OBJEKTIVER IDEALISMUS *HEUTE*

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Publication Information

Hösle, Vittorio. 2013. “The Search for the Orient in German Idealism”. *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 163 (2): 431–54.

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Author(s): Vittorio Hösle

Source: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 163, No. 2 (2013), pp. 431-454

Published by: Harrassowitz Verlag

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13173/zeitdeutmorggese.163.2.0431

The Search for the Orient in German Idealism

By Vittorio Hösle, Notre Dame (Indiana)

For my teacher Heiner Eichner in gratitude and admiration

Summary: The essay analyzes the Orientalist contributions of Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, and Schelling (and, to a lesser degree, Schopenhauer). It shows how many of the basic categories that still govern our approach to the languages, arts, religions, and social structures of China, India, and Iran go back to the conceptual work done by figures connected to German Idealism and its peculiar transformation of traditional Lutheranism into a metaphysics of the self-unfolding of the human mind in the various cultures. The normative stance of these figures is something that may still inspire Oriental studies today.

One criterion for measuring the richness of a culture is its capacity to interact with, and to learn from, other cultures. If the culture studied is temporally and spatially remote, particular hermeneutical efforts are needed both to understand its language and to evaluate and appropriate its contents. Since the Renaissance, Greek and Roman culture have formed the contrast to Europe's own Christian present, and some of the most important debates of early modernity, such as the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, had to do with the self-definition of the present in relation to the overwhelming influence of Classical Antiquity. Johann Joachim Winckelmann's new appreciation of ancient art, particularly in his *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums (History of Ancient Art)*, which also touched upon Egyptian, Phoenician, and Persian art, prepared the way for the new German philosophy of history and culture. It found its first comprehensive expression in Johann Gottfried Herder, while German Idealism tried to ground it in a new philosophy of spirit that reacted to the transformation of philosophy induced by Immanuel Kant. The impact of the Hellenic world on German idealism is well-known. But less well-known is the fact that German idealism tried to develop a universal philosophy of history in which the Orient played an important role.[1] This had to do with the fact that the late 18th and

[1] The specialization achieved by the various philologies in the 19th century made a universal-historical view, superficial as it tends to be, more and more unpalatable. Symptomatic is the rejection of Georg Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen (Symbolism and Mythology of the ancient peoples,*

the early 19th centuries witnessed an enormous growth in our knowledge of various Oriental cultures, and with the two SCHLEGELS, AUGUST WILHELM and FRIEDRICH, persons close to German idealism themselves contributed to this growth.[2]

What were the extra-European cultures about which there was reliable knowledge between 1800 and 1850? The knowledge of Hebrew had always been preserved in Europe, even in the Middle Ages, thanks to the Jews living there and some Christian theologians who studied it seriously (such as NICHOLAS OF LYRA). Due to the *sola scriptura* principle, the number of such theologians increased strongly with the Reformation. In fact, even GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL learned some Hebrew at the gymnasium in Stuttgart;[3] and FRIEDRICH WILHELM JOSEPH SCHELLING studied, during his early teenage years, both Hebrew and Arabic under his father, who taught Oriental languages at Bebenhausen. The knowledge of Arabic had played an important role in the European Middle Ages, given the scientific superiority of the Islamic world and its earlier familiarity with Greek philosophy, and despite the decline of Islam and of European interest in it, even in the 18th century Islamic rationalism and tolerance were cherished by some Enlighteners.[4] The 16th century had brought the encounter with the Mesoamerican and Andean cultures, but the Mayan codices were to a large extent destroyed by zealous clerics, and the decipherment of the surviving texts began only in the late 19th century; the knowledge of these cultures was thus more anecdotal than scholarly. A serious study of Chinese culture, on the other hand, began with the Jesuit missions in the late 16th century; since then, educated Europeans had access to the basic ideas of Chinese culture (though Japan and Korea remained mysterious for a long time). CHRISTIAN WOLFF's famous lecture on the practical philosophy of the Chinese, delivered in 1721 in Halle and published in 1726, initiated the controversies that led to his

particularly of the Greeks) of 1810–1812 by most contemporary Classical philologists, who disliked the (often arbitrary) connections between Greek and Near Eastern mythologies (and underrated the Near Eastern influence on Greece). HEGEL and SCHELLING (1976, I, p. 89, II, pp. 255, 277f., but see II, pp. 245, 289), on the other hand, admired CREUZER.

[2] I cannot discuss here their exact position with regard to German idealism; suffice it to mention that, on the one hand, the SCHLEGELS were strongly influenced by FICHTE and SCHELLING and that, on the other hand, both SCHELLING's and HEGEL's philosophies of art and religion would not have been possible without early Romanticism, even if the SCHLEGELS did not share the desire for system building characteristic of SCHELLING and particularly HEGEL and instead aimed at a synthesis of literature and philosophy. Depending on one's own philosophical stance, one will see in these specific differences either a weakness or a strength. A positive evaluation of early Romanticism against the later developments was proposed by FRANK 1997. Still important is BEHLER 1963.

[3] See ROSENKRANZ 1844, p. 7.

