he continues, “Had contributed, like him, to all the realms of human spirit that had been discovered at that time. If earlier one had viewed him… as a great politician, scientist, and man of letters, since then was this picture completed by adding … the philosophical-theological aspect…”

Although, interestingly enough, the identification of Goerres as a Romantic thinker had its opponents (as Ricarda Huch wrote in her *Die Romantik*, he had a romantic *Geist*, a romantic mode of thought, but no romantic nature), his being an all-round thinker, like Friedrich Schlegel or, perhaps, to an even greater extent, was beyond doubt. A journalist, critic of arts, philosopher, theologian, historian of German culture, historian

---


of mythology and ethnologist, Goerres was almost equally influential in all these spheres, which enabled him to become a guru for several generations of the German educated class.

Significantly also, like Schlegel and Frank, a combination of the scholarly and ideological aspects is clearly visible in Goerres’ intellectual endeavor. Each of the writings by this extremely prolific author includes both these components. As Jon Vanden Heuvel justly notes, “Goerres always searched for a universal explanation for the politics… an all-encompassing creed for understanding the world”. 507 “Goerres”, he specifies, “Had a holistic view; no matter what subject he tackled, whether Persian myth or medieval Germany, he sought a total explanation encompassing religion, culture, society and politics.” 508 This latter circumstance had predetermined one important feature of the Goerres’ texts: on the one hand, Goerres the historian and theorist always aimed not only to enlighten his reader but also to mobilize him. On the other hand, Goerres the publicist always proceeded from a solid scholarly basis.

At the same time, neither Goerres’ agenda, nor his scholarship, were indisputable; on the contrary, both in his lifetime and thereafter they represented a topic of a passionate debate.

The Goerres Question and the Goerres Trajectory

Striking evidence of unique reputation that Goerres enjoyed among his adherents is erection, shortly after his death, of the “Goerres’ window” (Goerres-Fenster) in 1856 in

508 Vanden Heuvel., p. 133.
the Cathedral of Cologne. The figure of Goerres is placed next to those of St. Boniface and Charlemagne; Goerres is portrayed as genuflecting before the Holy Virgin and being recommended to her by St. Joseph. 509

On the other hand, the enthusiasm of Goerres’ supporters was perhaps fully equaled by the bitterness of his critics. “… Nobody was as powerful (as Goerres – A.P.)…in igniting the Germans’ hatred of the French”, Heinrich Heine wrote in his The Romantic School, “And the journal which he wrote for this purpose, Der rheinische Merkur, abounds with such accusation formulas (Beschwierungsformeln) which, should a war happen again, would still have a certain effect.” “Since then, Mr. Goerres fell into oblivion”, Heine continued. “The princes did not need him and let him go. They even persecuted him, when he started to grump… Persecuted by the princes and having nothing to bite, Mr. Goerres flew into the arms of the Jesuites … and became a pillar of the Catholic propaganda in Munich. It was there that I saw him a few years ago. … Before an audience, consisting mostly of the catholic seminarians, he delivered his lectures on the universal history. … A great confusion… regarding both the concepts and language prevailed in his presentation as it did in his books, und it was not without reason that one had compared him with the Tower of Babel.” 510

The judgment of other German liberals was no less severe. “It is hard to indicate where we stand themselves”, Carl Gutzkov wrote in 1838, “But it is a long dark shadow thrown by Goerres… that shows where he stands. We do not know clearly what our intensions are, and we are not certain about what the distant future will bring us; but we

all know that the elf fires dancing within the world picture of a Goerres, point to an unsafe and moist marshland that we definitely have to escape.”

Given Goerres' political trajectory, this criticism is not surprising. Within a wide spectrum of German Romantic thought, his fate as a thinker represented a typical and a special case at the same time. In a number of ways, Goerres was akin to the mainstream of the Romantic movement including Friedrich Schlegel, and one crucial dimension of this mainstream was the religious-philosophical evolution towards Roman Catholicism. Here is how Heine, a dedicated opponent and sharp critic of the *romantische Schule* characterized this process: “… They pilgrimized to Rome where the Vicar of Christ should revitalize the consumptive German art by (nourishing it) with the asses’ milk … They embarked on a voyage to the bosom of the only redeeming (aleinseligmachenden) Roman Catholic Apostolic Church. For… the adherents of the Romantic school, there was no need for a formal conversion: they were born Catholic, for example, Mr. Goerres and Mr. Brentano. The others were born in the fold of the Protestant church… and their conversion did not recquire a public act “.

The distinction in religious background between Schlegel and Goerres was not the only one, however. No less significantly, Goerres' political trajectory differed from that of Schlegel (and Frank as well) in some important ways. Neither a glorification of the Emperor of the French in 1808, nor a service to the Holy Alliance during the later decades was thinkable for him. Having started his career on the far left wing of the

---

512 Heine, Die romantische Schule, p. 216.
German political spectrum as the «most outstanding German Jacobin», he got disappointed with revolutionary France and became a key figure in the German struggle against Napoleon. Although during the liberation war both Schlegel and Goerres took an uncompromisingly anti-Napoleonic stance, their political ideals strongly differed. Contrary to Schlegel, Goerres positioned himself not as a supporter of the Holy Alliance system in the post-war Europe, but as its most radical opponent. His quest for an alternative represented a long process; a powerful voice of the nationalist opposition to the Holy Alliance system, Goerres evolved gradually to the most outstanding Catholic writer in the Germanies and in the 1840s, he became the founding father of the German political Catholicism. As Bernd Wacker justly points out, it was in this movement that «was in the making during the year of his (Goerres' – A.P.) death» that he found «the place and the outlet», which enabled him to become the «artillery commander of the Catholic citadel who is to this day regarded as the leading figure… in… articulating the sociopolitical goals of Catholicism».  

This description of Goerres' role expresses the way the German Roman Catholic camp estimated the contribution of this outstanding thinker to the common cause. «You can imagine», Clemens Brentano wrote to Goerres, «What a joy it is for the good people in the citadel (the editorial board of the journal of Der Katholik – A.P.) that they… have this spitfire mountain as their artillery commander».  

Indeed, Goerres' strong political temperament represented a factor crucial for his unique place within the newly emerged political movement of the German Roman

513 Wacker., p. 16.
514 Clemens Brentano, Gesammelte Briefe, Bd.2 (Bern: Lang, 1970)., p. 112.
Catholics. Of no lesser importance it was for his later reputation in the German-speaking realm. Significantly unlike Schlegel let alone Frank, Goerres represented a political figure, whose Weltanschauung included not only a picture of the world but also an explicitly outlined program of its transformation.

Among other things, this circumstance had predetermined one distinctive feature of Goerres’ career: the alternation of the periods of political activity and those of philosophical reflexion. As Wolfgang Fruehwald justly notes, “Similarly to his disciple, Joseph von Eichendorff, (Goerres) distinguished between the times of poetry and the times, for which he considered the art of poetry as “foolish” because (it is) “The Lord (himself who) once again talks directly to the peoples in the language of poetry”\textsuperscript{515}, one should distinguish between the periods of quite reflexion and those of growing political and, thus, journalistic engagement in the life of Goerres.” \textsuperscript{516}

The other side of this alternation was a peculiar approach of Goerres to the variety of the topics that he addressed. “We have neither time nor space”, he wrote, “To consider everything in detail (and) analyze every (factor) contributing to the whole… in a comprehensive way, in order to put it in a proper place, and to examine its connection to the other factors… We confine ourselves therefore to grasping the multiplicity (of phenomena) in a most general survey.” \textsuperscript{517}

For the later works of Goerres, Bernd Wacker defines this synthetic view as “political theology” (politische Theologie), using this term as reflecting the combination

\textsuperscript{515} Eichendorff to Goerres on August 30, 1828, in: Joseph Eichendorff, \textit{Briefe, Band 3} (Regensburg: Habbel, 1910)., p. 342.
\textsuperscript{516} Goerres, \textit{Ausgewaehlte Werke}, Bd. 2, p. 821.
\textsuperscript{517} Goerres, \textit{Athanasius}, quoted in: Wacker, p. 11.
of the variety of subjects, that Goerres addressed, depending on occasion, theme, and context with the continuity of his attitude to them.  

The nature of this continuity was far from obvious, however. Not surprisingly, it became more than once a topic of discussion. “Strikingly”, Vanden Heuvel stressed, «As an old man…Goerres seemed to stand for everything he had attacked as a young man: for an archtraditional papist Church, for the preservation of the estates, and for a privileged hereditary nobility.”  

To the contrary, Robert Saitchick emphasized the continuity of the fundamental principles of Goerres’ social philosophy: “In spite of (his) church-political views more and more coming to the surface, Goerres… always remained the same (in his views): in part, these views were clearly visible in the conception of society articulated already in The Rheinische Merkur.”

This controversy goes far beyond the chronology of Goerres’ work; it reflects not merely the trajectory of his evolution but also the correlation between different dimensions of his discourse, such as the religious, the national, and the social. This study has already highlighted two different cases of such correlation: that of Friedrich Schlegel within whose Weltanschauung one can observe a distance between the religious and the national dimensions, with the former prevailing over the latter, and that of Othmar Frank who practically did not distinguish between them. Within this context, what was the specificity of the Goerres’ case?

---

518 Wacker., p. 10.
519 Vanden Heuvel., p. 5.
Significantly, in attempting to describe Goerres’ Weltanschauung, his supporters and critics emphasized the centrality of both the religious-mystical and the nationalist aspects to his discourse. At the same time, they singled out a third aspect, the sociopolitical. As an expressive illustration of this, one can recall the wording by Thomas Mann pointing to the “Joseph Goerres complex of soil, folk, nature, past, and death” characterizing this complex as “revolutionary obscurantism”.  

This remark reflects, after all, a synthetic nature of what Thomas Mann describes as the Goerres complex, on the one hand and the ambivalence of its political message as revolutionary and obscurantist, on the other. What was the place occupied by the Orient, specifically India, within this complex? For a better understanding of this, one should address first the question of the scholarly basis of the Goerres’ reasoning on the Orient.

**The Orient in the Goerres’ World**

Among numerous striking features of Goerres’ personality, one of the most astonishing ones was his all-embracing erudition. “Goerres’ knowledge in all fields possible was enormous”, Johann Nepomuk Sepp wrote. “He was”, Sepp continued, “The last universal historian on the pulpit.”

In particular, the contemporaries of Goerres admired his linguistic prowess. As a young man, he mastered French, Spanish, Italian as well as the Scandinavian languages. Mastering English took him six weeks, after which he was able to read John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* in original. Importantly in the context of this study, in 1811 Goerres learned Persian to translate the Firdowsi’s monumental epic, the *Shahnameh*.

---

521 Quoted in: Wacker., p. 17.
522 Quoted in: Saitchik., p.92.
Curiously however, Sanskrit was absent from the long list of the languages mastered by Goerres. “He convinced himself”, Robert Saichick explains, “That at a later age a fundamental study of a foreign language would be too demanding: he saw that this undertaking would be too hard even for such a strong health as his, due to which he abandoned the thought of learning Sanskrit.”

No less curious is the question of how Goerres himself described this episode. Here is what he wrote to his son: ”If you are complaining at the headache caused by the study of Sanskrit, then I can comfort you because currently I have learnt by heart the Champolion’s hyerogliphic alphabet, in order to make sense, although partially, of the Egyptian treatise that I have to finish.”

In other words, as the “last universal historian”, Goerres had too many languages to learn. In a way, his attitude was understandable: the all-embracing intellectual endeavor could not always rely on solid specialized knowledge. This latter circumstance should be put in a larger context, however. At that time, many scholars and men of letters admiring the treasures of Indian culture but not knowing Sanskrit produced indirect translations of the Indian texts. Goerres did not belong to them; among his numerous writings, one cannot find even indirect translations from the Indian languages or special scholarly works based on them. Unlike Friedrich Schlegel and Frank, Goerres could not be regarded therefore an Indologist in the strict sense.

This circumstance reflects only one side of the picture, however. The other is the place that Goerres’ understanding of the Orient including India occupied within a larger

523 Saichik., p. 78.
524 Ibid.
context of his effort as a philosopher and publicist. In part, this ambivalence explains the differences in the perception of Goerres’ reasoning on the Orient between the later scholars and his contemporaries. “A conglomeration of chaotic combinations” – such was the wording that Helmut von Glasenapp used for the *Mythical History of the Asian World (Mythengeschichte der asiistischen Welt)*, Goerres’ major work on the topic. Glasenapp admitted, however, the existence of a “powerful idea behind (these combinations)”.

Goerres’ contemporaries judged differently. Some of them viewed Goerres as an even more significant Oriental scholar than the author of *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*. “Goerres’ book”, Wilhelm Grimm wrote to Joachim Arnim about the *Mythengeschichte*, “… Has to be one of the finest and most important written in a long time; there is a most uncommon spirit in it, great powers of discernment and knowledge, yet the living tremors of the spirit are not in any way hemmed in.” “Both the Schlegels together at their best”, Grimm stresses, “Could not equal this. The first one’s book about India is a totally insignificant text to Goerres’s’.”

This evaluation makes the question of the “powerful idea” articulated by Goerres with regard to and based on the Oriental, specifically Indian materials, particularly intriguing. In addressing this topic, one should take into consideration one circumstance regarding the trajectory of Goerres’ career as a thinker. Given Goerres’ long life and the distinctions between the phases of his intellectual evolution, it is not surprising that the character of his interest in India-related subjects underwent modifications depending on the subject matter of his focus during the time-period in question. More precisely, on can

---

525 Glasenapp., p. 30.
526 Wilhelm Grimm, *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 63-64; quoted also in Vanden Heuvel, p. 137.
single out not one but two “powerful ideas” that Goerres put forward with regard to the Orient, specifically India. The first referred to the history of myths and religions and represented an attempt to reconstruct the original religion of mankind (Urreligion) whose versions and modifications determined, according to Goerres, the further trajectory of universal human spirit. Here the thought of Goerres developed in tune with those of his fellow-Romantics. As Vanden Heuvel notes, he “followed Herder’s notion that the myths of India were the earliest myths; that they represented an Urreligion, of which all other subsequent myths and religions were regional variations… The most essential, elemental, truths about mankind were contained in Indic myth”. 527

Later, Goerres’ interest in the Oriental subjects acquired also another dimension. On this stage, his purpose consisted in examining the fate of the German people within the world-historical context and was connected immediately to his political agenda. As Jon Vanden Heuvel justly states, “Nations, for Goerres, were not unlike plant life: to understand the tree, one must first examine the seed”, and he believed to have discovered this seed in the ancient Orient. Tracing the roots of the Germans back to what he considered the beginning of human history, Goerres sought to explain the factors that had caused the German fragmentation and find the ways to overcome it.

These two approaches to the Orient reflected two different phases of Goerres’ evolution as a thinker: the earlier, that of Goerres the Romantic and the later, that of Goerres the founding father of political Catholicism. The major document of the former was the Mythical History of the Asian World published in 1810, whereas the latter found its particularly comprehensive expression in the work of 1844, The Japhetites and their

527 Vanden Heuvel., p. 135.
Common Homeland, Armenia (Die Japhetiden und ihre gemeinsame Heimat Armenien).

It is these two texts that will be examined in this chapter. However, for a better understanding of the place occupied by each of them within a larger framework of the Goerres’ Weltanschauung, this examination should be preceded by briefly tracing the major stages of Goerres’ intellectual biography in the context of several political and cultural movements, of which he was a central figure.

Goerres’ Roles

1. The Roots: The Rhineland

Josepf Goerres was born in 1776 in Coblenz, a Rhenish city that at a year after his birth became the residence of Archbishop Clemens Wenzeslaus, the sovereign prince of the Rhineland and, thus, the political center of the region. "Goerres was born into a modest petit bourgeois home setting," Georg Buerke notes. Indeed, his father was a small wood merchant. Another fact usually mentioned by his biographers is his mother’s Italian origin. One can observe, however, that the data of Goerres’ family roots do not provide much material for a reconstruction of his formation as a thinker: there is no evidence of a strong family influence on the future writer and scholar.

More visible is the importance of the regional factors. According to numerous evidences, the Rhenish identity was very strong in Goerres; “The waters of the Rhine run in my veins”, he said more than once. “Whatever language he spoke”, Robert Saitchick emphasizes, “His Rhenish accent betrayed him.” “It was the dialect of

528 Vanden Heuvel., p. 1.
529 Buerke., pp. 7-8.
Koblenz”, the historian specifies, in which he spoke to his wife and children; only in his lectures he wanted to speak pure German.” 531

Goerres’ Rhenish identity was not confined to his spoken language, however. Not to a lesser extent did it determine his environment. An interesting evidence of this refers to his stay in Paris in 1799 when his circle consisted predominantly of his Rhenish compatriots. “Goerres socialized with the cream of the small colony of Rhinelanders in Paris”, Vanden Heuvel writes. “Interestingly”, he adds, “The circle was referred to as “Rhenish”, as opposed to Prussian, or Bavarian, or “German.” 532

What were the major distinctive features of Goerres’ home region within the then all-German context? The first and most obvious one referred to religion. “Pfaffengasse” (Monks’ Alley) – this was how the territory between Mainz and Cologne was dubbed in the Lutheran and liberal circles. Indeed, Rhineland represented a stronghold of Catholicism, and one can list three major factors determining this situation: first, about 80% of the Rhinelanders belonged to the Roman Catholic church; second, the region was ruled by a church-prince, Archbishop of Trier and, third, a number of restrictions inherited from the past remained imposed on the non-Catholics: for example, it was as late as 1783 that the Protestants were allowed to run business in Rhineland. 533

On the other hand, the situation in the Rhineland in the late eighteenth century was characterized by the influence of the Enlightenment, specifically the enlightened absolutism coming from the Holy Roman Empire, which, as Vanden Heivel justly recalls,

---

531 Saitchik., p. 78.
532 Vanden Heuvel., p. 86.
533 Ibid., p. 5.
“still loomed in (regional) people’s consciousness”, in the form of Josephinism. The latter represented “an amalgam of the liberal and absolutistic ideas that characterized the rule of Emperor Joseph II” who, as the historian stresses, “decreed the end of monastic orders, established state oversight of the education of priests, promoted religious tolerance, and validated civil marriage. He abolished serfdom, emancipated the Jews, and even established equality before the law.” It was this model that, as Vanden Heuvel points out, was “widely emulated by the archbishop-electors of the Rhineland in the 1780s”.

“Clemens (Archbishop-Elector Clemens Wenzeslaus, the then ruler of the Rhineland – A.P.), and the other Rhenish prince-bishops”, he specifies, “Attempted to gradually build a power base independent of the Church, and to distance themselves from the clerical aspects of their states. They wanted to rule more as secular princes, less as sovereign bishops. At the same time, they fostered an Enlightenment movement within the Catholic Church itself.” 534

This Enlightenment movement within the realm of the Church was to a great extent based on the ideas of Johann Nicolaus von Hontheim, the suffrage bishop of Trier, who had chosen the pseudonym Febronius. Febronianism represented an attempt to nationalize the Church, on the one hand and to rationalize it, on the other. “Febronius advocated a more national, a more German, Catholic Church, a Church in tune with an enlightened, rational religiosity”, Vanden Heuvel writes. “Febronius”, he specifies, “Sought to differenciate between the essence of Christianity and the historical baggage that it had acquired over the centuries. Papal authority, indeed the whole clerical hierarchy of the Catholic Church, Febronius regarded as superfluous to real Christianity.”

534 Vanden Heuvel, p. 10.
“In the Rhineland, these ideas led more orthodox Catholics to dub Febronius “a Protestant Catholic”, Vanden Heuvel emphasizes.  

In spite of the influence of the Enlightenment in a variety of realms including the Church, the Josephinist model did not work successfully in the Rhineland. This fact was due to the third key factor shaping the sociopolitical situation in the region – the role of the estates (Staende) inherited from the medieval times. “The rights and prerogatives of the Staende… were protected by the Holy Roman Empire”, Vanden Heuvel notes, “And attempts to sweep those rights aside were frequently blocked by the Reichskammergericht, the imperial court of justice.”

The role of the Staende factor in Rhineland as an obstacle in the way of the Enlightenment was determined by the weakness of the local state. “Only truly powerful German states, for example, Austria and Prussia, were strong enough to abolish many of the old rights of the estates”, Vanden Heulen stresses. “A solid bureaucracy was the engine of modernization and reform, but the circumscribed powers of the bureaucracy in a state like Clemens Wenzeslaus’ Trier naturally made a bureaucratic career there less attractive for men of talent than a similar career elsewhere.”

Such were the major parameters of the sociopolitical landscape in which the powerful personality of Joseph Goerres was formed. It was this situation that created the controversies that he would seek to resolve. And it was these three variables – the Church, the bureaucratic state, and the Staende – that would acquire different meanings

535 Ibid.
536 Ibid., p. 7.
537 Vanden Heuvel, p. 7.
in his Weltanschauung in different periods of his long career. But the way he formulated the questions and where he sought to find the answers depended not only on these internal circumstances but also on the powerful external factors that shaped the all-German and, more generally, all-European situation in which Goerres had to live and act. The interaction between these two kinds of influences had determined the trajectory of Goerres’ thought.

2. Goerres the Revolutionary

The signs of this interaction were quite visible in the environment in which Goerres spent his formative years. The gymnasium he entered in 1785 had been founded and by the Jesuites. It was, however, not Jesuitism but rather Febronianism that dominated in the school atmosphere during his years of learning. Finally in 1789, a new powerful influence was added to the Josephinist mainstream: that of the French revolution. 538

The aspirations of the young Goerres were in tune with the rapidly infolding events; using the Vanden Heuvel’s wording, he “rebelled against the still arch-Catholic, deeply aristocratic, political world he was born into”. 539 A year after his graduation, the seventeen years old rebel seemed to have gotten a powerful ally: in October 1794 Coblenz was occupied by the troops of revolutionary France.

Among the Rhenish supporters of the French revolution, Goerres, then a medical student at Bonn belonged to the most enthusiastic ones. Not only did he participate in the planting of the Liberty Tree (Freiheitsbaum) in Coblenz but also practically from the

538 Buerke., pp. 7-8.
539 Vanden Heuvel., p. 5.
very beginning of the French rule in the Rhineland he became a journalistic mouthpiece of the pro-French Rhenish republicans. In 1796, he was among the most vocal members of a group of intellectuals that founded the Coblenz Patriotic Club, the first openly republican organization in the city. As the other Rhenish republicans, Goerres wanted his home region to be as close to the motherland of revolution as possible. This aspiration acquired different political forms, however. At first, the future ideologue of German nationalism and political Catholicism stood for annexation of the Rhineland to France but soon, with a change of political circumstances, he started advocating the idea of the creation an independent Cisrhenanian republic. Nevertheless, when, as Vanden Heuvel puts it, “patronage for a Cisrhenanian republic evaporated in Paris, Goerres and his associates blitherly returned to their original program of annexation”.  

For the enthusiasts like young Goerres, these fluctuations highlighted the contradiction between the revolutionary principle and the Realpolitik. As an attempt to apply the former to the concerns of the latter, one can consider the first significant work by Goerres, written in 1795-1796 and published two years later, Der allgemeine Friede, ein Ideal. This essay was composed between the two peace agreements between France and the Holy Roman Empire, that of Leoben (Aprile 18, 1797) and that of Campo Formio (17-19 October, 1797). Amplifying the Kant’s idea of perennial peace, Goerres sought, as Fruehwald clarifies, to convince the French authorities to protect the republican movement of the Rhineland by establishing a Cisrhenanian republic. 

---

540 Ibid., pp. 36-37.
541 See: Goerres, Ausgewaehlte Werke, p. 766.
Interestingly in attempting to reach out the government of revolutionary France, Goerres sent his essay to Paris. The French reaction followed shortly; Francois de Neufchateay, the minister of the interior, wrote to Goerres, thanking him for sending the Directory the work. Here is how a report of the ministry described the message of the text: “21 Messidore Year 5. Goerres of Coblenz sent a brochure written in German having the title Work to the Universal Peace. It implores the French government never again to let the lands of the Left Bank of the Rhine fall under despotic domination.”

Under the despotic domination Goerres understood that of the Holy Roman Empire and of the smaller German sovereigns including Clemens Wenzeslaus, whereas France embodied the force expected to end the era of despotism. Shortly after the French troops occupied Mainz in accordance to the secret article of the peace treaty of Campo Formio (they entered the city on December 30, 1797), Goerres addressed his fellow-republicans of the Rhineland with a speech containing the following words: “It is not a dream, the integrity (of the Empire) is broken, and Mainz is ours!”

In characterizing the nature of the enthusiasm expressed by Goerres, Heribert Raab justly notes that the young Rhenish revolutionary viewed France “not as a state power (*Machtstaat*) but as the motherland of mankind and associates it with a republic of the peoples (*Voelkerrepublik*) and with the future kingdom of the human race (*Reich der Humanitaet*). This idealistic vision of France corresponded with that of the German, primarily Rhenish situation. At that time, Goerres considered what was to be done to

---

542 Vanden Heuvel., p. 54.
improve the conditions in his homeland completely in terms what could be described as a revolutionary universalistic philosophy. As W. Hermanns stresses, the aim that Goerres pursued for “his Fatherland, the Rhineland (was) to achieve a life on the basis of human rights”. Regarding the political form that this life should acquire, the historian specifies that “The universal republic Goerres dreamed of... was, from his perspective, not a single state (Einzelstaat) and not a geographical concept in general, but a moral-political task that had to be resolved step by step through (the establishment of) a union of free states. (The fact that) France had become the leader in this process and would remain one for a certain time, was based on the given circumstances. It was only with (this leader) and under his protection that Goerres’ ideal could come true.”  

“The goal was a life in freedom and justice and the realization of (this) idea within the constellation of modern powers”, Wolfgang Fruehwald emphasizes.  

This vision of the future union of free states was equally utopian within both the internal German and the external European contexts. On the one hand, as Fruehwald justly remarks, “Germany did not exist either as a lingual or as a cultural unity let alone as a nation-state”.  

No better was the situation with the constellation of modern powers and, more specifically, with the alleged leader of the struggle for universal freedom. Not that revolutionary France was not at all interested in the developments in the Rhineland. This interest had a different nature, however. “At the end of 1797”, Vanden Heuvel writes,  

---

547 Ibid.
“Reubell, now holding the balance of power in the Directory, sent a fellow Alsatian, Francisque Joseph Rudler, to organize the Rhineland on a French-style departmental basis, and to prepare the land, administratively, for annexation to France. But… the proposed plan of annexation was constantly postponed, and the Rhineland instead was treated as war booty, a source of requisitions, and a place to quarter French armies. All too often the French occupying power turned to old guard officials in the Rhineland, whom they regarded as able bureaucrats, more capable than Goerres and his friends, of wringing the necessary contributions from the Rhenish population.”  

Equally alarming were the news about the developments within France itself. Goerres was particularly distressed by the events of the eighteenth of Fructidor when, under the pretext of suppressing a royalist cue the Directory used the army against the deputies of the Convent. Goerres tried to preserve his belief in the revolution. “I trust”, he wrote a year later in Mein Glaubensbekenntnis, “That those in power in today’s France, at least the majority, are men of firm and good principles and generally act accordingly; but (I think also that) the pressure of the circumstances often forces them to make things that are in direct unconformity to these principles. The people in the foreign countries, especially in the (unoccupied parts of)… Germany viewed the eighteenth of Fructidor from a misanthropic perspective… They regarded it as the day of the death of liberty and as the beginning of an oppressing despotism of the Directory”. 

This conflict between the revolutionary ideas to which Goerres desperately attempted to keep loyalty, and the practices of the revolutionary authorities determined

548 Vanden Heuvel., p. 63.
his attitude towards revolutionary France. “He praised the Revolution”, Vanden Heuvel notes, “For what it represented philosophically, rather than for what it had brought to the Rhineland in concrete terms.”

Yet it was harder and harder for Goerres to defend this ambivalent position. The corruption of the occupiers in the Rhineland became a target of a sharper and sharper criticism of his newspaper, Das rote Blatt. That was only one aspect of a larger picture, however. “In addition to French corruption”, Vanden Heuvel stresses, “Goerres attacked Rudler’s practice of importing French bureaucrats and naming officials from the old regime to key posts in the departmental and municipal governments.”

These attacks resulted in Goerres’ conflict with the French bureaucracy in the occupied Rhineland. In fall 1798, two officials of the Coblenz central administration, Champein and Godon, asked their superiors in Mainz and Paris to ban his newspaper. Goerres defended himself, and this self-defence did not seem to be in vain: some French officials on the occupied territories, including the commissar Rudler, were well disposed to him. The decision made with regard to Das rote Blatt after some debates was not to ban the outlet but only to change its format, and Goerres continued his undertaking as a journal titled Ruebezahl. The struggle between him and his opponents continued as well; representing a part of a larger conflict including, after all, the local competition for power between Goerres’ associates, the young republicans and the Coblenz old guard the French

---

550 Vanden Heuvel., p. 65.
551 Ibid., p. 68.
preferred to rely on, this conflict, as Vanden Heuvel emphasizes, could not be resolved until the big political picture in Paris was settled.  

The Rhenish radicals were well aware of this latter circumstance and in 1799 they decided to send a delegation to Paris; Goerres was named the delegate of the Departent of Rhine and Mosel. The major political instruction he was given was to demand “the definitive union of the four new departments with the French Republic”.  

November 2, 1799, the delegation set out to Paris; interestingly, Goerres and his colleagues were still on their way to France when they received the news about the cue of the Brumaire eighteenth. Although Goerres as well as his compatriots would only later become aware of the political sense of the Napoleon Bonaparte’s rise to power, his voyage to “the land of heroes and cowards, the proudest republicans and the most debased slaves”, as he characterized France in the letter to his betrothed, Katharina von Lassaulx, was crucial for his understanding of both revolutionary France and the German situation.

Primarily, the very view of the Parisian political scene made Goerres realize the scale of the processes unfolding in and initiated by revolutionary France. As Vanden Heuvel rightly stresses, “The magnitude of the political power struggles in Paris was foreign to Goerres’s experience, grounded as it was entirely on the experience of local skirmishes in Coblenz”. 

552 Vanden Heuvel., p. 73.
553 Ibid.
554 Ibid., p. 81.
It is noteworthy that two decades later Goerres would say that “This (French – A.P.) revolution was a great Justice of Heaven arranged in one country (ein grosses Gottesgericht, in einem Lande abgehalten). At the same time, his face-to-face encounter with the world of the French politics resulted in his full disillusionment with his revolutionary ideals. In the occupied Rhineland he had observed only some practices of the revolution and criticized them as not cohering with the revolutionary principles. But, as Georg Buerke notes, “The personal encounter with the masters of the Revolution healed him forever from his Jacobin enthusiasm”. 555

The question of the essence of this disillusionment is all the more important that, as Vanden Heuvel stresses, “It was relatively late in the game – March 1800 – for a German to turn his back on the French Revolution; most Germans had already done so back in 1793-1794”. 556 The explanation of the transformation of Goerres’ mind can be found in his writings that appeared after the journey. “Today’s Europe knows four imperial powers (Kaisertueme)”, he wrote in 1804, “…The Great Turk is the master in the Orient; in the Occident, the Roman Emperor; in the North, the Czar; and in the South, the new republican emperor.” 557 “Only now”, Vanden Heuvel notes, “Did France become (from Goerres’ perspective – A.P.) a power like any other power – except that it was a hegemonic power.” 558

Of no lesser importance is the question of what replaced the fallen idol within Goerres’ Weltanschauung. According to Vanden Heuvel, it was German nationalism.

555 Buerke., p. 8.
556 Vanden Heuvel., p. 89.
558 Vanden Heuvel., p. 89.
“Goerres who had dreamed of a Kantian universal republic, became a German nationalist during his first trip outside of Germany”, he writes. “His education”, he specifies, “Had extolled the virtues of the cosmopolitan “Weltbuerger”: national differences between Rhinelander and Frenchman paled beside the grandeur of a common republican creed. His experiences in Coblenz under French occupation began to erode this idealistic view of the world; his trip to Paris crystallized his German national consciousness.” 559

In light of the later evolution of Goerres’ Weltanschauung towards nationalism and his future role in the anti-Napoleonic struggle, this conclusion seems self-evident. On the other hand, for a better understanding of his trajectory, including even that of his nationalism, it is necessary to examine more closely the periods that followed his disillusionment in revolutionary France and the Weltbuerger philosophy. More specifically, one should trace three major phases of Goerres’ intellectual evolution: first, the Romantic period during which he addressed for the first time the Oriental subjects; second, the period of the anti-Napoleonic struggle and the post-war conflict between Goerres and the Holy Alliance ideology and system; and, third, his later formation as the ideoloque of political Catholicism.

3. Goerres the Romantic

An immediate result of Goerres’ disillusionment with the revolution was his complete retreat from political activities. The ardent publicist became now a modest high school teacher of physics. The disappointed Jacobin sought solace in science and philosophy. He turned to the studies of cerebrophysiology and quickly became a widely recognized expert in this field. No less importantly, he studied the major philosophers of

559 Ibid., p. 85.
the era: in addition to his favorite Kant, he intensively read the works of Herder, Fichte, and Schelling.

At the same time, the personality of Goerres was too vivid and energetic that he was unable to confine himself just to the high-school audience. Equally, the others in his life would not let him do so. In the fall of 1806, the Senate of the Heidelberg University appointed him, who, as Fruehwald justly reminds, had never attended a college as a student, to the position of adjunct-professor. 560

At Heidelberg, his lectures became a sensation. “The very tone of his presentation contrasted with the … atmosphere prevailing (in the university)”, Fruehwald emphasizes. “(His very) announcement”, the historian continues, “Ignited such an excitement that the first lecture was attended not by the… fifteen who had registered (for the class) but by sixty or seventy (students)…” 561 As one of the contemporaries would recall later, the young adjunct-professor represented a combination of a “Roman orator and a Low-Rhenish contemplator”. 562

Of course, it was not only the power of the presentation in itself, but, primarily, the message of the Goerres’ lectures that impressed his audience. Significantly, among his delighted listeners, both students and colleagues, there were some illustrious figures of the German Romanticism, including Joseph von Eichendorff and Clemens Brentano (the latter also taught at Heidelberg in 1807). Within this constellation, Goerres occupied the central place. Here is how a historian of German literature, Josef Nadler, describes his

561 Ibid.
562 Ibid.
role: “… This burning religious energy in itself enabled him to ignite a movement unfolding around Goerres as an engine even in the secular spheres.” “For it was Goerres”, Nadler specifies, “Who within this short two years period at Heidelberg created an atmosphere of the highest excitement and innovation… We still exaggerate (the role of) Brentano who spent only (a few) months at Heidelberg and only provided Goerres with books, in order to put into motion this powerful mill of spirit, and (the role of) Arnim, a faithful literary entrepreneur. It was Goerres who was the main fire (Zentralfeuer). 563

Two points are of particular interest in this description: the centrality of the role of Goerres and the religious nature of his message. In attempting to describe the latter, one should characterize first the subject of the course taught by Goerres. “Philosophical and Physiological Lectures” – such was the title of the prospectus for the fall semester of 1806. The way the young adjunct-professor interpreted this title and, therefore, the topic of these lectures, was completely in tune with those of many other Romantics; characterizing the syncretic nature of the Goerres’ undertaking, Vanden Heuvel justly defines it it as an “attempt to synthesize philosophy, religion, art, and science”. 564

This universalistic approach determined both the lectures and writings that Goerres worked on at that time. And significantly, as a crucial dimension of the all-pervasive picture he sought to draw, Goerres addressed the Orient. It was precisely at that time that he, first, started working on his translation of the monumental epic by Firdowsi

564 Vanden Heuvel., p. 130.
and second, even more importantly, on the *Mythical History of the Asian World* that would by published in 1810.

This phase of Goerres’ career as a thinker was ended by external, not internal factors. It was a new stage of the struggle between the inheritor of Goerres’ former dreamland, revolutionary France, and the anti-French coalition that marked the beginning of a new chapter in his biography. This chapter started on New Year’s Eve of 1814 when, after Emperor Napoleon had rejected the proposal of peace put forward by Prince Metternich, the Prussian troops under command of Field Marshal Bluecher crossed the Rhine and ended the twenty years long French occupation of the left-bank Rhineland. One of the first decisions made by the Prussian General-Gouverneur, Justus Gruner, was the appointment of Goerres Director of Public Education of the newly liberated region.\(^\text{565}\)

4. Goerres as the Ideologue of the *Regermanisierung*

Upon an initiative of the Prussian authorities, Goerres transformed the formerly French-founded and sponsored newspaper of *Mercure du Rhin* (whose format, content, and task had emulated those of *The Moniteur*) into a new outlet, *Der rheinische Merkur* supposed to become a political weapon in the ongoing anti-Napoleonic struggle.\(^\text{566}\) The Prussian government expected Goerres to play a key role in this struggle. He responded enthusiastically and, as Fruehwald states, “… the period between January 23, 1814, through January 10, 1816, within which *Der Rheinische Merkur* appeared in press, was a time of a passionate engagement for him”.\(^\text{567}\)


\(^{566}\) Ibid., p. 822.

\(^{567}\) Ibid., p. 821.
One circumstance should be highlighted in this context: as Reinhard Hagman notes, “Gruner and the reformers led by the powerful Stein, who stood behind him… would secure for him (Goerres – A.P.) a practically unlimited liberty action through a far-going abolition of censorship – an unheard-of thing at that time.” 568 This policy was based on the political task that Goerres was entrusted with. “The newspapers served as a tool of the Regermanisierung of the left-bank Rhenish region”, Wolfgang Fruehwald writes. “The newspaper (started by Goerres –A.P.)”, he specifies, “Was expected to appeal to the trans-Rhenish Germany as the “Rhenish tonque within the greater German order and to awake… a feeling of the belonging to the realm of the German language and culture.” 569

This latter point needs clarification, however. Through the strengthening in the Rhinelanders of the feeling of the all-German national identity, the Prussian authorities, naturally, wanted to win their support for the Prussian effort for the domination within the German-speaking realm. For two years, Goerres and his Prussian superiors went hand in hand. The newspaper had an astonishing success: within a short period of time, the circulation of Der rheinische Merkur was as great as 3000 copies.

The role of Goerres in inspiring his compatriots to fight the French invaders was extraordinary. “The fourth ally (der vierte Allierte) – such was the nickname invented for Der rheinische Merkur. Interestingly as Hagmann clarifies, the original wording was “the fifth great power” (die fuenfte Grossmacht, next to Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Great

Britain), and it came from an influential journalist of the era J.F. Benzenberg, who brought this nickname from Paris to Berlin.\footnote{570 Hagmann., p. 64.}

With the victory over Napoleon, the relationship between the two Grossmaechte, Prussia and Goerres with his Der rheinische Merkur could not stay the same. The Rhineland became now a Prussian province, which presupposed, in particular, the inclusion of the local schools in the Prussian school consistory, and in April 1816, Goeres was stripped out of his post as director of public education in the region. More importantly, the Goerres’s journalistic enterprise lost its significance: to use Wolfgang Fruehwald’s wording, “As an ally against Napoleon, Der rheinische Merkur was not needed anymore.” More generally, the situation on Prussia’s political scene underwent a serious change; Goerres’ reformist benefactors lost their influence, and Prussia entered the era of an absolutist restoration. In this context, Goerres, with his criticism of the Prussian policies, specifically of its pro-Russian course, became totally unacceptable and his newspaper was doomed to be banned. “In his struggle against the Restoration, Goerres lost”, Fruehwald notes.“\footnote{571 Goerres, Ausgewaehlte Werke Bd.2, pp. 820-830.} As immediate pretexts for the ban of Der rheinische Merkur, (the authorities) used the clashes with the Czar of Russia and with Theodor Anton Heinrich Schmalz, the denunciant of the Tugendbund”, he specifies.

After the demise of his newspaper, Goerres retreated once again from his public activities and focused on scholarly work. More specifically, he completed to major undertakings started earlier: Old German Folk and Master Songs (1816) and his translation of the Shah Nahmeh (tit was published in 1819). Politically, a watershed “both
for Germany and for Goerres personally” (Vanden Heuvel) was the year 1819 when the murder of August von Kotzebue by Carl Sand “was used by Metternich to raise fears of an impending revolution and to justify a crackdown on freedom of expression” and when “Metternich and the Prussian king agreed on the necessity of coordinating antirevolutionary policies. This accord was followed by the Carlsbad Decrees, a series of measures designed to suppress popular campaigns for constitution and national unity, and to stifle the “demagogues” who stoked such fires.”

Interestingly, Goerres reacted to the murder of Kotzebue with an insightful essay. In this article published two months after the assassination and titled Kotzebue, and What Murdered Him, he interpreted the slaying of the famous playwright by the radical student as a heavenly sign of a split between two historical eras. The murdered author (Chapter Three of this study touched upon him with regard to the Indian imagery that he had used in a pamphlet unmasking a group of radical Aufklärers) who had become a secret political spy for and advisor to the Russian Emperor) represented in Goerres’ view the one who “had misused his talent for erecting an altar of an idol and involving his contemporaries in a shameful worship of Baal”, whereas his murderer belonged, to “the other era (represented by) the youth who had promised a united, free, strong, independent, well governed, and safely protected Germany to themselves”. According to Goerres, the murder of Kotzebue marked thus a split between Germany’s shameful past and its glorious future. “Even the founders of the Holy Alliance”, he resumed, “Will

572 Vanden Heuvel., p. 244.
573 Ibid., p. 242.
574 Goerres, Kotzebue und was ihn ermordet. Ausgewählte Werke Bd.1, p. 283.
not be able to deny (the indication of) “the spirit of time (Geist der Zeit)… for it is biblical (eben weil sie die biblische ist)” – such were the final words of the article. ⁵⁷⁶

At that time, Goerres wrote a much more extended text expressing his political philosophy, *Germany and the Revolution* (*Teutschland und die Revolution*). This work combining the sharpest critique of the Prussian authorities with a meticulous analysis of the relations within the variety of German lands became a sensation for the German intellectual community. The German audiences perceived it in a variety of ways; some outstanding readers highlighted the ambivalence of its message. “Goerres has written a book, *Germany and the Revolution*”, Friedrich Schlegel wrote to his wife, Dorothea, in October 1819. The book, Schlegel continued, “Has awakened the greatest interest, and contains much that is excellent – not for the revolution, but rather quite decisively against the bad party and their principles. There also very strong complaints against the Prussian government, for which he is being persecuted to the utmost. It is said that the king intends to put him in (the bastion of) Glatz in Silesia.” ⁵⁷⁷

Some other observers expressed similar opinions. Shortly after the publication of *Germany and the Revolution*, the Austrian conservative writer, Friedrich Gentz, wrote: “He (Goerres) can bristle as much as he wants, … the main thing is that he is ours and he can’t run away from us anymore. Whoever writes in this manner about the Church, about

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 293.
the monarchical principle in constitutions, about the estates, can never return to the common democrats.” 578

What Goerres said in his book about the monarchist power and the nature of the estates, represented indeed the core of his political philosophy and will be addressed in the pages to follow. The Prussian authorities remained insensitive to these details, however. On September 15, 1819, the Oberpraesident of the Prussian Rheinprovinz banned *Germany and the Revolution* within the province; shortly thereafter the book was banned in the whole Prussian Koenigreich. Later in September, Goerres left Coblenz, first for Frankfort and then, for Strasbourg. A year later, the rumors that after the murder of the Duke of Berry, measures resembling the German Carlsbad Decrees might be enacted in France, prompted Goerres to seek a safer refuge in Switzerland, and later in the year he settled in Basel.

5. Toward Political Catholicism

The year of 1819 marked the greatest caesura in the life of Goerres. “Goerres came to Strasbourg in 1819 as a frustrated nationalist”, Vanden Heuvel asserts. “He left in 1826”, he continues, as “a devout Roman Catholic.” 579 Indeed, the transformation the author of *Germany and the Revolution* underwent in the period of his exile between 1819 and 1827 was crucial for his development as a thinker and indeed, this transformation referred primarily to the religious aspect of his Weltanschauung. As Vanden Heuvel notes, “A religious element in Goerres thought began to emerge around the time that the *Merkur* was shut down. His thoughts about religion turned away from the vague

pantheism of the romantics of the 1800s to address formalized, traditional religion”. It was in exile that Goerres started positioning himself as an explicitly religious, specifically Roman Catholic writer. Not only did he return formally to the Church but also, no less importantly, the situation with the Church in the Germanies, its rights and mission became central to his work. Within the same year, he started working for the Strasbourg-based journal *The Catholic (Der Katholik)*. “Goerres was a man of strong loves and strong hates”, Vanden Heuvel writes with regards to this, “And in *The Catholic*, he was once again in his element: manning the intellectual and epistolar barricades against an enemy.” “The enemy in this case” he clarifies, “Was the liberal, rational, secular spirit that he saw undermining social stability and attacking the Church.” In attacking this enemy, Goerres received more and more recognition among the German Roman Catholics. In 1825, Ludwig I, the young king of Bavaria, combining deep piety with a national-patriotic outlook and inspired by a Goerres’ essay published in *The Catholic*, decided to invite the writer to teach at the newly established Ludwigs-University.

Goerres fit perfectly well into the king’s cultural policy of turning Munich into the “Athens of Bavaria”. One important aspect of this policy was promotion of the late Romanticism. “If Romanticism in Germany had its first bloom in Jena and enjoyed its second flowering in Heidelberg, it had its last flourishing in Munich”, Vanden Heuvel emphasizes.  

580 Vanden Heuvel., p. 229.
581 Ibid., pp. 288-289.
582 Ibid., p. 289
Among the group of historians and men of letters working in Munich under the royal patronage, Goerres who arrived in the capital of Bavaria in 1827 to accept a professorship in universal history occupied a if not the central place. In addition to a prestigious teaching position, the fourty-three years old scholar got a significant influence: as Vanden Heuvel puts it, King Ludwig was “uniquely receptive to Goerres’ prescriptions”. At any rate, it was precisely Goerres who became the spiritual leader of the Munich Späromantik circle that emerged around the editorial board of the journal of Eos and, naturally, the editor-in-chief of this journal.  

Within the Bavarian and the all-German political spectrum, The Eos group positioned itself as opposing both the liberal and the purely restorationist tendencies. Instead, it put forward a third way – a wide program of measures assigned to defend “the really eternal, the truly vital, great, original and undying Good”. The way it understood this ideal illustrated the texts by de the conservative thinkers, such as Maistre, Edmund Burke, and Lamennais that appeared in the journal.

No less importantly, for Goerres himself this last, Bavarian period of his career was marked by a number of major works expressing his political philosophy and securing his role as the founding father of the German political Catholicism. Sociopolitically, the most important of them was Athanasius, an extended pamphlet, with which, as Bernd Wacker notes, “Unspecialized knowledge to this day associates the name of Goerres”.

\[
\text{Ibid., pp. 286-297.}
\]
\[
\text{Ibid., p. 296.}
\]
\[
\text{Wacker., p. 10.}
\]
The subject of the book was the relationship between church and state; more specifically, that was a key question of the German religious situation – the interaction between the Roman Catholic Church in Germany and the Lutheran Prussian State. The incident that Goerres addressed had become a matter of a passionate debate far beyond the Catholic community. It referred to the fragile balance between the Catholic Church, the traditional ruler of the Rhineland, and the Prussian government, that existed in the Rhenish province after the annexation to Prussia. One of the issues that had emerged in this context referred to the mixed, Catholic-Lutheran marriages and, more specifically, to the upbringing of the children. The main problem was the conflict between the requirements of the Prussian government and those of Catholic Church.

According to the former, the child of such intermarriage should belong to the confession of the father. On the other hand, the papal breve of 1830 demanded the issue be resolved exclusively on the basis of the obligatory approval by the Church of the Catholic baptism and upbringing of the child. As the Prussian state did not accept the legislation by the Holy See, the decisions were routinely based on a compromise between the Cologne archbishop and the Prussian authorities; unlike the papal breve, the convention they had concluded did not require a formal obligation to baptize the child and bring him (her) up in accordance with the Roman Catholic tradition; the Catholic parent was only obligated to secure the child’s religious attitude.

The newly appointed Archbishop Clemens-August (Freiherr Droste zu Vischering) decided to put an end to this practice and got involved in an open conflict with the Prussian authorities, which resulted in his arrest and two years long imprisonment in the Fort of Minden. On the other hand, that made him a hero in the eyes of Goerres who
compared the valiant hierarch with the Roman Christian martyr, Athanasius. Goerres’ book published when Clemens-August was in jail, did not only bring Goerres an enormous popularity with the German Catholic audiences but also secured his place as, to use the wording by Bernd Wacker, “One of the founding fathers whom the German Catholicism has never forgotten”. 586

Although Goerres’ emphasis was on the “eternal, the truly vital, great, original and undying Good “, specifically the sacred and inalienable rights of the Churche, his very message was new. “The very concept of ‘Catholicism’ was new”, Vanden Heuvel explains. “Before the Revolution, when the Church so thoroughly shaped social and cultural life in Catholic lands, ‘Catholicism as such hardly existed. There was the Church, and there was the flock, but Catholicism, which included confessional elements outside of the institutional Church, was a modern phenomenon.” 587

The articulation of this new phenomenon by Goerres drew fire from the German liberals; interestingly, it was precisely Athanasius to which Carl Gutzkov reacted by comparing Goerres’ideas with “an unsafe and moist marshland”. At the same time, the Goerres’ platform attracted the others: for example, shortly before his death his circle was joined by Carl von Vogelsang, a native of the northern Mecklenburg who would later convert to Roman Catholicism, sojourn in Vienna and become the founding father of the Austrian corporate-based Christian Socialism.

His last years Goerres spent in Munich, surrounded by delighted disciples and admirers. He passed away on January 29, 1848, and here is how a female family friend

586 Wacker., p. 10.
587 Vanden Heuvel., pp. 278-279.
described his death: “This morning, … dear father Goerres went to his long home … He
died (as a) pious, joyful, and delightful (person); (his) striggle with death was hard but
not long and the clarity of his soul was so great and his spirit, so fresh…(that I cann tell
that) I have never seen such a dying person: it was the death of the one who was right.”

588

The greatness of Goerres’ personality and the role played by him in the world of
the German Catholicism were, thus, beyond doubt. Another story was the nature of his
philosophy of history. “Without having any competitors, at least, in his era”, Wacker
explains, “He was the one on whom this (the German – A.P.) Catholicism…based its
political options… without attempting, however, to understand the Catholic-Christian
Weltanschauung of its founder with more precision.” 589

589

Amplifying this wording one can formulate the question of the major parameters
of Goerres’ integral worldview combining different components. What were these
components and what held them together? What were Goerres’ understanding of human
spirit and the picture of world history that underpinned his changing political philosophy?
And, more specifically, what was the role of the Orient within this picture?

Given the fact that Goerres addressed the Oriental subjects on two different stages
of his career, first, during his Romantic period (primarily in The Mythical History of the
Asian World) and, second, during his Munich period (in The Japhetites and their
Common Fatherland, Armenia), it is important to consider these two Orientalist

589 Wacker., p. 10.
undertakings within the larger context of what Vanden Heuvel defined as Goeres’ “great cosmic plan”.

The Goerres Cosmic Plan: Ruptures and Continuity

The students of Goerres have more than once pointed to one peculiarity of his evolution as a thinker. Within his long career, his political and religious views underwent obvious changes. Another question is whether or not these changes referred to the fundamental parameters of his Weltanschauung. For instance as Robert Saitschick emphasized, the understanding of the sociopolitical role of the Church that Goerres developed after 1819 could in some ways be traced back to the imes of The Rheinische Merkur.” “It was”, the historian explained, “Only a development of his essential character that led him to a stronger and stronger emphasis on the significance of the church for social life.”

This just observation represents only a segment of a larger picture, however. The continuity of Goerres’ thought noticed by Saitschick referred not only to some concrete ideas but to the very character of his thinking. “Goerres’s disappointment with the Prussian state in 1816”, Vanden Heuvel observes, “Mirrored his disillusionment with revolutionary France in 1800. To be sure, his concept of the state had undergone a radical transformation in the intervening years. The ideal of the eudaemonic state had changed to one of the cultural state. The Kantian republic that he had dreamed of in his youth… had given a way to a Herderian conception of the state as an organic community rooted in national heritage and history.” “But”, the historian emphasizes, “In both instances Goerres called upon the state to carry out an almost divine mission: in his revolutionary

590 Saitschik., p. 92.
phase, the moral improvement of humanity in general; in his nationalist phase, the moral
improvement of Germany in particular. The state was the chief vehicle for the unfolding
of a great cosmic plan, and it was the state that Goeres – whether Goerres the Jacobin or
Goerres the nationalist – crusaded for.” 591

This observation raises two questions: first, what were the parameters of this
cosmic plan and second, to what extent the earlier version of this plan can be
characterized as oriented toward the humanity in general and the later, towards Germany
in particular?

In this context, one should note that the contours of this cosmic plan were quite
visible already on the Jacobin stage of Goerres’ career. Significantly, it rested on an
explicitly outlined naturphilosophical basis. “When the cosmologist has to determine
synthetically the laws of the Universe and the relations between its parts as well as the
relation obetween the parts and the whole,” Goerres wrote in 1798, “Then he has his
point of departure in the original state of chaos, and goes…from (the original concept of
matter) through a sequence of conclusions… and all possible combinations of them. He
traces the most whimsical phenomena back to the simplest causes and principles, the
psychic laws, back to he cosmic ones; he follows the revolutions that bring the smallest
changes of these laws to their corollaries; and (finds out) what causes can speed up, slow
down, or completely destroy the developing organization of the (originally) formless
matter (Urstoff); (he) follows the whole entanglement of nature… transforming the …
relative planlessness (Planlosigkeit) into a most possible planned nature.” The same

591 Vanden Heuvel., p. 215.
“The cosmopolite swings around the universe in search of a standpoint from which he can observe the whole mankind…” 592

Eight years later, in his famous lectures at Heidelberg, Goerres addressed this topic again. His imagery and terminology had changed but his message remained as universalistic as before. “How the essence of the All formed, how it was and is; how the eternal Sphinx entered… the primordial night, containing the riddle of being in her bosom where Death… hides; but also how, when the young day comes… another nature, opposite to the darkness, emerges…out of the womb of the creative force,” – such was the way he explained the subject of his course to the students. 593

The difference between the former, Kantian-Jacobin and the new, Romantic attitude consisted in the newly appeared emphasis on myth and religion; at the same time, Goerres the Romantic philosopher followed the approach that he had developed in the previous period. This continuity referred primarily to the nature of the project he developed, first, in his lectures, and, second, in the Mythical History of the Asian World. As Fruehwald notes, “In his Announcement, Goerres promised as much as a mythical interpretation of the whole Universe.” 594

Josef Nadler provides an insightful observation regarding the way Goerres understood the nature of this universal interpretation (Gesamtdeutung): “What we view as political, patriotic, literary-historical scholarly activities, is in reality ((a variety of) reflections (Prismenerscheinungen) of a religious world process, the worldly functions of

a God-seeker, a Theophorus who makes new and new volutions around the mountain of purification, because he does not feel yet the full burden of God on his shoulders. These are only the external manifestations of an internal religious content that whirls him through Natur, Spirit, and History.”  

This description outlines the essence of Goerres’ attitude and intentions. “As … a powerful, indestructible, and ever young life… acts in the Universe”, he explained, “…. And (as) a spirit is that of all spirits, and (as) the nature is a nature of all natures that acts within the depth of the All, and (as) the original spirit lives within … the original nature, and (as) there is the truly primum existens over (all) these visible gods, the really… original creative power… the evidence of this… is the philosophy, which comprehends the divine (which the religion considers in its ideality) in its reality; art represents this comprehension in a subjective way and science, in the objective.”

This reasoning brings Goerres to a conclusion that determined the character of his understanding of the spiritual history of mankind. “Every philosopy is therefore essentially a pansophy (Pansophie), and every religion represents essentially a theosophy: (the same way) as the divinity… manifests its essence in the creature, the religion (manifests itself) in the depth of the spirit; what is established and rests in it… appears, historically and physically, in the latter (the creature – A.P.), as a variety of the real (phenomena) that the spirit embraced from the Universe”.  

---

595 Nadler., p. 287.  
596 Ibid., p. 139.  
597 Ibid.
It was precisely this process of the manifestation of the divine in history that Goerres addressed in his first major work on the Orient – *The Mythical History of the Asian World*.

1. The Urreligion, Urvolk, and Urstaat: The Goerres Quest of Indic Myth

   “An 349-pages long colossus without one single visible division into chapters or topics” – such is the way Reinhardt Habel characterizes Goerres’ *Mythengeschichte*. “This feature”, he adds, “Should be considered as another indication of the plastic-vegetative nature of Goerres’ thinking”. 598 Vanden Heuvel goes even further: he describes *The Mythical History* just as “an anthology, a massive compilation of notes that Goeres spilled out onto the page”. As the historian stresses, “The book… exhibited many of the traits and weaknesses that would characterize Goerres’s scholarly work for his whole life… Its structure and theses were often obscured by a torrent of images and a waterfall of facts.” 599

   Nevertheless, the general idea of the *Mythengeschichte* is quite clear, and this idea is the original religious and even political unity of mankind. “Through a juxtaposition of the Far-Asiatic and Near-Asiatic myths, from the Chinese *Yi Ching* to the Nordic *Edda*”, Glasenapp explains, “Goerres sought to demonstrate that originally (*in der Urzeit*) when the human race inhabited the Caucasus, there existed one religion, one language, one state, and one church.” 600

---

599 Vanden Heuvel., p. 136.
600 Glasenapp., p. 30.
Significantly, it was precisely the Indic myth on which Goerres, as Vanden Heuvel admits, “gathered a vast amount of material”, that “eventually formed the basis” of the *Mythengeschichte*. Here Goerres sounded in tune with the mainstream of the German Romanticism. “Goerres…”, Vanden Heuvel specifies, “Emulated Herder’s anthropological understanding of myth. (He)… followed Herder’s notion that the myths of India were the earliest myths; that the Indic Myths represented an *Urreligion*, of which all other subsequent myths and religions were regional variations…. The mot essential, elemental, truths about mankind were contained in Indic myth. Goerres and Creuzer sought to discover a unifying historical myth linking the earliest civilization of India, through the mythopoetic cultures of the ancient Near East, through Greek and Roman antiquity, through the Christian Middle Ages, right down to their own age. Each new era drew its life’s blood from its own variation of the Indic *Urmythos*.”

This observation needs a clarification, however. For a better understanding of what the Indic mythology meant precisely to Goerres, one should juxtapose his view of India with the attitudes of of Herder, Schlegel and Frank. As demonstrated in Chapter Three of this Dissertation, Herder insisted on the equivalence between the alleged Indian original monotheistic religion and the biblical tradition. Friedrich Schlegel viewed the Indian tradition as a misread Revelation, on the one hand, and as a much more detailed source of information on the ancient history than the biblical, on the other. Frank articulated the most enthusiastic approach insisting on the Indo-Iranian world’s uniqueness as the basis and source of the all-human civilization.

---

To understand the place occupied by Goerres within this spectrum, one should address his understanding of the revelation. Here is how he describes the very beginning of the world process. “At first Divinity went out of its sacred citadel, and its Revelation (Offenbarung) was the matter and visible Universe. That was the first word it said, calling itself by name; such were the first sacred books that it wrote with a torch on the sky… (Then) the second incarnation followed to reveal even more the beauty of the essence… All forms of Nature were infused with life… The Mystery appeared in broad daylight and scattered a veil of elements around itself and weaved … the hieroglyphs of the earlier revelation… The mysteries of Nature were reveiled to mankind…” 602

This original Offenbarung unfolded not only in nature but also in history, Goerres postulates. “There is the highest natural (die höchste Natureinheit) in the history of that era; as in the physical laws, no falseness or lying could one discover in it”, he specifies. No less important is the anthropological aspect of the picture. “The man (at that time)”, Goerres explains, “… (Was) the articulated word pronounced by the earth, as the world (represented) the word of God; his speech was a the muffled continuation of the language of the elements.” 603

Here is how Goerres characterizes human consciousness in the initial stage of world history: ”The man of this era is somnambulistic; as in a magnetic slumber, does his

603 Ibid.
consciousness wander entering the deeper consciousness of the world; his thinking is
dreaming... but his dreams are true because the nature never lies." 604

In explaining the character of this dream-like thinking reflecting, nevertheless, the
highest reality, Goerres addresses the phenomenon of myth. As Reinhard Habel clarifies,
Goerres “Views the mythical original evidences as the “heavenly language
(Himmelsprache) of the gods creating (the world) as translated into the earthly language
and providing the “immortal original pictures of what would (later) actually come into
being on earth.” 605

This understanding of myth explains its role in the Goerres’ historiosophical
project. “All myths have a deep significance for the history”, he emphasizes; “… It
appears as a fundament on which any later development rests... Therefore, (it contains)
the essential symbolism in which it (the history) manifests itself in its original form” 606

As to this original form, Goerres points to the Indic myth. “I addressed the
documents of that era”, he writes, ”And from the very beginning I became
convinced... that no one of them equals the Vedas of the Indians in antiquity and natural
authenticity.” 607

This description of the Vedas as the most ancient and authentic expression of
myth represents only one aspect of a larger picture, however. Another one is the
existence of multiple comparable texts representing the evidences of the original myth
and produced within a variety of cultures. “Veda”, Goerres explains, “…Is the law of

604 Ibid.
605 Habel., p. 133.
606 Goerres, Die Mythengeschichte, p. 413.
607 Ibid., p. 11.
Nature; Zend Avesta, … the creating word in itself. The Adam and the Eva of the Pentateuch, Meschia and Meschiane of the Persians, Man and Pani of the Indians, the seven first hermaphrodites of the Egyptians who later were emulated in 7 Cabires (Kaiberoi) are the embryo-crystals of the whole earthly (world), as well as the double star hidden deep under the ground that was originally the only one that existed in Heaven.” 608

In characterizing the Goerres’ understanding of the original myth as documented in this variety of sources, Habel emphasizes that “The great undertaking of The Mythical History of the Asian World” is nothing else than a demonstration (of the fact that) it is only one Weltanschauung that dominates essentially in all known mythologies, which Goerres considers a reliable evidence of a common origin of the human race”. 609

Significantly in this context, Goerres points explicitly to the multiple agents, “the venerable ancient wisemen and prophets” through whom the original revelation widespread around the globe. “They”, he clarifies, “Were so deeply immersed in their own depth that they discovered God in it, and they recognized him soon as the most internal center of their lifes and an embryo of them and everything that came out of it… as a blossom (Effloreszenz), as the revelation of this internal infinity.” “And because there can be only one infinite and eternal (phenomenon)”, Goerres continues, “They must have discovered the Divine within themselves as (something) common to everyone and to the whole universe, as a well that all individuals have within themselves and from which they… should scoop… the ocean of the Absolute…” 610

608 Die Mythengeschichte, p. 629.
609 Habel., p. 133.
610 Die Mythengeschichte, p. 299.
This passage illustrates how far Goerres moved beyond his fellow-romantics, Schlegel and Frank, in his understanding of the revelation. If Schlegel analyzed the factors that had supposedly contributed to the process of the darkening of the original, biblical, Revelation, and if Frank postulated the centrality of the Indo-Iranian heritage to the European, specifically German thought, Goerres considered the original mythical Weltanschauung as the revelation given to the whole human race but unfolding in human history through multiple messengers.

In a way, this idea amplifies that of the multiple mediators (Vermittler) between God and Man, expressed earlier by Novalis (see Chapter Three of this Dissertation). But the Goerres’ undertaking representing a portrayal of the manifestations of the original revelation as one single process rooted in the nature and unfolding in human history brings this study to the question of other sources that might have influenced his understanding of the Uroffenbarung. Significantly, Goerres points quite explicitly to a text that determined the major parameters of his attitude, emphasizing that his “Judgement… is based on the Oupnekhat (Upnekhata) and on his premise proven in the course of his research that (this text) provides a true excerpt from the Vedas”. 611

To understand what the Oupnekhat was and what this text meant to Goerres, one should look at an earlier period of the European-Indian cultural relationship.

2. In Search of the Uroffenbarung: The Oupnekhat, the Sirr-i-Akbar, and the Mythical History of the Asian World

As mentioned above, unlike Friedrich Schlegel and Othmar Frank, Joseph Goerres cannot be regarded as an Indologist in the strict sense of the term. Two

611 Goerres, Die Mythengeschichte, p. XI.
circumstances should be highlighted with regard to this: first, he did not undergo an influence of the British Indian studies and, second, without having mastered Sanskrit, he based his reasoning on India including its place within the larger picture of the mythical and religious history of the world exclusively on the translations.

This circumstance brings this study to one such translation. Its extraordinary influence on the European audiences of the era of Romanticism made it central to the European understanding of the Indian religious-philosophical heritage. This text, titled *The Oupnekhat* and published within two years, from 1801 through 1802, in Strasbourg, represented a Latin translation of the fifty Upanisads. 612 This translation was made not directly from Sanskrit but from a Persian translation by a Mughal prince, Dara Sukoh; performed in 1657, this Persian version of the Sanskrit sacred texts was titled *Sirr-i-Akbar* (The Great Secret).

The translator of the *Sirr-i-Akbar* into Latin, Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron, was, according to Wilhelm Halbfass, “one of the most impressive and decisive figures in the history of European approaches to Indian and Oriental thought, and in the preparation of a philosophical dialogue between India and the West”. 613 Born in Paris in 1837, Anquetil studied theology at Utrecht and became interested in the Oriental religions. As a man of the Enlightenment, he looked for the sources of the original monotheism. “Anquetil’s working procedure”, Halbfass justly notes, “Was such that the Enlightenment motif of

---

613 Halbfass., pp. 64-65.
origins led to a search, conducted with a great sense of purpose, for the original, primal sources of the religions of the Orient."  614

Between 1754 and 1761, Anquetil traveled in India in the hope of finding these original sources of the original monotheism. One of the numerous obstacles on his way was the linguistic barrier. As Halbfass notes, “He gained a knowledge of Persian, but his attempts to learn Sanskrit did not meet with success”.  615 More generally, Anquetil’s reputation as a linguist was a matter of debate even in his lifetime. Some time after returning from India, in 1771, he published his translation of Zend Avesta into French, a work that, as Halbfass notes, “Unleashed an extended controversy as to its authenticity”.  616 (Interestingly, Anquetil found his most stunch supporters among the Germans: shortly after the publication, J.F. Kleuker translated the text from the French into German and defended the trustworthiness of the Anquetil’s work.)

Yet the role of Anquetil in the history of the German reception of the Oriental philosophical-religious traditions was due primarily not to his translations from Persian but to his later work, The Oupnekhat, which, to use the Halbfass’ wording, “Did more to awaken the modern interest in Indian philosophy and made a greater contribution to to the philosophical debate about India than Jones’ works”. “His influence”, the historian specifies, “Was felt until well into the nineteenth century.”  617

To understand the factors that had predetermined this centrality of the Oupnekhat to the European reception of the Indian thought, one should address the text that Anquetil

614 Ibid., p. 65.
615 Ibid.
616 Ibid.
617 Halbfass., p. 64.
translated and his attitude to it. Strictly speaking, his translation of the Dara Shukoh’s
version of the Upanisads did not represent a direct result of his voyage to India”. “Not
even the manuscripts of the text upon which his work was based were obtained there;”
Halbfass notes. As he specifies, Anquetil received them “at a much later date, from his
friend Le Gentil, the French Envoy at Oudh”. No less curiously, the Anquetil’s
translation project enterwent some modification: at first, he wanted to translate the Sirr-i-
*Akbar* into French. “The first sample of the translation – four Upanisads in French”,
Halbfass writes, “Appeared in 1787; the remainder of the complete French translation…
has never been published. Instead, he followed up these initial efforts with a Latin
translation (finished in 1785, published in 1801-1802).” 618

Interestingly, the British Indologists reacted negatively to the publication of the
*Oupnekhat*. “Nothing less than the beatitude promised by Dara Shekuh, at the conclusion
his preface, to those who shall read and understand it, could induce any one to persevere
in such an attempt, through the medium of Mr. Anquetil’s version”, Alexander Hamilton
wrote. “We are of the opinion”, he continued, “That a translation of an Upanisad, from
the Sanskrit into English, would prove a performance of some interest; but that the value
of the work before us is considerably diminished, by coming through the medium of a
Persic translation.” 619

Hamilton’s remarks reflect the essential difference between the two approaches to
the Indian materials, the British and the Anquetil’s. The latter needs a more detailed
explanation, however. Admitting that “In some ways (Anquetil was)… the antipode of

618 Ibid., p. 65.
619 Ibid., p. 64.
the British ‘Orientalists” and that “his proper place is more in the prehistory of Indology, Halbfass stresses that “Anquetil’s importance is by no means merely limited to his role as a translator or the fact that others have received important stimuli from the texts he translated”. “His… philosophical and hermeneutic reflection”, the historian explains, “And his peculiar position between the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and scientific Indology all earn him a more direct and primary interest than that he is normally accorded.”

It was indeed not the quality the translation but the position of Anquetil toward the Indian tradition that determined his unique role in the history of Indian studies. Remaining a faithful Christian, he “developed an openness for extra-European and non-Christian achievements of thought”, Halbfass states, “And a readiness for comprehensive comparisons which not only transcended the limits of ‘orthodoxy’, but also surpassed the abstract openness of deism and the Enlightenment. Even if he himself was unable to fulfill his own programmatic ideas, his postulate to… inquire systematically into the sources and backgrounds of their (Indians’) thought is suggestive of the line line of development which A.W. Schlegel and other pioneers of Indian philology would promote and exemplify.”

This latter observation needs one important clarification. As Halbfass admits, “Anquetil himself left no room for doubts as to the primarily philosophical aim of his work”. “His appeal to a philosophical audience was explicit”, the historian specifies. “He called upon the philosophers of many countries, and in particular the representatives of

---

620 Halbfass., p. 64.
621 Ibid., p. 65.
German idealism – the ‘followers and opponents of the profound Kant’ – to study the teachings of the Oupnekhat from a philosophical angle, not just seeing them as a testimony about ancient India, but also to consider them as a serious philosophical challenge… He included many comparisons with Western philosophical teachings, e.g., with Plotinus and the Gnostics… The Introduction to the first volume (of the Oupnekhat – A.P.) offers a very detailed attempt to establish the concordance or correspondence of Indian and Judaeo-Christian ideas… He cites at lengths from the hymns of the ‘syncretic’ Bishop Synesius of Cyrene in order to illustrate the fundamental agreement between Christian and Indian thought with respect to such themes as the creation of the world… The two (Christianity and Indian tradition) … enjoy equal rights as members of the same family.”

Where did this syncretism come from? The ideas articulated by Anquetil were in tune with the mainstream of the Enlightenment, but what did they have to do with the Indian source of his inspiration? With regard to this, one should emphasize that unlike Voltair and his adherents, Anquetil based his understanding of the Christian-Indian concordance not on a forgery, such as the Ezour-Vedam but on a genuinely Indian document. To understand the Anquetil’s message and, thus, the nature of its crucial influence on the European audiences, one should address therefore not only the Oupnekhat as such, but also the philosophy articulated in the text that he translated – the Persian translation by Prince Dara Sukoh of the fifty Upanisads, or the Sirr-i-Akbar.

The author of the Sirr-i-Akbar, Dara Sukoh, was born in 1615 to the Mughal crown prince and future emperor, Sahgahan. As the firstborn, Dara had to succeed to his

622 Ibid., pp. 66-67.
father. Being a religion and philosophy rather than power-inspired person he was defeated by his brother, Aurangzeb, in the struggle for power as a result of which he was executed in 1659. It was shortly before his tragic death that Prince Dara completed the work that immortalized his name.  

As Erhard Goebel-Gross emphasizes, “The translation by Dara Sukoh of a collection of the fifty Upanisads or Upanisad-like texts, that he began and completed within the year of 1675 and titled Sirr-i-Akbar, (The Grear Secret)... represents without doubt a peak in the long series of translations from Sanskrit into an Islamic language”.

Historically, the Sirr-i-Akbar can be considered within two different contexts. It represented a document marking the final stage of the era of the policy of religious tolerance conducted by the first Mughal rulers, particularly, Dara’s great-grandfather, Akbar, to which Aurangzeb put an end. On the other hand, it was precisely this text that a century later stimulated the European research and reasoning on the Indian spirituality. For a better understanding of the place occupied by the Dara’s work within both contexts, it is necessary to address the goals he pursued while interpreting the texts of the Hindu tradition and the methods he used in doing so.

In explaining Dara’s motivation, one should point to the interaction between the Muslim governing elite and the Hindu majority of the Mogul Empire. In attempting to resolve this problem, central to the empire politically and religiously, the Muslim

---


\(^{624}\) Ibid., p. 13.
intellectuals transcended at times the norms of orthodoxy. In this context, the discourse of Sufism played a particularly important stimulating role. “On the Muslim side, the Sufis became the most important religious and philosophical mediators”, Halbfass writes. On the one hand, he clarifies, “The Sufis gained influence as popular saints, who were in some cases accepted by Hindus. On the other hand, they reached an intellectual level, which qualified them for an important role in a process, which represents climax in the history of Hindu-Muslim reconciliations – universalistic effort of the Mogul emperor Akbar and, above all, his great-grandson Dara Shukoh.”

In the Introduction to the Sirr-i-Akbar, Dara exposed his philosophy at length, and significantly, his starting point was his uncompromisingly monistic monotheistic attitude. “He is the All!” – such was the initial thesis of Dara’s reasoning. No less importantly, he emphasized the all-pervasive nature of this All, on the one hand and the strictly Islamic character of his monistic monotheistic view, on the other. “The today’s Qur’an”, Dara stressed, “Contains an indication of His sublime name!... All angels, heavenly books, prophets, and saints are embraced by this name! And blessed be His best creature, Muhammad, his family, and his companions!”

This understanding of the All becomes a clue to Dara’s undertaking. “It is known from the holy Qur’an”, he asserts, “… That there is no people which would not have its books and prophets, and that God… does not punish any people before sending a prophet to it, and that there is no people among which there would be no prophet.” In explaining the nature of his project, he points to his “desire to see the wisemen of all religions and to

---

625 Halbfass., p. 32.
listen to their sublime words about the Tauhid (the idea of the oneness of God). “Since he had already read many books about Sufism and written treatises (on this topic)” Dara writes about himself, “His desire of the Tauhid, this sea without shores, became stronger and stronger.”

Significantly, without confining himself to just expressing this desire, Dara justifies theoretically the necessity to take the variety of the existing religions into account. This necessity is caused by the difficulty of the task to be fulfilled. “Because the holy Qur’an is for the most part allegoric and those understanding the allegories are far from numerous, he wanted to see all heavenly books, for the godly word in itself is its own exegesis! And what is (explained) fragmentarily in one book, can be discovered in another one in a detailed form… Therefore, he studied the Thora, the Gospels, the Psalms, and other writings.”

Yet even this variety of the sources of religious inspiration did not satisfy Dara Shukoh. “Even in those (texts) the explanations of the Tauhid were laconic and allegoric”, he complained. “And due to the song-like translations…the message of these writings was unclear.”

At this point, Dara’s reasoning comes to the question of the specific place occupied by the Indian religious teachings within this wide spectrum of monist worldviews. “He asked himself”, Dara continues, “Why the discussion of the Tauhid in India is so frequent and why the ancient priests and mystics not rejected the (idea) of the

---

628 Ibid., p. 14
Tauhid but, to the contrary, (this idea) represented the basis of their beliefs”. “On the other hand”, he asserts, “There are the simpletons of today who claim to be scholars and are involved in vain debates and throw mud at those really knowing God.” In explaining this controversy, he states: “It became clear to him that it was the four heavenly books, namely the Rgveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, and the Atharvaveda with all the teachings of the prophets of that ear, that were revealed to … this ancient people before all other heavenly books.” “The greatest (of those prophets) is Brahma who matches Adam”, Dara specifies.

Such is the perspective from which the author of Sirr-i-Akbar classifies the texts that he translated into Persian. “…The essence of these four books containing all secrets of the ascetic (practices) and of the art of meditation of the Tauhid, are called ‘Upanisad’”, he explains, “And the people of that era singled them out, wrote exegetic works on them… and read them, in order to get the best knowledge of the liturgy. Since these truth-seekers sought to comprehend the basis of the oneness of the Supreme Being, … he (Dara Shukoh) wanted to translate these Upanisads, a treasury of the Tauhid, the experts on which are so few even among this people…Because he realized what a secret (these texts) contain and why this people kept them away from the Muslims.” 630

Significantly, Dara emphasizes the common nature of what he considers as the Indian treasury of the Tauhid (the Upanisads) and of the Qur’an. “… And he found”, he writes about himself, “… All the sublime problems that he had passionately wanted (to resolve) in this essence of the ancient book, that is undoubtedly the first among the

630 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
heavenly books and (represents) the source of knowledge of the Tauhid, is in agreement with the Qur’an and even represents a comment on it! 631

No less interestingly, Dara Shukoh attempts to underpin this theory by pointing to some Qur’anic verses. Moreover, he goes even further by interpreting these verses as indications that “The holy Qur’an is contained in a book which is hidden and unknown to anyone; (it is only a) pure heart, that could see it”. “This (book) has been revealed by the Creator of the World”, Dara states. 632

For a better understanding of Dara’s reasoning, one clarification is of particular significance. Not only does Dara specify that the Qur’anic words on the hidden book “Refer neither to the Psalms, nor to the Thora, nor to the Gospels, but he also explicitly asserts that under the book in question he understands not the Preserved Tablet (Al-Lawh al-Mahfuz, or Umm-al-Kitab – Mother of the Books), the eternal text of the Qur’an located, according to the Islamic tradition, in the seventh heaven. “The word “revelation”, Dara stresses, “Indicates clearly that it (the Qur’anic verse) points not to the Lauh-i-mahfuz”. “And since the “Upanisad”, that is, a secret to be kept, is the stem of this book, then… it is for sure that it is this ancient book that is understood under the “hidden book”, he resumes. 633

This reasoning explains clearly Dara’s understanding of the nature of the revelation as given by God in a variety of forms and of the specific place occupied by the Indian tradition within this variety. And it was this understanding that, due to the

631 Ibid., p. 16.
632 Ibid.
633 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
translation of the *Sirr-i-Akbar* by Anquetil Duperron, influenced significantly the European, specifically Romantic attitude to India.

This influence was particularly strong in the German-speaking realm. As early as 1808, Thaddae Anselm Rixner published his German translation of a section of the *Oupnekhat*. In his Introduction, he characterizes Anquetil Duperron as “the only metaphysician, which the French nation can boast of since perhaps the time of Malebranche”.  

Curiously, the German enthusiasm about the *Oupnekhat* mirrored Anquetil’s own attitude to German thought. Not only did he find that “the lines of Immanuel Kant’s thought, its principles as well as its results” indicated that “it did not deviate very far from the teachings of the Brahmins”, but he also invited “the followers and opponents of the profound Kant”, such as Goethe, Schiller, Humboldt, Jacobi, Maimon, Fichte, and others, to respond to the philosophical challenge of the *Oupnekhat*. No less interestingly, he discovered in Indian philosophy “true Spinozism”.

In characterizing the influence that the *Oupnekhat* produced on the European and, specifically, German thought, one should thus define the source of this influence with more clarity. As described above, the British Indologists criticized the Anquetil’s undertaking for addressing the Persian translation of the Upanisads instead of their

---

635 Thaddeus Anselm Rixner, Geschichte der alterthuemlichen, sowohl barbarischen als classsischen Philosophie (Sulzbach: Seidel, 1829), pp. II-III; also quoted in Halbfass, p. 67.
Sanskrit original. From the perspective of Alexander Hamilton, this Persian version of the ancient Indian texts represented just a screen between the original and its translator preventing Anquetil from an adequate interpretation of the Indian source. But in fact, the role of the *Sirr-i-Akbar* was much larger than this: it was precisely the Sufi-based syncretic message of Dara Shukoh that had predetermined that of the *Oupnekhat* and, through it, that of the European Romanticism.

This message that contained the idea of a fundamental kinship between the Indian and Judaeo-Christian traditions, was based on their supposedly common adherence to “the all-is-one-doctrine” expressed in the *Oupnekhat* and, as Taddae Anselm Rixner put it, “happily… brought back to the bright light of the philosophical day” “through the insightful research of the most recent German students of God and the World”. 637

This “all-is-one-doctrine” had thus two major parameters: first, the oneness of the Absolute and, second, the multiplicity of the mediums through which this Absolute manifested itself. And within the context of the Enlightenment, with its motif of origins, the question of the origin of the powerful underpinning that Anquetil Duperron had discovered for this theory and that, through his translation of the *Sirr-i-Akbar*, became crucial for the European reception of the Indian religious-philosophical tradition, needs to be examined with maximal preciseness.

There are two possible answers. One is the Sanskrit original itself, the other, its Persian interpretation by Dara Shukoh. Theoretically, the “all-is-one-doctrine” as a basis

637 Ibid., p. 67.
for a religious-philosophical syncretism as advocated by Anquetil Duperron, might have come from the Sanskrit original (to which Anquetil Duperron had no immediate access, due to his lack of knowledge of Sanskrit) *through* the Persian translation. But given all what is known about the Indian xenology (see Chapter Four of this Dissertation), one should conclude that this hypothesis would contradict its fundamental principles: to the Brahmanic world which did not accept the very existence of foreign cultures and classified the aliens as Indian outcast, the question of how various religious traditions correlated with each other was simply irrelevant. In other words, the syncretism articulated by Anquetil could not come from the Sanskrit original.

On the other hand, this issue of syncretism was central to the Dara Shukoh’s project. As the Introduction to the *Sirr-i-Akbar* demonstrates, its assertion was precisely the goal of Dara’s undertaking. And it was precisely his interpretation of the ancient Indian sacred texts and of the place occupied by them within the spectrum of those of the world that became the basis of the Anquetil’s and, therefore, the Romantic attitude. It was thus neither the ancient Indian civilization with the Upanisads as its product, nor the European Enlightenment in itself, with its search of the sources of the original monotheism, but the Islamic-Sufi interpretation of the Indian heritage, from where Anquetil had received the ideas, which, through his *Oupnekhat*, influenced decisively the Romantic attitude to the Indian mythological-religious-philosophical tradition.

One distinctive feature of this particular, Islamic-Persian component was the idea of the “hidden book” as the original revelation prior to all other revelations documented by the sacred texts produced by the multiplicity of the historically known religious
traditions. The other, no less important feature was the understanding of the Indian texts (specifically the Upanisads) as the closest ones to this original revelation.

This understanding of the Indian heritage and its place within the global spectrum that Anquetil Duperron discovered in the Persian version of the Upanisads and brought to the European audiences enables one to modify the Edgar Quinet’s description of the European discovery of the Indian culture as the second Renaissance in the history of Europe. It was not only the arrival of the Hindu manuscripts in the West but, not to a lesser extent, the influence of the Sufi interpretation of Indian thought that produced an effect comparable to that of the the arrival of the Greek manuscripts and the Byzantine commentators in the fifteenth century. More precisely, it was the Sufi interpretation of the Indian tradition expressed in the Sirr-i-Akbar and reproduced in the Oupnekhat that provided the theoretical model for the European Romantic reception of Indian spirituality.

The influence of this reception was particularly strong on those not knowing Sanskrit, and in this context Goerres occupies a special place among the thinkers examined in this study. Not that the Oupnekhat and through it, the ideas of the Sirr-i-Akbar did not influence Friedrich Schlegel und Othmar Frank. But, as Sanskritists, they underwent also the influence of the British Indology. No less significantly, in their cases the role of the Oupnekhat as a source was of secondary importance to the original Sanskrit texts. But in the case of Goerres the influence of the Anquetil’s translation of the Sirr-i-Akbar was decisive. Due to this fact, the idea of the “all-is-one-doctrine” as articulated in the original revelation and documented in the “hidden book”, became central to his project; the alleged existence of a narrative prior to those represented by the
existing religious traditions and originally common to everyone justified the liberty of comparisons within the variety of the empirically available narratives.

The fact of the influence of the Anquetil’s work on Goerres raises the question of how precisely Goerress’ responded to the intellectual challenge of the *Oupnekhat*. This response can be described as follows: Having adopted the idea of the multiplicity of wisemen and prophets representing different manifestations of the *Uroffenbarung*, Goerres attempted to reconstruct this development as a historical process. In doing so, he had to address what he could not find in the *Oupnekhat*, namely not only the religious-mythical but also the ethnic and sociopolitical dimensions of the original mankind. In addressing them, he introduced, in addition to the *Urmythos*, two other interrelated concepts, the *Urstaat* and the *Urvolk*. And significantly, in examining these two phenomena he had to use other sources.

3. The Path of the *Urvolk*: the *Voelkertafel* and Friedrich Schlegel

With regard to how Goerres portrayed the formation of the original human race and the trajectory of its further expansion and fragmentation, one should note that *The Mythical History of the Asian World* did not contain yet a complete theory of the *Urvolk*. At the same time, the contours of the conception that Goerres developed in his later works were pretty visible. In this context, one circumstance is of particular significance. Singling out Indic myth as the most ancient evidence of the *Uroffenbarung*, Goerres did not consider India as the only original homeland of the *Urvolk*. “In all probability”, he asserted, “All initial… culture originated from the Semites”. At the same time in tracing the formation of the *Urstaat*, he places it in two different regions. “The first *Urstaat*”, Goerres pointed out, “(was) placed within an elliptic arc both focuses of which … met in
the… mountains of Armenia and on the (banks) of the Indus.” As he specified, “This arc stretches from… the rise of the Ganges… through the Caspian Sea, around the Caucasus… towards the rises of the Euphrates and Tigris, through the Persian Sea and finally returns to the Western India”. He emphasized also, that “Its (this ellipse’s) great axis goes from the South East to the North” and “Its middle is the center of Iran”. 638

According to Goerres, it was within this vast area that the expansion of the *Urvolk* largely unfolded. Significantly, his portrayal of the variety of peoples inhabiting this area was based on the Book of Genesis, specifically on the *Voelkertafel*. More specifically, he considered the majority of the population of the Middle East, Central Asia, Iran and India as Semites and Japhetites, on the one hand and the Hamites, on the other. Goerres identified the ethnic groups of Asia Minor, that, as he asserted, “Would become the root of the European population”, as Semitic. No less interestingly, he classified the Indians as just another branch of the Semites. In doing so, he emphasized the original linguistic unity of these supposedly Semitic peoples as well as the equivalence of their religious practices. Not only did he postulate the existence in the past of the original language common to the Middle East and India, the versions of which are Chaldaic, Assyrian, Sanskrit and Pahlavi, but, no less importantly, he pointed to the “Sabaean original Nature-based myth” as the common background of “the worship of Zeus and Jehova in the West” and that of Vishnu in the East”. On the other hand, in addressing the Hamitic branch of the original mankind, he pointed to “the old Empire” of the Kushites that expanded, as he believed, to Arabia, Egypt, Phoenicia, through Greece and Kolhis and

---

638 Goerres, *Die Mythengeschichte*, p. 35.
eastward, to India, widening its “worship of Shiva celebrated with blood, death… and wild orgies”.  

In emphasizing the global role of the Semites, Goerres goes as far as to say that “China as well as… Peru and Mexico were, probably, founded by the Semites from the Mountain of Meru”. Within this global picture, he divides the Urvolk into three major parts. The first is ”The land of he Homerites, or Sabaeans in the happy Arabia… the middle, … (was) Persia; (the third)… the internal India proper (described in) the Puranas”. “In the middle”, Goerres specifies, “… Was the center of the great empire of Mahabeli, a grandson of Kush… in the third, the empire of Rama…”

Summarizing the distinctive features of the Urvolk as portrayed in The Mythical History of the Asian World, one should point to three major dimensions of the picture. First, ethnically, Goerres views this people as Semitic (or, more precisely, Semito-Hamito-Japhetic); second, mythological-religiously, he considers them as Indian (Indo-Iranian); and, third, he stresses that the different branches of the Urstaat emerged as a result of the Urvolk’s migration.

In tracing this process, Goerres addresses the problem of motivation for this migration also central to Friedrich Schlegel’s On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians. Here is an example of how this issue is considered in The Mythical History of the Asian World. In portraying the first of the three Urvolk’s states, ruled by “prophet Eber” (described as “a Brahmin… from the middle (state)” and “native of Samarkand”),

---

639 Ibid., p. 36.
640 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
641 Ibid., p. 329.
642 Ibid., p. 330.
Goerres points to the alleged expansion of this state to Egypt. Curiously in describing this migration, he turns to the *Verfassung* of the ancient India, *The Laws of Manu*. “The Institutions of Menu (Manu) indicate”, Goerres writes, “That multiple families (belonging to) the warrior cast lived by themselves in humiliation, after abandoning… the Vedic regulations and separating from the community of the Brahmins.” “Possibly”, he continues, (such were the cease of the)…”Dravira (dravida) and Camboya (Kamboja), the Javanas and Sacas (Scythians), Paradas (Parsi) und Pahlavas (Pahlavi, Medians), Chinas (Chinese) and several other nations.” Developing this idea, Goerres traces “the most ancient great migration of the peoples… through Arabia to Ethiopia and Egypt” as well as the later waves of migration resulting in the establishment of the worship of Osiris whom he describes as an Indian monarch. According to Goerres, the Vedas were brought to Egypt as a result of this process. At the same time, he does not exclude the possibility of other trajectories of the Urvolk’s migration, such as, for example, the “migration of the Egyptian priests to India (through which they) brought their dogmas there”.

The way Goerres interprets the Urvolk’s motivation for the migration points unmistakably to the influence of the explanatory model developed in *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*. This circumstance reflects a certain ambivalence of Goerres’ attitude to Schlegel’s reasoning: in spite of the obvious disagreement with Schlegel in his understanding of the location of the original homeland of the Urvolk and of the trajectory/trajectories of its migration, Goerres follows Schlegel in his interpretation of the very essence of this process.

---

643 Ibid., pp. 330-331.
These observations help summarize the major parameters of Goerres’ reasoning on the Orient as expressed in the *Mythengeschichte*. Unlike Schlegel, the linguistic aspect is secondary to his analysis; similarly to Frank, his approach to history has a naturphilosophical basis. This basis becomes particularly visible in his conception of the *Uroffenbarung*. On the other hand, his version of the history of the *Urvolk* is much more multidimensional than those developed by Schlegel and Frank. This circumstance stems from the all-pervasiveness of the Goerres’ historiosophical project; more precisely, it is due to the diversity of sources that he uses in pursuing his goal. Three of them are of particular theoretical significance: the *Oupnekhat* (the *Sirr-i-Akbar*), the biblical *Voelkertafel*, and *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* by Friedrich Schlegel. These three sources determine three major dimensions of the Goerres’ understanding of the *Urreligion, Urvolk and Urstaat*.

The *Oupnekhat* represents the very basis of his theory – the conception of the original revelation manifested through multiple mediums, which Goerres articulates with the explicitness unknown either to Herder or to Schlegel. Significantly, this conception enables Goerres to synthesize easily the different narratives within the narrative that he creates himself. More specifically, it provides him with a basis for a synthesis of the Oriental materials with the biblical *Voelkertafel* and, thus, the fascination with Indic Myth, with the Bible-based perspective. Similarly to the late Schlegel’s approach articulated in the Viennese Lectures (and contrary to the Frank’s “trunk and branches theory”), but much earlier than Schlegel, Goerres juxtaposed the Oriental, specifically Indian materials with the biblical. Moreover, he went far beyond Schlegel by combining them directly within one all-embracing narrative. On the other hand, Goerres adopted the
Schlegel’s narrative on the feralized Kshatriyas as the progenitors of the non-Indian peoples as a model.

At the same time, the picture of the world process that one encounters in the *Mythengeschichte* differed from that drawn by Schlegel in two important respects. The first difference referred to the trajectory of the *Urvolk*: if in *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* it migrated from its original home in India westward, Goerres, considering the Indic myth as the *Urmythos*, associated the origin of the *Urvolk* with a territory much larger than that of India: Within Schlegel’s discourse, India stretched from Mesopotamia to China.

The second difference between Goerres and Schlegel referred to the correlation between the religious-mythological and the ethnic-national dimensions within the pictures drawn by the two thinkers. In both Schlegel’s major works on the *Urvolk*, there remained a certain distance and even a controversy between his religious and national aspirations whereas Goerres considered the religious-mythological and national developments as one all-embracing process.

Such was the first stage of the Goerres’ examination of the Orient. It represented, however, only one chapter in his long evolution. The next stage referred to the later phase of his re-integration project, marked by the transformation of Goerres the adherent of the Romantic religious universalism into Goerres the founding father of the German political Catholicism.

This religious-philosophical evolution unfolded in a strong connection to that of Goerres’ understanding of the German question. The years that followed the publication
of the *Mythical History of the Asian World* were those of his patriotic struggle against Napoleonic France and, later, against the Holy Alliance authorities. It was precisely at that time that Goerres, to use the Vanden Heuvel’s wording, moved from considering the moral improvement of humanity in general as the mission of the state to focusing on the moral improvement of Germany in particular. How did this transformation modify his approach to the Orient? An attempt to answer this question provides a motivation for addressing some aspects of Goerres’ discourse as an ideologue of the national liberation.

**The German *Staende*-Based Weltstaat and its Oriental Roots**

1. **The German Question**

   “Through all the peoples (*Voelkerschaften*) covering the territory of the old Germany (*das alte Germanien*), goes a spirit of a joyful dedication… a wonderful delight burns in all hearts”, Goerres wrote in *Der Rheinische Merkur* in 1814. “The consequences of this rise of a strong nation have already become part of world history”, he continued, “The battle at Leipzig has no parallels (in history) other than that at the Catalaunian Fields; and since the that great union of the Germans against the Roman domination, Germany has never been so united and invincible.”

   “Obviously”, Goerres stressed, “It is the Germans that have become the organ through which History acts.”

   This latter statement as well as the parallel between the *Voelkerschlacht* of 1813 and the battle at the Catalaunian Fields reflected the understanding of the Germans’ role in the world process that Goerres developed on the peak of the anti-Napoleonic liberation war. Five years later, he reiterated this idea by tracing the fate of his compatriots back to

---

645 Ibid., p. 821.
the era of the struggle against Napoleonic France. “Such is the (current) state of affairs”,
he wrote in 1819, in his *Germany and the Revolution*, “And as long the hand that wrote
the *Mane, Tekel, Phares* to the French in the fire of Moscow, writes inexorably our own
verdict with burning letters on the sky, we should stand on the watchtower of the era.”

Within these five years, the political landscape around Goerres had undergone a
significant change. Formerly a mouthpiece of the Prussian government, he became its
sharpest critic. Having played his unique role in the ideological war against Napoleon, he
was now a dedicated opponent of the Holy Alliance. Significantly, this transformation
was due to his staunch adherence to the philosophy that he had developed while
publishing the *Merkur*. The two ideas that he had put forward during the liberation war –
the unity of the *ältes Germanien* with all its *Voelkerschaften* and the understanding of his
fellow-Germans as the organ through which History acted, did not loose their centrality
to Goerres.

This centrality was due to a number of sociopolitical circumstances. As Goerres
stressed, not only was the German-speaking realm torn by two German powers, Austria
and Prussia, but also “both powers were forced to seek a foreign support of their claims,
and Austria and Prussia were divided over the controversy between the English and the
Russian influence. “What Austria is doing in Italy”, Goerres stated, “Russia, in Poland,
and England, on the German coast, … Prussia attempted to do to Saxonia but was

---

stopped on the Rhine.” 647 “One could not talk about Germany anymore, because it lost itself in Europe”, Goerres resumed. 648

This latter observation was based on a meticulous analysis of the situations in a variety of German lands. Goerres juxtaposed the conditions in his home region, the Rhineland, and in Prussia proper and, more generally, in the South and the North of the German-speaking realm. In doing so, he took three major factors into account. The first was the confessional situation (the prevalence of Roman Catholicism in the South versus that of Lutheranism in the North) and, therefore, the status of the Church; the second, the relations between the government and the opposition and the third, the peculiarities of the historical trajectory, specifically the influence of the French revolution (especially strong in the Rhineland); and, as a result, the Rhinalaenders’ hostility to Prussia. 649

The Prussian factor represented a particularly significant component of this picture. Here is how Goerres described Prussia’s sociopolitical system: “(There are), on the one hand, (first) the state hold together exclusively by the idea of the king, … ruling without a constitution … (second), a bureaucracy … acting covertly according to unclear instructions … (third), a nobility almost dying out … (fourth), an impoverished clergy and, on the other hand, a third estate not rich but well-to-do at the moment…(It is) obedient but vulnerable to every injury by a benevolent arbitrary rule.” 650

According to Goerres, although the situations in other segments of the all-German spectrum might seriously differ from that in Prussia, in every case the central issue is the

647 Ibid., p. 302.
648 Ibid., p. 300.
650 Ibid., p. 344.
relationship between the state and society. More specifically, he describes this relationship as that between the state and the estates (Staende). In portraying it, Goerres does not take explicitly one of the two sides. On the one hand, he criticizes the governments of the lands for the bureaucratization of the estates through cracking down their economic autonomy. At the same time, he opposes the understanding of the estates as “states within a state” considering this attitude as a “relic of the feudal system” and a “fuel for a possible rebellion”. As Goerres emphasizes, “The estates must be not constituting but constituted”.  

Considering the relations, first, among the estates and, second, between the estates and the state as the key dimension of the sociopolitical system, Goerres views the distortion of these relations as the major factor leading to social injustice and disorder. And in looking for a solution to this issue, Goerres addresses its historical roots.

2. The Revolution, Reformation, and Bureaucratization

In portraying the major parameters of the post-war situation in the Germanies, Goerres traced them back to two events that he found equally crucial for German history: the French Revolution and the German Reformation. In his view, they had much in common. “This revolution”, he wrote about the developments in France that had so much inspired him as a young man, “Was a justice of Heaven that occurred in one country to punish this (country) and then the rest of the world for longstanding shame and villanies… the same way as the Reformation was justified to initiate the destruction of

651 Ibid., pp. 333-335.
the old constraints both within and outside the Church, the ossification of the higher
spiritual life, fraud, and selfishness.”

Goerres found a similarity not only in the roots of both developments but also in
their historical results. “Later”, he specified, “The (princely) courts of the North …
managed… to master this popular movement; and as the devil cast out of the affirmation,
flew mockingly to the negation, the (development) that had started as a purification of the
Church, ended as a shameful looting throughout Protestant Europe, and the great idea of
the Church-state (Kirchenstaat)… dissolved into absolute idleness…” “… Similarly
today”, Goerres continued, “…The courts of the West are in league with the reverse side
of the revolution, the unlimited despotism (presupposing) the looting of the other half of
the Church … the suppression of the weaker (states) of the (German) Reich
(Reichsgenossen)… and a complete destruction of the other idea of the medieval era,
(that of) the German Empire (teutscher Kaiserreich).”

According to Goerres, the major social consequence of both the Reformation and
the French revolution was the emergence and rise of the class of bureaucrats
(Staatsmaenner). It is the state officialdom that he considers as the most dangerous and
sinister phenomenon determining the very essence of the modernity. “The slaves of
routine” who “have no idea of and no respect for the past”, and who “hate anything
positive which contradicts their nervous activities”, the “children of the day when they
were born, denying everything that was before them” but “hopeful that their will is in
agreement with the future” – such are the wordings that Goerres uses for the state

---

652 Ibid., pp. 329-330.
653 Ibid.
No less sharply does he describe the philosophy of bureaucracy. “As no idea of… the quite way the nature expands its formations has remained in them”, Goerres writes, “Then… the state becomes a steam engine in their hands, in whose cylinder they move themselves up and down as a hot steam.”

Such was the disease that Goerres diagnosed in examining the modern European, specifically German society. In this context, his analysis of the history case and his search for a remedy are of particular interest.

3. Restoring the Organic Order of Things

In attempting to explain the rise of the bureaucracy historically and looking for an alternative to the bureaucratic domination politically, Goerres appealed to what he defined as “the way the nature expands its formations”. “In the ancient times”, he wrote, “When (the people) were guided… by a natural instinct, the society or rather community of organic individuals was organized, mostly unconsciously, in accordance with the laws and in forms of organic life... and the formative force (Bildungskraft)... reproduced the type of the individual organism.”

In reconstructing the way this formative force acts, Goerres singles out two major types of social life, the automatic and the liberty-based (willkuerlich). He compares the former type to the beat of the heart or pulse. According to Goerres, it “contains its own law and order in itself” and “has its own... natural soul”. “The latter (type)”, he continues, “Is also based on a high spiritual power but instead of a... dark instinct it rests

---

654 Ibid., p. 330.
655 Ibid., p. 331.
656 Ibid., pp. 404-405.
on a deliberate understanding and self-determining power of a free will decisive for all arrangements.” 657

Juxtaposing these two principles, Goerres stresses that the former “Has to do with the nature of reality and… represents the prevalent element of statehood” whereas the latter “is closer to the ideal and…appears rather as the element (prevailing) in the ecclesiastic sphere”. At the same time, he clarifies that in the ecclesiastical sphere the former element “embodies the Protestant tendency and the latter, the Catholic”. On the other hand, “In the (realm of) statehood the former element represents the democratic principle and the latter, the monarchist”, Goerres notes. 658

As he asserts, the interaction between these two principles determines the whole course of world history. “In the constitutions of the Antiquities, most obviously in (that of) the Greeks, the democratic element prevailed”, he specifies. Goerres characterizes this prevalence as “automatic”, due to which ”All these democracies were based on a mostly unconscious instinct”. “The nomadic peoples”, he explains, “Moved like storks and, in accordance to the natural instincts of … migratory birds; (whereas) the sedentary (peoples) settled, similarly to beavers, close to the waters, and sent out colonies in the manner of the bees; inside the society, everything was arranged according to the natural periods… The custom determined (the life) in a manner of physical force.”659

In this context, the societies where the two opposite principles of social organization converge are of particular interest. As to an example of such convergence of

657 Ibid.
658 Ibid., p. 405.
659 Ibid., p. 406
the democratic component with the monarchical, Goerres points to the sociopolitical system of the ancient Rome. “Internally constructed according to the… (democratic) principle, (Rome) realized the monarchical (principle) externally”, he indicates. More specifically, he continues, “Still within the limits of old order, (Rome) (embraced) the order of a great world empire (Weltreich); the provinces were essentially subdued and imposed its will on all peoples, as Jupiter the Capitoline mastered the deities of the whole subjugated world.”

As a similar example of the convergence of monarchy and democracy Goerres considers another Weltstaat, Germany. Here is how he describes the formation of this Weltstaat: “When the Germans stormed the bulwarks of this empire from their forests, they advanced also in… the development of the spiritual unity (based on) the monarchist principle that, due to Christianity, found its justification in the the higher world …Charlemagne founded the first empire (Kaisertum) of the new, Christian era.” But”, Goerres continues, “He capitulated before the liberty of his Franks and of other peoples (Voelkerschaften) subdued by their weapons”.

This capitulation of the all-powerful sovereign before the traditions of his subjects had fargoing historical consequences. “Respecting the principle of the ancient Germanic liberty”, Goerres explains “, he (Charlegmane) built … the first truly organic Weltstaat… determining the man in the whole entirety of his physical and psychological aspects and

---

in his highest efforts”. “It was through this kind of synthesis of the two principles that …Germany rose to the leader of Christendom”, Goerres concludes. 661

In examining the question of why and how Germany lost this central place in the Christian world, Goerres addresses a variety of factors. As to the first and most obvious of them he points to the relations between the German Voelkerschaften and to the roles they played interchangeably in the history of the Kaisertum. A Rhinelander, he does not spare words to emphasize the contribution of his ancestors to the formation of the empire. “Your progenitors the Franks”, he addresses his fellow-Rhinelanders, “…Embraced the Catholic faith when the other German tribes still practiced paganism or adhered to Arianism; the Reformation also affected them only in some extreme cases; (and) for one and a half thousand years the tribe has remained unflinchingly faithful (to Catholicism), which has substantially determined its physiognomy”. 662

Without confining himself to highlighting the place once occupied by the ancestors of the Rhinelaenders in the all-German history, Goerres points also to a larger subject – the rivalry among the German Voelkerschaften. “This is how it always occurred in the Germanies”, he indicates, “If the Franks dominated in the Reich, the Saxons, Swabians, and Bavarians were bitter about that; if the domination transferred to another tribe (Stamm), the other…tribes … opposed that.” “Nevertheless”, Goerres emphasizes, “The common whole flourished because in the long run all of them understood that they were connected to each other in a common interest, which did not prevent them from the

661 Ibid., pp. 408-409.
662 Ibid., p. 714.
controversies but did not allow (these controversies) to transcend (the limits of) a certain wholeness.” 663

According to Goerres, it was not these rivalries as such but some powerful social factors behind them that became destructive for the integrity of the empire. At a certain point, the German love for freedom became one of these factors. “With time and the same way that this system had risen”, Goerres indicates, “… The same democratic principle… should destruct its own work”. 664

In explaining this destructive process, Goerres addresses the key features of the organization of the political power in the Kaisertum. As to a particularly dangerous phenomenon of the medieval German history resulting in the gradual weakening of the imperial unity he points to the combination of the electoral character of the emperor’s power with the strengthening of the imperial bureaucracy (Reichsbeamte) gradually becoming hereditary. As another factor that led to the limitation of the Kaiser’s political role, Goerres highlights the growing influence of the second and especially third Heerschield (the princes and the lower groups of the German aristocracy). As he clarifies, although these segments of German society were subjectively interested in the integrity of the empire, their rise contributed in fact to its decentralization.

Among the other factors that fragmented the texture of the society and led to the disintegration of the empire into multiple smaller despotic monarchies, Goerres points to the social consequences of scientific innovations and geographic discoveries: the invention of gunpowder advanced the warfare and diminished the role of the smaller

663 Ibid., pp. 716-717.
664 Ibid., p. 409.
vassals by transforming them into the courtiers, on the one hand and into the mercenaries, on the other. On the other hand, the discovery of the Americas “brought the streams of gold into the society” due to which “the system of taxation became fully independent from the approval of the land-owners”. “Finally, the Reformation began, which resulted in a complete subjugation of even the Church. That was how the Reich turned into a… conglomerate of smaller and bigger tyrants”, Goerres concludes.665 Importantly, as the most sinister aspect of this fragmentation he highlights the all-powerfull character of the states into which the formerly united empire collapsed: “The so-called police has subjugated… all the components of the communities including the intervention in the family life; even the Church has degraded to becoming a tool of this policy”. 666

Goerres characterizes the consequences of this situation as disastrous for the German society. “As all instincts more and more extinct, and the natural impulses remain inside”, he explains, “The whole national economy has become an artificial reason-based phenomenon without life and nature”. On the other hand, he traces the counterprocess – the development of the democratic element. As Goerres clarifies, this development is determined precisely by the suppressed natural impulses, and it is rapidly unfolding in the depth of the German society.667 Pointing out that this process became particularly visible in the “great aspirations of the liberation wars (against Napoleon – A.P.), Goerres associates it directly with the third estate.668

665 Ibid., p. 409.
666 Ibid.
667 Ibid., pp. 410-411.
668 Ibid., p. 412.
In characterizing the political essence of this movement, Goerres describes it as a return of all German Voelkerschaften to the heritage of the Weltstaat once established by Charlemagne. “The time will come”, he states, “When all German tribes (alle teutschen Staemme) will act in accordance to the understanding that they already have, realizing that the diversity is a valuable good and that it is their advantage versus almost all today’s peoples…but (that on the other hand) this blessing can become a coarse without a firm unity; and if a confederation (Eidgenossenschaft) appears not enough for the common freedom and security, this (unity) will be once again realized by a powerful clan that would not be overburned by the crown of Charlemagne, (by the one) whom would fit tightly his gown, and who would be able to take his sword.” 669

In sum, the major parameters of the Goerres’ alternative to the German post-Napoleonic-wars-condition can be characterized as follows. Philosophically, he views this alternative as an organic socioeconomic and spiritual formation contrasted with the lifeless and mechanical bureaucratic systems of the modernity. Historically, he considers this organic formation as having existed in the past but destroyed later through the processes that culminated in the Reformation and French Revolution. Politically, he portrays this alternative as democratic and monarchist at the same time. Nationally, he describes it as the German Weltstaat continuing directly the tradition established by Charlemagne and embodied in the medieval Roman German Kaisertum. The conflation of these dimensions naturally gives rise to the question of the social basis of this formation that Goerres aims to restore.

669 Ibid., p. 445.
4. The Kaisertum, the Staende and the Orient

Social-philosophically, the examination by Goerres of the foundations of the organic social system that he discovered in the history of Germany and projected for its future was based on his understanding of the major dimensions of human nature. “There exist three principles of vivification (Beseeligung) differing in level of the faculty in which they are rooted”, he asserts. “The first”, he specifies, “Is religion whose sublime stemmes from the nonearthly and (whose mission is) to sacralize the earthly and (specifically) to sacralize the state. This principle prevailed in the way the ancient priest-states were constructed, with which the history begins everywhere because it was theocracy that represented the first government on the earth. But because the priesthood displayed with time too much hubris, the power determined the law… and the kings heading their retinues, appeared to subdue the peoples ...(as a result of which) there emerged those world monarchies whose deeds are inserted in the book of time”, he continues. “In this case, Goerres notes,“The honor and military valiance prevailed.” But as the piety of the priests degraded to hubris, the military force-based power of the kings degraded to despotism, which, as Goerres indicates, “Becomes an unbearable burden for the peoples”. It was as a result of the popular reaction that “The democracies emerged …and the buergerlich virtues as well as the republican attitude acquired their significance: honesty instead of honor and ethical dignity instead of sacrality.”

According to Goerres, this transition from priest-state to military power-based monarchy and then, to democracy, characterizes the trajectory of world history. As he stresses, it “passed through the whole (era) of the Antiquities… as well as (the history of)
the Orient”. “The same way” Goerress continues, “(It unfolded) among the Greeks from the era of the priests through the heroic (era) and then into that of the peoples”. The same process he discovers in the history of Rome “whose theocracy stemmed from the Etruscan”.  

In this context, Goerres points to an important distinction between the ancient and the medieval history, of which, to him, Germany is at the center. If the former represents a descending (absteigend) process, the latter represents the opposite, ascending (aufsteigend) one. Goerres links this difference with the influence of Christianity that provided the newly created Weltmonarchie with a unique spiritual content. However, this uniqueness did not prevent the German Kaisertum combining the features of a theocracy, monarchy, and the “green democracy of the German Voelkerschaften”, from taking the road typical for the ancient pagan empires, and once again this process resulted in the distortion of the correlation of the three components (priestly, monarchical, and democratic) based on the three types of the Beseeligung and constituting the social whole. This is why while advocating the return to the original democracy (ursprüngliche Demokratie) Goerres seeks to exclude the possibility for this process to become absteigend once again. As he emphasizes, to exclude any misuse of freedom (Missbrauch der Freiheit) 672, this process must represent a restoration of the original natural order violated and distorted in the course of history.

This political motivation determines not only the context within which Goerres places the question of the three types of vivification but also, no less importantly, his

---

671 Ibid., pp. 440-441.
672 Ibid., p. 414.
approach to it. After tracing their evolution as three historical forms of statehood representing the bases of different sociopolitical systems, he focuses on them as the components coexisting within one society. This is the way the theme of the three estates \((\text{Staende})\) emerges in his world-historical reasoning. “Since the darkest, most ancient times, (people) distinguished between three different estates”, Goerres indicates, “And the most ancient picture in which… the priesthood constitutes the head, the estate of the warriors, the arms; and the feeding estate, the body or, more precisely, some parts of it, points to the fact that the understanding of the state as a living organism existed already at that time.”

In concretizing this idea, Goerres describes the roles that he believes these three estates to have played in the past and expects them to start playing again in the future. The priesthood that he defines as the teaching estate \((\text{Lehrstand})\) “was essentially the custodian of all godly and human wisdom to be passed on from generation to generation”. “In the state”, Goerres explains, “It represented the Logos, the constitutive principle determining proportion and symmetry as well as the religious mobility of the lower world from above.” “Therefore”, he clarifies, “(The term ’reverend’ \((\text{ehrwuerdig})\) was his (the priest’s) attribute.” “The military estate \((\text{Wehrstand})\) at whose center… the prince… stood, must serve as the… stronghold of the union and the protector of the throne; the force of the whole must be consolidated in them; (therefore) it was valor that should be their essence… being adamant in honor \((\text{ehrenfest})\) was their attribute.”

\[673\] Ibid., p. 420.
“Finally, in the feeding estate”, Goerres points out, “The children of the earth take care of the earthly… and their sign is honesty.” 674

These differences between the three estates in the functions to perform and in the requirements to match, determine the Goerres’ understanding of the “original democracy”. On the one hand, he insists that “The representation must be determined by the sum of the constituency”, emphasizing that only this kind of representation would create a counter balance to the power of the bureaucrats. 675 On the other hand, for this sum to be effectively represented, the representation should be that of the estates, not individual citizens. Interestingly, the Goerres’ critique of the European parliamentarianism focuses precisely on the underrepresentation of certain social groups at the expense of the other. For example, pointing to the British Parliament where the nobility majority and the clergy minority are represented within one chamber 676, and to the French Chamber of Deputies, with its prevalence of the nobility, he states that this kind of parliamentarianism is “unable to perform its function as the intermediary between the commoners and the throne”. 677

According to Goerres, the only effective way to secure all social forces and all talents to be represented proportionally in the legislative organ should be based on a representation of the individuals as the members of one of the three estates. More

674 Ibid., pp. 421-422.
675 Ibid., p. 425.
676 Ibid., pp. 434-435.
677 Ibid., pp. 435-436.
specifically, they should be represented within one chamber but divided into three curias depending of estate. 678

One should clarify, however, that the estates that Goerres has in mind are only partially a continuation of those inherited from the past. For example, in addition to the hereditary aristocracy, he projects the establishment of a new kind of merit-based nobility (Verdienstadel) selected upon the choice of the people. 679 Similarly he considers the consolidating role that he expects the clergy to play in the process of the future sociopolitical renewal, in a much more broader sense than they were understood in the pre-Aufklaerung times. Here Goerres distinguishes between the esoteric and the exoteric roles of the clergy. One the one hand, he points out that as “the custodian of the doctrine (Glaubenslehre) … relying on the Script and Tradition”, (the clergy) performs its “esoteric function”. But, Goerres continues, no less important is its exoteric function by performing which the clergy “does not exclude the results of experience and speculation in the sciences and… welcomes their cultivators as its comrades…” 680 It is this renewed priesthood that Goerres expects to become the intermediary between the selfish aristocracy and the commoners 681, and it is these new clergymen that he wants to contribute to establishing a completely and genuinely Christian social order (ganz christliche soziale Ordnung). 682 In sum, it is with regard to these idealized estates allegedly inherited from the past and projected for the era to come that Goerres

678 Ibid.
679 Ibid., p. 433.
680 Ibid., p. 434.
681 Ibid., p. 424.
682 Ibid., p. 594.
emphasizes the honor of the estate (*Standesehre*) as a key component of social progress.\(^{683}\)

Significantly however, it is precisely the question of the *Staende* system as the key parameter of the completely and genuinely Christian social order as displayed in world history that creates a major historiosophical problem for Goerres. Basing his project on the distinctions between the estates and viewing the distortion of the *Staende* hierarchy as a sign of destruction of the natural order of things, he considers the Reformation and French revolution resulting in the Napoleon’s dictatorship, as the most visible symptoms of this destruction. But placed in a larger historical framework, his reasoning faces a deeper issue referring to the place occupied by the European-Christian world within a variety of civilizations.

This issue refers to the very roots of the division of the society into three estates. According to Goerres, this division existing from the very beginning of human history, stemmed from natural factors. “This division”, he explains, “Based originally on the natural distinctions between the races, entered first the constitutions of those original states (*Urstaaten*) that started as a result of the domination of the sword over the purely vegetable existence and of a similar subjugation of the sword by the spirit.” “The nobler races”, he clarifies, “That victoriously founded those states, sought also secure the purity of their blood by separating themselves (from the others) through creating clearly outlined casts”.\(^{684}\)

\(^{683}\) Ibid., p. 424.
\(^{684}\) Ibid., p. 420.
From this perspective, the specificity of Christianity consisted in softening this allegedly natural hierarchy. “In proclaiming the equality of everyone before God and in electing its first governance bodies from precisely the lowest classes”, Goerres indicates, “Christianity broke… simultaneously with slavery and cast system, and… incorporated the rightless in the sphere of justice”. 685

This incorporation had various consequences. “Christianity conciliated the sharp distinctions, softened the transitions, and moderated the claims of the power; having accepted the spiritual equality in origin of everyone… it united… what was separated”, Goerres explains. And, as he specifies, it was precisely in this context that the formation of the European estates unfolded: “Christianity transformed the casts into estates (Staende) that initially… tended to closeness, but the more the ideal spirit of the new faith and new ethics… developed… the stronger was the awareness of the necessity to (make) them… more open”. Significantly however, in characterizing the consequences of this process, Goerres points to their ambivalence. As he specifies, with time the Christian softening of the original social hierarchy led to the estates being lost in a ”more and more universal confusion” (eine mehr und mehr allgemeine Unbestimmtheit). 686

This reasoning traced the roots of the distortion of the estates system in the European society to the eras incomparably more distant than the Reformation let alone the French revolution. Moreover, it portrayed the Christian attitude toward the Staende as ambivalent. Although Goerres never formulated this ambivalence explicitly, one fact pointing to the centrality of this problem to his later work was his attempt to find a

685 Ibid.
686 Ibid., pp. 420-421.
historical underpinning of his sociopolitical project by addressing the alleged roots of the *Staende* system in the pre-Christian, specifically Oriental civilizations. The most significant evidence of this attempt was one of the last major works by Goerres, *The Japhetites and their Common Homeland*, Armenia, where he addressed once again the origin and trajectory of the *Urvolk* and the fate of the *Urstaat*. 687

5. The Biblical *Staendestaat*

“The priests, citizens with their crafts, noble warriors, and wild giants in the woods… were thus united in the great original priesthood-based state (*Priesterstaat*) that held these elements together and developed them in the direction of the casts” – this is how Goerres described the initial stage of human history. 688 “The tribe of the Semites”, he specified, “Had to exercise the priestly authority forever; that of the Japhetites, as their ally, had to… protect this authority; the tribe of the Hamites was to be tiresly in… service; the primogenitor had established (this order) through his blessing and coarse.” 689

In drawing this picture, Goerres naturally addresses the question of the sources and points to the biblical *Voelkertafel* as to the most reliable evidence. “Let us … assert that the *Voelkertafel* is simultaneously… authentic and completely detailed in its beginning”, he emphasizes. “We consider it as the tradition that the house of the Abrahamides handed down from generation to generation… This house could know the truth”. 690

687 Goerres, Die Japhetiden und ihre gemeinsame Heimat Armenien (Munich: Weiss, 1844).
688 Goerres, Die Japhetiden, p. 57.
689 Ibid.
690 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
Interestingly in justifying his belief in the historical authenticity of the biblical narrative, Goerres points to the changed cultural and scholarly context of his era. “Thirty of forty years ago, this statement would have encountered serious objections”, he stresses, “But since the necropoleis of Egypt enabled the observers to go back to the third and fourth millennia (B.C.) as if they lived with the people of those eras who did not attend the classes of the peoples of the classical (Antiquities), we may proceed… without paying attention to the interventions of the spirit of negation…” “The historical time of the classical peoples … has extended and deepened simultaneously”, Goerres explains. Importantly, he highlights the major factors that contributed to this change. After pointing to to the remnants of the ancient heritage of “the Gaelic and Germanic peoples”, Goerres emphasizes: “What the Indian Sanskrit had kept locked for several millennia, what the memories of the Chinese had preserved in their hieroglyphic writings, what the Achaemenides had documented in their sacred texts, what the Egyptian (priests) hid in their hieroglyphics, all this is (now) open”. 691

Of no lesser significance than this understanding of the sources was the theoretical-methodological aspect of Goerres’ reasoning on world history. In formulating it, he followed his organicist scheme. “Similarly to the trees in the forest”, he wrote, “Men represent a tribe growing out of the soil (erdentsprossenes Geschlecht)…. The places of the settlement of the tribes (Voelkerstaemme) are prepared beforehand by the nature, and their instincts… force them to look for the prepared… Like birds of passage… they search of their old homeland and find it.” 692

691 Ibid., p. 3.
692 Ibid., p. 5.
The Voelkertafel and this organicist analogy represent two dimensions of the context within which Goerres examines the narrative on Abraham and his descendants and, thus, the beginning of the Urvolk’s trajectory. Significantly he asserts explicitly that the biblical narrative reflects not only the developments in the Near East but the initial stage of the history of the whole mankind. The “primogenitor (of the Abrahamides)”, he writes, “Resided originally in Chaldaea where the whole human race (Voelkerstock) once resided”693.

“He went to Mesopotamia”, Goerres continues, “To the North of which the Ashur, to the West, the Arameans, and to the North... where (also) the Scythian kingdoms were located. Then, he went to the Jordan and communicated with the Canaanites and Arabs, (after which he) came to Egypt under the Hyksos, where he learned much of the wisdom of the Mizraim... This way he could easily learn the truth; there was no reason for him to keep the discovered from... his tribe, and the latter had every tool to hand down what it had received.” 694 In tracing the path of Abraham, Goerrs raises the question: how to explain the fact that the earliest chapter of the Urvolk’s history unfolded precisely there?

Significantly, his answer lies primarily in the sphere of naturphilosophy. In addressing the internal structure of the Earth, Goerres points to the opposites that determine the character of the terrain. In explaining its influence on the historical process, he singles out the differences between the territories depending on sea level as the key variable. More specifically, he distinguishes between three types of landscape; the first

693 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
694 Ibid.
two types are two extremes, the mountains and the areas below sea level, and the third is the intermediary between them, the plain.  

Within this naturphilosophical conception in some ways reminiscent of Otmar Frank, each of these three types of terrain reflects a certain variant of the correlation between the positive (constructive) and negative (destructive) forces and processes unfolding within the geological structure of the Earth and coming to the surface from time to time. According to Goerres, the correlation between these two kinds of forces determines not only the nature of a landscape in itself but also that of its inhabitants. This refers, in particular, to the mountain areas, where the clash between the constructive and the destructive elements becomes particularly visible. Interestingly, Goerres views various narratives including those on the conflict between the gods and titans in the Greek mythology and those on the struggle among the deities of Babylon, as reflections of this geological clash.

This geogonic process that, as Goerres asserts, changed more than once the face of the planet, determines the distinctive features of the peoples inhabiting any given landscape. More specifically, this refers to the basic parameters of their perception of the world and, through this perception, their social organization. According to him, it is “the correlation of the positive and negative forces, reflecting the interaction between Force and Matter (Kraft und Stoff)” that constitutes the basis of the tribe’s/people’s mentalite – its understanding of the correlation of the spatial opposites, such as “above – below”, “ahead – behind”, and “right – left”. “In the long run”, Goerres explains, “Every kind of

---

695 Ibid., p. 5.
696 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
697 Ibid., pp. 27-29.
force in life and in the nature as well as in any kind of matter associated with these (forces), has a right and left side, into which it appears to be polarized; and as a result of a direct action and counter action, they (these forces) are interfered through a third force for an active quiescence or motion/action.” “All these major directions”, he continues, “Converge in man, as well as in the soil that he is presupposed to inhabit; and their influence becomes essential when the tribes occupy their territories.” 698

Within this naturphilosophical context, Goerres places the question of the original home of the Urvolk. In reconstructing the earliest, pre-Abrahamic period of its history, he underpines the evidence of the Voelkertafel with his geographical-geological argument. And significantly, it is precisely this argument that becomes central to his identification of Armenia as the cradle of the human race that the Urvolk had left later for Mesopotamia. It was in Armenia that, as he asserts, “The constructive force of the nature mustered its forces to come to the surface and overcome the... force of gravity; the mass followed the force and created that highland”. And it was this land where, according to the Scripture, the originally created human race was located and where the second (human race) came off the ark. 699 Importantly in this context, wherever the Urvolk migrated from its original home (erste Heimath), it preserved the paradigm of behavior and the key dimensions of the spatial organization inherited from its initial, Armenian era.

It was from this Armenian ancestral home (Urvaterhaus) that three tribes constituting the Urvolk, those of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, moved once upon a time toward

698 Ibid., p. 50.
699 Ibid., pp. 49-51.
the valley of Schinear to settle there and to establish a universal state (*Universalstaat*). According to Goerres, it was this universal state that represented the earliest example of the estates-based state (*Staendestaat*) in world history. “The … *Urvolk* was divided into three groups that formed the three estates”, Goerres specifies, “And these three (estates) are known to us through the names of three sons of the primogenitor.”

His explanation of the functions that each of these three estates performed in the *Urstaat*, Goerres starts with Noah’s oldest son, Shem. The key feature of the primogenitor’s firstborn is his priestly status. “Shem who matched Seth of the previous human race, (was made) in the image and likeness of his father…and blessed by him…Jehova was his God and he was the priest of this God”, Goerres stresses.

The youngest son of Noah, Ham, is described as Shem’s antipode. As Goerres clarifies, “If (Shem) mirrors… the unity, … (Ham embodies) disruptiveness (caused) by sin”. “Within the new human race”, he continues, “(Ham)… is what Cain was within the previous”. This circumstance predetermines his and his descendants’ status as servants to the other brothers’ tribes.

In some fundamental ways, this description of Ham resembles that of the Cainites by Friedrich Schlegel: the latter’s portrayal of the descendents of Cain as the nature-oriented tribe/class opposing the God-oriente tribe/class of Seth is easily recognizable in the picture drawn by Goerres. But unlike Schlegel, Goerres, following his naturphilosophical approach, highlights the geographical-biological component of the

---

700 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
701 Ibid.
702 Ibid.
picture. This circumstance makes the figure of Ham ambivalent. “In Ham”, Goerres emphasizes, “Life is represented… with all its instincts and (natural) impulses. Life is rooted in the soil… and his (Ham’s) leanings relate predominantly to it; it is between him and… it (the soil) that the process of what life essentially represents, unfolds…” Meanwhile, “It is out of soil that all sublime has grown up”, Goerres notes with respect to Ham. 703

These ties between Ham and the nature determine his and his tribe’s role in world history. “The Hamites are at home anywhere… where … the factors of life go hand in hand with each other and with the required energy”; (they feel) best where the nature itself satisfies their needs, sparing their own efforts, similarly to the trees of a forest”, Goerres writes. 704 Within his reasoning, this circumstance explains the expansion of the Hamites toward the warm and humid areas, such as the land of Kush. 705

In sharp contrast to Ham and his descendents stands the tribe of the middle brother, Japhet. This contrast begins with the preferred landscape: “Driven by their nostalgia for the old… places of the tribe in Armenia, the Japhetians moved massively… to their valleys… “. “The landscape of this land and… predetermined their role of shepherds: in the struggle with the elements… they became strong…(This way) the nature forged them as the sword of history”. 706

According to Goerres, as the men of the sword and “the shepherds among the brethren”, the Japhetites formed what should be “defined as nobility”. This factor

703 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
704 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
705 Ibid., pp. 55-57.
706 Ibid., p. 57.
becomes decisive for their world-historical mission: “The Japhetites… are the motivated ones (strebsame) guided by their internal will… And if the tribe of Ham looks everywhere for a moist and fertile environment… these men of iron… are driven to the highlands of the earth… it is only there that they breathe freely… and it is there that their life process unfolds…” Curiously in highlighting the energetic nature of the Japhetites, Goerres points to their “white skin, blond hair and blue eyes as an indication of the prevalence of the breathing processes”. Significantly in this context, he adds: “Their instinct… drives (them) northward and, on the other hand, to the mountains…”  

Placing this description within the framework of his naturphilosophical conception of the spatial parameters determined by the correlation of geological forces, Goerres defines the Japhetites as people “moving from inside to outside, upwards, rightwards, and … forward”. 

After describing the features and functions of the two opposites – the tribes started by Ham and Japhet, Goerres returns to the role of Shem. The oldest son of Noah and his tribe represent the center of the Urvolk’s home, spatially and functionally. “The house of Shem…is in the middle between the other houses”, Goerres points out. As he specifies, “It (serves as) the intermediary between the drive upwards (typical for) of one tribe and the drive downwards (typical for) the other”. 

These three tribal groups represented the components, of which, as Goerres asserted, “Shem built the first empire (Reich)”. In describing the way this empire was arranged, Goerres followed the biblical narrative: “His (Shem’s) own tribe had to teach,
that of the Japhetites, to multiply, and that of the Hamites, to feed (the other tribes)”. Shem’s role as the ruler became particularly visible in his order “to… erect a metropolis” where, “In the middle of his state, he established the (system of) service, from which the law stemmed”. “Babylon was the metropolis of this empire, and the tower at the heart of the metropolis, its capitol”, Goerres specified.  

In this context, he formulates his main thesis: it was the crisis and then the collapse of this three tribes/estates-based original empire that had predetermined the whole course of world history.

6. The Hamitic Revolution

“… They misread the plan of Providence and the opinion of the primogenitor” – this is how Goerres characterizes the mistakes made by the authorities of the Urstaat. He points to two such misinterpretations: that of the imperial unity and that of the relations between the tribes. “They (Providence and the progenitor) did not want… a false unity for mankind” 711, he explains. Goerres interprets this false unity “covering selfishness and symbolized by a tower erected due to willfulness”, as a distortion of the correlation between “the whole and its parts” rooted in misreading the will of Noah. “The primogenitor had by no means predetermined some to be privileged and some, humiliated”, Goerres points out, “He had only indicated the way the brothers should treat each other.” 712

Importantly for his interpretation of the biblical narrative, it was not only the Hamites but also the Semites and Japhetites that violated the primogenitor’s will,

710 Ibid., p. 55.
711 Ibid., p. 58.
712 Ibid.
although in different ways. “Guided by the wrong principle”, Goerres clarifies, “The Semites evolved towards hubris, the Japhetites, towards violence… whereas the Hamites opposed them with the whole… audacity of their burning blood.” And, according to him, it was this conflict between Noah’s inheritors that became the prototype of all later social cataclysms: “In emancipating themselves not only from the unlawful pressure but also from any legitimate order, they (the Hamites) (commited) the first rebellion, out of which, like out of a well of impertinence and barbarization, went out all the later revolutions in history”. 713 

This Urrevolution resulted in what, according to Goerres, any revolution results: “Anyone sinning becomes a slave of this sin; and it so happened that the coarse by the father… came true. The uncontrolled mutiny limited itself from inside; out of its bosom did it it produce its terminator.” Curiously this terminator, Nimrod, was renowned as a hunter. “Those supposed to serve became masters”, Goerres notes with regard to Nimrod’s rise to power. “That was”, he continues, “How the… outrage commited by the whole people, caused a general collapse of the old order desired by God but violated by Man.” 714 No less symptomatically, Goerres considers these developments as the emergence of absolutism. “It is… not the beginning of the monarchy, as it is usually believed, but that of the rebellion and absolute violence contradicting any buergerlich order”, Goerres states. 715 

Significantly in portraying the Hamitic revolution, Goerres does not confine himself to the evidences of the Voelkertafel; according to him, the tradition of the

713 Ibid.
714 Ibid., p. 59.
715 Ibid., p. 58.
Ancient Greece contains no less authentic and impressive illustrations of this development. In this context, he points to the myth on the war between Chronos and the Titans. Specifically, he cites the words of Eusebius of Caesarea about “The giants who, having survived the Flood… erected a tower (in Babylon)… after … the priests had brought there the sacrariums of Zeus; … they imagined themselves… to be stronger than gods… but when their work (the tower) almost reached heaven, they (the Gods) made the tower break down…” No less importantly, highlighting the naturphilosophical aspect of that development, Goerres considers the first rebellion in human history as a continuation of the destructive forces unfolding under the crust of the Earth. In this context, Goerres points once again to the geogonic processes that, as he insists, did not end after the Flood. “As the innumerable volcanos here and there survived the Flood… volcanism (Volcanismus) partially continued”, he indicates.  

Such is the way the author of *The Japhetites and Their Common Homeland*, Armenia portrays the process of how “The primitive state broke up into the elements of which it was artificially constructed”. The most visible consequence of the collapse of the Urstaat was that “The people who had before (spoken) one language became … multilingual, und the giants who had erected (the tower) scattered all over the world”. This referred not only to the rebellious giants: the formerly privileged tribes/estates started migrating as well. “Those able to endure this overturn, stayed in their old homeland as servants”, Goerres clarifies, “Whereas the others left.”

---

716 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
717 Ibid.
718 Ibid., p. 59.
719 Ibid., p. 60.
That was the beginning of the *Urvolk*’s migration. It unfolded in a variety of directions and resulted in the formation of numerous peoples. Of particular importance for Goerres’ historiosophy was his understanding of the mechanism of this process.

7. From the Ararat to the Mountain of Meru: The *Urvolk*’s Path to the East and its Second Center in India

One problem central to the reconstruction by Goerres of the migration of the *Urvolk* after leaving its homeland was the emergence of the peoples not listed in the *Voelkertafel*. In explaining this process, he emphasized the continuity between the previous stage of the *Urvolk*’s history and the stage it entered as a result of the collapse of the *Urstaat*. He went even further by describing the mechanism that maintained this continuity. “The tribe of the Semites departed”, Goerres wrote, “But this departure occurred in accordance with the same principle, according to which it had separated (from the Hamites and Japhetites) at the beginning.” This principle referred to the other tribes as well: “Precisely the way the descendants of Noah had divided themselves into the Semites, Japhetites, and Hamites, the Japhetites divided themselves the same way”. “The descendants of Shem”, Goerres continued, “Divided themselves into Semitic, Japhetic, and Hamitic Semites; therefore, the prevalent character of the tribe was expressed only in (this) three-level hierarchy.”

As to one example of such reproduction of the original structure, Goerres points to the Hebrew people that created “the second Semitic center” with “Jerusalem as its new ancestral home”. As he emphasizes, in a way, “the second *Semitenland* around the first” represented a unique phenomenon. “It was not by nature… but by the higher

---

720 Ibid., p. 60.
721 Ibid., p. 61.
authority that the Hebrew people… was chosen the kernel people (*Kernvolk*) of the whole tribe… It was not its natural instincts but the commandment that brought it to the homeland prepared for it… in the middle of the Palestinian Hamitic empire (*Hamitenreich Palaestina*”), Goerres indicates, emphasizing the priestly nature of the Hebrew people. 722

On the other hand, he points to the Semitic tribes that positioned themselves as Japhetites (the Semitic Japhetites). Among them, he singles out the Arameans in Syria ("between Asia, Africa, and Europe"). According to Goerres, their world-historical role consisted in forming two peoples (*Staemme*). The first comprised the adherents of Judaism (differing thus from the original Hebrew people) and later, those of Christianity. The second expressed itself in the creation of Islam and the Caliphate, on the one hand and, in the foundation of the Croesus world empire in Lydia, on the other. 723

Such were the first areas of the *Urvolk*’s expansion, specifically of that of the Japhetites, from where it continued to Asia Minor (which, as Goerres stresses, could be defined also as “Europe Minor”); then, northward (which resulted in the rise of the Scythians) and, through Armenia, eastward, to Iran and the banks of the Indus. “Finally the highland connecting Armenia to Eastern Asia (*Hinterasien*) and its continuation becomes the road to India and Iran, the land of light, and it will get its population from the Urmia Lake. This (population) had to be formed in Atropatena…”, Goerres writes. “Thus even here”, he continues, “While (the people) was passing through (the region), it divided itself (into three parts according to) three general directions, (that is, into three

722 Ibid.
723 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
tribes – (those of) Shem, Ham, and Japhet) and became a numerous… people widespread… from the Bosphorus to the Bab el Mandeb… and from… the western bank of the Caspian Sea… to the outfall of the Indus.”

Why did the Urvolk take precisely this road? Amplifying the ideas expressed earlier in the Mythengeschichte, Goerres provides an explanation that differs from the theory that Friedrich Schlegel develops in On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians. The most obvious difference is in the direction of the Urvolk’s migration: if Schlegel traces the journey of the degraded Indian warriors to the West, Goerres precisises his version expressed earlier in the Mythengeschichte and describes the trajectory of the Urvolk exclusively as the expansion of the descendents of Noah to the East. Interestingly with regard to the motivation for the Urvolk’s migration, Goerres also modifies his earlier version. Partially similarly to Schlegel, he points to the social upheavals as to the major factor at work. Nevertheless, these upheavals are seen be the two thinkers as different in nature: according to Schlegel, the migrants protested the severe Brahmanic law; according to Goerres, they fled from the victorious Hamitic revolution.

Curiously also, the drive eastward and northward of the Noah’s descendants as described by Goerres, resembles in some ways the fascination with the sublime North of the Germanic branch of the migrants as portrayed by Schlegel. As Goerres explains, “What strengthened this drive for wander of the peoples in addition to the increase of population and the desire to escape from the power of the Kushites… (was) the tradition (inherited from) the ancestors and (based on) the still existing memory of the old Eden”.

\(^{724}\) Ibid., p. 75.
“They had passed through all the lands where this blessing had flourished before”, he continues, “And everywhere they had found the triumph of evil… Finally, they decided that they should move from the middle of the circle (to its periphery)… to look for the lost paradise.” 725

In underpinning his thesis on the search of the paradise as the motivation for the Urvolk’s migration eastward, Goerres combines a variety of narratives. (He turns, in particular, to the ancient Greco-Roman tradition and cites Plinius, Marcianus Capella, and Haecateus providing numerous illustrations of the ancient paradise-related imagery. 726 More generally, juxtaposing the evidences and images taken from different cultural traditions, Goerres traces the Japhetites’ expansion and their transformation into a powerful military tribal union.

Globally, Goeres portrays the Japhetites as divided into three great groups (Vaterhaeuser): “Those (being part of) the Western Japhetic empire, represented four tribal roots (Stammwurzeln); those… (of) the Eastern, were divided into three great tribes; finally in the New World, they split into … (those) of the North-, Mid-, and South America”. 727

Focusing on the Eastern Japhetites, Goerres singles out four segments of a large picture. “In the North… along the Elbrus, and in the West, on the Western side of of the

725 Ibid., p. 75.
726 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
727 Ibid., p. 89.
Zagros, the Midian tribe rose. Then in the South, on the intersection of the Tigris and Inus, the Persian; finally in the East... that of the Aryans,” he writes.  

Within this framework, the tribe of the Indian Aryans occupies a special place: India becomes the only place outside Armenia that Goerres characterizes as a land of the world’s highest mountains (Gipfellaend) and, therefore, the second homeland of the Urvolk. Following his naturphilosophical attitude, he explains this role of India by pointing to the similarities between the two landscapes, the Indian (more precisely, North Indian) and the Caucasian. Due to these similarities, Armenia and India play equivalent roles in the global context. Since “In the Gipfellaender the entanglement of the mountains and the river net are connected approximately the same way”, they perform comparable functions: “If (the Armenian highland) connects the Babylonian region... to the Hyperborean North, the other (that of India) represents an analogous connection between India and Iran and, through Turan, (links them) to the mythical countries of Jashush und Washush”, Goerres explains.  

At the same time, the place of India within the context of the Urvolk’s advancement into Asia goes far beyond these geographical circumstances. “Earlier”, Goerres states, “Another root of this tribe had pushed through here from the Northern India and, fighting and defeating the local ... Ethiopians (according to Goerres, a branch of the Kushites – A.P.), but also partially mixing with them, founded the Sanskrit-speaking tribe of Indians, due to which the land was named Aryavarta”. This explains the centrality of the Indian stage of the Urvolk’s trajectory to the picture drawn by  

---

728 Ibid., pp. 67-71.
729 Ibid., pp. 119-120.
730 Ibid., p. 79.
Goerres: according to him, it was precisely in India that the conflicting parts of the disunited *Urvolk* met again.

Furthermore, Goerres explicitly describes the area between the Indus and the Ganges as the destination of the Japhetic tribes. As he asserts, it was one of Japhet’s sons, Madai, who led his people from Iran to India. “Nobody has ever doubted that he (Madai) signified the Medians and thus, the most ancient root of the people (inhabiting the area) from Iran to India”, he clarifies.  

Goerres does not confine himself to this general statement; tracing the earlier advancenement of the Japhetians into Iran, he points to the possibility of multiple waves of the Japhetic migration to the Indus valley. And, according to him, these developments resulted in the formation of the Sanskrit-speaking Japhetic Indian people.

On the other hand, the expansion of the Hamites unfolded in the same direction. If, as Goerres asserts, “The three Hamitic tribes had started the population of Africa”, “The other tribes descending from Ham sought to found a Hamitic world power in Central Asia next to that under Nimrod… Another (group of Hamitic) tribes created an Eastern Hamitic empire in India”.

In demonstrating the evidences of the alleged Hamitic influence on the Indian culture, Goerres points to some major components of Hinduism. More precisely, he interprets these components as the evidences of the conflict between the Japhetites and Hamites. “The historical avatars of Vishnu as Man-Lion and as Dwarf”, he explains.

---

731 Ibid., p. 90.
732 Ibid., p. 117.
733 Ibid., p. 88.
“(The forms) in which he fights the gigantic tyrant, Hiranya Kashyapa, and his successor, refer to the empire of Nimrod and his uprising; Parasurarama (Rama with the axe – A.P.), disciplining the victorious Japhetic Kshatriyas through the godly power; but… in particular… the struggle of the Japhetites of the Aryan descent, which the Semitic Brahmin (der semitische Brahmane), Sri-Rama from Ayodhya (located) in Aryavarta, led against Havila of the Kush. In this struggle, he concluded an alliance with the apes; but these apes represented the tribe of… Hanuman… (this) word signifies, however, … (those) with high cheekbones. These are those having… large Mongolian faces; these Indian nymphs and satyrs were also Scythians descending from Gog and supporting him as (their) ally; those (people) whom he, being half Scythian, brought from the East Asian highland, from Tibet (Goerres considered the Tibetans as an ethnic group of Scythian origin – A.P.); therefore, according to the Chinese narrative, the barbarians descended from apes.” 734

No less symptomatic is the way Goerres portrays Rama’s enemy, Ravana. As he explains, “The expedition (led by Rama) was directed against the Pandavas and their leader, the king Ravana of Lanka… or Ceylon”. “It was there”, he explains, “That the Kushites, by that time pushed out of the peninsula, had moved, and in the name of Ceylon, the last remnant of that of Havila appears to be preserved. Rama defeats the forces of the giants and all their sorcerous practices; he liberates his spouse, Sita, whom they kidnapped, which means that he takes the Indian heiress from the Kushites who held her as a prisoner on their island; the incorporated territory becomes an… empire (with a) mixed (population) comprising the ruling Semito-Japhetites and the subjugated

734 Ibid., pp. 117-118.
Ethiopians, that is, (an empire) within which the Kushites become servants as the Pariahs; whereas the casts of the Brahmins, warriors, and the laborers of farming and arts, united by the purity of their blood, divide the possessions and power between themselves.” “In Iran the same struggle had the same results”, Goerres adds. 735

As one can observe, this interpretation of the Indian sources echoes the interpretation that one encounters in the writings of Friedrich Schlegel. Both Schlegel and Goerres portray the ancient India as a major arena of the struggle between the pious Brahmins and their supporters, on the one hand, and the brutal and audacious giants, on the other. No less importantly, this struggle represents an episode of the global conflict between two forces or classes, the God- and Nature-seekers, and according to Friedrich Schlegel, this struggle determines the course of world history. In reconstructing this process, both Schlegel and Goerres juxtapose the biblical and the Indian narratives.

In doing so, Goerres goes far beyond Schlegel, however. If Schlegel considers the two narratives as the illustrations of two typologically similar developments, Goerres views them as two episodes within one and the same narrative. Not only does he confuse the demonic Rakshasas whose king Ravana was, with the heroic Pandavas of the Mahabhatata, but he also portrays the Indian higher casts as Semito-Japhetites and the Indian southerners, as a branch of the Kushites and the descendants of the biblical Nimrod.

8. The Urvolk’s Advancement into Europe and the Emergence of Germanien

The juxtaposition of various narratives examined within the Bible-based or, more precisely, the Voelkertafel-based perspective, remains the key method for Goerres when

735 Ibid., p. 118.
he goes on to the other part of his world-historical project – the reconstruction of the Urvolk’s path westward, to Europe and, specifically, to the future German lands. As he asserts, strictly speaking, it was at first not precisely the Western but rather the Northern direction: if some of the Japhetites took the road that finally led them to India, the others moved to the North, and it was Japhet’s firstborn son, Gomer, who became the central figure of this process. “The house of Gomer drove northward”, Goerres postulates. Importantly, he emphasizes in this context that, “Due to the flexibility of the vocals in the Oriental languages, this name is spelled and pronounced in a variety of ways, such as ‘Gamer’, ‘Gimer’, ‘Gumer’, ‘Gumber’, etc”. 736 This flexibility represents one major underpinning of the Goerres’ reasoning: for example, according to him, it was from Gomer that the Kimmerians, or Slavs, descended. 737

For a better understanding of this reasoning, one should bear in mind two key parameters of the way Goerres portrayed the Japhetites’ expansion. One of these parameters was the constant division of the Urvolk into new tribal groups according to the fundamental tripartite scheme. Once again, the other parameter was the motivation: it was not a search for new homelands but the memory of the lost original homeland in the highland of Armenia that drove the travelers. In the particular case of the Japhetites’ migration in the North Western direction, the combination of these two circumstances resulted in the emergence of multiple Kimmerias (entities allegedly started by Gomer) located in a variety of places. Significantly, Goerres continues, the character of the Japhetites had predetermined the fact that these places were located in the mountain areas.

---

736 Ibid., p. 90; elsewhere Goerres adds a number of other versions, such as “Gamar”, “Gimir”, and Gumr” (p.136).
737 Ibid., p. 91.
including, in particular, the Balkans, Crimea, and the Caucasus. And as he states, it was as part of this advancement of the Japhetites that the Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans, Armenians, and Georgians came into being.

Significantly, it was within the same context that Goerres portrayed the formation of the German people. As he emphasized, the very name of Germany points to its Japhetic origin or, more precisely, its being the offspring of Japhet’s oldest son, Gomer: according to Goerres “Germania” means in fact “Gomeria” and, as he specified, it was third the Kimmeria, in addition to the Slavic and the Caucasian, that became the homeland of the Germans.

In describing this process, Goerres addresses the Germanic narrative, the Edda. In doing so, he points to the necessity to highlight the interrelation between two dimensions of it, the cosmical and the historical. Starting with the former, Goerres singles out the major parameters of the Universe as portrayed by the ancient Germanic mythology and documented in the Edda. The key feature of this picture is its dualistic character: the initial stage of the world process represents the interaction of two opposites – Light and Darkness. One manifestation of this cosmic dualism refers to two primeval cosmic beings – the gigantic cow, Audhumla who embodied feminine and fertility, and the gigantic male, Ymir. Spatially, the Universe is also organized dualistically: it is strictly divided into two worlds, the earthly (Erdenburg) and the heavenly

---

738 Ibid., pp. 135-137.
739 Ibid., pp. 114, 143
740 Ibid., p. 161
(Himmelsburg). No less significantly, this dualistic picture is added by a third component, Bifrost – the cosmic bridge connecting the earth to the heaven.

Such is the cosmos within which the creation of mankind occurs and its history begins. At this point, the importance of a third component within the dualistically organized Universe becomes particularly visible. This trialistic motif is displayed on a variety of levels. For example, it is three Ases – Har the Strong, Jafnhar the Equally Strong, and Thridie (the Third) that participate in the creation of the human race. 742 No less significantly, not only the procedure of the creation but also the nature of the creature is interpreted in the Edda as tripartite. Three deities determine the Man’s essence: Othin, his soul, Honir, the time and motion, Lodur, his language and corporal beauty. Importantly also, in this combination of the three components, the third one occupies a special place: it represents a synthesis of the first two. A particularly impressive illustration of this synthesis is the structure of Man: the feeding of the body occurs through blood, the feeding of the soul, through senses, whereas the beauty of human body represents a result of the combination of both processes. 743

At the same time, the dualistic dimension does not loose its centrality: the initial history of the first mankind (Man-aston) whose progenitor is Bur (Bor), is described in the Edda as a conflict between the Ases and their enemies, the gyants (Oetuns and Vans). It is thus this combination of dualism and trialism as major principles of the worldview expressed in the Germanic mythology that Goerres focuses on while interpreting the Eddic narrative.

742 Ibid., p. 155.
743 Ibid., 156.
In doing so, he draws parallels to the story of the sons of Shem, Ham, and Japhet. In his juxtaposition of the two traditions, every element of the Eddic narrative has its counterpart in the biblical. Asgard becomes Eden; Bifrost, the bridge connecting the middle of the earth to that of the heaven, is interpreted by Goerres as leading from Mesopotamia to the Armenian highland; and, most importantly, the Ases, Oetuns, and Vans of the *Edda* match the Semites, Hamites, and Japhetites of the biblical *Voelkertafel.*

In underpinning this identification, Goerres relies on a legend related by Moses of Chorene and telling the story of how three heroes, Zervan, Titan, and Japhet divided the Earth among themselves after the Flood. The story identifies Zervan with Shem and Titan, with Ham. In synthesizing this narrative with the Germanic, Goerres states that what the Semites built in Babylon was in fact the new Asgard for the new human race. According to him, it was nothing else than this new Asgard against which the Hamites led by Nimrod rebelled.

Such was the context within which Goerres traced the later history of the German branch of the Japhetites. This process unfolded in full accordance with the inherited tripartite scheme. Moreover, in tracing it, Goerres singles out the stages that match precisely those that he discovered in the biblical narrative. More specifically, he points to the sequence of the Germanic counterparts of the biblical primogenitors. “What Bor was among the Ases, and (what) Asti and Embla (the first male and female) were for the Manaston (*Menschen*) (equivalent of the first human race in the Bible) that was Tuisco

---

744 Ibid., pp. 156-157.
745 Ibid., pp. 157-158.
for the *Tuitonen, Teutonen, or Teutschen* (Germans)”, he specifies. For the Teutons representing thus an equivalent of the second human race, Tuisco whom Goerres describes as “the first kernel of the German tribes (*Voelkerstaemme*)”, played a role comparable to that of Noah. It was, however, not he himself but his son Mann (Mannus) who produced three sons, Istav, Hermin, and Ingu, from whom “all German *Voelkerschaften*” originated. “This is how the triplicity comes back everywhere”, Goerres resumes.

As he emphasizes, it was this original triplicity that determined the original constitution of the German people. In describing this constitution, Goerres singles out three regions that Germany (Germanheimr) comprises: the first is the *Mannaheimr* (homeland of the humans), the second (opposing the first), the land of the titans (“*Jotunheimr, Joten-or Riesenland*”) and, the third, “In the lowland of the South … *Banaheimr*, the land of the water-related Wans”. Such are the genuine roots and the fundamental structure of Germanendom as described by Goerres. In characterizing his understanding of the place occupied by the Germans within the world-historical context of the Japhetites’ expansion, one should point to two aspects of his reasoning. The first refers to his understanding of the nature of Germanendom, the other, to that of the narratives he deals with.

In accordance with his general attitude, Goerres portrays the formation of the German people as just another remake of the original *Voelkertafel* scenario. This process

---

746 Ibid., p. 158.
747 Ibid., p. 159.
748 Ibid., p. 161.
reproduced, therefore, the initial structure of the *Urvolk*, comprising, first, the faithful privileged group (the Semites and Ases), second, the rebellious giants opposing it (the Hamites, Titans, and Oetuns (sometimes accompanied by the Wans)), and, third, the mediating component (the original Japhetites and, in some cases, the Wans). As applied to the origin of Germans, this approach makes particularly visible the key feature of Goerres’ understanding of the fact of ethnic/national diversity. And as one can observe, this understanding is based on the idea of the *Urvolk* not only as the common root of all peoples, but also as their common eternal substance existing within them and manifesting itself through them. All these peoples including, in particular, the Germans, represent in fact one and the same people, the *Urvolk*, and this is as true for Goerres’ fellow-Germans as it was for their distant ancestry.

Of no lesser importance is the way Goerres interprets the narratives on the *Urvolk*. According to him, all of them, specifically the biblical, Indian and German (Nordic) represent different versions of one and the same narrative. And within the historiosophical project of Goerres, this differences mirror the variety of forms in which the *Urvolk* has existed and, no less significantly, the sequence of the stages it has passed in its history.

This is why in summarizing the results of the Goerres’ historiosophical undertaking one should highlight these stages once again. Finishing his analysis of the Japhetites’ world-historical mission, he returns to its point of departure – the original Armenian homeland of mankind. “Armenia”, he resumes, “Proved to have been the first vagina gentium; as the first beehive from which all the flights of the Japhetic peoples flew out. Underpinning their whole history, this original homeland … remained a
distinctive marker of them… The Ararat remained… the mother of the sacred mountains of all other peoples”. 749

On the other hand, Goerres points to the major result of the historical process – the fragmentation of the originally united Urvolk. The roots of this fragmentation lie in the conflict between the three tribes that it comprised, and it is this process that represents the content of all existing narratives. “The most ancient narrative of the peoples as preserved by the Pentateuch”, Goerres states, “Preserves… the memory of this…point of departure, (which is) the great war between the races and peoples of the initial times… but (then) this memory darkened”. 750

This process of fragmentation had two major aspects. The first was the multiphase division of the Urvolk into multiple peoples. Each stage of this process represented a remake of the original partition of the house of Noah into three tribes, those of Shem, Ham, and Japhet. Within this process, the tribal groups reproduced themselves multiple times, and the emergence of several Kimmerias, one of which was Germany, illustrated this phenomenon with particular clarity.

The second aspect of the world-historical process was the duplication of the peoples’ historical trajectories. On the one hand, Goerres singles out a variety of concret ethnic groups getting their counterparts elsewhere: as to one instance of such duplication he points to the two peoples of Alans, one located in the East and the other, in the West. This is only a part of a larger picture, however: as Goerres demonstrates, not only do the individual ethnicities duplicate each other but the whole world process becomes divided

749 Ibid., p. 197.
750 Ibid.
into two processes mirroring each other. More specifically, in the course of the Urvolk’s expansion eastward, there emerges an equivalent of its original Armenian homeland. This equivalent is India where the sacred Mountain of Mery becomes the analogy to the Ararat.

Within this picture, the similarities between the two Gipfellaender go far beyond their landscapes. “The legend”, Goerres indicates, “Provided the two Gipfel with fully analogous features, both physically and morally… (In Armenia) the Ararat towers and next to it, the cliff of Prometheus, and the altars of fire … illuminate (them) with the original flame of sacrifice, in the middle of the path of the peoples, and all the later wars occurred along the same roads.” One the other hand, he stresses, “(In the East)” …Bactria was erected” and “The peoples concentrated around these two centers”. 751

This existence of the two centers instead of one had another crucial world-historical consequence – the division of the Urvolk’s original narrative into two major versions. “With time”, Goerres specifies, “…. The original narrative (ursprüngliche Sage) had to split into two ones, the Eastern and the Western”. The Eastern (specifically Indian) version represented a modification of the original. According to Goerres, “All the peoples dwelling around the Western Gipfel (the Ararat) preserved the original form; all those who resided around the Eastern, viewed the heavenly Mountain of Meru as (the equivalent of) … what their ancestors had looked for in Armenia…” Interestingly closely to India, in Iran, these two variants of the original narrative met. “The Iranian narrative divided itself into two (versions)”, Goerres indicates, “The Median and the

751 Ibid., pp. 119-121.
Bactrian”. “Thus”, he emphasizes, “The… original truth was preserved for a long time in the memories of the peoples”. 752

This observation represents the answer that Goerres gives to the question central to his whole historiosophical undertaking – the multiplicity of the narratives and their being rooted in one single original narrative. On the other hand, it brings this study to an attempt to summarize the major parameters of how Goerres portrays the Urvolk and the Urstaat within his own world-historical narrative.

Conclusion

In his attitude to the Orient, Goerres displayed important common features with and no less important differences from Friedrich Schlegel and Otmar Frank. Although unlike both of them, he did not deal with the original Indian sources, his interest in the Orient had a similar nature: as Schlegel and Frank, he focused on the reconstruction of the trajectory of the Urvolk. Within this context, he addressed two interrelated aspects, the original religion (Urreligion) and the original state (Urstaat).

In characterizing the way Goerres addressed these subjects, one should note that the linguistic aspect plays a much lesser role in his undertaking than in that of Schlegel. On the other hand, similarly to Frank, Goerres underpins his historical reconstruction of the Urvolk’s history with a naturphilosophical conception highlighting the geogonic processes supposedly determining the trajectory of the Urvolk’s migration.

With regard to the sources that Goerres used for his project, one should point to two circumstances. On the one hand, he addressed innumerable texts representing a

752 Ibid., pp. 120-121.
variety of cultures and considered them as different versions of one single original narrative. On the other hand, his conceptual understanding of this original narrative was based largely on two sources: the Oupnekhat (Sirr-i-Akbar) and the biblical Voelkertafel. It was these two documents that he regarded and used as the keys to the religious and ethnic history of the world.

This circumstance determined the trajectory of the Urvolk and the fate of the Urstaat as portrayed by Goerres. Unlike Schlegel and Frank, he placed the original homeland of the Urvolk not in the Indo-Iranian region but in Armenia and Mesopotamia from where the Urvolk widespread around the world including Asia, specifically Iran and India, Africa, Europe, and even the Americas.

Similarly to both Schlegel and Frank, Goerres viewed the world process as a gradual fragmentation of the originally united human race. Significantly like Schlegel, he interpreted the nature of this process as a global distortion. On the other hand, his understanding of the parameters of this distortion differed from the theory develop by Schlegel in some important respects. If the author of On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians and of The Vienneese Lectures confined himself to postulating free will as the fundamental factor at work, Goerres added two dimensions to this picture: first, the geogonic factor and second, a detailed analysis of the social conflict within the Urvolk.

This conflict was rooted in the relations between the three original tribes (the Semites, Hamites, and Japhetites), which Goerres interpreted as three estates (Staende). According to him, it was the hierarchy of these three estates that constituted the sociopolitical basis of the Urstaat. In examining the factors that had predetermined its
collapse, Goerres pointed to the rebellion of the suppressed Hamites, which resulted in the tyranny of Nimrod. According to Goerres, it was this social cataclysm that distorted the original form of statehood and became the prototype of all later upheavels including the Reformation and the French revolution. No less importantly, he regarded the consequence of the rebellion, the tyranny of Nimrod, as the beginning of the bureaucracy-based absolutist rule.

Two other consequences of this development were, first, the partition of the *Urstaat* and therefore, the fragmentation of the *Urvolk* into multiple peoples speaking different languages and, second, the migration of these peoples in several directions. Importantly, Goerres described this process as a separation of the new entities from the older ones. This separation occurred in accordance with the principle of the division of the people into the three tribes/estates inherited from the biblical times and resulting in the constant reproduction of the original tripartite structure. This understanding of the historical process enabled Goerres to interpret the developments in the Middle East, Indo-Iranian region, and Europe as local versions of the original conflict between the Semito-Japhetian coalition and the barbaric Hamites. Significantly also, he interpreted all existing narratives as local illustrations of this conflict.

According to Goerres, the uniqueness of the place occupied by India within this global process, was due to two circumstances. On the one hand, it represented a region where the struggle between the two opposite forces acquired a particularly dramatic form, and this struggle became central to the Indian narrative. No less significantly, India, as another *Gipfelland*, became the Eastern equivalent of the Armenian homeland of the *Urvolk* and the sacred Mountain of Meru, the Oriental version of the Ararat. It was due to
the emergence of this second center of the Urvolk’s expansion that world history became divided into two streams, the Western and the Eastern.

These observations help formulate more clearly the major dimensions of the Goerres’ cosmic plan, or, in other words, of his specific version of the Romantic re-integration project. The stages of the evolution of this project depended on what Goerres viewed as the major actor in the world process. One can single out three such stages: first, the Kantian world republic embodied in revolutionary France, second, the universal Urreligion rooted in Indic myth, and third, the Germanic Staende-based Weltstaat.

Goerres’ understanding of each of these three actors of the world process had three dimensions – the social, the religious, and the national. Sociopolitically, Goerres advocated the division of the society into the three estates as the most fundamental principle of the all-human order. Philosophical-religiously, he attempted to reconstruct the universal Urreligion. Nationally, he traced the Germanies back to the German Weltstaat.

The way Goerres understood the correlation of these three dimensions becomes visible in his concepts of the Urvolk and Urstaat. Within them, these three components were inseparable; the Urvolk got inspiration in the original religion, and its original state was Staende-based.

For a better understanding of how Goerres understood this inseparability, one should, first, go back to his theoretical sources and, second, juxtapose his attitude with those of Schlegel and Frank. Indeed, although the very idea of Germany as the Weltstaat based on the biblical narrative can be traced back to, at least, the Renaissance, Goerres
added a new religious-philosophical component to this idea. The influence of the
*Oupnekhat* and, through it, of the Sufi pantheistic theory of the multiple prophets sent to
the variety of peoples, articulated in the *Sirr-i-Akbar*, enabled Goerres to adopt the idea
of the *Uroffenbarung* – the universal supraconfessional revelation, the most ancient and
clearest evidence of which was the Indian tradition.

Interestingly in this context, in reconstructing the global religious-mythological
process or the trajectory of the *Urvolk’s* expansion, Goerres never pointed explicitly to
the differences between the Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religions. Addressing a
variety of religious-mythological traditions in his book on the Japhetites, he considered
these traditions as versions of one global narrative as he did before while portraying
every philosophy as pansophy and every religion, as pan-religion. Curiously, this
founding father of the German political Catholicism and the author of *Athanasius*, so
sensitive to confessional tensions within Christendom, specifically in the German
context, never addressed the differences between the Bible-based and not-Bible-based
perspectives with regard to global religious and ethnic issues.

An interesting illustration of this attitude is the difference in understanding of the
revelation between Goerres, on the one hand, and Schlegel and Frank, on the other.
Schlegel considered the Indian tradition as a misread Revelation versus the truly
interpreted one, the biblical (which led him finally to the idea of the two *Urvolks*). In
Frank’s *The Light from the Orient*, the Indo-Iranian tradition became the original
universal revelation contrasted to the variety of all other traditions including the biblical
as to historically limited and distorted versions of the original Parsism/Magism. Without
addressing this problem explicitly, Goerres regarded all local manifestations of the
_Uroffenbarung_ as equally valid.

This circumstance had predetermined the correlation between the religious and
the national dimensions within Goerres’ discourse. In Schlegel one encounters a certain
difference between them, an illustration of which represents the controversy regarding the
motivations for the migration of the majority of the _Urvolk_ and its proto-German part,
whereas Frank practically did not differentiate between these two dimensions. Contrary
to Schlegel and similarly to Frank but in an incomparably more systematic way, Goerres
synthesized the religious and the national dimensions within one all-embracing narrative
in which the _Urreligion_, the _Urvolk_ and the _Staende_-based social order represented an
integral whole, all-human and German at the same time.

In this context, Vanden Heuvel’s thesis of the two phases in Goerres’ intellectual
evolution, the universalistic and the German nationalist, needs a significant modification.
Again, Goerres regarded _Germanien_ not as a nation-state but as the _Weltstaat_. More
generally, one can observe the continuity of the Goerres’ “cosmic plan” within his career
as a thinker. This plan did undergo some important changes; these changes referred,
however, not to its major parameters but exclusively to how Goerres interpreted the
concrete manifestations of the actor of the world process.

Finally, one should highlight another key feature of the Goerres project, referring
to the way he articulated his “cosmic plan”. If Schlegel’s _On the Language and The
Wisdom of the Indians_ and the _Vorlesungen_ by Schlegel represented a reasoning on the
existing narratives and Frank’s _The Light from the Orient_, a pamphlet criticizing those
unable to understand the supposedly original narrative of Parsism/Magism, the
reconstruction by Goerres of the alleged original narrative resulted in fact in the creation
of a new narrative, his own. This narrative was composed of the materials borrowed
from a variety of existing narratives but it expressed the “cosmic plan” developed by
Goerres or, in other words, his own version of the world process.

Again, this narrative created by Goerres represented a universal synthesis
combining the religious, national and social components. One significant feature that
distinguished this synthesis from those developed by Friedrich Schlegel and Otmar Frank
was a complete amalgamation of the Bible-based and not-Bible-based perspectives. Their
next separation occurred in the discource of the fourth figure examined in this study,
Arthur Schopenhauer.

**Chapter Seven. Schopenhauer: The India-Rooted “Wisdom of All Ages” vs. the
Bible-Based Monotheism**

The fourth figure examined in this study, Arthur Schopenhauer, differed from the
first three in many ways. Having inherited the major parameters of his understanding of
Indian culture from the earlier Romantic orientalists, he used this inheritance for different
purposes. “Among German thinkers, Arthur Schopenhauer… occupies a special place”,
Helmut von Glasenapp wrote. “Not only was he strongly influenced by Indian thought in
his philosophy but he also ascribed to India and its *Geisteswelt* a decisive significance in
the development of mankind.” 753

---
753 Glasenapp., p. 68.
Indeed, in his pro-Indian stand, Schopenhauer went much further than many other German thinkers of the era. This circumstance did not remained unnoticed by scholars, including the Indian ones. “The Upanisads profess: The Supreme Reality reveals itself to a chosen few”, wrote, for example, Ram Nath Jha. “Blessed ones are thus a few”, he continued. “The Bhagavad-Gita says: Among thousands of persons, a few endeavor for perfection. Even amongst those, who diligently make effort, know Me a few. Arthur Schopenhauer is one of the blessed ones.”

The others placed Schopenhauer’s attitude to India within a more clearly outlined cultural context, specifically, that of German Romanticism. “In Schopenhauer’s … philosophical vision”, Sai Bhatawadekar notes, “He was reviving the Romantic appeal to universalism, with the sense of common origins and affiliations with India as the land of original wisdom and the cradle of humanity.“ In addition to this world historical aspect, Bhatawadekar highlights the trans-historical one. “… He (Schopenhauer) stated”, the scholar clarifies, “That Indian philosophies offered profound ideas that transcended cultural and temporal boundaries and were echoed in great European thinkers such as Plato and Kant, and, of course, himself.”

This integration by Schopenhauer of Indian heritage and “Plato and Kant, and, of course, himself” within one single universal cultural space represented one key dimension of Schopenhauer’s discourse on India. The other side of the coin was the

---

selectivity of his approach to Indian thought. “Rather than engaging with the full spectrum of Hinduist religious practices”, Guenter Zoeller stresses, “He focuses throughout on those aspects of Indian autochtonous philosophy and religion that agree with his own prior position and thereby are suitable to lending support to his own philosophical system.” In specifying Schopenhauer’s hermeneutic practice, Zoeller justly emphasizes that it “not only removes Schopenhauer’s engagement with India from any attempt to encounter an alien religious culture”, but, no less importantly, that it “also integrates the selectively appropriated elements of Hindu philosophy into an essentially Western philosophical system”. 756

This observation points to a significant distinction between the figures earlier examined in this study and Schopenhauer. If Friedrich Schlegel, to use Heine’s wording, introduced his compatriots to the studies of Indian culture as a historical phenomenon, the author of Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung claimed to have opened up the world of Indian thought as a part and, moreover, as the basis of Western philosophical discourse. If Frank proclaimed a return to the Indo-Iranian roots of the German civilization as a project, Schopenhauer has been believed to be one who demonstrated this return in his discourse. “Schopenhauer”, R. Raj Singh writes, “Was certainly a pioneer in trans-cultural philosophy. A trans-cultural thinker is one who not only compares and contrasts the ideas and concepts of different philosophical traditions but treats a chosen foreign tradition as his own.” 757

756 Guenter Zoeller, “Philosophizing Under the Influence – Schopenhauer’s Indian Thought”, in: Arati Barua et al., p. 15.
The formation of Schopenhauer’s trans-culturalist discourse occurred within the same chronological framework as that of the thinkers examined earlier: his major theoretical work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, appeared in 1818 – ten years after *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* and *The Light from the Orient*, seven years after Goerres’ *Mythengeschichte* and twenty six years before his *The Japhetites*. Conceptually nevertheless, Schopenhauer’s approach to India represented a later stage versus Schlegel, Frank, and Goerres. Significantly in this context, whereas the publication of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* in 1818 remained practically unnoticed by the German intellectual community, the beginning of Schopenhauer’s fame was due to the appearance of his later work, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, in which the philosopher provided a more detailed explanation of his ideas, specifically with regard to India.

Frederick Copleston provides an impressive description of the Schopenhauer’s triumph after the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena*. “With the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena* in 1851”, Copleston writes, “He (Schopenhauer) had arrived at the evening of his life, and with the evening came fame, long hoped for yet so long delayed. Hostility was indeed not lacking, even at this stage, particularly on the part of German professors… The younger Fichte and the Hegelian Rosenkranz showed their hostility in their reviews; but all this was powerless to reverse the tide, which had now set in…. The Schopenhauer’s hour was come.” 758.

This long delayed fame, marking the end of the era of the Hegelian rationalism-dominance in German philosophy, made Schopenhauer an if not the central figure in the

---

German scholarly and artistic community. And significantly, his fame had from the very beginning an unmistakably Indian flavor. “Virtue…, in his view, is better taught by the sages of Hindostan than by the Jewish or Christian theologians” – this is, for example, how John Oxenford who, as Copleston rightly notes, “acted as Schopenhauer’s herald in England”, characterized the essence of his message in the widely read article titled *Iconoclasm in German Philosophy*.  

No less importantly, this message provoked a powerful response from the German cultural community. Richard Wagner who in 1854 sent the philosopher a copy of his *Ring der Niebelungen* “in admiration and gratitude,” was deeply influenced by Schopenhauer’s fascination with Indian religious-philosophical thought and even started working on an opera on Buddha. With time, a number of the followers of Schopenhauer’s ideas including his pro-Indian sand, such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Eduard von Hartmann, started their careers as philosophers. Finally, another disciple of Schopenhauer, Paul Deussen, marked an era in the German and all-European studies of Indian philosophy by publishing in 1897 the first translation of the Upanishads from the Sanskrit original into German.  

An attempt to explain this stimulating role of Schopenhauer raises the question of the specificity of his view of India. What was the focus of his interest, and what were the teachings of the sages of Hindustan that helped him create his own philosophical system?

---

760 Copleston, p. 41.  
The students of Schopenhauer give different answers to this question. If Douglas Berger puts the emphasis on “Schopenhauer’s appropriation of pre-systematic Indian Upanishadic philosophical speculation had on the shaping of his own system” 762, Dorothea Dauer insists that “With Schopenhauer Buddhism began to become a power in the intellectual life of Germany”. 763 On the other hand, it was back in 1897 that Max F. Hecker had justly stated that Schopenhauer’s interpretation of Indian thought was not based on a clear distinction between Vedanta and Buddhism but represented rather an attempt to synthesize these two traditions. 764

Citing this opinion of Hecker, Sai Bhatawadekar specifies that the scholars of Schopenhauer “typically discuss idealism, perception, denial and asceticism, pain and suffering, ethics of sympathy, nothingness, etc. as the elements that tie Schopenhauer with Hindu and Buddhist philosophies”. 765 Importantly also, Bhatawadekar explains that “Schopenhauer’s modus operandi was to isolate relevant utterances and insert them in his thought as parallel examples”. “In a similar fashion”, he continues, “In order to show similarities, these scholars select quotes from Schopenhauer and Hindu and Buddhist texts that resemble one another.” 766 As Bhatawadekar justly points out, “Doing so ignores the larger context and implications of these philosophies, in which the similarities cannot hold. Moreover, they disregard that the Schopenhauerian quotes that they find similar to Indian quotes may themselves have been formulated by Schopenhauer under

764 Max F. Hecker, Schopenhauer und die indische Philosophie (Koeln: Huebscher, 1897), p. 254.
765 Bhatawadekar., p. 39.
766 Ibid.
Indian influence, which then makes such comparisons tautological. Finding eight, ten, or twelve individual and scattered common elements is symptomatic of this selective, cherry-picking analysis”.  

A historical examination of the “Schopenhauer’s modus operandi” starts naturally with the sources he used. And in this context one should characterize the way his philosophy was related to Indian studies. With regard to the formative years of the philosopher, Michael Gerhard asserts that “At the time of young Schopenhauer, neither the chronological relation of individual Indian texts to each other was known nor was there any knowledge of development steps of Indian philosophies”. “Accordingly”, Gerhard continues, “Schopenhauer had to imagine the philosophy of the Vedanta as a unity, of which, however, he was only interested in maya and brahman.”

Indeed, Schopenhauer’s texts provide numerous illustrations of his understanding of Indian philosophy not as a variety of schools but rather as one single tradition. Furthermore, he explicitly and repeatedly pointed to one major source on which he based his reasoning on Indian wisdom, and this source was the Anquetil’s translation of the Sirr-i-Akbar. “Anyone”, Schopenhauer wrote, “…Who desires… kind of supplement to the negative knowledge to which alone philosophy can guide him, will find it in its most beautiful and richest form in the Oupnekhat.”

At the same time, it would be an oversimplification to consider the Oupnekhat as the only source of Schopenhauer’s knowledge of Indian culture. “… From this period

767 Ibid.
768 Gerhard., pp. 31-33.
Schopenhauer read as many works as he could find on classical India” Christopher Ryan justly writes, “Especially its religious and philosophical thought.” “During the first period of his encounter – from his meeting with Majer up to the completion of the first edition of the World as Will and Representation in late 1818”, Ryan specifies, “Schopenhauer’s main sources included the first nine volumes of Asiatick Researches…, Mme de Polier’s Mythologie des Indous, Julius Klaproth’s journal Das Asiatisches Magazin (which contained Majer’s German translation of Charles Wilkins’ English Bhagavad-Gita) and Friedrich Schlegel’s On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians.”

Schopenhauer’s knowledge of the Indological literature of the era went thus far beyond the Oupnekhat. Not only was he familiar with the works of the British scholars but also, no less importantly, he was a reader of the German orientalists including the pioneering book by Friedrich Schlegel. Furthermore, in some cases he addressed the Indian cultural phenomena by no means belonging to those widely discussed by the European scholars of the era. One interesting example of this kind provides Parerga and Paralipomena: describing the alternatives to rationalism in world, specifically Indian philosophy, Schopenhauer does not confine himself to naming Vedanta but he names also Mimamsa, a Brahmanic philosophical school that in Schopenhauer’s lifetime remained practically unnoticed by the European scholars of India.

At the same time, the centrality of the Oupnekhat to Schopenhauer’s Weltanschauung is beyond doubt. As Ryan justly emphasizes, “Apart from August

---

770 Ryan., p. 159.
Wilhelm Schlegel’s 1823 Latin translation of the Bhagavad-Gita and Colebrooke’s rather brief translation of some passages and hymns from the original Vedas and the Upanisads, Anquetil’s Oupnekhat was to remain Schopenhauer’s chief and favorite sourcebook on Hinduism until his death in 1860”. 772 Schopenhauer explicitly expressed his admiration of the Oupnekhat and stressed the centrality of it to his reasoning. “I read this translation with fullest confidence, which is at once delightfully confirmed”, he wrote in his Remarks on Sanskrit Literature. “How deeply”, he continued, “Stirred is he who, by diligent and careful reading, is now conversant with the Persian-Latin rendering of this incomparable book! How imbued is every line with firm, definite, a harmonious significance! From every page we come across profound, original, and sublime thoughts, whilst a lofty and sacred earnestness pervades the whole. Here everything breathes the air of India and radiates an existence that is original and akin to nature.” 773

In explaining this staunch belief of Schopenhauer in the authenticity of the Oupnekhat, one should take into account three circumstances. First, unlike Schlegel and Frank, he was not an Indologist; moreover, unlike Goerres, he could be even characterized as an orientalist in a broader sense. This refers not only to the fact he based his reasoning on India exclusively on the translations, but also to his lack of interest in the originals. “He was not concerned with the external forms and specific historical manifestations of such (Indian) teachings, but rather with their ‘inner sense and spirit”, Wilhelm Halbfass justly asserts. 774

772 Ryan., pp. 26-27
774 Halbfass., p. 112.
Interestingly in this context, contrary to Schlegel, Frank and Goerres, Schopenhauer’s fascination with Indian religious-philosophical thought did not include an aesthetical aspect. Indeed, his admiration of the Upanishads and Buddhism coexisted with a full lack of interest in Indian poetry. “Much as I admire and respect the religious and philosophical works of Sanskrit literature”, he confessed, “Only rarely have I been able to find any pleasure in the poetical works. Indeed, at times it seemed to me that these as were as inelegant and monstrous as the sculpture of the same peoples. Even their dramatic works I appreciate mainly on account of the most instructive elucidations and verifications of the religious belief and morals which they contain.”  

This approach highlights a key dimension of Schopenhauer’s discourse on India. “We must not forget that Schopenhauer was a very European thinker”, Stephen Gross stresses”. “He was proud of his place in the Western tradition, and in spite of his interest in Indian thought his understanding of philosophy was largely formed by European attitudes. He often reminds us that his thought is directly related to that of Kant and so to the tradition running back through Hume, Berkeley, and Locke, to Descartes and beyond”.  

Importantly, however, it was this very European thinker indifferent to all external manifestations of Indian culture who, as Gross asserts, “Acts as a link between post-Cartesian Western thought and the philosophical and religious ideas of India and ultimately of the rest of Asia”. Specifying this observation, one should add that

---

775 Parerga and Paralipomena, volume I, p. 295.
777 Cross., p. 15.
Schopenhauer’s authority as the transmitter of the Indian ideas and, more concretely, his role as a champion of the *Oupnekhat* as the most authentic source of Indian wisdom were so powerful that as late as the 1890s, his disciple Paul Deussen, the founding father of philosophical Indology in Germany, translated the Upanishads from Sanskrit into German “mainly on the account of the palpable eccentricities of (Anquetil) Duperron’s approach”.  

This paradigmatic role of Schopenhauer raises two questions: first, what precisely he appropriated from the Latin version of the *Sirr-i-Akbar* and, second, what he used these appropriations for. In outlining the place occupied by the *Oupnekhat* within Schopenhauer’s discourse, Douglas Berger justly points to the central concepts of Indian thought appropriated by the philosopher from this text. “Schopenhauer’s reading of Anquetil Duperron’s … translations of and, most importantly commentary on the Upanishads”, Berger explains, “Provided him (Schopenhauer) with the notion of maya (the term for the illusory phenomenal world in Indian thought – A.P.). “This thesis”, he specified, “In its turn was the linking concept that bound Schopenhauer’s systematic theory of knowledge, metaphysics and ethics together.”  

Similarly can be described the opposite aspect of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, expressing his understanding of what is believed to be concealed under the veil of maya. And again, in characterizing this non-phenomenal world, the “primary source of all reality” where the essence of the universe becomes identical with that of human self, “the most real of all beings” that “necessarily recognizes in himself the true center of the

world, Schopenhauer emphasizes: “Its most powerful expression is the words of the Upanishads: *hae omnes creaturae in totum ego sum, et praeter me ens akiud non est, et Omnia ego create feci* (Oupnekhat, Pt. I, p. 122). (I am all this creation collectively, and besides me there exists no other being. I have created everything.)  

The question of how Schopenhauer was “subjecting the religion in question (the Hindu and Buddhist traditions – A.P.) to instrumental use for the purposes” of his own philosophical agenda” presupposes a more detailed analysis of this agenda. One key dimension of it is Schopenhauer’s attitude to the earlier tradition of the German fascination with India, most importantly to its founder, Friedrich Schlegel.

This attitude was explicitly and uncompromisingly negative, and one passage in *The World as Will and Representation* provides an impressive illustration of this. “… Sons of the same mother have equal mental powers,” Arthur Schopenhauer wrote, “And … if one were highly gifted, the other would of necessity be so also.” “Occasionally, this is the case,” the philosopher continued, ”For example, we have the Carracci, Joseph and Michael Haydn, Bernard and Andreas Romberg, Joseph and Frederick Cuvier.”

There was one exception that Schopenhauer could not avoid mentioning, however. “I would also add the brothers Schlegel,” he stressed, “Were it not that the younger, namely Friedrich, had made himself unworthy of the honor of being mentioned

---

780 Parerga I Paralipomena, volume II, p. 17.
781 Guenter Zoeller, “Philosophizing Under the Influence – Schopenhauer’s Indian Thought”, in: Arati Barua et al., p. 15.
along with his admirable, blameless, and highly distinguished brother, August Wilhelm, by the disgraceful obscurantism displayed by him in the last quarter of his life…” 783

Within the spectrum of factors underlying this bitter critique, the difference between the two thinkers in their understanding of India occupied a significant place. Not only did Schopenhauer’s indifference to the aesthetic dimension of Indian culture stood in striking contrast to Schlegel’s admiration of the masterpieces of Indian poetry but also, even more significantly, it differed fundamentally from Friedrich Schlegel’s interpretation of Indian thought as a misread revelation.

This latter circumstance highlights the religious dimension of the specifically Schopenhauer’s version of the German Romantic representation through India, to recall the wording of Azade Seyhan. And, as Guenter Zoeller points out, this religious dimension is related not only to the nature of the Indian phenomena addressed by Schopenhauer, but not to a lesser extent, to that of his own agenda and discourse. Although, as Zoeller observes, “Schopenhauer’s affirmatively resorting to religious traditions and teachings is not to be taken as an endorsement of the religion involved” and “while Schopenhauer’s avowed atheism eliminates specifically theological concepts and arguments from the foundation and elevation of his philosophical system”, “Religiously dimensioned terms and teachings are not altogether absent from his philosophy.” 784

In describing these religious components of Schopenhauer’s discourse, Zoellner points to the affinities between the major elements of Schopenhauer’s ethics and

783 Ibid., Volume I, p. 25.  
784 Zoeller., p. 15.
Christianity. “In particular”, he specifies, “The very notion of ethical ‘salvation’ (Erloesung) from life’s suffering and the final orientation of ethical practice toward the ascetic life and the attitude of ‘resignation’ (Entsagung) is informed by religious traditions, most prominently the teachings of Christianity about the otherworldly destination of human life.”

On the other hand, already the contemporaries of Schopenhauer interpreted his worldview as non- and even anti-Christian. For example, in his *Iconoclasm in German Philosophy* John Oxenford not only stressed Schopenhauer’s view that “Virtue... is better taught by the sages of Hindostan than by the Jewish or Christian theologians”, but he explained in detail the way the philosopher underpinned his thesis. As the British journalist clarified, Schopenhauer’s philosophy “is based on a practical acknowledgment, that the whole world is but a manifestation of the same will as ourselves—that the various men and animals around us, are so closely connected with us, on account of their common substance, that to say they are "akin" is but a feeble expression. "Thou thyself art this," Oxenford explained, “Is the moral maxim of the Hindoo teacher, who points to the surrounding world, as he declares this identity—and the one virtue is sympathy. This is likewise the moral doctrine of Christianity, when it commands its professor to love his neighbor as himself, but Christianity is so far less perfect than Hindooism, that it does not, in its command of universal love, include the brute creation. Hence cruelty to animals—a vice which Schopenhauer holds in the greatest abhorrence... —is far more common in Christian countries than in the East.”

---

785 Zoeller., pp. 15-16.  
786 Oxenford., pp. 388-407.
This description helps summarize four major features of Schopenhauer’s message. First, it represented an alternative to Christianity; second, this alternative was based on the Indian values; third, Schopenhauer’s pro-Hinduist stand was linked to his metaphysics of transpersonal will and, fourth, it manifested itself in his ethics of universal sympathy transcending the borders of mankind. Significantly also, this role of the Indian component in Schopenhauer’s Weltanschauung was unprecedented: among the earlier German Romantics, specifically those examined in this study, went so far in his fascination with the Indian cultural heritage.

This circumstance brings this study to a detailed examination of the major parameters of, to use Zoeller’s wording, “Schopenhauer Hinduist philosophy and religion”. Emphasizing that these parameters “are subject to critical account of religion in general – and thereby of any and all religion”, Zoeller justly points to the necessity to “assesses the phenomenon of religion with a triple focus on the epistemological status, the ethical purpose and the sociopolitical function of religion.” 787

It is these three dimensions of Schopenhauer’s discourse that this chapter is intended to address. But before examining in detail the essence of the philosopher’s message, one should characterize the specific way he articulated this message in his texts. In order to do this, this study will briefly survey his personality and intellectual career.

**Schopenhauer’s Way and Philosophical Personality**

Not many German intellectuals could boast at family roots comparable to those of Schopenhauer. Born in 1798 in Danzig, he belonged to one of the wealthiest families not

787 Zoeller., pp. 15-16.
only in the city but also in the whole Northern Germany. The family was old: the philosopher’s ancestors known to have arrived from the Netherlands were reported as clearly as 1439.

In the early eighteenth century, the Schopenhauer family entered the circle of the most successful German entrepreneurs. “Johann Schopenhauer, the philosopher’s great grandfather… founded a bank, attained wealth and distinction, and kept a great house in which even a king could be entertained”, V.J. McGill writes. 788

In this context, the historian recalls a curious episode. “The story is told”, he relates”, of how he (Johann Schopenhauer – A.P.) was once aroused by an unexpected visit from Peter the Great and Catherine (1716), who, as they walked through the house to choose a chamber for the night, fixed upon one which unfortunately had no stove in it nor any defense against the bitter cold of the season. But the great grandfather of Schopenhauer was quite equal to the occasion. Ordering many bottles of brandy to be brought he poured them out on the floor of Dutch tiles and struck a light to it. The Tsar, it seems, was quite delighted with the sea of burning brandy at his feet and when the fire had died down, spent the night very comfortably in the warm and fragrant room.”789

In the later times, the family experienced ups and downs. Johannes’ son, Andreas, extremely successful in trading with Russia and Poland, represented a type of tough and energetic entrepreneur. His younger brothers did not take after him, however, and it was due to their impracticability (in some cases it was accompanied by mental deficiency) that had ruined the family’s fortune by the time when Andreas’ son, Heinrich Floris, the

789 Ibid., p. 30.
father of the future philosopher, had to start his entrepreneurial career. “In 1794”, McGill relates, “… The philosopher’s father… was left alone on the great wholesale and uphold the family name. Possessed of extraordinary energy and force of will, intelligent, skillful and dominating, he was precisely the man to succeed.”  

It was due to him, that the name of Schopenhauer rose high again. As McGill specifies, in the hands of Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer, “the family business expanded from a small concern to one of the leading houses in Danzig and beyond” which made the father of Arthur Schopenhauer a distinguished member of the city’s merchant aristocracy. At the same time, with all his capacity, he experienced mental problems apparently similar to those of other family members, specifically his brothers, and his death in 1805 was due to suicide.

His wife, Johanna Trosiener whom Heinrich Floris married having 38 years of age, the daughter of a highly respected old city councilman, belonged therefore to the same social circle. She survived her husband by many years and, in the later times she rose to prominence as a hostess of a literary salon in Weimar. The relations between Johanna Schopenhauer and her son never were cordial, however, and this experience has not infrequently been considered as a factor that had predetermined Schopenhauer’s strongly antifeminist views.

At any rate, as Copleston rightly observes, the future philosopher “was brought up in a cultured and refined home, a circumstance that enabled him to develop his bent for

---

790 Ibid., p. 30.
791 Ibid., p. 31.
792 Ibid., p. 34.
One of the consequences of this upbringing was his love of travel. In 1797, Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer sent Arthur, then a nine-years-old boy, to Paris, after which Arthur spent two years in Havre in the home of his father’s business correspondent. Later on, after attending a private school in Hamburg, he undertook a tour of Europe: within two years (1803-1804) he traveled in England, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Austria and Germany. According to Copleston, “The opportunity for travel which Schopenhauer enjoyed in his youth intensified and developed his cosmopolitan spirit. He always appreciated the culture of other lands, particularly that of France; he came to read with ease the great European works of literature in their original languages. Moreover, the historian of philosophy asserts, “He was never a ‘Fatherlander’; indeed, as a grown man, he was characterized by an almost complete lack of patriotic feeling.”

The question of whether or not the young Schopenhauer’s cosmopolitan experience resulted indeed in a lack of national patriotism deserves a more detailed discussion and will be examined later in this chapter. At this point, it is enough to say that after these Wanderjahre came to a close the young Schopenhauer returned to Hamburg and, at the will of his father, entered reluctantly a business career. However, upon his father’s death in 1805 he took the first opportunity to gradually free himself from his duties. In 1807, he left Hamburg and entered the Gymnasium at Goth. It was here that Schopenhauer for the first time displayed publicly his sarcastic and rebellious temper by

---

794 Copleston, p. 19.
795 Ibid.
796 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
writing a lampoon on his masters, which finally resulted in his leaving the school. Shortly thereafter, Schopenhauer moved to Weimar.

The two years that he spent there occupy a special place within his formative period as a thinker. On the one hand, he continued classical studies under the guidance of Hellenic scholar, Franz Passow. No less significantly, by entering the salon established by his mother he made the acquaintances of the illustrious that she received there: August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, the brothers Grimm, and, most importantly, Johann Wolfgang Goethe. The encounter with Goethe produced a substantial influence on the young Schopenhauer, a dedicated admirer of the German Dichterfuerst, and, no less interestingly, the latter estimated at once the intellectual potential of Johanna Schopenhauer’s son. Arthur’s criticism toward the other guests of his mother had no limits however and at times he did not even forbear from insulting them.

Fortunately for Johanna, in 1809 Arthur attained his majority and, after receiving his share of the father’s fortune, left for Goettingen to attend the university. He started studying medicine but shortly changed to philosophy. It was at Goettingen that his philosophical preferences started taking shape: as a young university student, he became an admirer of Plato and remained one to the end of his life.

Schopenhauer’s attitude to his older contemporaries in philosophy was much less enthusiastic. At first, he got interested in Fichte and, drawn by his fame, went for three semesters to the University of Berlin. Very soon, however, the young Schopenhauer became disappointed in the author of the Wissenschaftslehre. According to Copleston, Schopenhauer “was… disgusted by Fichte’s obscurity, rhetorical language and a priori
character of his philosophy”. His opinion of other illustrious figures in the philosophical realm was usually not higher, however. If Schleiermacher was an object of Schopenhauer’s sarcastic comments, Hegel became a target of his unbounded hatred. In sum, this antipathy to the leading figures of the then German intellectual life anticipated Schopenhauer’s all-embracing negativism towards what he would later define as the Universitaetsphilosophie and, more generally his great No (Ruediger Safranski) to the whole post-Kantian German philosophy.

Meanwhile the German society entered the period of the struggle with Napoleon, during which Schopenhauer displayed another aspect of this negativism. The intellectual community reacted to the liberation war in different ways. Some participated in the anti-Napoleonic struggle in a variety of capacities: Fichte gave himself to the care of the wounded Prussian soldiers; Friedrich Schlegel became a political functionary at the Austrian court, Goerres started his Rheinischer Merkur. On the other hand, the Southerner Frank had published his The Light from the Orient with an eloquent dedication to the Emperor of the French. As highly controversial was perceived the position above the fray demonstratively taken by Goethe.

Yet even within this spectrum, Schopenhauer’s place was unique: he avoided any participation. In summer 1813, he moved to Rudolstadt to prepare his doctoral dissertation On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. He articulated his understanding of his role in the events in a letter to the Dean of the philosophical faculty at Jena, written in his application for doctorate. After pointing out that he was not a

797 Copleston., p. 21.
798 Ibid.
Prussian citizen, Schopenhauer emphasized that he felt himself called to serve humanity with his head and not with his arm. 799

After publishing his thesis at his own expense later in the year (the edition remained unsold), Schopenhauer went to Weimar. Within a few months that he spent there, his conflict with his mother sharpened. On the other hand, that visit was not without two major results for his intellectual career. One was the continued acquaintance of Goethe that resulted, in particular, in Schopenhauer writing an essay *On vision and Colors* inspired by Goethe’s theory on this topic and following his method. No less significantly, it was at that time that Schopenhauer met the orientalist Friedrich Mayer whose role was crucial in familiarizing the young philosopher with the Indian religious and philosophical literature, primarily the *Oupnekhat*. 800

Later that year, another episode occurred in Schopenhauer’s life, and although this episode had little to do with the philosophy, it displayed some key dimensions of the philosopher’s personality. While in Dresden, he learned of a bankruptcy of the commercial house at Danzig in which his mother and sister had invested all their capital and he a part of his own. In a letter to his sister, Schopenhauer offered to divide with her and mother what remained to them. This offer was not accepted, however. “In turn”, Copleston narrates, “Schopenhauer refused to grant his sister’s request that he would take part with her and their mother in the general arrangements of the creditors, with the result of a rupture of relations between him and his relatives.” 801 The results of his decision were surprising. “He went his own way”, Copleston writes, “With such success that

799 Ibid., p. 22.
800 Ibid., p. 25.
801 Ibid., p. 27.
two years he obtained possession of his whole capital plus interest, the other creditors
being by no means so fortunate.” 802

Curiously, it was within the same time period that Schopenhauer worked on his
*The World as Will and Representation*. It was finished in 1818. Although in the later
years this work would bring him an all-European fame, the success of its first publication
was rather modest. The reviewers praised the philosophical debutant for his literary talent
and pointed with forbearance to his alleged mistakes, such as mingling Platonic and
Kantian ideas. Perhaps, only Jean Paul recognized the author of the newly appeared work
as an original and profound thinker. 803

Even less successful was Schopenhauer’s attempt to start an academic career.
Two years after the publication of *The World as Will and Representation*, he obtained a
position of adjunct-professor at Berlin. This enterprise resulted in a complete failure,
however. Interestingly, in contrast to Friedrich Schlegel and Joseph Goerres,
Schopenhauer was never able to acquire popularity with an academic audience. At
Berlin, no one single student registered for his course. As Copleston emphasizes, this
was due to Schopenhauer’s philosophical message as well as the way he articulated it:
“The pessimist’s philosophy was not only opposed to the spirit of time, which found its
embodiment in optimistic idealism, but also it did not lend itself to treatment in the
dialectical manner which was then in fashion under the influence of Hegel, so that
Schopenhauer was handicapped both by his matter and by the form in which he delivered

802 Ibid.
803 Ibid., p. 31.
Interestingly however, Copleston observes, “In spite of his complete failure, Schopenhauer continued for several years to have his name printed in the University catalogue and to announce the subject of his course, although the lectures were never delivered”.  

The other Schopenhauer’s undertakings of that period were as unsuccessful as the university teaching. He projected to translate Kant into English and Goethe, into French but he was never able to find a publisher to complete these projects. Neither could he find an editor for his German translation of Baltahazar Gracian’s *Handorakel* (*Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*), a Spanish writer and philosopher of the seventeenth century in whose worldview he found many parallels to his own.

These circumstances and, more generally, Schopenhauer’s growing alienation from the German cultural mainstream of the era resulted finally in his full renouncement of academic career. In 1833, he returned to Frankfurt and spent here the rest of his life. Until his death in 1860, Schopenhauer did not leave this city for even a short period of time. Having abandoned not only any further attempts to enter the academic world but also travel and matrimony, he lived, as Copleston puts it, ”a retired life, preoccupied with the composition of his works and the desire of fame and popularity”.  

In very rare cases, the scholarly community reacted favorably to the philosopher’s initiatives. For example, in 1839, he won a prize from the Scientific Society of Drontheim (Norway) for the best essay on the question of whether free-will world could

---

804 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
805 Ibid., p. 32.
806 Ibid., p. 34.
807 Ibid., pp. 34-35.
be proved from the evidences of consciousness. Moreover, he was elected a member of the Society. Nevertheless, such episodes did not change the general picture. Interestingly, when a much more prestigious society, The Royal Danish Academy of the Sciences at Copenhagen, instituted a prize competition for essays on ‘whether the source and foundation of ethic is to be sought in an intuitive moral idea, and in the analysis of other derivative moral conceptions, or in some other principle of knowledge’, and Schopenhauer submitted his essay on this topic, this essay was rejected with a unique wording. The Academy notified Schopenhauer that, though his essay was the only one sent in, it had failed to obtain the prize because the author failed to show proper respect for the leading philosophers. 808

The texts Schopenhauer worked on in that period developed and concretized he ideas of *The World as Will and Representation*. In 1836, he wrote *On the Will in Nature*; in 1844, he completed the second, enlarged edition of WWR and, finally, in 1851, he finished *Parerga and Paralipomena*, a collection of essays on a variety of topics. Three publishers rejected this book whereas the fourth accepted it without offering any payment. On the other hand, it was precisely this work that in a few years marked the beginning of Schopenhauer rise to an all-European prominence. “With the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena* in 1851”, Copleston justly observes, “He arrived at the evening of his life, and with the evening came fame.” 809 One earlier anticipation of Schopenhauer’s future recognition was the review by an anonymous author of his *Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics* titled “Doomsday on Hegelian Philosophy” and

808 Ibid., p. 36.
809 Ibid., p. 40.
published back in 1841 in a literary journal, *The Pilot*, that characterized Schopenhauer as the greatest philosopher of the era.  

Historically, this praise was a part of a much larger development. The era of the dominance those for whom Schopenhauer showed so little respect, was coming to a close. More specifically, that was the end of idealistic rationalism represented primarily by Hegelianism. This development included a political dimension. A year before the publication in *The Pilot*, the new King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, invited Hegel’s old opponent, Schelling, to Berlin to start teaching at Berlin University, which marked the official break with the Hegelianism. As Peter Lewis stresses, “Schelling arrived in Berlin as the prophet of a new era”. His popularity with the Berlin audiences did not last for long, however, and it was not he but other thinkers who became central to the new era that the intellectual community of the German-speaking realm and beyond entered.

One of such figures was Schopenhauer. The years that followed the philosophical change of the guards at Berlin, especially the last decade of his life were for him the period of an enthusiastic recognition, not only German but also all-European. Even the leader of the Hegelians Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz characterized Schopenhauer as “the newly elected emperor of philosophy in Germany”. This wording was not an exaggeration. “Schopenhauer’s hour was come”, Copleston writes. “Visitors came from… Vienna, from London, from Russia, from America; audiences of the great man

---

811 Lewis., p. 141.
812 Copleston., p. 41.
were eagerly sought for and his more fervid admirers kissed his hand: students made pilgrimages to Frankfurt as the had formerly made pilgrimages to Weimar.” 813

“I feel strange with my present fame”, Schopenhauer said to one of his visitors, the playwright Friedrich Hebbel. “No doubt you will have seen how, before a performance, as the houselights are extinguished and the curtain rises, a solitary lamplighter is still busy with the footlights and then hurriedly scampers off into the wings – just as the curtain goes up. This is how I feel: a latecomer, a leftover, just as the comedy of my fame is beginning.” 814 Indeed, although the others viewed Schopenhauer as an embodiment of a new era, he remained in many ways a person of the earlier age. One illustration of this was his reaction to the gift from Richard Wagner. “Thank your friend Wagner for me for sending me his Nibelungs”, Schopenhauer said to an intermediary who delivered to him a copy of the Nibelungenring, “But he should give up his music, he has more genius as a poet! I, Schopenhauer, remain faithful to Rossini and Mozart.” 815

These words illustrate something much larger than Schopenhauer’s conservative musical taste. One of his major features was his deep and unshakable belief in his world-historical mission as a thinker. “Mankind has learned a few things from me which it will never forget”, he said repeatedly. 816 This belief was based on that in a fundamental authenticity of his message. What was its nature? “Nearly a century before Freud”, Ruediger Safranski explains, “Schopenhauer turned round the philosophy of consciousness which had dominated Western thought. In Schopenhauer there is, for the

---

813 Ibid.
815 Ibid.
816 Ibid., p. 345.
first time, an explicit philosophy of the unconscious and of the body. Being determines consciousness. But being is not, as with Marx, the social body but our own real body, which makes us the equals of everything and, simultaneously, the enemies of everything that lives”. 817

This description highlights not only Schopenhauer’s anti-consciousness standpoint in itself but also the nature of what Safranski defines as Schopenhauer’s “message of denial”. His “great No” represented a fundamental dimension of his philosophy, and this circumstance raises the question of the major targets of Schopenhauer’s criticism.

On the one hand, Schopenhauer explicitly opposed the intellectual mainstream, specifically the German academic world. As he wrote, his “sole star has always been that of truth”, whereas “The university professors have had constantly before their eyes the fear of the Lord, the will of the ministry, the laws of the established church, the wishes of the publisher, the attendance of the students, the goodwill of the colleagues, the course of current politics, the momentary tendency of the public, and Heaven knows what besides”. 818 At the same time, his criticism by no means referred to the sociopolitical order. An impressive illustration of this provides the philosopher’s reaction to the revolutionary events of 1848 in Frankfurt. The outbreak of violence occurred in September when the radical workers who “had lost patience with the impotence of the middle-class ‘talking-shop’ attacked the All-German Assembly in the St-Paul’s Church. 819 From his apartment at 17 Schoene Aussicht, Schopenhauer observed what he described later as “a large rabble

817 Ibid.
819 Lewis., p. 149.
armed with pitchforks, poles and few rifles, with a red flag carried ahead of it’ crossing the bridge into the city”. 820

Without confining himself to observing the events, Schopenhauer demonstratively expressed his support of the authorities, more precisely, the Austrian and Prussian troops restoring the order in Frankfurt. When the Austrian soldiers hammered at his door, he immediately showed them to a suitable vantage point at his windows from which they could fire the protesters. Furthermore, when they “later decided to move to the house next door, he lent the commanding officer his ‘big, double opera glasses’ so that he could get a better view of ‘the rabble behind the barricade’”. 821 No less demonstratively did he express his support of the authorities after the order was restored. The vehemence with which he denounced the leaders of the mob as well as his praise for “the noble Prince Windischgraetz” who had helped put down the rebellion shocked even the conservative aristocratic officers. Interestingly also, in his will written in 1852, he left most of his estate to be employed for the benefit of the royalist soldiers wounded at Berlin in 1848. 822

According to Copleston, the position taken by Schopenhauer was to a substantial extent due to his fear that the revolutionary events “might result in the loss of his own property”. 823 Nevertheless, an interpretation of it presupposes addressing the more general question of the philosopher’s understanding of state power. In this context, Safranski justly observes that “Schopenhauer explicitly contradicts all theories, developed by Kant’s successors, which expect the state to accomplish a moral

821 Lewis., p. 150.
822 Copleston., p. 38.
823 Ibid., p. 37.
improvement of man (Schiller, Hegel) or which regard the state as a kind of higher human organism (Novalis, Schleiermacher, etc.)”. “The state, according to Schopenhauer,” Safranski clarifies, “Protects the individual against himself; it cannot improve him. The state is a social machine which, at best, couples collective egotism with a collective interest of survival.” 824 Indeed, as Schopenhauer stresses, “The state, aiming at well-being, is by no means directed against egoism, but only against the injurious consequences of egoism arising out of the plurality of egoistic individuals, reciprocally affecting them, and disturbing their well-being”. 825

This understanding of the functions of state determines Schopenhauer’s political ideal resembling in some ways the common Romantic opposition between the organic and inorganic entities, postulated with particular clarity by Goerres. The Schopenhauer’s standpoint is explicitly and uncompromisingly anti-republican. “Republics”, he states, “Are unnatural and artificial productions and have sprung from reflection; and so in the whole history of the world they occur only as rare exceptions. Thus there were the small republics of Greece, Rome, and Carthage which were all conditioned by the fact that five-sixths, or perhaps even seven-eighths, of the population consisted of slaves…. Moreover, the duration of the republics of antiquity was very short compared with that of monarchies. Republics generally are easy to establish, but difficult to maintain; with monarchies the very reverse is true.” 826

Significantly also, in spite of Schopenhauer’s pragmatic understanding of the functions of state, his philosophy contains a clearly outlined sociopolitical ideal. This

824 Safranski., p. 230.
825 World as Will and Representation, volume I, p. 345.
826 Parerga and Paralipomena, volume II, p. 256.
ideal is fundamentally elitist. “If we want utopian plans”, he states, “Then I say that the only solution to the problem is a despotism of the wise and noble, of a genuine aristocracy and true nobility, attained on the path of generation by a union between the noblest men and the cleverest and most brilliant women”. “This is my idea of Utopia, my Republic of Plato”, Schopenhauer emphasizes. 827

In concretizing what kind of nobility and brilliance he has in mind, he develops the idea of the three kinds of aristocracy. In this context, it becomes particularly visible that the distinction between the earlier post-Kantian theorists and Schopenhauer is not that between those proclaiming the moral function of state and those putting it aside. Indeed, Schopenhauer does not merely deny a moral improvement of man as a task for the state to perform. He goes even further by explicitly basing social hierarchy not on virtue but on vice. “No hatred is as implacable as envy”, he observes. “We should, therefore, not incessantly and assiduously endeavor to excite it”, he continues, “On the contrary, it would be better for us to renounce this pleasure, like many another, because of its dangerous consequences.” 828

As Schopenhauer postulates, “There are three kinds of aristocracy: (1) of birth and rank, (2) of money, and (3) of the mind or intellect”. “The last”, he explains, “Is really the most distinguished and is acknowledged as such if only it is given time. Even Frederick the Great said: Privileged minds have equal rank with sovereigns, and this to his chamberlain who took umbrage at the fact that, whereas ministers and generals dined at the chamberlain’s table, Voltaire should be given a place at the table where only

827 Ibid.
monarchs and princes sat.” 829 “Each of these aristocracies”, Schopenhauer specifies, “Is surrounded by a host of envious people who are secretly embittered towards any member thereof. But it is these very efforts on their part that show how convinced they are of the opposite.” 830

This reasoning brings Schopenhauer to two conclusions. One is his recommendation for “those who are exposed to envy” to keep at a distance the whole host of the envious and voiding as much as possible all contact with them” or, in other words, the necessity to maintain their aristocratic status. The other is the idea of a synthesis of the three aristocracies because, as he stresses, “The members of one aristocracy will for the most part get on well with those of the other two without being envious, because each will match his advantages and privileges with those of the others”. 831

Without confining himself to this general reasoning, Schopenhauer applied his ideal of hierarchy to the precisely German situation. Although, as McGill asserts, “Unlike Fichte and Hegel, and most of the great men around him, Schopenhauer had no special sympathy for Germany… and expressed… only contempt for national boundaries and national pretensions” 832, the passages on the German question in his texts draw a different picture. Contrary to Schopenhauer’s alleged indifference to the fate of the Vaterland, he expresses a clearly outlined and concrete political philosophy. In doing so, he articulates his negative attitude to the small German constitutional monarchies by

829 Ibid.
830 Ibid.
831 Parerga and Paralipomena, I, p. 431.
832 McGill, p. 29.
pointing to the illusory character of their sovereignty. “Constitutional kings undoubtedly resemble the gods of Epicurus” Schopenhauer explains, “Who, without meddling in human affairs, sit up in their heaven in undisturbed bliss and serenity”. The other side of this statement is Schopenhauer’s contempt for constitutionalism. “They (constitutions) have now become a fashion”, he writes, “And in every petty German principality a parody of English constitution is set up, complete with Upper and Lower Houses down to the Habeas Corpus Act and trial by jury.” Natural to the English people, these forms are foreign to the Germans, Schopenhauer insists.

Here is how he describes the sociopolitical system suitable for his compatriots: “It is just as natural for the German people to be divided into many branches under many actually ruling princes, with an emperor over them who maintains peace at home and represents the unity of the State abroad”. Significantly in this context, Schopenhauer puts the emphasis not on the princes but on the emperor. “I am of the opinion”, he stresses, “That, if Germany is not to meet the fate of Italy, she must restore as effectively as possible the imperial dignity that was abolished by her archenemy, the first Bonaparte. For German unity is bound up with it, and without it will always be only nominal or precarious”. No less curiously, if the Kaisers of the medieval German Empire had to be elected, in the modern situation Schopenhauer prefers the imperial power to be hereditary. “Since we no longer live in the times of Guenther of Schwarzburg when the

834 Ibid., pp. 256-257.
835 Parerga and Paralipomena, volume II, pp. 256-257.
836 Ibid.
choice of an emperor was a serious business”, he clarifies, “The imperial throne should pass alternatively to Austria and Prussia for the duration of the emperor’s life.”

In sum, Schopenhauer’s reasoning on social order and, more specifically, the sociopolitical dimensions of the German question, not only explain his position toward the protesters in 1848 but, no less significantly, highlights what his sociopolitical views had in common with those of the figures examined earlier in this study and in what way they differed from them. On the one hand, Schopenhauer’s views are far from unique, and the ideas of Schlegel and Goerres regarding the Reich and the Staende system, are easily recognizable in them. There exist two serious differences, however: one is Schopenhauer’s standpoint on morality, the other, the way he articulates his position.

One illustration of the role of the denial of the state’s moral function within Schopenhauer’s discourse is that he explicitly defines his sociopolitical ideal as despotism, although that of the wise and noble. One should emphasize also that his comparison of this ideal with Plato’s Republic makes it clear how far it goes beyond a merely pragmatic approach.

Another other distinction between Schopenhauer, on the one hand and Schlegel, Frank, and Goerres on the other, was in the way he expressed his position. Curiously, the specificity of this expression was not confined to his provocative rhetoric. For example, he not merely took the side of the authorities in 1848 but he did so in the most demonstrative manner possible during the upheaval as well as in its aftermath.

Ibid., p. 257.
This unique demonstrativeness provides a motivation for addressing the linkage between the ideas of Schopenhauer and his personality with more preciseness. In doing so, Georg Lukacs highlights the socioeconomic dimension by describing the author of *The World as Will and Representation* as the first major instance in Germany of a writer with private means. “His biography distinguishes him quite sharply from all his German predecessors and contemporaries”, Lukacs observes. “He was a “grand bourgeois’ in contrast to the others’ petty-bourgeois status… Accordingly Schopenhauer did not experience the normal straits of petty-bourgeois German intellectuals (private tutoring, etc.) but spent a large part of his youth on journeys all over Europe. After a brief transitional period as a business trainee he lived a peaceful existence on private means, an existence in which even his university link – the teaching post in Berlin – played a merely episodic role.”

According to Lukacs, this social status of Schopenhauer had predetermined the major features of his position as a thinker. “This material freedom from all daily cares” he specifies, “Provided the basis of Schopenhauer’s independence not only from semi-feudal, State-determined conditions of existence (a university career, etc.) but also from the intellectual movements connected with them. Thus it was possible for him to occupy a stubbornly personal position on all questions without having to make any sacrifices. In this respect he became a model for Germany’s later ‘rebel’ bourgeois intellectuals.”

The specificity of the Schopenhauer’s case goes far beyond the model described above, however. Specifically, its uniqueness is related to the demonstrativeness with

---

839 Lukacs., p. 198.
which he expressed his views not only in his texts but also in his way of life. Curiously, among the distinguished German philosophers Schopenhauer was the only one who became a part of the popular culture. In this context, numerous anecdotes on him represent a particularly interesting source. “A collection of the efforts to comprehend the personality of the philosophers” – this is how the publisher of these anecdotes, Arthur Huebscher, characterizes them. “Some of these anecdotes”, he specifies, “Were told already within the circle of his friends and admirers; in part, they were known to him himself, and he voiced his opinion on them.”

Interestingly in this context, all these anecdotes with no one single exception are set in Frankfurt; they reflect, therefore, exclusively the last period of the philosopher’s career, during which he started rising to prominence. One curious detail Huebscher points to is that as the hero of these stories, Schopenhauer, a native of Danzig who grew up in Hamburg expresses himself in a distinctive Frankfurt dialect.

Significantly, this tradition of anecdotes on Schopenhauer going back to the philosopher’s circle and, to some degree, to him himself represents a unique phenomenon. Indeed, although, as Copleston stresses, “His (Schopenhauer’s) manner of life at Frankfurt is well known, though not so well known as that of Kant”, this juxtaposition overlooks one fundamental difference: if the stories on Kant, his servant, Lampe, etc., could be related to any daydreamer professor immersed in his studies and they have nothing to do with the specifically Kant’s philosophy, the anecdotes on

---

841 Ibid., p. 10.
842 Copleston., p. 25.
Schopenhauer highlight, although in a simplified form, his major ideas regarding man and animal, women and marriage, religion and medicine, life and death. In this context, one can single out several themes central to Schopenhauer’s Weltanschauung. The most important of them is reflected in the anecdote about Schopenhauer addressing his dog as another human being (Du Mensch!) \(^{843}\) in the event of the dog having done something inappropriate, and the stories of this kind reflect not simply Schopenhauer’s misanthropy and his ostentatious devotion to his dogs but also his key idea of the inseparable wholeness of the world including men and animals as representing together a manifestation of one all-pervasive will. Similarly, the numerous jokes on women (“the only merit of a woman’s lips is their being closed”) \(^{844}\) and on the undesirability of marriage for a philosopher and the absurdity of marriage and family life in general \(^{845}\) articulate Schopenhauer’s radical antifeminist viewpoint quite visible in his texts.

These anecdotes on Schopenhauer help, therefore, not only comprehend the personality of the philosophers in addition to his ideas but they also demonstrate the ideas of Schopenhauer as manifestations of his personality. And significantly, this principle goes beyond the philosopher’s personal tastes and habits, such as his defiant hedonism and love for good wine. \(^{846}\) One illustration of the anecdotal portrayal of the major components of Schopenhauer’s philosophy is a story on his atheism. Here is how the denial by Schopenhauer of the existence of God is interpreted in this “efforts to comprehend the personality of the philosopher”. Baron Anselm Mayer Rothschild of Frankfurt learns that Herr Schopenhauer does not believe in God, which is unacceptable.

\(^{843}\) Huebscher., p. 13.
\(^{844}\) Ibid., p. 37.
\(^{845}\) Ibid., pp. 42, 44-49.
\(^{846}\) Ibid., p. 34.
for any respectable gentleman. On the other hand, the famous banker learns from
Schopenhauer that not believing in God is his business. In response, Rothschild displays
his full understanding (Das ist dem Mann sein Geschaeft. Geschaeft ist Geschaetft),
which results in the further acceptance of Schopenhauer by the Buergerverein of the city,
although normally only the citizens believing in God can join it. Nevertheless, it makes
an exception for Schopenhauer as the one for whom the denial of God is a Geschaeft. 847

Significantly in this context, the anecdotal image of Schopenhauer echoes the
well-documented biographical evidences also demonstrating him as a thinker not only
expressing his ideas in a textual form but also representing them in his every day life. But
if Schopenhauer as the hero of the anecdotes confines himself to choosing the most
provocative and rather humiliating wordings to articulate his nihilism regarding the most
important human values, the biographical data highlight the same demonstrativeness in
him representing the major aspects of his Weltanschauung in a positive way.

One of these aspects was Schopenhauer’s fascination with India and its religions.
Not only did he praise the wisdom of the Upanishads and positioned himself a Buddhist,
but his representation of himself through India went as far as to name his favorite dog
with the Sanskrit word “Atma” (Atman) signifying the central notion of the Indian
religious-philosophical tradition. Curiously also, the philosopher left three hundred
Gulden to Atma in his will. 848 No less demonstrative was another example of
Schopenhauer’s devotion to India’s heritage. “A few years before his death”, Copleston
relates, “Schopenhauer obtained a statue of Buddha from Paris and had it gilded, and it

847 Ibid., pp. 34-36.
848 McGill., p. 306.
was his custom, before retiring for the night, to meditate on the text of the Upanishads. Perhaps this had been his occupation on the last night of his life on earth, to meditate on the vanity of life and the fact of death.\textsuperscript{849} In tune with this oriental-like style was the way Schopenhauer arranged his funeral. “Anywhere; they will find me” – such was his constant answer to the questions of where he wished to be buried. And, in accordance with his last will, the inscription on the black tombstone over his grave in Frankfurt has neither his date birth, nor of his death but only two words, Arthur Schopenhauer. \textsuperscript{850}

In summarizing these evidences, one can observe one curious circumstance. Positioning himself as a lonely wise man foreign to the official academic world and renouncing any public activities, Schopenhauer made his life a vehicle of the public expression of this renouncement. Without confining himself to articulating his philosophy in a textual form, he deliberately and consequently created his image as a thinker. Not only does he express his pro-governmental and pro-Austrian stand in 1848 in the most provocative form possible; even his meditation on the Upanishads before a statue of Buddha in his study becomes known to his admirers and acquires, thus, the features of a public performance.

Did this phenomenon have any parallels in the earlier history of philosophy? In analyzing the sociocultural type represented by Schopenhauer, Lukacs juxtaposed him with Voltaire. “Voltaire too battled unceasingly to attain a complete independence”, Lukacs specified, “In his case from feudal and courtly patronage. He (Voltaire) did so, however, not only on behalf of his individual productive work but so as to be able to

\textsuperscript{849} Copleston., p. 44.  
\textsuperscript{850} Ibid.
make a stand as an independent intellectual force against feudal absolutism in respect of all the important topical issues (the Calas case, etc.)” With Schopenhauer”, he stressed, “We find not a slightest sign of such a relation to public life. His ‘independence’ was that of the self-willed, sheerly egoistic eccentric who uses it to retire from public life completely and to free himself from all obligations existing towards it.”

Without underestimating the importance of these observations, one can consider the Schopenhauer-like eccentricity and demonstrativeness within a broader historical context. As to one particularly striking parallel one can point to the practices of the so-called philosophical life building of the late Antiquities.

Here is how Elena Rabinovich describes this phenomenon: “At times, the philosophical life building… acquired very unusual forms (for example, among the Cynics). This life building emerged… not without the influence of the Pythagoreans, and it pursued … the aim of a social self-determination, that is, a separation of the philosophers as a special category of people… The life of a philosopher was seen as an embodiment of his doctrine (hence the traditional images of Socrates in jail, Diogenes in his tub, and Epicurus in the garden. The advancement of philosophical learning contributed to that of life building: the most impressive example here was the senators of the Roman Republic… combining the old Roman and the Stoic etiquettes in their behaviors; on the other hand, in the demonstrative self willingness of the young

---

851 Lukacs., p. 199.
Alcibiades one can discover already some features of that specific form of life building that would later flourish in the dandyism of Modern Europe. 

These historical parallels help explain the specifically Schopenhauer’s place within the spectrum of the German fascination with India with more clarity. This place was determined by a combination of three factors: his sources, his philosophical program, and his rhetoric. On the one hand, he inherited the Romantic attitude to India and, no less importantly, the major source on which the earlier German thinkers (especially those unfamiliar with Sanskrit) based their reasoning on the Indian civilization, the Oupnekhat. On the other hand, his attitude to India was different. If Schlegel analyzed Indian thought within the Bible-based perspective, if Frank proclaimed the return to the Iranian-Indian heritage as a program of the German national revival, and if Goerres created his own synthetic narrative based on the Indian narratives juxtaposed with other narratives, Schopenhauer incorporated the Indian categories in his philosophical discourse and explicitly identified himself as an adherent of the Indian religious-philosophical tradition. Importantly also, without confining himself with articulating this adherence in his texts, he made it a part of his life style.

Among the examples of the, to use the wording by Azade Seyhan, Romantic representation through India Schopenhauer’s attitude to Indian philosophy represented, thus, a particularly internalized and personalized case. This circumstance raises the question of the specificity of the precisely Schopenhauer’s version of the generally

---

Romantic re-integration project versus those examined earlier. An examination of this question presupposes the focus on two parameters: first, the specifically Schopenhauer’s understanding of the European modernity as the target of his Romantic critique and, second, his view of the Indian alternative to what he criticized.

An examination of the internalization of Indian thought by Schopenhauer presupposes also taking into account the specificity of his philosophical reasoning. One distinctive feature of it is the coexistence in Schopenhauer’s discourse of different, at times even opposite statements on the same subject. And interestingly, his articulation of this explicit self-contradictoriness includes usually a strong personal dimension. One example of this is Schopenhauer’s attitude to state. His demonstrative expression of his indifference to the state issues (“I thank God every morning that I do not need to concern myself with Roman Empire’ has always been my motto”) and his scornful description of Hegel’s adulation of State as the worst philistinism did not prevent him from outlining quite clearly his view of the desirable state organization, and, in spite the differences in wording, this view was as statist and Staende-based as those of Hegel and the Romantics.

Another distinction between Schopenhauer, on the one hand and Schlegel, Goerres and even Frank, on the other, was that, unlike them, Schopenhauer’s philosophy did not include a philosophy of history as a special section. To examine his understanding of world history one should, therefore, localize them within the other spheres of his discourse. As to two such interrelated spheres one should point to his reasoning on religion, specifically the juxtaposition of Christianity and the Indian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, and to his interpretation of the history of the European philosophy. In
reconstructing them, this study will address two major texts, *The World as Will and Representation* and *Parerga and Paralipomena*.

**The Philosophical Foundations of Schopenhauer’s Re-Integration Project**

Here is how Schopenhauer starts is reasoning in *The World as Will and Representation*: “I part with the book with deep seriousness, in the sure hope that sooner or later it will reach those to whom alone it can be addressed; and for the rest, patiently resigned that the same fate should, in full measure, befall it, that in all ages has, to some extent, befallen all knowledge, and especially the weightiest knowledge of the truth, to which only a brief triumph is allotted between the two long periods in which it is condemned as paradoxical or disparaged as trivial. The former fate is also wont to befall its author. But life is short, and truth works far and lives long: let us speak the truth.”

What is this truth that Schopenhauer is intended to announce? “No truth… is more certain”, he states, “More independent of all others, and less in need of proof than this, that all that exists for knowledge, and therefore this whole world, is only object in relation to subject, perception of a perceiver, in a word, idea. This is obviously true of the past and the future, as well as of the present, of what is farthest off, as of what is near; for it is true of time and space themselves, in which alone these distinctions arise. All that in any way belongs or can belong to the world is inevitably thus conditioned through the subject, and exists only for the subject. The world is idea (presentation; *Vorstellung*).”

---

854 Ibid., p. 3.
The problem with this “most certain truth” begins once Schopenhauer places it within a historical-philosophical context. This place is far from self-evident. On the one hand, Schopenhauer emphasizes the fallacy of all existing epistemologies and, therefore, the uniqueness of his approach. “However much we investigate”, he asserts, “We can never reach anything but images and names. We are like a man who goes round a castle seeking in vain for an entrance, and sometimes sketching the façades. And yet this is the method that has been followed by all philosophers before me.”  

At the same time, formulating his key thesis (“The world is my idea (representation), he asserts, that “This truth is by no means new”. “It was”, he specifies, “Implicitly involved in the sceptical reflections from which Descartes started. Berkeley, however, was the first who distinctly enunciated it, and by this he has rendered a permanent service to philosophy, even though the rest of his teaching should not endure. Kant's primary mistake was the neglect of this principle…”

It is in this context and in the first paragraph of his major philosophical work that Schopenhauer addresses Indian philosophy for the first time. “How early again this truth was recognized by the wise men of India, appearing indeed as the fundamental tenet of the Vedânta philosophy ascribed to Vyasa”, he notes, “Is pointed out by Sir William Jones in the last of his essays: “On the philosophy of the Asiatics” (Asiatic Researches, vol. iv. p. 164), where he says, “The fundamental tenet of the Vedanta school consisted not in denying the existence of matter, that is, of solidity, impenetrability, and extended figure (to deny which would be lunacy), but in correcting the popular notion of it, and in contending that it has no essence independent of mental perception; that existence and

---

855 Ibid., p. 143.
856 Ibid., p. 4.
perceptibility are convertible terms. ”These words adequately express the compatibility of empirical reality and transcendental ideality.” 857 Indian philosophy, specifically Vedanta, appears thus in Schopenhauer’s reasoning alongside with Descartes, Berkeley, and Kant and, no less importantly, in direct connection with his own philosophical position placed within the world philosophical process. Of no lesser significance is his emphasis on the centrality of the Indian contribution to this process. As to one illustration of this centrality he points to the role of the Indian heritage in history of logics. “Aristotle”, Schopenhauer asserts, “Collected, arranged, and corrected all that had been discovered before his time, and brought it to an incomparably greater state of perfection. If we thus observe how the course of Greek culture had prepared the way for, and led up to the work of Aristotle, we shall be little inclined to believe the assertion of the Persian author, quoted by Sir William Jones with much approval, that Kallisthenes found a complete system of logic among the Indians, and sent it to his uncle Aristotle (Asiatic Researches, vol. iv. p. 163). 858

Yet incomparably more important for Schopenhauer’s reasoning is the Indian understanding of the nature of reality. In addressing the problem fundamental for proving his key thesis (The world is idea (representation) and, therefore, for the whole Schopenhauer’s undertaking, he distinguished between two types of philosophy. To the first belong “the systems starting from the object”. As Schopenhauer clarifies, such systems “Had always the whole world of perception and its constitution as their problem”. As he specifies, these philosophies vary depending on their understanding of the object. It is not always this whole world of perception, nor its fundamental element,

857 Ibid.
858 Ibid., p. 62.
mater, Schopenhauer explains. “Thales and the Ionic school, Democritus, Epicurus, Giordano Bruno, and the French materialists, may be said to have started from... the real world, he continues. Spinoza (on account of his conception of substance, which is purely abstract, and exists only in his definition) and, earlier, the Eleatics, from... the abstract conception: the Pythagoreans and Chinese philosophy in Y-King, from... time, and consequently number: and, lastly, the schoolmen, who teach a creation out of nothing by the act of will of an extra-mundane personal being...” 859

In spite of these differences, all these philosophies have the objective reality independent on the subject as their common starting point. These are the philosophies that Schopenhauer opposes, and he finds an alternative to them in the Indian tradition. Generally, he bases his critique of the object-based philosophy on the principle of sufficient reason, according to which any proved thesis is considered as true. In applying this principle to the question of the nature of reality, he addresses the categories of time and space. In both cases, Schopenhauer emphasizes the emptiness of very concept of reality and, more specifically, the impossibility of distinguishing clearly between reality and imagination. “In it each instant is”, he writes with regard of time, “Only in so far as it has effaced the preceding one, its generator, to be itself in turn as quickly effaced. The past and the future (considered apart from the consequences of their content) are empty as a dream, and the present is only the indivisible and unenduring boundary between them.” 860

In similar way, Schopenhauer describes space. “We shall find the same emptiness”, he stresses, “And shall see that not time only but also space, and the whole content of

859 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
860 Ibid., volume I, p. 9.
both of them, i.e., all that proceeds from causes and motives, has a merely relative existence, is only through and for another like to itself, i.e., not more enduring.” 861

In describing this alternative to the object-based philosophy, Schopenhauer points also to the deep historical roots of this alternative. “The substance of this doctrine is old”, he writes. “It appears in Heraclitus when he laments the eternal flux of things; in Plato when he degrades the object to that which is ever becoming, but never being; in Spinoza as the doctrine the doctrine of the mere accidents of the one substance which is and endures. Kant opposes what is thus known as the mere phenomenon to the thing in itself.” 862

Within this spectrum, Indian thought occupies a special place as an underpinning of Schopenhauer’s theory. Specifically, he introduces the category of Maya. “The ancient wisdom of the Indian philosophers declares“, he notes, “It is Mâyâ, the veil of deception, which blinds the eyes of mortals, and makes them behold a world of which they cannot say either that it is or that it is not: for it is like a dream; it is like the sunshine on the sand which the traveller takes from afar for water, or the stray piece of rope he mistakes for a snake. (These similes are repeated in innumerable passages of the Vedas and the Puranas.)” 863

If these Indian parallels represent one dimension of the Schopenhauer’s reasoning on the illusory nature of the phenomenal world, the psychological-epistemological analysis of the problem in terms of Kantianism is the other. “The world of perception raises in the observer no question or doubt so long as he remains in contact with it”, he

861 Ibid.
862 Ibid.
863 Ibid.
explains. “There is here neither error nor truth, for these are confined to the province of the abstract the province of reflection. But here the world… presents itself with naive truth as that which it really is ideas of perception which develop themselves according to the law of causality." In other words, the question of validity of perception emerges outside perception. On the other hand, as Schopenhauer states, “After examination of the whole nature of the principle of sufficient reason, of the relation of subject and object, and the special conditions of sense perception, the question itself disappeared because it had no longer any meaning”. 864 “We have dreams”, he explains; “May not our whole life be a dream? Or more exactly: is there a sure criterion of the distinction between dreams and reality?...We can only compare the recollection of a dream with the present reality.” 865

Addressing the difference between reality and dream, Schopenhauer cites Kant: “The connection of ideas among themselves, according to the law of causality, constitutes the difference between real life and dreams.” Schopenhauer does not find this argument plausible, however. “In dreams”, he objects, “As well as in real life, everything is connected individually at any rate, in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms, and this connection is broken only between life and dreams, or between one dream and another. Kant's answer therefore could only run thus: the long dream (life) has throughout complete connection according to the principle of sufficient reason; it has not this connection, however, with short dreams, although each of these has in itself the same connection: the bridge is therefore broken between the former and the latter, and on this account we distinguish them. But to institute an inquiry according to this criterion, as to

864 Ibid.
865 Ibid.
whether something was dreamt or seen, would always be difficult and often impossible. For we are by no means in a position to trace link by link the causal connection between any experienced event and the present moment, but we do not on that account explain it as dreamt. Therefore in real life we do not commonly employ that method of distinguishing between dreams and reality.” 866

At this point, Schopenhauer addresses once again the Indian tradition as the most ancientsource of the epistemology that he advocates, and he explicitly applies the concept of maya to the phenomenal world. “We need not be ashamed to confess it”, he asserts, “As it has been recognized and spoken of by many great men. The Vedas and Puranas have no better simile than a dream for the whole knowledge of the actual world, which they call the web of Mâyâ, and they use none more frequently.” 867 Significantly however, although Schopenhauer stresses the importance of the Indian tradition, he by no means views it as the only historical predecessor of his life-is-dream philosophy. No less impressive evidences of this worldview can be found in Europe, he insists. Not only does Schopenhauer point to Plato’s interpretation of human life with a ream (“The philosopher alone strives to awake himself”) but he also recalls the words of Tempest by Shakespeare: “We are such stuff/As dreams are made on, and our little life/ Is rounded with a sleep”.

"Lastly”, Schopenhauer writes, “Calderon was so deeply impressed with this view of life that he sought to embody it in a kind of metaphysical drama – ‘Life a Dream’. ” 868

These parallels to poetry and drama highlight also another key aspect of Schopenhauer’s discourse on the illusory phenomenal world described as maya. It has not

866 Ibid.
867 Ibid., pp. 20-22.
868 Ibid., p. 22.
only epistemological but also a very clearly outlined existential dimension. Here is how Schopenhauer describes this dimension: “For to him (average individual) pleasure appears as one thing and pain as quite another thing: one man as a tormentor and a murderer, another as a martyr and a victim… He sees one man live in joy, abundance, and pleasure, and even at his door another die miserably of want and cold. Then he asks, Where is the retribution? And he himself, in the vehement, pressure of will which is his origin and his nature, seizes upon the pleasures and enjoyments of life… and knows not that by this very act of his will he seizes and hugs all those pains and sorrows at the sight of which he shudders. He sees the ills and he sees the wickedness in the world, but far from knowing that both of these are but different sides of the manifestation of the one will to live, he regards them as very different… and often seeks to escape by… causing the suffering of another, from ills, from the suffering of his own individuality.” 869

It is this human perception of the human condition that prevents man from the comprehension of the true reality concealed by the veil of maya: “The investigator himself” is “more than the pure knowing subject (a winged cherub without a body)”… he himself” is “rooted in that world”. 870

The consequences of this fact need clarification, however. “He (the subject) finds himself in it (the phenomenal world) as an individual”, Schopenhauer explains, “That is to say, his knowledge, which is the necessary supporter of the whole world as idea, is yet always given through the medium of a body, whose affections are… the starting point for the understanding in the perception of that world”. If for the pure knowing subject human

869 Ibid., volume I, p. 455.
870 Ibid.
body as “an idea like every other idea, an object among objects”, a real human being perceived his (her) body in an entirely different way, Schopenhauer emphasizes. As he specifies, “the answer to the riddle is given to the subject of knowledge who appears as an individual, and the answer is will”. “This and this alone”, Schopenhauer continues, “Gives him the key to his own existence, reveals to him the significance, shows him the inner mechanism of his being, of his action, of his movements. The body is given in two entirely different ways to the subject of knowledge, who becomes an individual only through his identity with it. It is given as an idea in intelligent perception, as an object among objects and subject to the laws of objects. And it is also given in quite a different way as that which is immediately known to every one, and is signified by the word ‘will’.”

One consequence of this identification of the body and the will is the understanding of the will as an individual, that is, his (her) own will. According to Schopenhauer, this understanding is merely another consequence of the ultimate reality being concealed under the veil of maya, however. What appears as an individual will, represents in fact merely a visible manifestation in space of one single super-individual will objectifying itself in a variety of forms. “Of this (objectification) there is a higher grade in the plant than in the stone”, Schopenhauer specifies, “In the animal a higher grade than in the plant: indeed, the passage of will into visibility, its objectification, has grades as innumerable as exist between the dimmest twilight and the brightest sunshine, the loudest sound and the faintest echo.” “But”, he stresses, “As the grades of its

---

871 Ibid., pp. 129-130.
872 Ibid., p. 133.
objectification do not directly concern the will itself, still less is it concerned by the multiplicity of the phenomena of these different grades, i.e., the multitude of individuals of each form, or the particular manifestations of each force. For this multiplicity is directly conditioned by time and space, into which the will itself never enters. The will reveals itself as completely and as much in one oak as in millions. Their number and multiplication in space and time has no meaning with regard to it, but only with regard to the multiplicity of individuals who know in space and time, and who are themselves multiplied and dispersed in these. The multiplicity of these individuals itself belongs not to the will, but only to its manifestation. We may therefore say that if, per impossible, a single real existence, even the most insignificant, were to be entirely annihilated, the whole world would necessarily perish with it. The great mystic Angelus Silesius feels this when he says “I know God cannot live an instant without me, He must give up the ghost if I should cease to be”.  

As another example of this full immersion in the universe and, therefore, the identification of one’s individual existence with the super-personal ultimate reality, Schopenhauer cites the lines of Byrone: “Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part of me and of my soul, as I of them?” But as to the deepest and clearest expression of this worldview, he points to the Anquetil-Duperron’s Latin translation of “the Upanishad of the Veda”: “Hæ omnes creaturæ in toton ego sum, et præter me aliud ens non est (Oupnekhat, i. 122)”.  

Significantly in this context, Schopenhauer points also to an unbridgeable gulf between this view and that of the average individual. “The sight of the uncultured

---

873 Ibid., p. 167.
874 Ibid., p. 234
individual is clouded, as the Hindus say, by the veil of Mâyā”, he emphasizes. “He sees not the thing-in-itself but the phenomenon in time and space… And in this form of his limited knowledge he sees not the inner nature of things, which is one, but its phenomena as separated, disunited, innumerable, very different, and indeed opposed”. 875 This circumstance determines not only the epistemological but also the ethical views of Schopenhauer, specifically, his critique of the optimistic and rationalist ethical systems. “It is far from the case… that the reason, rightly used, can really free us from the burden and sorrow of life, and lead us to happiness”, he asserts. “Rather”, he continues, “There lies an absolute contradiction in wishing to live without suffering, and this contradiction is also implied in the commonly used expression, “blessed life.” 876

Significantly in this context, not only does Schopenhauer criticizes the purely endaemonist doctrines, but he also considers the ethics of Stoicism as a phenomenon of a similar kind. “In this purely rational system of ethics”, he writes, “The contradiction reveals itself thus, the Stoic is obliged in his doctrine of the way to the blessed life… to insert a recommendation of suicide… for the case in which the sufferings of the body, which cannot be philosophized away by any principles or syllogistic reasoning, are paramount and incurable; thus its one aim, blessedness, is rendered vain, and nothing remains as a mode of escape from suffering except death; in such a case then death must be voluntarily accepted, just as we would take any other medicine. Here then a marked antagonism is brought out between the ethical system of Stoicism and all those systems referred to above which make virtue in itself directly, and accompanied by the most

875 Ibid., pp. 455-456.
876 Ibid., p. 119.
grievous sorrows, their aim, and will not allow a man to end his life in order to escape from suffering”. “The Stoic philosopher”, Schopenhauer concludes, “…Could never obtain life or inner poetic truth, but remains a wooden, stiff lay-figure of which nothing can be made. He cannot himself make use of his wisdom…” 877

As the factor preventing the Stoics from obtaining the “inner poetic truth”, Schopenhauer highlights their inability to overcome the *principium individuationis* and, thus, comprehend the illusory character of the individual existence. As to the examples of the true “overcomers of the world” he points to the “voluntary hermits that Indian philosophy presents to us” and to the “holy man of Christianity”. In characterizing this type of man, Schopenhauer emphasizes that “Attaining to the state of voluntary renunciation, resignation, true indifference, and perfect willlessness”, he “no longer makes the egotistical distinction between his person and that of others, but takes as much interest in the sufferings of other individuals as in his own, and therefore is not only benevolent in the highest degree, but even ready to sacrifice his own individuality whenever such a sacrifice will save a number of other persons, then it clearly follows that such a man, who recognizes in all beings his own inmost and true self, must also regard the infinite suffering of all suffering beings as his own, and take on himself the pain of the whole world. No suffering is any longer strange to him. All the miseries of others, which he sees and is so seldom able to alleviate, all the miseries he knows directly, and even those, which he only knows as possible, work upon his mind like his own. It is no longer the changing joy and sorrow of his own person that he has in view, as is the case with him who is still involved in egoism; but, since he sees through the *principium*

877 Ibid., pp. 119-120.
individuationis, all lies equally near him. He knows the whole, comprehends its nature, and finds that it consists in a constant passing away, vain striving, inward conflict, and continual suffering”. 878

In underpinning this observation, Schopenhauer cites a variety of evidences. On the one hand, refers to the passage in the Vedas quoting the translations by Colebrooke published in the *Asiatic Researches*; no less importantly, he recalls the lines by “the admirable and unfathomably profound Angelus Silesius (“Man! all loves thee; around thee great is the throng. All things flee to thee that they may attain to God.”) and by “a yet greater mystic, Meister Eckhart (“I bear witness to the saying of Christ. I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things unto me.”) “In Buddhism also, there is no lack of expressions of this truth”, Schopenhauer continues. “For example, when Buddha, still as Bodisatwa, has his horse saddled for the last time, for his flight into the wilderness from his father's house, he says these lines to the horse: “Long hast thou existed in life and in death, but now thou shalt cease from carrying and drawing. Bear me but this once more, O Kantakana, away from here, and when I have attained to the Law (have become Buddha) I will not forget thee”. 879

Within this framework, the way Schopenhauer presents his philosophy becomes more visible. “What I have here described with feeble tongue and only in general terms”, he explains, “Is no philosophical fable, invented by myself, and only of to-day; no, it was the enviable life of so many saints and beautiful souls among Christians, and still more among Hindus and Buddhists, and also among the believers of other religions. However different were the dogmas impressed on their reason, the same inward, direct, intuitive

878 Ibid., p. 489.
879 Ibid., pp. 490-491.
knowledge, from which alone all virtue and holiness proceed, expressed itself in precisely the same way in the conduct of life.” Interestingly enough, he highlights not only the metaphysical and the ethical but also the social dimension of the ancient wisdom of which he considers himself a messenger. The social ideal he advocates is explicitly elitist. “The living knowledge of eternal justice… demands the complete transcending of individuality and the principle of its possibility”, he states. “Therefore it will always remain unattainable to the majority of men.”

No less importantly, this elitist ideal is articulated in the Indian terms. “The wise ancestors of the Hindu people”, Schopenhauer indicates, “Have directly expressed it (their philosophy – A.P.) in the Vedas, which are only allowed to the three regenerate castes, or in their esoteric teaching…; but in the religion of the people, or exoteric teaching, they only communicate it by means of myths. The direct exposition we find in the Vedas, the fruit of the highest human knowledge and wisdom, the kernel of which has at last reached us in the Upanishads as the greatest gift of this century.” “It is expressed”, he specifies, “… Especially by making all the beings in the world, living and lifeless, pass successively before the view of the student, and pronouncing over every one of them that word which has become a formula, and as such has been called the Mahavakya:… Tat twam asi, – which means, “This thou art.” But for the people, that great truth, so far as in their limited condition they could comprehend it, was translated into the form… of a myth… sufficient as a guide for conduct.” “This is the aim of all

---

880 Ibid., p. 495.
881 Ibid., p. 459.
882 Ibid.
systems of religion”, Schopenhauer observes, “For as a whole they are the mythical clothing of the truth which is unattainable to the uncultured human intellect.” 883

Within this context, Schopenhauer singles out the myth of the transmigration of souls as a particularly powerful one. “It teaches”, he clarifies, “That all sufferings which in life one inflicts upon other beings must be expiated in a subsequent life in this world, through precisely the same sufferings; and this extends so far, that he who only kills a brute must, some time in endless time, be born as the same kind of brute and suffer the same death. It teaches that wicked conduct involves a future life in this world in suffering and despised creatures, and, accordingly, that one will then be born again in lower castes, or as a woman, or as a brute, as Pariah or Tschandala, as a leper, or as a crocodile, and so forth. … As a reward, on the other hand, it promises re-birth in better, nobler forms, as Brahmans, wise men, or saints. The highest reward, which awaits the noblest deeds and the completest resignation, which is also given to the woman who in seven successive lives has voluntarily died on the funeral pile of her husband, and not less to the man whose pure mouth has never uttered a single lie, – this reward the myth can only express negatively in the language of this world by the promise… that they shall never be born again…; or, as the Buddhists, who recognize neither Vedas nor castes, express it, “Thou shalt attain to Nirvâna,” i.e., to a state in which four things no longer exist—birth, age, sickness, and death.” 884

A product of India, this powerful vehicle of morality and order became known far beyond India’s borders. Moreover, “Broken up as this nation now is into many parts, this

883 Ibid., pp. 459-460.
884 Ibid.
myth yet reigns as the universal belief of the people, and has the most decided influence
upon life to-day, as four thousand years ago”, Schopenhauer emphasizes. “Therefore”, he
specifies, “Pythagoras and Plato have seized with admiration on that ne plus ultra of
mythical representation, received it from India or Egypt, honored it, made use of it, and,
we know not how far, even believed it”. 885

At this point, Schopenhauer introduces a countermelody. “We, on the contrary”,
he writes, “Now send the Brahmans English clergymen and evangelical linen-weavers to
set them right out of sympathy, and to show them that they are created out of nothing,
and ought thankfully to rejoice in the fact.” According to Schopenhauer, this state of
affairs is not the end of story, however. “It is”, he asserts, “Just the same as if we fired a
bullet against a cliff. In India our religions will never take root. The ancient wisdom of
the human race will not be displaced by what happened in Galilee. On the contrary,
Indian philosophy streams back to Europe, and will produce a fundamental change in our
knowledge and thought.” 886

This latter passage places the India-based metaphysical-ethical reasoning of
Schopenhauer within the context of a religious conflict that had predetermined, according
to him, the trajectory of European history. Furthermore, it sheds light on Schopenhauer
positioning himself as an innovator breaking with all previous philosophies and,
simultaneously, an inheritor of an ancient tradition of the all-in-all philosophy based on
the Indian heritage and including, at the same time, a variety of the non-Indian names,

885 Ibid., p. 461.
886 Ibid.
such as Shakespeare, Calderon, Meister Eckhart, and Angelus Silesius. Significantly however, the key idea of the tradition – tat tvam asi – was articulated on the Indian terms.

This picture raises two questions: first, how did Schopenhauer view his place within this tradition and, second, what had predetermined modern Europe’s foreignness to it? An examination of both questions presupposes addressing *Paralipomena and Paralipomena* where Schopenhauer placed the ideas of *The World as Will and Representation* within a more detailed historical-philosophical and historical-religious context.

**Schopenhauer’s Philosophical Self-Representation within the Global Religious-Philosophical Context**

A reconstruction of the portrayal by Schopenhauer of the relationship between the Indian and the European civilization presupposes taking into account one important difference between his discourse and those of the other thinkers examined in this study. Unlike Friedrich Schlegel, Frank, and Goerres, he did not examine world history in a systematic way. His reasoning on it is scattered in the essays of *Parerga and Paralipomena* on a variety of topics, such as religion, Indian literature, and the history of philosophy. This latter dimension is of particular importance for the understanding of how Schopenhauer viewed his own philosophy within the spectrum of other philosophies.

As to the starting point of his reasoning on this matter, one should point to his distinction between two types of philosophy. “The Philosophy of all times”, he states, “Can be conceived as a pendulum swinging between rationalism and illuminism, that is, between the use of the objective source of knowledge and that of the subjective.” The
most obvious difference between these two forms of philosophical thinking is in method. Rationalism”, Schopenhauer explains, “Having for its organ the intellect that is originally destined to serve the will alone and is thus directed onwards, makes its first appearance as dogmatism; and as such it maintains a completely objective attitude. It then changes to skepticism and, in consequence thereof, ultimately becomes criticism. Through a consideration of the subject, it undertakes to settle the dispute; in other words, it becomes transcendental philosophy”. 887

Whatever form rationalism takes, it is unable to transcend its borders, Schopenhauer asserts. “Having now reached this point (transcendental philosophy)”, he clarifies, “Rationalism arrives at the knowledge that its organon grasps only the phenomenon, but does not reach the ultimate, inner, and original essence of things.” 888

What is the alternative? “At all its stages…” , Schopenhauer indicates, “Illuminism asserts itself as its (rationalism’s) antithesis. Directed essentially inwards, illuminism has as its organon inner illumination, intellectual intuition, higher consciousness, immediately knowing reason (Vernunft), divine consciousness, unification, and the like, and disparages rationalism as the ‘light of nature’. Now if here it takes as its basis a religion, it becomes mysticism.” 889 Here is how Schopenhauer describes the illuminist approach: “If we look inwards, we find in the first place that every individual takes an immediate interest only in himself; indeed he has his own self more at heart than all else put together. This comes from the fact that he knows directly only himself, but everything else more indirectly. … Finally, we call to mind that the

888 Ibid.
889 Ibid.
object is conditioned by the subject, that is immeasurable outside world, therefore, has its existence only in the consciousness of human beings. Consequently, this world is so definitely tied to the existence of individuals who are its bearers that it can in this sense be regarded even as a mere equipment, an accident, of the always individual consciousness. If we bear all this in mind, we arrive at the view that only the inwardly directed philosophy, starting from the subject as that which is immediately given, and hence the philosophy of the moderns since Descartes, is on the right lines and that the ancients have, therefore, overlooked the main point. But of this we become perfectly convinced only when we descend into and commune wit ourselves and bring to our consciousness the feeling of originality which resides in every knowing being.”

Illuminism is thus rooted in the very human nature: “Everyone, even the most insignificant, finds himself in his simple self-consciousness as the most real of all beings and necessarily recognizes in himself the true center of the world, indeed the primary source of all reality. And could this ultimate consciousness lie?” Schopenhauer writes. Interestingly also, in explaining this all-human phenomenon, he points to the Oupnekhat as its most powerful expression: “Ae omnes creaturae in totum go sum, et praeter me ens aliud non est, et omnia ego create feci (Oupnek’hat, Pt. I, p. 122) (I am all this creation collectively, and besides me there exists no other being. I have created everything.)

At the same time Schopenhauer points to a variety of other examples of illuminism. “Illuminism”, he indicates, “Can be traced even in certain passages of Plato; but it makes a more definite appearance in the philosophy of the Neo-Platonists, the

890 Ibid., p. 10.
891 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
Gnostics, Dionysius the Areopagite, as well as that of Scotus Erigena; further among the Mohammedans in the teachings of the Sufi; in India it is dominant in the Vedanta and Mimamsa; it appears most decidedly in Jacob Boehme and all the Christian mystics.”  

Importantly in this context, Schopenhauer explicitly characterizes illuminism as superior to rationalism. “It always appears when rationalism has run its course without attaining its goal”, he emphasizes. “Thus it came towards the end of the scholastic philosophy and in opposition thereto as mysticism, especially of the Germans, in Tauler and the author of the Theologia Germanica among others; and likewise in modern times in opposition to the Kantian philosophy, in Jacobi and Schelling and similarly in Fichte’s last period.”

Moreover, as Schopenhauer asserts, in many cases “a concealed illuminism may often enough underlie rationalism”. “To such an illuminism”, he explains, “The philosopher… looks as to a hidden compass, whereas he admittedly steers his course only by the stars, that is, in accordance with external objects which clearly lie before him and which alone he takes into account.”

One can conclude thus that as a type of philosophical discourse, illuminism is clearly preferable for Schopenhauer. Nevertheless, he does not position himself as its adherent. The reason why is that, in his view, this position has a fundamental defect: the incommunicability of the knowledge it provides. As Schopenhauer explains, “This is due partly to the fact that for inner perception there is no criterion of identity of the object of different subjects, and partly to the fact that such knowledge would nevertheless have to be communicated by means of language. But this has arisen for the purpose of the

---

892 Ibid., p. 10.
893 Ibid.
894 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
intellect’s outwardly directed knowledge by means of abstractions there from and is quite unsuited for expressing the inner states or conditions which are fundamentally different from and it and are the material of illuminism. And so this would have to form a language of its own; but this again is not possible, on account of the first reason previously mentioned. Now as such a knowledge is not communicable, it is also undemonstrable, whereupon rationalism again enters the field hand in hand with scepticism”. 895

These circumstances determine the ambivalence of the Schopenhauer’s position towards illuminism. “Philosophy”, he states, “Should be communicable knowledge, and must, therefore, be rationalism”. “Accordingly”, he specifies, “At the end of my philosophy I have indicated the sphere of illuminism as something that exists but I have guarded against setting even one foot thereon. For I have not undertaken to give an ultimate explanation of the world’s existence, but have only gone as far as is possible on the objective path of rationalism. I have left the ground free for illuminism where, in its own way, it may arrive at a solution to all problems without obstructing my path or having to engage in polemic against me.” 896

This reasoning enables one to understand more clearly the nature of Schopenhauer’s philosophical undertaking. Although he emphasizes the superiority of the teachings that he describes as illuminist to the rationalistic philosophy, he positions himself as a thinker not claiming to grasp ultimate reality and, thus, remaining within the borders of rationalism. And significantly, the reason why is that he wants his philosophy to be communicable.

895 Ibid., p. 10.
896 Ibid.
This latter epithet needs clarification, however. Indeed, any doctrine that Schopenhauer identifies as illuminist cannot be incommunicable by definition: the communicability is a necessary condition of the very existence of a religious or religious-philosophical tradition however esoteric it might be. More than that, it always has its special techniques of transmission of the knowledge regarded as sacred. The problem is, therefore, not whether these techniques exist or not but that they work only within the tradition. And indeed, this tradition or, at least, some aspects of it may be communicable exclusively to the insiders.

From this perspective, Schopenhauer’s words about the threat to this path to be obstructed become quite understandable, and it is this circumstance that determines his position toward the illuminist teachings grasping the ultimate reality. In other words, he wants to remain within the limits of what can be articulated without using the discourse specific for a certain tradition.

On the other hand, this position by no means prevents him judging the teachings about ultimate reality and, more specifically, postulating the Oupnekhat as the purest and most fundamental understanding of it. Another, no less important aspect of his position is his sharp critique of the European scholarship on India. “When I consider”, he writes, “How difficult it is, with the aid of the best and most carefully trained scholars and of the excellent philological resources achieved in the course of centuries, to arrive at a really precise, accurate, and vivid appreciation of Greek and Roman authors whose languages are those of our predecessors in Europe and are mothers of tongues still living; when, on the other hand, I think of Sanskrit as a language spoken in remote India thousands of years ago and that the means for learning it are still relatively very imperfect; finally,
when I consider the impression made on me by the translations from Sanskrit of European scholars, apart from very few exceptions, then I am inclined to suspect that perhaps our Sanskrit scholars do not understand their texts any better than do the fifth-form boys of our own schools their Greek texts. Since, however, these scholars are not boys but men of knowledge and understanding, it is possible that on the whole they make out fairly well the sense of what they really understand, whereby much may, of course, creep in *ex ingenio.*” “It is even much worse with regard to the Chinese of European sinologists who often grope about in total darkness”, Schopenhauer adds. 897

Interestingly, this criticism does not result in Schopenhauer questioning his own hermeneutic position, specifically the absolute authenticity of the *Oupnekhat* as a source. “On the other hand”, he continues, “When I reflect that Sultan Mohammad Dara Shikoh, brother of Aurangzeb, was born and brought up in India, was a scholar and thinker, and craved for knowledge; that he, therefore, probably understood Sanskrit as well as we understand Latin; and that, in addition, a number of the most learned pundits collaborated with him, this predisposes me to a high opinion of his Persian translation of the *Upanishads* of the *Veda.* Further, I see with what profound veneration, in keeping with the subject, Anquetil-Duperron handled this Persian translation, rendering it word for word into Latin, accurately keeping to the Persian syntax in spite of the Latin grammar, and content merely to accept the Sanskrit words left untranslated by the Sultan in order to explain these in a glossary, I read this translation with the fullest confidence, which is at once delightfully confirmed.” “How imbued is every line with firm, definite, and harmonious significance!” Schopenhauer exclaims. “From every page we come across

897 Ibid., pp. 396-397.
profound, original, and sublime thoughts, whilst a lofty and sacred seriousness pervades the whole. Here everything breathes the air of India and radiates an existence that is original and akin to nature. And oh, how the mind is there cleansed and purified from of all Jewish superstition that was early implanted in it, and of all philosophy that slavishly serves this!”

This portrayal of the *Oupnekhat* illustrates, first, what Schopenhauer had inherited from the earlier tradition of the German fascination with India and, second, what he added to it. Although he expressed his admiration of this text as the most authentic and reliable source on India, in a uniquely radical form, this idea in itself as well as the interpretation of this text as the original evidence of the all-in-all philosophy had been put forward long before he started his career as a thinker. Similarly, his criticism of the scholarship on the ancient civilizations including the Indian was not unique either.

At the same time, four features distinguished Schopenhauer’s discourse on India from those of his predecessors. The first was singling out the *Oupnekhat* not as a valuable evidence of the ancient wisdom displaying striking similarities to European thought, but as the source of the original truth. The second feature was the explicit articulation by a European thinker of his own philosophical message through the Indian categories that he discovered in this text. The third feature was the interpretation by Schopenhauer of the correlation between the *Oupnekhat* and his own philosophy as that between an illuminist, esoteric teaching and its rationalistic version and the fourth, the indication of “what happened in Galilee”, that is, the Bible-based European religiosity as opposing the original truth expressed in the *Oupnekhat*.

---

898 Ibid.
Thus, Schopenhauer positions his philosophy in relation to two opposite traditions. One of them is rooted in India and based on the Latin translation of the Upanishads, and he positions himself as an adherent of this tradition. The other tradition based on the Bible, dominating in Europe, and termed as the “Jewish superstitions” “slavishly served by the philosophy” becomes the target of Schopenhauer’s sharp critique.

The further examination of Schopenhauer’s reasoning on India presupposes addressing this conflict as reflected within his discourse.

Schopenhauer’s India and the Two Moralities

One key problem of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, bridging the metaphysical, ethical, and historical-philosophical-religious dimensions of his reasoning was the foundation of morality. As he asserted, “We can regard the actions… of benevolence… as the beginning of mysticism”. “Every good or kind action that is done with a pure and genuine intention”, he stated, “Proclaims that, whoever practices it, stands forth in absolute contradiction to the world of phenomena in which other individuals exist entirely separate from himself, and that he recognizes himself as being identical with them. Accordingly, every entirely disinterested benefit is a mysterious action, a mysterium; and so to give an account thereof, men have had to resort to all kinds of fictions.” 899 As to a particularly striking illustration of this mysterium, Schopenhauer points to the examples of self-sacrifice for the sake of the others by the people facing the

899 Ibid., p. 219.
inevitable death. “In all cases of this kind”, he observes, “We see an individual, who is approaching with absolute certainty his immediate personal destruction, think no more of his own survival and directs all his efforts and exertions to the preservation of another.”⁹⁰⁰ According to Schopenhauer, the clue to this riddle is “the consciousness that this destruction is only that of a phenomenon, and that, on the other hand, the true essence of the one who is perishing is untouched by it, continues to exist in the other in whom he so clearly recognizes just now that essence, as is revealed by his action”. “For”, he continues, “If this were not so and we had before us one in the throes of actual annihilation, how could such a being, by the supreme exertion of his last strength, show such a deep sympathy and interest in the welfare and continued existence of another?”⁹⁰¹

In examining this question, Schopenhauer distinguishes between two ways “we conscious of our own existence”. The first way, he specifies, is the “empirical intuitive perception where it manifests itself from without as an existence that is infinitely small in a world that is boundless as regards space and time as one among the thousand millions of human beings who run over the globe for a very short time, renewing themselves every thirty years”. The second view is in deep contrast to the first: according to Schopenhauer, it represents “absorption in ourselves and becoming conscious of being all in all and really the only actual being, such being in addition once again seeing himself, as in a mirror, in the others who are given to him from without”. And, as he emphasizes, if “the first method of knowledge embraces merely the phenomenon which is mediated through

---

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 220.
⁹⁰¹ Ibid.
the principium individuationis”, “the second is an immediate awareness of oneself as the thing-in-itself”. 902

This application of the central category of Kant’s epistemology to the anthropological-ethical problem represents a key dimension of Schopenhauer’s reasoning. As he explains, “The simple objection to the second mode of knowledge is certainly its assumption that one and the same being can be in different places at the same time, and yet entirely in each place”. But, he continues, “Although from the empirical point of view this is the most palpable impossibility and even an absurdity, it nevertheless remains perfectly true of the thing-in-itself. For that impossibility and absurdity rest merely on the forms of the phenomenon, which constitute the principium individuationis. For the thing-in-itself, the will-to-live, exists whole and undivided in every being, even in the tiniest; it is present as completely as in all that ever were, are, and will be, taken together.” “To this”, Schopenhauer points out, “Is due the fact that every being, even the most insignificant, says to himself: dum ego salvus sim, pereat mundus. And in fact even if all others perished, the essence-in-itself of the world would still exist unimpaired and undiminished in this one being which remained and would laugh at that destruction as at sleight of hand.” 903

If in setting the problem Schopenhauer applies the Kantian discourse, in formulating his credo, he addresses the Indian. “With me”, he declares, “The foundation of morality rests ultimately on the truth that has its expression in the Veda and Vedanta in the established mystical formula tat tvam asi (This art thou) which is stated with

902 Ibid., p. 220.
903 Ibid., p. 220.
reference to every living thing, whether man or animal, and is then called the Mahavakya or Great Word.” 904 Schopenhauer explicitly describes his approach as an intersection of these two discourses. Importantly however, he clearly puts the emphasis on the Indian component. “This is a doctrine”, he stresses, “Wherein I am supported by Kant as regards the first half, but by the Veda as regards both”. 905

This thesis refers to the correlation between the ethics and its metaphysical background. As a practical guidance, Kant’s categorical imperative matches perfectly well the Schopenhauer’s description of the mysterium of the disinterested benefit. Another story is its metaphysical underpinning provided by Kant based on his moral argument for God’s existence.

Here is how Schopenhauer characterizes Kant’s approach: “After Kant had removed all other props for theism, he left it only this one, namely that it afforded the best interpretation and explanation of that and all similar mysterious actions. Accordingly, he admitted theism as an assumption which theoretically is incapable of proof, it is true, but for practical purposes it is valid.” “But I am inclined to doubt whether here he was really quite in earnest”, Schopenhauer continues. “For to support morality by means of theism is equivalent to reducing it to egoism, although the English, like the lowest classes of society with us, see absolutely no possibility of any other foundation.” 906

904 Ibid., p. 219.
905 Ibid., p. 221.
906 Ibid., p. 219.
This other foundation, the alternative to the Christian theism, Schopenhauer discovers in India. In portraying this alternative, he addresses the religious practices of Hinduism, citing the evidences of the “very beneficial and practical influence of Brahmanism” and “its effect in life and on the people”. 907 “Even today”, he specifies, “After a burial for instance, the priests chant before all the people … the Vedic hymn that begins: “The embodied spirit that has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, is rooted in the human breast and at the same time permeates the whole earth. This being is the world and all that ever was and will be…” “If we compare such hymns with our hymn-books”, Schopenhauer continues, “We shall no longer be surprised that Anglican missionaries on the Ganges meet with such pathetically little success and with their sermons on their ‘maker’ make no impression on the Brahmans.” 908

Over and over again, Schopenhauer points to the Upanishads as to the philosophical underpinning of the Hindu way of life: “If we go to the root of the matter, even the fantastic and sometimes strange Indian mythology, still constituting today as it did thousand years ago the religion of the people, is only the teaching of the Upanishads which is symbolized, in other words, clad in images and thus personified and mythicized with due regard to the people’s power of comprehension. According to his powers and education, every Hindu traces, feels, surmises, or clearly sees through it and behind it; whereas in his monomania the crude and narrow-minded English parson ridicules and

---

907 Ibid., pp. 223-224.
908 Ibid., pp. 222-223.
blasphemes by calling it idolatry, fondly imagining that he alone is on the right side of the fence.”  

This admiration of Hinduism combined with the sharp critique of the Christian West raises several questions. Where did the fence Schopenhauer points to come from? Why what is natural for India is foreign to Europe? More specifically, what had predetermined the theistic limitations of Kant’s moral philosophy? In examining these questions, it is necessary to take into account that Schopenhauer pointed also to the examples of India-like approaches in the European, particularly German religious-philosophical thought. As one such example especially significant within Schopenhauer’s reasoning, one should recall the mystical poet Angelus Silesius. And significantly, his lines quoted by Schopenhauer highlight the relationship between God and man: “I know that God without me cannot for one moment live;/ If I to nothing come, he of necessity must his spirit give. (Ich weiss, dass ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nu kann leben,/ Werd’ ich zunicht, er muss von Not den Geist aufgeben.)  

The problem is thus neither the uniquely Indian character of the Hindu thought and practices, nor the non-existence of similar approaches in Europe. Here is how Schopenhauer interprets the difference between India and Christian Europe: “Considerations like the foregoing (the Hindu understanding of the universe and human existence – A.P.) … always retain here in our Judaized West something very strange, but not so in the fatherland of the human race, where quite a different faith prevails.”  

According to him, it is precisely Europe’s adherence to the Judeo-Christian tradition that

---

909 Ibid., p. 225.
910 Ibid., p. 221.
911 Ibid., p. 222.
prevents it from understanding the fatherland of the human race. “It is extremely droll”, Schopenhauer writes, “To see the cool smile of self-complacency with which some servile German philosophasters and also many precise and literal orientalists look down on Brahmanism and Buddhism from the heights of their rationalistic Judaism. To such little men I would really suggest a contract with the comedy of apes at the Frankfurt Fair, that is, if the descendants of Hanuman would tolerate these amongst them.” 912

In portraying this contrast between the “fatherland of the human race” and the “rationalistic Judaism” supposedly unable to comprehend it, Schopenhauer highlights the differences in ethics and links them to those in understanding of the relationship between God and man. In this context, he formulates his own ethical ideal and, importantly in doing so, he illustrates it with two examples, the Indian and the Greek. “Buddha Sakya Muni”, he writes, “Separated the kernel from the shell, to free the exalted teaching itself from admixture with images and gods, and to make its pure intrinsic worth accessible and intelligible even to the people… which resulted in his religion becoming the most excellent on earth and is represented by the greatest number of followers. With Sophocles he can say: “Even the man who is nothing is capable of gaining strength when in alliance with the gods; but I venture to gain this glory even without them”. 913

It is this emphasis on the autonomy of human morality from the divine that underlies the Schopenhauer’s idea of the superiority of Hinduism over the Bible-based religions. In this context, he particularly stresses the centrality of the theory of metempsychosis to the ethical sphere. In his view, “The doctrine that all genuine moral

912 Ibid., p. 225.
913 Ibid.
qualities, good as well as bad, are innate is better suited to the metempsychosis of Brahmanism and Buddhism than to Judaism”. “According to metempsychosis”, he specifies, “Man’s good and evil deeds follow him, like his shadow, from one existence to another; whereas Judaism requires that man should come into the world as a moral zero in order to decide now, by virtue of an inconceivable liberum arbitrum indifferentiae and thus in consequence of rational reflection, whether he wants to be an angel or a devil, or anything else that lies between the two”. 914

In the final analysis, this difference in ethics is due to that in understanding of the God-world-man relationship. “Brahma produces the world through a kind of original sin”, Schopenhauer asserts, “But himself remains in it to atone for this until he has redeemed himself from it. This quite a good idea! In Buddhism the world comes into being in consequence of an inexplicable disturbance (after a period of a long calm) in the crystal clearness of the blessed and penitentially state of Nirvana and hence through a kind fatality which, however, is to be understood ultimately in a moral sense… Accordingly, in consequence of moral lapses, it also gradually becomes physically worse and worse until it assumes its present sorry state. An excellent idea! To the Greeks the world and the gods were the work of an unfathomable necessity; this is fairly reasonable… Ormuzd lives in conflict with Ahriman; this seems not unreasonable. But that a God Jehovah creates this world of misery and affliction animi causa and de gaiete de coeur, and then applauds himself…. this is something intolerable. And so in this respect, we see the religion of the Jews occupy the lowest place among the dogmas of the

914 Ibid.
civilized world, which is wholly in keeping with the fact that it is also the only religion that has absolutely no doctrine of immortality, nor has it even any trace thereof.”  

In demonizing Judaism, Schopenhauer points also to another allegedly inevitable consequence of monotheistic religiosity – religious intolerance. Although he cites the examples of religion-based brutality, such as the killing of heretics or unbelievers considered “an essential thing to the future salvation of his (believer’s) soul” and the Indian “counterpart to this in the religious fraternity of the Thugs” who practiced their sense of religion and veneration for the goddess Kali by assassinating on every occasion their own friends and travelling companions” he makes, nevertheless, an important concretization: “In the interest of truth I must add that the fanatical cruelties arising from this principle are really known to us only from the followers of the monotheistic religions, thus Judaism and its two branches, Christianity and Islam”.  

In this context, the fate of India occupies a special place. “Let us not forget”, Schopenhauer writes, “… That sacred soil, that cradle of the human race, or at any rate that part thereof to which we belong, where first Mohammedans and then Christians furiously and most cruelly attacked the followers of mankind’s sacred and original faith.” As he specifies, “The ever-deplorable, wanton, and ruthless destruction and disfigurement of ancient temples and images reveal to us even to this day traces of the monotheistic fury of the Mohammedans which was pursued from Mahmud of Ghazni of accursed memory down to Aurangzeb the fratricide. These were afterwards most

---

915 Ibid., p. 301.
916 Ibid., p. 327.
917 Ibid., pp. 358-359.
faithfully imitated by the Portuguese Christians through the destruction of temples as well as by the *auto-da-fe* of the Inquisition at Goa.  

On the other hand, Schopenhauer portrays India as an embodiment of tolerance. “We hear nothing of the kind about Hindus and Buddhists”, he states. “Although we know that in about the fifth century of our era Buddhism was driven by the Brahmans from its original home in the Indian peninsula and then spread over the whole of Asia, yet we have no definite information, as far as I know, of any crimes of violence, wars, and atrocities, whereby this was carried out.”  

“Indeed”, Schopenhauer asserts, “Intolerance is essential to monotheism; an only God is by nature a jealous God who will not allow another to live. On the other hand, polytheistic gods are naturally tolerant; they live and let live. …They gladly tolerate their colleagues, the gods of the same religion, and this tolerance is afterwards extended even to foreign gods who are… hospitably received and later admitted… An instance of this is seen in the Romans who willingly admitted and respected Phrygian, Egyptian, and other foreign gods.” “This is only the monotheistic religions”, he concludes, “That furnish us with the spectacle of religious wars, religious persecutions, courts for trying heretics, and also with that of iconoclasm, the destruction of the images of foreign gods, the demolition of Indian temples and Egyptian colossi that had looked at the sun for three thousand years.”  

Significantly in describing the world-historical phenomenon of monotheism, Schopenhauer emphasizes its local roots in the history of the Hebrew people. No less importantly, his portrayal of this people bears clear features of demonization. “We should

---

918 Ibid., pp. 358-359.
919 Ibid.
920 Ibid.
not forget God’s chosen people” he writes, “Who, after they had stolen by Jehovah’s express command the gold and silver vessels lent to them by their old and trusty friends in Egypt, now made their murderous and predatory attack on the ‘Promised Land’, with the murderer Moses at their head, in order to tear it away from the rightful owners, by the same Jehovah’s express and constantly repeated command, showing no mercy and ruthlessly murdering and exterminating all its inhabitants, even the women and children… And all this simply because they were not circumcised and did not know Jehovah.” 921

Within the context of this study, one can observe that the juxtaposition by Schopenhauer of India with the Bible-based religions led him to the conclusion opposite to that made by Friedrich Schlegel. If Schlegel, who examined India’s religious philosophical tradition within the Bible-based perspective, characterized it as a misread revelation, Schopenhauer, on the contrary, described the biblical tradition as inferior to Indian wisdom. In underpinning his thesis, he portrayed these two conflicting cultural phenomena within the context of the history of religions. More specifically, Schopenhauer interpreted Christianity, its theology and philosophy, as the arena of a bitter conflict between the Judaism-based and India-influenced components.

“The Wisdom of All Ages” vs. the “Jewish Theism”

“To judge this (Christian – A.P.) religion fairly”, Schopenhauer wrote, “We must … consider what existed before it and was set aside by it.” As he specified, “First there

921 Ibid., pp. 357.
was Greco-Roman paganism”. Here is how Schopenhauer described this religion:

“Considered as popular metaphysics, it was an extremely insignificant phenomenon without any real, definite dogmatic system or any decidedly expressed ethics… So it hardly merited the name of religion, but was rather a mere play of imagination, a product of poets from popular fairy tales, and for the most part an obvious personification of the powers of nature. …Even in the best Greek period, this State religion was certainly not taken as seriously as was the Christian in more modern times, or as are Buddhism, Brahmanism, or even Islam in Asia. 922

“The second thing that Christianity had to supplant”, Schopenhauer continued, “Was Judaism whose crude dogma was sublimated and tacitly allegorized by the Christian.” “It must be admitted”, he concluded, “That Christianity is far superior to those two earlier religions not only in morals, but even in dogmatics. In morals the teaching of caritas, gentleness, love of one’s enemy, resignation, and denial of one’s will, are explicitly its own.” 923

On the other hand, Schopenhauer emphasizes the weaknesses of Christianity in comparison with Buddhism. As he asserts, these weaknesses are due primarily to the fact that, unlike Buddhism, Christianity represented not a theory but a narrative. 924 “A religion which has as its foundation a single event”, Schopenhauer explains, “And in fact tries to make the turning-point of the world and of all existence out of that event that occurred at a definite time and place, has so feeble a foundation, that it cannot possibly survive, the moment men come to reflect on the matter. How wise in Buddhism, on the

922 Ibid., p. 362.
923 Ibid.
924 Ibid., p. 369.
other hand, is the assumption of the thousand Buddhas, lest it appear as in Christianity, where Jesus Christ has redeemed the world and no salvation is possible without him; but for four thousand years, whose monuments exist in Egypt, Asia, and Europe in all their greatness and glory, could not know anything of him, and those ages with all their glories went to the devil without ever seeing him! The many Buddhas are necessary because at the end of each *kalpa* the world perishes and with it the teaching, so that a new world requires a new Buddha. Salvation always exists. *“925*

Another, no less important factor determining the fate of Christianity, is that, as Schopenhauer asserts, it represents an amalgamation of two different narratives and, therefore, of two heterogeneous doctrines. As to one indication of this internal heterogeneity of Christianity he points to the contradiction between the original and particular sin, i.e. to the doctrine, according to which “one man has an advantage over another in respect of grace, which then amounts to a privilege received at birth and brought ready-made into the world, and this indeed in the most important of all matters”. *926*

Significantly, Schopenhauer finds this idea in itself quite acceptable: it is only within the specifically Christian context that it leads to an insoluble contradiction. And, as he emphasizes, “The offensive and absurd nature of this teaching springs merely from the Old Testament assumption that man is the work of another’s will and is thereby created out of nothing”. “The absurd and even revolting aspect of this teaching”, Schopenhauer continues, “is merely a consequence of Jewish theism with its creation out

---

*925* Ibid., p. 393.  
*926* Ibid., p. 364.
of nothing and its really paradoxical and shocking denial, connected therewith, of the
document of metempsychosis, a doctrine that is natural, is to a certain extent self-evident,
and so is accepted at all times by almost the entire human race with the exception of the
Jews. 927

On the other hand, within the Indian contexts this teaching does not lead to any
controversies. “With regard to the fact that genuine moral qualities are actually inborn”,
Schopenhauer clarifies, “The matter assumes quite a different and more rational
significance under the Brahmanic and Buddhist assumption of metempsychosis.
According to this, the advantage one man has at birth over another and thus what he
brings with him from another world and a previous life, is not another’s gift or grace, but
the fruit of his own deeds that were performed in that other world.” 928

Importantly, Schopenhauer regards some components of the Christian doctrine as
echoing these Indian ideas. In this context, he points to Augustine’s conception of the
exceedingly large number of sinners and of the extremely small number of those meriting
eternal bliss as to a parallel to the Hindu-Buddhist thesis that only very few indeed attain
final emancipation (Nirvana in Buddhism). 929 No less interestingly, he interprets the idea
of purgatory as a moderated version of metempsychosis. 930 These observations bring him
to the conclusion that the New Testament must be based on the sources other than those
of the Old and that, in all probability, these sources were Indian. “The New Testament
(that it is, in Schopenhauer’s opinion, “diametrically opposed to the Old Testament, so

927 Ibid., pp. 364-365.
928 Ibid., p. 364
929 Ibid., p. 368.
930 Ibid., p. 370.
that there was only the story of the Fall to provide a link which could connect the two” – A.P.) … must somehow be of Indian origin”, Schopenhauer insists. “When that Indian teaching found its way into the Promised Land”, he continues, “There arose the problem of uniting Jewish monotheism… with the knowledge of the corruption and desolation of the world, of its need for deliverance and redemption through an avatar, together with a morality of self-denial and repentance. And a solution to the problem was as far as possible successful, namely to the extent that two such different and even antagonistic doctrines could be united… As ivy needs support and something to hold on to, it twines round a rough-hewn post, everywhere adapting itself to the irregular shape and reproducing this, yet clothing the post with life and grace, so that we are presented with a pleasant sight instead of the bare post. In the same way, Christ’s teaching that has sprung from Indian wisdom has covered the old and quite different trunk of crude Judaism and what had to be retained of the original form is changed by that teaching into something quite different, true and alive.” “Thus”, Schopenhauer concludes, “The Creator, who creates out of nothing and is separate from the world, is identified with the Savior and through him with mankind. He stands as their representative, for in him they are redeemed, just as they had fallen in Adam and had since been entangled in the bounds of sin, corruption, suffering, and death. For here, as well as in Buddhism, the world manifests itself as all this, no longer in the light of Jewish optimism that had found ‘all things very good’… On the contrary, the devil himself is now called the ‘prince of this world’”. ⁹³¹

⁹³¹ Ibid., pp. 380-381.
All this brings Schopenhauer to his key thesis: “Everything that is true in Christianity is found also in Brahmanism and Buddhism”. “But”, he clarifies, “In these two religions we shall search in vain for the Jewish view of a being who has sprung from nothing and is endowed with life, of a thing produced in time which cannot be humble enough in its thanks and praises to Jehovah for an ephemeral existence full of misery, worry, and want. For in the New Testament the spirit of Indian wisdom can be scented like the fragrance of a bloom, which has been wafted over hills and streams from distant tropical fields.” 932

This thesis raises the question of how this spirit of Indian wisdom reached the ancient Near East. In tune with the earlier Romantic tradition, Schopenhauer points to Egypt as a possible intermediary. “We could assume”, he notes, “That the gospel note on flight to Egypt was based on something historical; that Jesus was educated by Egyptian priests whose religion was of Indian origin and from whom he had accepted Indian ethics and the notion of an avatar; and that he subsequently had endeavored to adapt these to the Jewish dogmas in his own native land and to graft them on to the ancient stem.”933

In insisting on the Indian roots of Christianity, Schopenhauer goes even further. “It might be supposed”, he points out, “That a feeling of his (Jesus Christ’s) own moral and intellectual superiority had finally induced him to regard himself as an avatar and accordingly to call himself the Son of Man in order to indicate that he was more than a mere human being. It is even conceivable that, with the intensity and purity of his will and in virtue of the omnipotence generally associated with the will as thing-in-itself and

932 Ibid., p. 381.
933 Ibid., p. 383.
known to us from animal magnetism and the magic effects connected therewith, he had been able to perform miracles so called, in other words, to act by means of the metaphysical influence of the will.”  

Of no lesser importance is the question of the nature and origin of the Old Testament doctrine. “Just as polytheism is the personification of the individual parts and forces of nature, so is monotheism that of the whole of nature, at one stroke”, Schopenhauer notes. Historically, he considers Judaism as a distorted version of a branch of the same India-rooted tradition, and this branch is the religion of the ancient Iran. “In the doctrine of the Zendavesta”, Schopenhauer asserts, “Whence, as we know, Judaism has sprung, the pessimistic element is represented by Ahriman. But in Judaism he has only a subordinate position as Satan who is, nevertheless, like Ahriman, the author and originator of snakes, scorpions, and vermin. Judaism at once makes use of him to correct its fundamental error of optimism, namely for the Fall, which now introduces into that religion the pessimistic element that I required in the interests of the most obvious and palpable truth and its most fundamental idea…”

In attempting to underpin his thesis, Schopenhauer finds a few passages in the biblical texts that may be interpreted as possible indications of a linkage between the Old Testament and Iranian traditions. “A striking confirmation that Jehovah is Ormuzd is furnished by the first book of Ezra in the Septuagint”, he writes. In this context, he cites the biblical relation that “Cyrus the king had a house of the Lord built in Jerusalem, where sacrifices are made to him through the perpetual fire”. Another indication that

---

934 Ibid., p. 376.
935 Ibid., p. 377.
936 Ibid., p. 178.
“the religion of the Jews was that of the Persians”, Schopenhauer discovers in the second book of the Maccabees, narrating “that the Jews who were led away into Babylonian captivity had, under the guidance of Nehemiah, previously concealed the consecrated fire in a dried-out cistern, where it went under water and was later rekindled though a miracle, to the great edification of the Persian king”. “Like the Jews”, Schopenhauer adds, “The Persians also abhorred the worship of images and, therefore, never presented the gods in that form.” It appears that the service of Jehovah originated under Josiah with the assistance of Hilkiah”, he concludes, “In other words, it was acquired from the Parsees and completed by Ezra on the return from the Babylonian exile. For up till the time of Josiah and Hilkiah and also under Solomon, there obviously prevailed in Judaea natural religion, Sabianism, the worship of Belus, of Astarte, and others.” 937 As to another “confirmation of the origin of Judaism from the Zend religion”, Schopenhauer points to the sculptures of the cherubim, the “creatures with the head of a bull on which Jehovah is mounted”. As he specifies, “Such animals, half-bull, half-man, also half-lion, are very similar to the description of Ezekiel… and are found on pieces of sculpture in Persepolis, but especially among the Assyrian statues found in Mosul and Nimrod”. “All this sheds light on the genealogical tree of Jehovah”, Schopenhauer summarizes. 938

These identifications enable one to summarize the major parameters of Schopenhauer’s reasoning on Christianity. He regarded it as an amalgamation of two heterogeneous components, the Old Testament monotheism and the Indian tradition. In his view, not only did they have different sources but they also represented two opposite worldviews. “The fundamental difference in religions”, Schopenhauer emphasized, “Is to

937 Ibid., pp. 378-379.
938 Ibid., pp. 379-380.
be found in the question whether they are optimism or pessimism, certainly not whether they are monotheism, polytheism, Trimurty, Trinity, pantheism, or atheism (like Buddhism).” “For this reason”, he stressed, “The Old and New Testaments are diametrically opposed and their amalgamation forms a queer centaur. The Old Testament is optimism, the New, pessimism. The former is the major key, the latter minor.”

Cultural-historically, this interpretation of Christianity continued the previous tradition of tracing the India-rooted original civilization through Egypt to Europe. On the other hand, religious-philosophically it went much further by pointing to the Indian roots of the Christian teaching and considering Jesus as an avatar. No less importantly, it identified the Old Testament tradition as the antagonistic to the wisdom of the Indian “fatherland of the human race”. As a particularly important arena where this conflict unfolded Schopenhauer highlighted the history of European philosophy.

**The History of Philosophy as a Philosophy of History**

As Schopenhauer asserts, the very beginning of the ancient Greek philosophy was due to the Indian influence. “According to the biography of Pythagoras by Jamblichus”, he emphasizes, “The former obtained his education mainly in Egypt where he stayed from his twenty-second to his fifty-sixth year, and indeed from the priests of that country. Returning in his fifty-sixth year, he really intended to found a kind of priest state in imitation of the Egyptian temple hierarchies, although with modifications necessary for the Greeks.” Schopenhauer highlights the similarities of Pythagorean practices to those of Egypt and, through it, of India: “Since Egyptian culture and religion undoubtedly

---

939 Ibid., p. 388.
940 Ibid., volume I, p. 38.
came from India, as is proved by the sacredness of the cow and by a hundred other things… this explains Pythagoras’ precept to abstain from animal food, especially the order not to slaughter horned cattle… as also the gentle treatment of all animals which is enjoined; similarly his doctrine of metempsychosis, his white robes, his eternal mysterious conduct giving rise to symbolic utterances and extending even to mathematical theorems; again the establishment of a kind of priestly caste with strict discipline and much ceremonial, worship of the sun… and many other things. Even the more important of his fundamental astronomical conceptions were obtained from the Egyptians. Hence the prior claim of his doctrine of the obliquity of the ecliptic was disputed by Oenopides who had been with him in Egypt.” 941 At the same time, Schopenhauer points to the possibility of a direct Indian influence on Pythagoras. “According to Apuleius”, he notes, “Pythagoras may have traveled as far as India and have been instructed by the Brahmans themselves.” This relation underpins Schopenhauer’s assertion “that the wisdom and knowledge of Pythagoras, which are certainly to be highly rated, consisted not so much in what he thought as in what he had learnt and hence that they were less his own than that of others”. And, significantly in this context, he describes this supposedly India-rooted teaching attributed to Pythagoras, as “a decided pantheism” (‘God is one; but he is not, as some imagine, outside the universe, but inside it’).” 942

As to another Western reproduction of the Indian original, Schopenhauer points to the Neo-Platonists. “Reading the Neo-Platonists calls for much patience because they all lack form and style”, he observes. “The worst is Jamblichus in his book De mysteris

941 Ibid.
942 Ibid., pp. 38-40.
Proclus is a shallow, diffuse, and insipid talker. ... Plotinus, the most important of all, is changeable and inconsistent. ... His ideas are not arranged or previously considered, but have been written down at random just as they came.” 943 In spite of this, Schopenhauer stresses the outstanding role of Plotinus and the other Neo-Platonists. “What Plato has said mythically or indeed half metaphorically, is dragged down by him (Plotinus) to positive prosaic seriousness... Great, important, and profound truths are to be found in his works…” 944

Schopenhauer finds the explanation for these contradictory characteristics of Plotinus “in the fact that he and the (other) Neo-Platonists generally are not philosophers in the proper sense, are not original thinkers” but the messengers of the Indian influence. “What they expound, is the teaching of others... which was handed down to them”, Schopenhauer states. “It is Indo-Egyptian wisdom, which they tried to embody in Greek philosophy, as a suitable connecting link, a means of transmission, or menstruum for this, they use the Platonic philosophy, especially that part which inclines to the mystical. The whole of the All-One doctrine of Plotinus primarily and undeniably testifies to this Indian origin, through Egypt, of the Neo-Platonic dogmas…” 945 In concretizing this idea, he singles out the Plotinus’ teaching on the nature of the soul “that is originally one and is split up into many only by means of the corporeal world”. “Of special interest”, he specifies, “Is the eight book of this Ennead which explains how the pleroma ... fell into this state of plurality through a sinful striving; accordingly, it bears a double guilt, namely that of having descended into this world, and also that of its sinful deeds therein. For the

943 Ibid., pp. 56-57.
944 Ibid., p. 58.
945 Ibid.
former guilt it atones through temporal existence in general; for the latter, which is less important, it atones through metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls…”

Of no lesser importance is Schopenhauer’s interpretation of these Neo-Platonists’ ideas as central to Christianity. “This is obviously the same idea as the Christian original sin and particular sin”, he points out, and within his reasoning this observation becomes another indication of the Indian roots of the Christian worldview.

On the other hand, Schopenhauer highlights the example of the opposite, monotheistic influence on the philosophy of the Antiquities. “It is a good thing at every opportunity to convince ourselves, that theism proper and Judaism are convertible terms”, he insists, and this approach leads him to the interpretation of a number of ancient philosophies as the examples of the penetration of Judaism in the Greco-Roman tradition. As one case of such penetration he singles out the fate of the Stoics or, more precisely, the later Stoics.

Here is how Schopenhauer describes one of the texts of the later Stoa, the Eclogae ethicae by Stobaeus, in which, as he writes, “We flatter ourselves that we possess or the most part verbal extracts from Zeno and Chrysippus”. “If such is the case”, Schopenhauer comments, “this description is not calculated to give us a high opinion of the spirit and intellect of these philosophers. On the contrary, it as a pedantic, schoolmasterly, thoroughly diffuse, incredibly dreary, flat, and spiritless exposition of the Stoic morality without force and life”.

Similarly, Schopenhauer continues, “The dissertations of Arrian on the philosophy of Epictetus, which were written some four hundred years after

---

946 Ibid.
947 Ibid., p. 53.
the origin of the Stoa, do not give any sound information as to the true spirit and the real principles of the Stoic morality”. 948 “These shallow school exercises… will not bear comparison with the energetic, spirited, and well-thought-out works of Seneca”, he concludes.

Of no less importance than the poor style is the inconsistency of the Stoic message. As Schopenhauer observes, it “appears even in a ridiculous way … in his (Arrian’s) description of the perfect Stoic which is repeated innumerable times”. “He always says: ’he blames no one, complains neither gods nor men, rebukes no one’, and yet”, Schopenhauer stresses, “His whole book is for the most part couched in scolding terms that often descend to abusive language.” 949 Schopenhauer attributes this inconsistency to the foreign monotheistic influence. As he asserts, the content of the late Stoic philosophy “is by no means genuine and purely Stoic; on the contrary, there is a strong foreign admixture that smacks of a Christian-Jewish source. The most undeniable proof of this is theism, which is to be found on all sides and is also the supporter of morality. Here the Cynic and Stoic act on behalf of God whose will is their guidance; they submit to him, put their trust on him, and so on. Such things are quite foreign to the genuine original Stoa; here God and the world are one and there is absolutely no knowledge of a God who is thinking, willing, commanding, and provident person.” “Not only in Arrian”, Schopenhauer adds, “But in most of the pagan philosophical authors of

948 Ibid., p. 54.
949 Ibid., p. 55.
the first century of the Christian era, we see Jewish theism already shining dimly, which was soon to become the popular creed in Christianity”.

Yet as the most important example of the monotheistic influence that had particularly fatal consequences for European thought Schopenhauer singles out the metaphysics of Aristotle. The reason why is that, as he emphasizes, “The books of Aristotle quite clearly disclose the origin of Scholasticism”. In explaining this role of Aristotle, Schopenhauer questions the common interpretation of Aristotle’s philosophy as an empiricist alternative to Plato. “In spite of this empirical turn of mind”, he points out, “Aristotle was nevertheless no consistent and methodical empiricist; and so he had to be overthrown and driven out by the true father of empiricism, Bacon.” In juxtaposing Aristotle with the genuine empiricism, Schopenhauer highlights Aristotle’s “statement on nature, which endeavors to understand and explain her processes from mere concepts”. To the contrary Bacon “appeared with the advice to make not abstract, but perceptual, experience the source of a knowledge of nature”. “The brilliant result of this is the present high state of natural sciences whence we look down with a charitable smile on these Aristotelian vexations and annoyances”, Schopenhauer observes.

“Ibid., p. 49.

“Ibid.

“Ibid. p. 50.”
As to a particularly grotesque example of Aristotle’s errors, Schopenhauer points to his astronomic views. “In chapters seven and eight of his second book Aristotle expounds the whole of his absurd arrangements of the heavens”, he specifies. “Thus he states that the stars are firmly attached to the revolving hollow sphere, sun and planets to similar nearer ones; that the friction of revolution causes light and heat; and that the earth positively stands still.” 953

The problem here is not merely this erroneous view in itself, however. “All this might pass”, Schopenhauer notes, “If previously there had not been something better. But when he himself… presents us with the entirely correct views of the Pythagoreans on the shape, position, and motion of the earth in order to reject them, this inevitably rouses our indignation. This will occur when from his frequent polemics against Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Democritos we see how all these had a very much more correct insight into nature and had also paid more attention to experience than had the shallow prattler now before us. Empedocles had indeed already taught about a tangential force arising from rotation and acting in opposition to gravity… Far from being able to estimate such things at their true value, Aristotle does not even admit the correct views of those older philosophers concerning the true significance of above and below, but here he also takes his stand on the opinion of the common herd, which follows the superficial appearance.” 954

This latter remark on “the common herd” becomes particularly important in the context of the later historical consequences of the Aristotle’s errors. “It must be borne in

953 Ibid.
954 Ibid., pp. 50-51.
mind”, Schopenhauer clarifies, “That these views of his met with recognition and dissemination, superseded all that was earlier and better, and so later became the foundation of Hipparchus, and then of the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. Mankind had to be burdened with this system until the beginning of the sixteenth century, doubtless to the great advantage of the Jewish-Christian religious dogmas that are at the bottom incompatible with the Copernican system of astronomy.” 955

Schopenhauer provides a detailed explanation of the centrality of this Aristotle-Hipparchus-Ptolemaic tradition to the European Christian Weltanschauung. “How can there be a God in heaven when no heaven exists?” he asks. “Theism seriously meant”, he explains, “Necessarily presupposes that the world is divided into heaven and earth; on the latter human beings run about, former sits the God who governs them. Now if astronomy takes away heaven, then with it has taken away God; thus it has so extended the world that there is no room left for God. But a personal being, as every God inevitably is, who has no place, but is everywhere and nowhere, can merely be spoken of, not imagined, and thus not believed in. Accordingly, in so far as physical astronomy becomes popularized, theism must disappear, however firmly it may have been impressed on men by an incessant and most pompous preaching. The Catholic Church rightly recognized this at once and accordingly persecuted the Copernican system; and so as regards this, it is foolish to wonder at, and rise such an outcry over, the crushing of Galileo…” 956

955 Ibid., p. 51.
956 Ibid.
It is, however, not this historical picture in itself but its interpretation that represents the essence of Schopenhauer’s message. “Who knows”, he asks, “Whether some secret knowledge or at any rate an inkling of this congeniality of Aristotle to the doctrine of the Church and of the danger averted by him has not contributed to the excessive admiration of him in the Middle Ages?” “Who knows”, he continues, “Whether many a man, stimulated by Aristotle’s accounts of the older astronomical systems, did not secretly examine these truths long before Copernicus?” 957

The words about the possible secret knowledge linking the heritage of Aristotle to the doctrine of the Church and of the danger averted through this linkage highlight one important dimension of the picture drawn by Schopenhauer. Within his reasoning, the history of European philosophy becomes not that of accumulation of knowledge and exchange of ideas but primarily that of a bitter struggle between two opposite forces. One is the fatherland of the human race manifesting itself in the “wisdom of all ages”, the Brahmanic and Buddhist teachings; the other is the “Jewish theism” (monotheism).

In praising the former and demonizing the latter, Schopenhauer is equally ahistorical. Although he admits the fact of the Hindu-Buddhist conflict in India, resulting in Buddhists being pushed out of the country, he does not address this process in describing the interactions between the religions and represents, therefore, a step back in comparison with Schlegel and Goerres.

Comparably ahistorical is his portrayal of the “Jewish theism”. The first dimension of this portrayal is the indication of its allegedly Persian-Avestian origin.

957 Ibid., p. 51.
Curiously however, in postulating that the Old Testament religion was rooted in the Iranian, Schopenhauer fails to question of the nature of the latter, confining himself to pointing to its dualism. Specifically, he says not a single word about its common roots with the Indian tradition. In this context, it appears that the two opposite worldviews, the Indian and the Jewish, might have emerged from the same source.

Equally unclear remain in Schopenhauer’s reasoning the factors that had predetermined the grandiose, although demonic role of Judaism in Europe’s history. Indeed, what enabled this religion with obscure roots to have penetrated the ancient Greco-Roman thought (Aristotle) so deeply as to shape the foundations of the medieval Church domination?

The centrality of this question to Schopenhauer’s historical-philosophical undertaking becomes particularly visible when it comes to his understanding of the European rationalistic modernity that he also characterizes as the still continuing triumph of Judaism. “Our present-day rationalists… endeavor to… reduce Christianity to an insipid, egoistical, optimistic Judaism with the addition of a better morality and future life, as is required by an optimism that is consistently maintained”, he asserts. “These rationalists are honest men”, he admits, “Yet they are trite and shallow fellows who have not an inkling of the profound meaning of the New Testament myth and cannot go beyond Jewish optimism. They understand this, and it is to their liking…. We can compare them to the euhemerism of the antiquity…How remote these rationalists are from all knowledge… of the meaning and spirit of Christianity!”

---

958 Ibid., II, pp. 388-389.
Within this context, Schopenhauer positions himself as an alien to the intellectual mainstream. “All this I know quite well”, he writes, “But I pay not the least attention to it; for my standard is truth. I am no professor of philosophy and, therefore, do not recognize my vocation to consist in placing on a firm footing, first and foremost, the fundamental ideas of Judaism…” Curiously in emphasizing his foreignness to the cultural establishment, he goes as far as to compare himself with Caspar Hauser. Unlike the foundling of Nuremberg, Schopenhauer was completely aware of the heritage to which he belonged, however. “This view of the world”, he spoke of his worldview, “…finds its theoretical and objective justification not merely in my philosophy, but in the wisdom of all ages, in Brahmanism, Buddhism, Empedocles, and Pythagoras”.

What needs clarification in this context, is not the tradition within which Schopenhauer positioned himself but the way he applied this tradition to his critique of Europe’s “Jewish theistic”-rationalistic civilization. This clarification presupposes an examination of two questions: first, what did, according to Schopenhauer, the “Jewish theism” and the modern rationalism had in common and, second, what was his alternative to them.

**Schopenhauer’s Alternative to the European Civilization**

If the critique of the monotheistic understanding of God the creator represented one aspect of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, another target of his criticism was the monotheistic understanding of man, specifically of his special place as the master over

---

959 Ibid., 238-239.
960 Ibid., p. 129.
961 Ibid., p. 130.
other creatures. As to the fundamental defect of Christianity, he pointed to the fact “that it has most unnaturally separated man from the animal world, to which in essence he nevertheless belongs.” “It… regards animals positively as things”, Schopenhauer specified, “Whereas Brahmanism and Buddhism, faithful to truth, definitely recognize the evident kinship of man with the whole of nature in general and the animals in particular and represent him, by metempsychosis and otherwise, as being closely connected to the animal world. The important part played generally by animals in in Brahmanism and Buddhism, compared with their total nullity in Jewish Christianity, pronounces sentence on the latter in respect of perfection, much as we in Europe may be accustomed to such absurdity.” 962

As to one unmistakable indication of this “nullity” of animals in the Christian world, Schopenhauer points to “the trick of describing in terms quite different from those used in the case of man all the natural functions which animals have in common with us and which, more than anything else, testify the identity between their nature and ours, such as eating, drinking, pregnancy, birth, death, dead body, and so on”. “This positively a vile and mean trick”, he stresses, “Is a consequence of creation out of nothing, according to which the Creator… hands over to man all the animals, just as if they were mere things and without any recommendation to their being properly treated, such as even the seller of a dog often adds when parting with the animal he has reared. The Creator hands them over so that man may rule them and thus may do what he likes with them… He appoints man as the first professor of zoology by commissioning him to give

962 Ibid., p. 370.
animals the names they are to bear in the future. Again this is merely a symbol of their entire dependence of him, that is, of their being without any rights.”

According to Schopenhauer, this Old Testament philosophy continued in Christendom. “The fault”, he states, “Lies with the Jewish view that regards the animal as something manufactured for man’s use. But unfortunately the consequences of this are felt to this day because they have passed over to Christianity. For this very reason, we should give up crediting this religion with the most perfect morality.”

In addressing the practical consequences of this monotheistic view, Schopenhauer particularly emphasizes the cruelties by the scientists. In this context, he cites the reports of one professor who removed the yea-balls of young animals “to obtain a confirmation for his hypothesis through the fact that the bones now grow into the cavities” and of another one who “deliberately arranged for a death by starvation of two rabbits in order to carry out a useless and superfluous research as to whether the chemical constituents of the brain underwent a change in their proportions through the death by starvation”. “Does it never occur to these gentlemen of scalpel and crucible that they are human beings first and chemists afterwards? How can we sleep in peace while harmless animals from the mother’s breast are kept under lock and key to suffer are slow and agonizing death by starvation?” Schopenhauer asks.

As to another threat to the animals, he points to the “rough and callous masses who are frequently more bestial than the beasts”. “Look at the revolting and outrageous

---

963 Ibid.
964 Ibid., p. 371.
965 Ibid., p. 374.
wickedness”, he writes, “With which our Christian mob treat animals laughing as they kill them without aim or object, maiming or torturing them and even working the very marrow out of the poor bones of their old horses ho are their direct bread-winners. “Men are the devils of this earth and animals are tortured souls”, Schopenhauer concludes. 966

This conclusion does not refer not to the whole mankind, however: according to Schopenhauer, “These are consequences of that installation scene in the Garden of Paradise”. On the other hand, as he stresses, the societies for protection of animals “would be the most superfluous thing in the world in the whole uncircumcised Asia, where religion affords sufficient protection to animals and even makes them the subject of positive beneficence”. 967

At this point, Schopenhauer’s rhetoric becomes aggressively Judeophobic. “It is obviously high time”, he writes, “That in Europe Jewish views on nature were brought to an end, at any rate as regards animals, and that the eternal sense, living in all animals as well as in us, be recognized as such and treated with consideration and respect.” “Bear this in mind”, he continues, “And remember that it is seriously meant and not one word will be withdrawn, even if you were to cover with synagogues the whole of Europe! A man must be bereft of all his senses or completely chloroformed by the foetor Judaicus, not to see that, in all essential respects, the animal is absolutely identical with us and that the difference lies merely in the accident, the intellect, not in the substance which is the will. The world is not a piece of machinery and animals are not articles manufactured for our use. Such views should be left to synagogues and philosophical lecture-rooms, which

966 Ibid., p. 371.
967 Ibid., p. 371.
in essence are not very different.” “I advise the zealots and parsons not to say much
against it (correct treatment of animals) here”, Schopenhauer concludes, “For this time on
our side we have not only truth, but also morality.” 968

The nature of this morality – Judeophobia as the underpinning of the protection of
animals – needs clarification in two important respects, however. On the one hand,
Schopenhauer is well aware of the fact that the Old Testament religion and, more
generally, the Jewish tradition have never justified the cruelty toward animals. And,
addressing this fact, he cites the Old Testament formula: “The righteous man regardeth
the life of his beast”.

These words become another target of Schopenhauer’s criticism. “What an
expression!” he exclaims. “One is merciful to a sinner or an evil-doer, but not to an
innocent faithful animal who is often his master’s bread-winner and gets nothing but his
bare fodder…. We owe to the animal not mercy but justice.” We should”, he explains,
“Do this not out of ‘the righteous man’s regard for the life of his beast as the Old
Testament expresses it, but from our bounden duty to the eternal essence that lives in all
animals as it lives in us.” 969

Schopenhauer’s understanding of the justice toward animals has a variety of
dimensions, however. Curiously, although he demands the rights for animals, he is far
from preaching vegetarianism. The reason why is that the European descendants the
India-rooted Urvolk are unable to follow the rules of the Indian Verfassung. “It is
unfortunately true”, Schopenhauer admits, “That the human being who has been driven

968 Ibid., p. 375.
northwards and whose skin has thus become white requires animal food.” This is why, in preaching animal rights, he confines himself to the demand that “the death of the animals we eat should be rendered quite painless by the administration of chloroform and of a swift blow on the lethal spot”. “This would be a noble course to follow and an honor to mankind”, Schopenhauer proclaims. “Here the higher scientific knowledge of the West would go hand in hand with the higher morality of the East, since Brahmanism and Buddhism do not limit their precepts to ‘one’s neighbor’, but take under their protection ‘all living beings’”. 970

This combination in Schopenhauer’s discourse of the two components – the demand for the treatment of animals as equal to humans without demanding vegetarianism and making the Jewish influence responsible for the cruelty toward animals – provides the motivation for examining more closely the theoretical underpinning of his ethics. As one can observe, the demonization of the Jews by Schopenhauer has a variety of dimensions. One of them is religious; according to Schopenhauer, it is the “Jewish theism” that penetrates the pagan Greco-Roman philosophy that results, among other things, in Aristotle’s erroneous views becoming the theoretical basis of the Church’s domination in the medieval era. The second dimension is scholarly-rationalistic; it represents the mainstream of the secular European philosophy where Schopenhauer positions himself as another Caspar Hauser. The third dimension manifests itself in the scientific spirit of the modern era responsible for the brutal experimentations on animals. But historically all these dimensions have little to do with the religion of Judaism.

970 Ibid., pp. 375-376.
Nevertheless, Judaism represents the junction of all the evils that Schopenhauer opposes. Theism and selfishness, the domination of Church and secular rationalism, optimism and vivisection – to Schopenhauer, all these phenomena are the manifestations of Jewishness. This circumstance raises the question of whether he provides any explanation of this amalgamation.

Interestingly, although the starting point of Schopenhauer’s narrative on Jewry is articulated in religious terms, the narrative in itself is not focused on religious matters. “Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, is nothing but the personification of the whole Jewish race”, Schopenhauer emphasizes. “Since he sinned grievously against the Savior and World Redeemer, he shall never be delivered from earthly existence and its burden and moreover shall wander homeless in foreign lands.”

This emphasis on the “homelessness” of the Jews becomes central for Schopenhauer’s discourse. “Many great and illustrious nations”, he observes, “With which this pettifogging little nation cannot possibly be compared, such as the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Etruscans and others have passed to eternal rest and entirely disappeared. And so even today, this gens extorris, this John Lackland among the nations, is to be found all over the globe, nowhere at home and nowhere strangers. Moreover, it asserts its nationality with unprecedented obstinacy, mindful of Abraham who dwelt in Canaan as a stranger but who gradually became master of the

\[971\] Ibid., p. 261.
whole land, as his God his promised him… Till then, it lives parasitically on other nations and their soil.” 972

It is, thus, not the adherence to a religion but rather a unique historical fate that determines the essence of Jewry as a phenomenon within Schopenhauer’s discourse. He explicitly asserts that it is not the religion that holds the Jews together: “Originally amalgamated and one with their state, their religion is by no means the main issue here, but rather merely the bond that holds them together… and the banner whereby they recognize one another”. 973

Schopenhauer describes Jewry’s identity as “the liveliest patriotism of its own nation”. According to him, the uniqueness of this patriotism consists in it being a “patriotism sine patria”: “The rest of the Jews are the fatherland of the Jew”. As an indication of the non-religious essence of Jewishness, he asserts that even the converted Jew… does not by any means bring upon himself the hatred and loathing of all the rest, as do all other apostates”. “On the contrary”, Schopenhauer specifies, “He continues as a rule to be their friend and companion and to regard them as true countrymen.” 974

Such is Schopenhauer’s description of the demonic role that he believed “the most insignificant, least attractive of all religions” to have played in human history. This role cannot be explained by Judaism’s origin: according to Schopenhauer, historically-religiously it represented not an independent phenomenon but merely a distorted version of the Persian religion. On the other hand, he asserts that, fundamentally, the nature of

972 Ibid., p. 262.
973 Ibid., pp. 262-263.
974 Ibid.
Jewishness is not religious: within Schopenhauer’s discourse, Jewry represents a unique collective, a nationality based on a “patriotism sine patria”.

One should add that Schopenhauer does not address any other dimensions of Jewry as a historical phenomenon, either socioeconomic or cultural. Significantly however, within his narrative, the demonic influence of Jewry consisting in the advancement of theism and clericalism, on the one hand and egoism, optimism, rationalism, and scientific spirit, on the other, unfolds exclusively within the intellectual-cultural sphere. This circumstance highlights the place of Schopenhauer’s demonization of Jewry as a part of the alternative to the modern European civilization that he outlined in his texts. His program included a scholarly aspect, and it presupposed a revision of the Christian roots of the Western civilization. As he insisted, “For a thorough understanding of Christianity, a knowledge is required of the other two world-denying religions, Brahmanism and Buddhism … For just as in the first place Sanskrit gives us a really thorough understanding of Greek and Latin, so do Brahmanism and Buddhism enable us to understand Christianity”. “I… cherish the hope that biblical scholars familiar with Indian religions will one day come forward and be able to demonstrate through very special features the relationship of these to Christianity”, Schopenhauer stressed.  

His program went far beyond scholarship, however. Here is how Schopenhauer formulated his alternative to the European modernity: “We may… hope that one day… Europe will be purified of all Jewish mythology. Perhaps the century has come in which the peoples of the Japhetic group of languages coming from Asia will again receive the

975 Ibid., pp. 381-382.
sacred religions of their native country; for they have again become ripe for these after having long gone astray.” 976

These words point at the explicitly religious character of Schopenhauer’s message. Not merely did he drastically demonstrate the impotence of reason in the face of will, and not only did he speak “of the body, of the will, of life – without messianism”, as Ruediger Safranski states. Furthermore, not only were “religiously dimensioned terms and teachings… altogether absent from his philosophy”, as Guenter Zoeller justly points out. Essentially, Schopenhauer’s philosophy represented a project of a religion.

The main problem that this project was intended to resolve was the place of the individual within the universe. Schopenhauer’s understanding of man was fundamentally antipersonalistic. “In Adam all have sinned and are damned; whereas in the Savior all are redeemed”, he wrote. “This also expresses”, he concretized, “That the real essence and true root of man reside not in the individual, but in the species, which is the (Platonic) Idea of man, the individuals being merely the phenomenal appearance of that Idea spread out in time.” 977

Schopenhauer’s project had three major dimensions. Metaphysically, it was based on the distinction between the phenomenal world (representation) and the ultimate reality (will), and this distinction was articulated through the Indian categories. Theologically, Schopenhauer’s project was radically anti-theistic and represented a break with the Bible-based religiosity as postulating a special place of man within the universe.

976 Ibid., p. 226.
977 Ibid., p. 388.
Therefore ethically, this project demanded rights for animals and emphasized that "animals are in all essential respects identical with us".

All these dimensions of the Schopenhauer’s religion were the consequences of his fundamentally anti-personalistic worldview considering the redemption not as an individual but as collective and, moreover, universal process. According to Schopenhauer, this process involved not only mankind but also the whole biosphere. Therefore, his key thesis was the uncompromising denial of any special place of the human race within the universe.

Historical-culturally, this projected religion was explicitly based on Vedanta or, more precisely, on its Europeanized version, the Oupnekhat; culturally-politically it was deeply elitist and virulently anti-Jewish. This aspect of Schopenhauer’s Weltanschauung had two major features. On the one hand, his negative attitude to Jewry was based on his rejection of theism and had, thus, a religious underpinning. At the same time, neither the origin of Judaism as interpreted by Schopenhauer (a distorted version of the Iranian religion), nor Judaism’s teaching (the crudest and least attractive of all religions) explain the grandiose, although demonic role in world history that he attributes to it. Significantly in this context, although Schopenhauer considers Judaism within the religious context, he does not regard the very phenomenon of Judaism and Jewry (Judentum) as primarily religious. In describing the Jews as “John Lackland among the nations… nowhere at home and nowhere strangers… living parasitically on other nations and their soil”, he views them as a group without any parallels in human history.
This view, anticipating in part the later racial anti-Semitism represented by a variety of figures including the Schopenhauer’s disciples, such as, for example, Eduard von Hartmann, brings this study back to Schopenhauer’s understanding of ethnic and national identity. A juxtaposition of the passages in his texts on the German question, on the one hand and on the conflict between the India-rooted “wisdom of all ages” and “Jewish theism”, on the other, enables one to characterize the definition of Schopenhauer as a cosmopolite, who “never was a Fatherlaender” as rather one-sided. Not only did he have a clearly outlined sociopolitical philosophy focused on the specifically German situation but he also explicitly characterized the religious-philosophical traditions he advocated and those he opposed in terms of identity and otherness.

More specifically, Schopenhauer characterized the “wisdom of all ages” not only as the true philosophy and religion but also, no less importantly, as those of the “native country”. It was this India-rooted wisdom that he expected to become ripe again in Europe “after having long gone astray”, and it was the Jews that he blamed for the two millennia of Europe’s spiritual disorientation. It was, however, not merely the Germans but all “peoples of the Japhetic group of languages coming from Asia” whom he expected to return to their common heritage.

At the same time, Schopenhauer pointed explicitly to the centrality of the German component of this family of peoples. Describing himself as a Caspar Hauser within the modern German intellectual community, he emphasized at the same time a deep kinship between Vedanta and Buddhism, on the one hand and the medieval and early modern German mysticism, on the other. Although he pointed to a variety of examples of what he believes to be the Indian influence on the European thought from Pythagoras and Neo-
Platonists to Erigena, it was only in the Germanies that he found the thinkers embodying, according to him, the India-rooted all-in-all doctrine beyond the Classical Antiquities and Middle Ages, such as Meister Eckhart, Angelus Silesius, and Jakob Boehme.

It was thus of this tradition of the “wisdom of all ages”, rooted in India, transferred to Egypt, then Greece and the Roman Empire and, finally, to the German-speaking world that Schopenhauer claimed to be the inheritor. The way he positioned himself within it needs clarification, however. This clarification brings this study back to, first, the Schopenhauer’s description of himself as a thinker rejecting “all philosophers before me” and, at the same time, characterizing his philosophy as “by no means new” in *The World as Will and Representation* and, second, the distinction he makes between rationalism and illuminism in *Parerga and Paralipomena*.

As one can see, the latter provides a clue to the former. Within Schopenhauer’s historical-philosophical reasoning, the distinction between rationalism and illuminism represents a version of the relationship between faith and knowledge. “Knowledge is of sterner stuff than faith, so that if the two come into collision, the latter breaks”, Schopenhauer noted with respect to this relationship.  

Insisting on the rationalistic character of his philosophy, he emphasized more than once it matching the criteria of objective knowledge. Significantly however, it is the communicability of knowledge that he singles out among these criteria. And in juxtaposing his theory with a variety of religious-philosophical teachings, he emphasizes

---

978 Ibid., p. 360.
his position as a thinker not aiming, like them, to grasp the ultimate reality but remaining completely within the limits of what can be known and is, therefore, communicable.

This conception of communicability needs clarification, however. Any knowledge regarded as sacred is communicable by definition because the communicability is a necessary condition of the very existence of any religious or philosophical tradition. Furthermore, any tradition has its techniques of transmission. The problem is that these techniques work only within the tradition. And indeed, the tradition or some its aspects, cannot be articulated in a form understandable to those not belonging to it.

It is this circumstance that determines the ambiguity of Schopenhauer’s philosophical representation. On the one hand, he insists on his philosophy remaining completely within the limits of what can be known rather than believed and not claiming to grasp the ultimate reality. But, although he admits that this position results naturally in his only partial comprehension of the religions that he seeks to interpret, this circumstance by no means prevents him from interpreting and judging these religions. Hermeneutically, he positions his philosophy as not limited by any cultural-historical localizations and, thus, standing above the specific traditions representing the “wisdom of all ages” within his own historical-philosophical-religious narrative.

One indication of this position of Schopenhauer is that, unlike Friedrich Schlegel, Frank, and even Goerres, he never addressed the question of the authenticity of his interpretation of the sources. In articulating his understanding “the wisdom of all ages” and the “Jewish theism” alike, Schopenhauer did not let in a possibility of any other understanding of these phenomena. This circumstance reflected the lack of distance
between Schopenhauer and the texts he interprets as a distinctive feature of his approach. More specifically, he identified his message as a continuation of that of the Upanishads and Buddhism. If Schlegel examined the Indian heritage from the Christian perspective, if Frank put forward a program of a return to the original Parsim, and if Goerres outlined the contours of an all-embracing synthesis of myths and religions including the Indian ones, Schopenhauer positioned his philosophy as that expressing and embodying this return and this synthesis.

This position explains also the unique place of the *Oupnekhat* within Schopenhauer’s discourse. A product of two transformations of the original Indian tradition – first, the adaptation of it by the Sufi-Islamic tradition (Dara Shukoh) and, second, by the Romantic pantheism (Anquetil-Duperron) – this text represented in fact a document of the European culture. And significantly, Schopenhauer not only regarded it as an authentic source but he considered this Latin translation from the Persian as more authentic than any other translations including those from the Sanskrit originals.

Equally ahistorical was Schopenhauer’s concept of the “Jewish theism”. In part, his understanding of Judaism as a distorted version of the Iranian religion had its parallels in a variety of authors including Frank. But if Frank described the Jewish religion as merely secondary to the original Parsism/Magism, Schopenhauer characterized it as the crudest religion within the world spectrum. Furthermore, he pointed to the Old Testament theism as to the phenomenon opposing the India-rooted “wisdom of all ages” and, therefore, the source of error, selfishness, hubris, and the cruelty towards the animals.
The struggle between these two traditions with one representing the original wisdom based on pantheism/polytheism/atheism, the denial of the special place and role of mankind in the universe, the idea of the transmigration of souls, and pessimism and the other, on monotheism, the idea of man as the master of the world, rationalism, and optimism, unfolds, as Schopenhauer asserts throughout the whole history of Europe, from the Antiquities through the nineteenth century. According to him, it was the expansion of the “Jewish theism” to the West that resulted in the European civilization being cut off from its original Indian roots. In tracing the history of the ancient and medieval philosophy, Schopenhauer traces this alleged conflict between the India-rooted (Pythagoras, Empedocles, Neo-Platonists, Dyonisius Areopagite, and Erigena) and Jewry-influenced (Aristotle, the Stoics, the Gnostics and, particularly importantly, the geocentric Ptolemaic system) teachings. Similarly, he interprets the Christian doctrine as a fundamentally heterogeneous phenomenon combining the Jewish and Indian components and the history of the Christian Churches, as that of the uncompromising conflict between these two tendencies. And finally, Schopenhauer views the secular rationalistic culture of modern Europe Schopenhauer as the continuing triumph of the “Jewish theism”.

Significantly although Schopenhauer accuses Judaism of having distorted the religious-philosophical trajectory of Europe, his demonization of it goes beyond the realm of religion. Characterizing this religion as crude and primitive, he provides no historical explanation of the significant, although negative role in European history, that he attributes to the Jews. Instead at a certain point, Schopenhauer denies the centrality of
the religion to the historical role of Jewry and switches the subject of his reasoning to the
demonization of the Jews as a parasitic collective of people unique in human history.

Among the forms that this world historical conflict acquired in Europe,
Schopenhauer singled out the ethical dimension. As to a consequence of the “Jewish
theistic” understanding of the special place of man in the universe, especially harmful for
the public morality and allegedly non-existent in the non-Christian and non-Islamic
worlds, he points to the widespread cruelty toward the animals. In this context, he puts
forward the idea of the rights of the animals as subjects equal to the humans in all
fundamental respects. Interestingly however, the demand of a legal status for the animals
does not bring Schopenhauer to the advocacy of vegetarianism; to the contrary, he insists
on the necessity of meat eating for the Europeans as vital for their physical survival.

These inconsistencies within Schopenhauer’s reasoning, belonging to the
historical and ethical spheres alike raise the question of the very nature of his discourse.
Two interrelated features of it are of particular importance in this context: first, the
religious dimension of Schopenhauer’s message and, second, his unique rhetoric and,
more generally, the way he represented himself through his philosophy.

In factual and logical terms, numerous passages in Schopenhauer’s reasoning –
from considering the Oupnekhat as a more authentic document of the Indian wisdom than
the translations from Sanskrit and attributing the domination of the Church in the Middle
Ages and, at the same time, the triumph of rationalism in modern Europe to the Jewish
influence, to combining the demand of a legal status for the animals with the acceptance
of meat eating as a legitimate practice – display obvious contradictoriness.
An explanation of this contradictoriness provides a consideration of Schopenhauer’s ideas as components of a Romantic religious re-integration project. In the precisely Schopenhauer’s case, the idea of re-integration acquires a particularly radical form: it is redemption of the whole universe as opposed to the Christian personalistic understanding of redemption that underlies his project.

Considered not as a description of the reality but as a project, the inconsistencies of Schopenhauer’s theoretical reasoning form a clearly outlined system. The coexistence of the advocacy of animal rights with the acceptance of meat eating is not surprising anymore: not the fate of the animals is at stake but the wholeness of the redemption involving not only mankind but all living things in the universe. On the other hand, this goal presupposes the demonization of the opposite view considering the redemption as merely that of man or postulating a special place of mankind in the world. From this perspective, any difference between the monotheistic religiosity and the secular humanism of modernity disappears.

One should add, however, that this latter circumstance only partially explains the portrayal of the Jews by Schopenhauer. Indeed, his understanding of redemption and even his anti-monotheistic view may easily coexist with a more objective attempt to examine the historical differences between the Indian and the Bible-based religions. But this is not the path that Schopenhauer takes: to explain why one should go back to the main features of his philosophical representation.

This question can be formulated as that of the linkage between Schopenhauer’s ideas and his personality. Significantly in this context, the textual form was not the only
one in which he expressed his ideas. The other vehicle was his demeanor the
demonstrativeness of which resulted, among other things, in the emergence of the
anecdotal tradition on Schopenhauer.

The numerous biographical and anecdotal evidences of Schopenhauer’s
demonstrative conduct, not without affinities to the philosophical live building of the late
Antiquities highlight the key aspects of his Weltanschauung. They reflect his attitude to a
variety of issues including the sociopolitical order (the Frankfurt episode in September
1848), religion (the anecdote on Schopenhauer and Anselm Rothschild); antifeminism;
the relations between man and animal (“Du Mensch!” as a reaction to the dog’s
misconduct); the fascination with the Indian philosophy (Indian names for the dogs and
the meditation on the Upanishads and the statue of Buddha). In sum, these examples
illustrate one feature of Schopenhauer’s style: its deep provocativeness.

This provocativeness represented also a key feature of Schopenhauer’s rhetoric as
a writer. In choosing the way to articulate his “great No” to the values he opposed he
easily sacrificed consistency to provocativeness, and it was this approach that resulted in
his insensitivity to the inconsistencies and internal contradictions within his reasoning.
That was why Schopenhauer’s interpretation of the phenomena he tackled changed
depending on context: in one case, he described his philosophy as a break with all
previous philosophies and in another, as an inheritor of the primordial tradition.
Similarly, he emphasized his indifference to the fate of the Vaterland and, at the same
time, he clearly outlined his political philosophy including his understanding of the
German question. Comparably, he combined his adherence to the wisdom of the
Upanishads (not only through his texts but also through his meditations on the Oupnekhat
and the sculpture of Buddha) with full indifference to the masterpieces of Indian poetry and arts. In still another instance of his inconsistency, he criticized Judaism as a religion, at the same time denying that Jewry was based on religion at all.

More generally, these inconsistencies were due to Schopenhauer’s reasoning being aimed not at explaining the nature of the India-rooted “wisdom of all ages” and of “the Jewish theism” but rather at praising the former and unmasking the latter. To Schopenhauer, that was not a matter of scholarly analysis but a battle in which he believed himself to be participating and, naturally, winning. As Safranski justly noted, “He was an expert of denial, so long as it did not affect his own will”. In the final analysis, this approach was rooted in the very nature of Schopenhauer’s philosophy postulating the primacy of the will over intellect.

Conclusion

These observations highlight the major parameters of the specifically Schopenhauer’s case of the Romantic representation through India. They help, first, explain his interpretation of the Indian wisdom within the context of his philosophical personality and, second, find his place in the history of the German-Indian connection.

Since Schopenhauer’s triumph as a philosopher in the 1850s, this place has been considered as unique: although the fascination with India had become a common place long before the author of *The World as Will and Representation* rose to prominence, it was only he who was regarded not simply as a champion of Indian studies but as a representative of the Indian tradition in itself within the German and generally Western
intellectual community. This reputation echoed Schopenhauer’s self-identification with India’s wisdom of which he believed to be the inheritor. On the other hand, Schopenhauer’s interest in the Indian culture was selective: he combined deep adherence to the Indian religious philosophy with full indifference to all other aspects of the Indian heritage.

Unlike Friedrich Schlegel, Frank and Goerres, Schopenhauer was not an orientalist but a European philosopher applying the Indian ideas to his philosophical project that grew out of the purely Western, specifically German agenda. To him the wisdom of the Upanishads was not a topic of examination but the underpinning of his own effort, not a question but the answer.

This approach explains the centrality to his discourse of the Oupnekhat, this European Romantic adaptation of the Sufi interpretation of the original Upanishads. Not only did he based his understanding of Indian thought on this text, but, no less importantly, he insisted on it being more authentic than the direct translations from Sanskrit. Historical-philosophically, he relied on this text as the genuine expression of Indian spirit. Philosophical-religiously, he viewed it as the earliest and most perfect expression of the pantheistic “wisdom of all ages”, the original Weltanschauung of the human race.

As the anti-hero opposing this original wisdom and responsible for all evils of the European civilization, Schopenhauer considers Judaism. According to him, it was the “Jewish theism” that had emerged as a simplified and distorted version of the ancient
Iranian dualistic religion that became dominant in the European world (in the Christian form) as well as in that of Islam.

The conflict between these two opposite worldviews determines the whole history of European philosophy, Schopenhauer asserts. In tracing it, he distinguishes between the India- and Judaism-influenced phenomena in the Greco-Roman and medieval philosophy. As to the immediate results of the Indian influence he points to Pythagoras, the Neo-Platonists, Dyonisius Areopagite, and Erigena. On the other hand, the Stoics and Gnostics represent in this picture the products of the distorting influence of the “Jewish theism”. As particularly negative Schopenhauer singles out the role of Aristotle whose physics and metaphysics became the theoretical basis of the theistic view expressed in the scholastic theology and philosophy in medieval Europe. In Schopenhauer’s opinion, the teaching of Aristotle represented a step back from those of Pythagoras and Empedocles and its domination was fatal for philosophy and science. As a one consequence of this fatal dominance Schopenhauer regards that of the geocentric Ptolemaic system canonized by the Church.

Importantly, Schopenhauer discovers the same struggle between the Indian and the “Jewish theistic” components in the history of Christianity. In interpreting Jesus Christ as an avatar and considering Christian mysticism based on the allegorical understanding of the Script as another manifestation of the India-rooted “wisdom of all ages”, he describes these components of the Christian doctrine as opposing the “Jewish theism”.

512
Schopenhauer interprets the triumph of secular rationalism in the modern era as that of the “Jewish theism”. It is within this context that he describes his own place in the history of philosophy and his attitude to the German intellectual community. Calling himself a Caspar Hauser among German professors of philosophy, Schopenhauer emphasizes his foreignness to the dominant rationalistic discourse. Instead, he highlights his philosophy being rooted the all-in-all teachings of the Upanishads and Buddhism.

Nevertheless, his self-identification with them had its limits. The distance that Schopenhauer keeps between himself and the India-rooted worldview is based on the distinction between rationalism and illuminism. Insisting on his philosophy remaining within the limits of rationality and, thus, communicable to anyone regardless of religious and cultural differences, he announces it as the “wisdom of all ages” freed of all civilizational localizations and, therefore, suitable for his fellow-Europeans. Curiously, this claim displays a similarity to his advocacy of animal rights coexisting with the acceptance of meat eating as necessary for the physical survival of the Europeans.

The way Schopenhauer positioned himself within the conflict between the “wisdom of all ages” and the “Jewish theism” represented in fact a clearly, although not systematically outlined complex of ideas. Significantly, this complex of ideas was aimed not at an explanation of this conflict but at the defeat of the enemy, the “Jewish theism”. This position of Schopenhauer had three major dimensions: first, the theoretical based on the primacy of the will over intellect, second, the ethical manifesting itself in the advocacy of animal rights, and, third, the sociopolitical targeting the Jews as a group responsible for Europe being cut off from its Indian roots.
Fundamentally, this was a religious project the major idea of which was the redemption of the whole universe as opposed to that of merely the human race. Metaphysically, this idea was underpinned by that of the primacy of the will over intellect, and the understanding of the will as the super-personal essence constituting the ultimate reality. Ethically, it resulted in Schopenhauer’s demand of animal rights.

Generally, Schopenhauer put forward a re-integration project in its most radical form. This program was formulated not as that of a new religion but rather as a return to the perennial religion, from which Europe had deviated because of the influence of the “Jewish theism”.

One significant component of this project was Schopenhauer’s understanding of his own role in the historical-philosophical process, and he demonstrated this role not only through the texts he produced but also by creating his image which displayed a similarity to the practices of the philosophical live building of the late Antiquities.

Within this context, one can distinguish more clearly between what Schopenhauer had inherited from the earlier thinkers including those examined in this study and what he added to the tradition. The most important part of the inheritance was the world-historical scheme of the Indo-German connection. Although Schopenhauer’s philosophical undertaking did not include the philosophy of history in the strict sense, he placed his understanding of the world-historical process within the context of the history of philosophy. And importantly, the central component of his historical-religious and historical-philosophical reasoning, the India-rooted “wisdom of all ages”, performs in his narrative the same function as the concept of the Urvolk in those of Schlegel, Frank, and
Goerres. No less interestingly, the historical conflict between this original wisdom and the anti-hero of Schopenhauer’s narrative, Jewry, can be juxtaposed with that between the two \textit{Urvolks} in Friedrich Schlegel’s later texts.

On the other hand, in some significant ways Schopenhauer can be characterized as anti-Schlegel. One reason why was related to the scholarly basis of his undertaking clearly representing a step back from the accomplishments of the author of \textit{On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians}. Contrary to Schlegel’s emphasis on the philological analysis of the authentic Sanskrit sources, Schopenhauer postulated the absolute authenticity of the \textit{Oupnekhat}.

No less significant was the difference in the very type of reasoning. If Schlegel analyzed the original Indian civilization as a historical phenomenon, if Frank put forward a program of a return to it, and if Goerres created on a syncretic world-religious narrative on its basis, Schopenhauer made another step in this direction: he used the Indian heritage for the creation of a narrative where he (his philosophy) was the hero.

Within the broader historical context of the European search of India, this narrative marked the final of an even longer evolution. The starting point of this evolution was the interpretation of Indian thought within the Bible-based perspective; its second phase, the attempt to synthesize both perspectives; Schopenhauer marked the third phase on which the Bible-based perspective was completely rejected.

This role matched the spirit of his philosophy: to use the terminology of the late Schlegel’s narrative on the two \textit{Urvolks}, Schopenhauer was a dedicated nature-seeker,
and in the struggle determining, according to Schlegel, the course of world history, Schlegel and Schopenhauer belonged to the opposite sides.
Conclusions

The examination of the four figures addressed in this study enables one to portray the connection between the German fascination with India and the German Romantic nationalism in a more precise way than ever before. First, it highlights the extraordinary role of the Indian cultural heritage for the German mind. This uniqueness of the Indian influence on the German mind stemmed from India’s representing not a component of the European heritage, such as the Greco-Roman or Hebrew culture, but a living civilization an acquaintance with which acquired a study of the languages formerly unknown in Europe (primarily Sanskrit) and, no less importantly, a communication with the bearers of the Indian tradition.

Scholarly, the German Romantic discourse on India developed under the influence of the British Indology that familiarized the European audiences with the original Sanskrit sources. On the other hand, the German attitude to India’s thought continued the earlier stages of the European search for India, based on the works by the Christian missionaries, indirect translations, and, at times, forgeries. The models inherited from the pre-British eras of the European reasoning on India, including the Discoveries and the Enlightenment, remained central to the German Romantic understanding of the Indian civilization. Particularly significantly, the German Romantic scholars had inherited from the Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers the view of India’s religious tradition as a major example of the original monotheism outside the biblical tradition.
This difference between the German and the British approaches to India was caused primarily by the difference in scholarly motivation. Unlike the pioneers of the British Indology whose interest in India was based on the concerns of the colonial rule and public reactions to the colonial practices, the German Romantics viewed the Indian poetry, religions, and philosophies within the context of their own philosophical-religious quests and aspirations.

This Romantic internalization of Indian thought and imagery resulted in the view of them as akin to their Romantic Weltanschauung and, moreover, as its spiritual home. This Romantic attitude to India that Azade Seyhan has insightfully defined as the Romantic representation through India was a phenomenon going far beyond the purely scholarly sphere. More precisely, it acquired the features of an ideology, and, as any ideology, it had both adherents and critics (one of the latter was Johann Wolfgang Goethe).

Among the champions of this ideology, one encounters a variety of German cultural figures whose views on religion, politics, and culture substantially differed. In many cases, these differences made them strongly oppose each other; these differences, nevertheless, did not prevent them from sharing a common understanding of the major parameters of the Indian civilization. This common understanding of India determined the key dimensions of their Weltanschauungs far beyond the sphere of Oriental studies.

Among numerous thinkers to whom this feature was common, this study has singled out Friedrich Schlegel, Otmar Frank, Joseph Goerres, and Arthur Schopenhauer. A juxtaposition of these figures highlights the centrality of the reasoning on India to the
German Romantic discourse with particular clarity. The pro-Austrian Christian Conservative, Schlegel, and the critic of the Bible-based monotheism, Schopenhauer, the champion of the anti-French struggle, Goerres, and the pro-Bonaparte Romantic, Frank practically did not differ in how they portrayed Indian spirituality and, no less important, in how they underpinned their world-historical or cultural-philosophical reasoning with this portrayal. This circumstance enables one to consider their common fascination with India not merely as the intersection of their individual trajectories but rather as collectively representing a social Weltanschauung manifested in a variety of individual forms.

Most generally, this Weltanschauung represented a version of what Abrams has termed as the Romantic re-integration project. Its first major component was the understanding of world history as the history of the original people, the Urvolk, migrating from its homeland in a variety of directions including Europe, specifically Germany. Within this process, India played a key role as either the original homeland of the Urvolk (Schlegel and Schopenhauer), or a part of the larger area of its original residence (Frank), or the second (after the Ararat area) center of the Urvolk’s civilization that emerged in the process of the migration (Goerres).

The second component of this picture was the understanding of world history as the gradual disintegration of the originally united Urvolk. Schlegel, Frank, Goerres, and Schopenhauer portrayed the initial stage of this process as a world catastrophe. They portrayed it in different ways, however. Schlegel interpreted the split of the original human race as its division into two tribes, the God-seekers and the nature-seekers, depending on human choice based on free will. Frank and Goerres considered the split of
the *Urvolk* as the result of cosmic catastrophe and Schopenhauer, as a consequence of the emergence of Judaism. But for all four thinkers, the drama of world history began with the split of the original mankind into two opposite parts, and it was this split that predetermined the whole course of human history. Primarily, this split resulted in the upheavals (the religious conflicts in the Indian homeland in Schlegel, the disintegration of the *Lichtreich* in Frank, and the Hamitic revolution in Goerres) that led to the *Urvolk*’s migrations resulting in the further division of both parts of it into the variety of peoples speaking different languages and having different cultures. Significantly, this ethnic and linguistic variety was viewed as, first, secondary to the original split of mankind and, second, the sign of its deepening moral and intellectual degradation. This degradation resulted in the *Urvolk* forgetting its original values, and the European, specifically German modernity became the culmination of this process.

The third component of the German Romantic picture of world history is the expected re-integration of the *Urvolk* based on the return to its original values. This project of the breakthrough to the glorious past has two major aspects: first, the scholarly, including the linguistic, historical, and philosophical studies of the original civilization and, second, the practical-ideological, presupposing the revival of its values in the cultural and sociopolitical spheres.

The way these two aspects correlated with each other varied depending on a thinker’s individuality and changed with time. The German fascination with India had started earlier than the German scholarship on India. Schlegel’s *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians* based on his analysis of the original Sanskrit sources represented the intersection of the scholarly and the ideological components. These components
coexisted and interacted in Frank and Goerres who based their reasoning on a variety of sources, whereas the discourse of Schopenhauer who explicitly postulated the exclusive authenticity of the *Oupnekhat as the* document of the “wisdom of all ages” marked the complete triumph of ideology over scholarship.

One distinctive feature of the projected re-integration of the *Urvolk* was that it was interpreted as simultaneously a world-historical and specifically German phenomenon. If the former dimension was articulated in religious terms, the latter acquired a nationalistic form. And again, the correlation of these two dimensions changed with time. The picture of India inherited by the German Romantics from the Renaissance and Enlightenment had emerged in the context of the European search for the original monotheism outside the Western world. This dualistic picture distinguishing between the two levels of Indian religiosity – the external, representing polytheism and idolatry and internal, embodying original monotheism – underpinned the Enlightenment understanding of the biblical tradition as merely a local version of the primordial monotheistic doctrine. But the Romantics, who applied this Enlightenment scheme for their own purposes, added the national dimension to the religious. Already Novalis contrasting the Eternal Orient and its mystical language, Sanskrit, with the modern Europe degraded as a result of the Reformation and Enlightenment, not only places his understanding of India within the context of his conception of the multiplicity of the *Mittelglieder* between man and the divine but also emphasizes the role of Germany as the country where the return to the *uralte Heimat* is expected to begin.

The question of the correlation between the religious and the national dimension of the German Romantic re-integration project becomes central to Friedrich Schlegel, the
first German Romantic who based his reasoning on India on the analysis of the original Sanskrit sources. Scholarly, this reasoning has two points of departure: first, the philosophy of language and, second, ethnic history. In the sphere of linguistics, he explores the emergence of the multiplicity of languages and, in examining this problem, singles out two fundamentally different phenomena, the organic and the non-organic languages. According to Schlegel, if the latter represent a variety of types and forms, the former can be traced to one original language, the *Ursprache*, a product of the divine Revelation.

The second departure point of Schlegel’s reasoning, referring to ethnic history, is the question of the original homeland of the *Urvolk* and of the trajectory of its migration resulting in the emergence of the European peoples, specifically the Germans. In synthesizing these two approaches in *On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians*, Schlegel reconstructs the migration of the India-rooted *Urvolk* westward and interprets the formation of the European peoples as a sequence of the migrants’ separations (secessions) from the Ur-civilization. In underpinning this reconstruction, he utilizes the Brahmanic xenological model considering India (Aryavarta) as the only civilization in the world and interpreting the non-Indian peoples, such as the Persians, Chinese, and Greeks, as Indian outcast, specifically degenerated Kshatriyas, who separated from the original civilization because of their failure to follow the severe *Verfassung* of Brahmanism.

Equally importantly, philosophically-religiously Schlegel considered the India-rooted original civilization from the Bible-based perspective. As he described the *Ursprache* and the *Ursprache*-based organic languages as a product of the Revelation, he
interpreted the philosophies and religious practices of Hinduism as the misread Revelation. And according to him, this misinterpretation of the original truth that deepened in the course of the later history had predetermined the degradation and degeneration of the *Urvolk*. As the final stage of this degeneration, Schlegel portrayed the European modernity.

Based on the Indian schemes, this portrayal of the *Urvolk*’s history as its split and further degeneration became the model of Schlegel’s explanation of whole world historical process. Significantly in his later works, he synthesized the Indian and the biblical narratives, in order to provide a more general underpinning of his explanation of the original split of the *Urvolk* into two opposite groups, the God-seekers and the nature-seekers. Concretely historically, he identified the fallen Kshatriyas with the biblical Cainites and the Brahmins, with the descendent of Seth. Philosophically historically, he postulated the conflict between the God-seekers and the nature-seekers as fundamental for the whole world historical process.

This conception led Schlegel to a deep contradiction central to his *Weltanschauung*. Completely in tune with his agenda as a religious thinker, this picture of the world degradation was at odds with his aspirations as a German nationalist. Similarly to the Greeks, Phrygians and Romans, Schlegel’s fellow Germans appeared in his picture as the degenerated Kshatriyas. This is why he attempted to provide a special explanation for the migration of the precisely Germans’ ancestors to the North and West. In doing so, he addressed the Indian narrative on the Mountain of Meru. This hypothesis did not have any visible connection to the mainstream of his reasoning, however.
Contrary to Schlegel, Frank and Goerres completely synthesized the religious and the nationalist dimensions in their world-historical undertakings. Frank proclaimed the return to the original Magism/Parsism as the basis for both the religious and national revival of Germany. In this context, he interpreted the biblical tradition as one branch of the original Iran-and India-rooted Lichtreligion. Similarly, Goerres developed an all-embracing world-historical narrative on the Urvolk, Urreligion, and Urstaat based on his synthesis of a variety of narratives, with the particular emphasis on the Indian, biblical (specifically the Voelkertafel), and Nordic (Eddic). In his earlier works, specifically Die Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt, he focused on the reconstruction of the Urreligion manifested in various local forms. In the later texts, primarily Die Japhetiden und ihre gemeinsame Heimat Armenien, he considered the fate of the Urvolk and Urstaat within the context of the German question. In doing so, he developed his conception of the German state as the continuation of the Urstaat, characterizing it as, first, universal state (Weltstaat) and, second, estate-based state (Staendestaat).

Methodologically, Goerres bases his reconstruction of the Urvolk’s history on the degenerated-Kshatriyas-model developed by Schlegel. Geographically however, he traces the trajectory of the Urvolk’s migration in a different way. In his narrative, the history of the Urvolk begins at the mountain of Ararat from where it moves to the other areas of the Near East. And it is there that the sons of Noah start the Urstaat based on the three estates initiated and symbolized by Shem (priests), Japheth (nobility), and Ham (peasantry) and then destroyed as a result of the Hamitic revolution. The destruction of the Urstaat stimulates the migration of its inhabitants from the Near East to India, which results in the emergence of the second, Indian center of the Urvolk’ around the Mountain
of Meru. According to Goerres, it is in India that the three parts of the divided *Urvolk* meet again. Importantly in this context, he associates the Semites with the Brahmins, the Japhetites, with the Kshatriyas and the Hamites, with the non-Aryan lower casts of India. Similarly, he portrays all migrations of the *Urvolk* as a sequence of separations occurring in accordance with the tripartite scheme inherited from the biblical *Urstaat*. And it is as an episode within this spectrum that he considers the formation of the German people.

The three conclusions to which this historical reconstruction brings Goerres, can be formulated as follows: first, the three-estates-system is the organic sociopolitical order rooted in the initial stage of human history; second, all peoples around the world represent in fact one and the same *Urvolk* and, third, the German *Reich* is not a particular nation-state interacting with other nation-states but the world state (*Weltstaat*). This *Weltstaat* was founded by Charlemagne, then it collapsed due to princely selfishness and the Reformation, and it is expected to come back in the future as a result of the German revolution, Goerres asserts.

Within the context of Goerres’ narrative, the *Urvolk*-rooted and *Staende*-based German *Weltreich* becomes, therefore, the entity not merely central to human history but the only entity acting within the historical process. This synthesis of the universalistic-cosmopolitan and nationalistic dimensions in his discourse does not exclude the concept of otherness, however, but this otherness emanates from inside the synthesis. The potentially foreign element is represented by the Hamites and, similarly to Schlegel’s Cainites, Goerres portrays them as nature-seekers whose rude materialism stands in contrast to the noble aspirations of the Semites and Japhetites.
In a way, Arthur Schopenhauer inherited this dualistic picture. Within the tradition of the German Romantic representation through India, he occupied a special place: unlike Schlegel, Frank, and Goerres, he completely and explicitly identified himself with Indian thought. In his philosophical-historical narrative, he positioned himself as the champion of the India-rooted “wisdom of all ages” in Europe. Moreover, he made himself the major hero of this narrative as the one who articulated the illuminist message of the Upanishads in terms and within the limits of the rationalistic Western discourse.

Nevertheless, although Schopenhauer’s narrative unfolds primarily within the historical-philosophical and historical-religious realm, the *Urvolk* scheme remains central to his reasoning. Indeed, it is the concept of the *Urvolk* that acquires the form of the “wisdom of all ages” in Schopenhauer’s discourse. Further, the *Oupnekhat*, the fullest and most authentic expression of this wisdom, performs the function of the *Urfolk*’s original homeland whereas the Indian influences on the ancient and medieval philosophy from Pythagoras and Empedocles to the Neo-Platonists and Erigena, that of the *Urvolk*’s migration westward.

On the other hand, the figure of Other opposing the world historical/religious/philosophical mainstream acquires particularly demonic features in Schopenhauer’s narrative. At this point, his break with the previous tradition is particularly visible: contrary to Schlegel who considered the Indian philosophies and religious practices from the Bible-based perspective (the conception of the misread Revelation), and to Goerres who synthesized this Bible-based perspective with Indian within one narrative, Schopenhauer portrays the biblical tradition as the deviation from
the “wisdom of all ages” that led to the domination of Other, that is, the “Jewish theism”, over Europe. This demonization of Other distinguishes Schopenhauer from his predecessors: if the Cainites in Schlegel and the Chamites in Goërres have rather ambivalent features, the portrayal of Jewry by Schopenhauer is one-dimensional: he makes the “Jewish theism” responsible for all evils of the European civilization from the domination of the Church in the medieval era to the cruel experimentation on animals by the modern scientists.

Significantly, Schopenhauer’s approach to India represented not only a special case of the Romantic re-integration project but also a turning point within the larger context of the European search for the Orient. Having started as the search for the original monotheism outside the biblical tradition, it resulted in the full rejection of the Bible-based perspective. The perennial religion the return to which represented the essence of Schopenhauer’s undertaking was a Hinduism-based alternative to the Bible-based religions of Europe.

At the same time, Schopenhauer’s narrative included a clearly outlined nationalist component. This nationalism was not a typical European nationalism, however. The statement that he “never was a Fatherlaender” needs a clarification: the Vaterland that he proclaimed in his project included not merely Germany but all the “peoples of the Japhetic group of languages coming from Asia”, and it was these peoples whom he wanted to “again receive the sacred religions of their native country; for they have again become ripe for these after having long gone astray.”
Just as Schopenhauer describes his favored peoples of Japhetic languages in universalistic terms, he also characterizes their alleged adversary, the Jewish people, in the same universalistic manner by pointing to “patriotism sine patria” as to its distinctive feature. No less importantly, similarly to the “branches” in Frank and the Chamites in Goerres, this demonic Other originates from inside: according to Schopenhauer, the “Jewish theism” represents a distorted version of the Iranian religion that naturally is a branch of the “wisdom of all ages”.

These parameters of Schopenhauer’s discourse as the most radical and chauvinistic version of the German Romantic re-integration project, enables one highlight the major distinctive feature of the German Romantic nationalism and answer the question of the unique importance of the Romantic fascination with India as its cultural-historical underpinning. This distinctive feature can be described as follows: the Weltanschauung articulated by the German Romantics was simultaneously universalistic and nationalistic with universalism and nationalism representing not two different components of this Weltanschauung but rather two sides of it.

This circumstance was due to the Romantic understanding of identity and otherness. If the former was based on one’s belonging not to one of many nations in the world but to the Weltreich, the latter was interpreted as a separation from it, due to the failure to follow its norms. And it was this theory of the original split of the human race into two parts, the good and the bad one, that got its most impressive underpinning in the traditional Indian xenology classifying the foreign peoples as Indian outcast. In the final analysis, it was the Indian theory of casts based on the division of mankind into the Aryans and the barbarians that became the paradigm in which the German Romantics
synthesized the religious, the social, and the national dimensions of their reasoning. More precisely within this paradigm, they underpinned the German exceptionalism by interpreting the distinctions between multiple languages and peoples as the distinctions between the higher and lower levels of one single world-embracing hierarchy.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


-------- *Conspectus Chrestomathiae Sanskritae*. Munich: Monachii, 1817.

-------- *Grammatica Sanscrita*. Munich: Monachii, 1823.


----------*Brieve von und an Friedrich und Dorothea Schlegel. Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Munich Munich: Schoeningh, 1980, Bd. 30.3*


Shore, John, Baron Teighmouth. *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Baron Teighmouth, by his Son (Charles Shore)*. London: Hatchard, 1843.


Secondary Works