[4] Cp. ISRAEL 2006, p. 615ff. EDWARD GIBBON clearly prefers Islam to Christianity.

expulsion from the university and from Brandenburg-Prussia, for his praise of Chinese ethics despite its not being based on revelation was perceived as a threat to Christianity.[5] In general, the 18th century sees varying uses, both negative and positive, of the Chinese in philosophical contexts—in Malebranche's *Entretien d'un philosophe chrétien et d'un philosophe chinois* of 1708, the Chinese is a Spinozist who has to be confuted, and in Voltaire's *Entretiens chinois* of 1768, the Chinese Mandarin is a deist and as such superior to his Jesuit interlocutor.

With a certain exaggeration one could say that while the 18th century, with regard to the European reception of the Orient, is the century of China, the 19th century is the century of India: early on, Schelling complains about Indomania (1976, I p. 23). This shift has partly to do with the fact that the scholarly study of India begins in the late 18th century: I mention Sir William Jones, who not only hypothesized in 1786 that Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin (as well as possibly the Germanic and Celtic languages and Persian) had developed from a common ancestor, but also translated in 1789 Kālidāsa's drama *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. (Its prelude, a discussion between the theater director and an actress, probably influenced the "Prelude on the Stage" in Goethe's *Faust*; the idea of Kālidāsa's poem *Meghadūta* was the model for the address to the clouds in Schiller's *Maria Stuart* III 1.) Partly it has to do with the fact that, after the crisis of European rationalism manifested itself in Storm and Stress and Romanticism, many European intellectuals felt more attracted by what they perceived as Indian mysticism than by the more sober China, which had been so dear to the Enlightenment. While Indian studies in Britain were connected to colonialism, in Germany their political instrumentalization was more difficult.[6] The late 18th century also brought the first approach to another old Oriental language, Avestan, which is closely related to Vedic Sanskrit. In 1771, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Du Perron published his three volume French translation of the sacred books of the Zoroastrians under the title *Zend Avesta*. (The title was based on a misunderstanding, since the later commentaries to the *Avesta* are called "Zend".) He had left France in 1754 with the explicit desire to become acquainted with the religion founded by Zarathustra, and he had succeeded in befriending Parsi priests in Surat where he spent several years. Even if he knew modern Persian (and other Oriental languages) well, his approach to the Avestan language was still tentative and mediated by his Parsi contemporaries, and his translation contains many errors. In fact, several of

[5] See the erudite "Einleitung" by Michael Albrecht in: Christian Wolff 1985, pp. IX–LXXXIX. Wolff preferred Confucius' life and ethics also to that of Greek philosophers (pp. 106, 210).

[6] See the superb book by Marchand 2009.

his contemporaries (among whom was WILLIAM JONES) believed that ANQUETIL DU PERRON had been duped and that the texts he had been given were forgeries. The German theologian JOHANN FRIEDRICH KLEUKER, on the other hand, defended the authenticity of the text after having translated ANQUETIL's book from French into German in 1776 and 1777. From 1802 to 1804, ANQUETIL DU PERRON published his Latin translation of a Persian rendition of the *Upaniṣads*, done in 1657 by the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh *(Oupnek'hat, id est, secretum tegendum)*—a book which would prove of enormous importance in the history of German philosophy through its impact on SCHOPENHAUER. In 1808 it was partly translated by the Benedictine THADDEUS ANSELM RIXNER into German, but already in his famous *History of ancient and modern literature* of 1815, the fourth and fifth lectures of which dealt with the Hebrews, Persians, and Indians, FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL declared DU PERRON's *Oupnek'hat* as completely worthless.[7]

The other culture in the understanding of which a breakthrough was achieved during the time of German Idealism was Egypt, since THOMAS YOUNG and JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHAMPOLLION managed to decipher the demotic text and the hieroglyphs in the Rosetta Stone in 1814 and 1822 respectively.[8] (The cuneiforms followed suit later, the Persian one in the 1840s, and the Akkadian one in the 1850s.) But clearly China, India, and Persia were the three Oriental cultures most fascinating for German Idealism, since only from those cultures were important texts already available in translations. India and Persia enjoyed the advantage of being relatively new discoveries, and thus they elicited a stronger interest than China, an interest increased by the fact that their languages were understood to be related to most European languages. The term "Indo-European" was coined in 1813 by THOMAS YOUNG, and HEGEL's later colleague in Berlin, FRANZ BOPP, proved as early as 1816 beyond any doubt the common origin of the Indo-European languages by a comparative study of their grammars.[9] His book *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache (On the Conjugation System of Sanskrit compared with that of Greek, Latin, Persian, and Germanic)* contained an introduction by his Aschaffenburg teacher KARL JOSEPH HIERONYMUS WINDISCHMANN, a Catholic philosopher influenced

[7] F. SCHLEGEL, 1961, p. 131f. Cp. SCHELLING 1976, II, p. 477.

[8] See HEGEL's praise of YOUNG and CHAMPOLLION in his *Lectures on the philosophy of history* (12.247f.). I use the edition of HEGEL's works completed shortly after his death, since this is the one through which HEGEL has exerted his legacy.

[9] On the background of BOPP's great discovery see PORZIG, p. 320ff. On the creation of comparative linguistics in Germany see GARDT 1999, p. 268ff. HEGEL was personally acquainted with BOPP, whom he consulted on the *Bhagavadgītā* (11.164) and whom he calls his friend (11.170).

by Schelling and Friedrich Schlegel. Bopp's comparative linguistics was part of a general rise in comparative studies that had been rendered possible by the study of quite different cultures and by the belief in an underlying unity of the human mind and whose early proponents in the 18th century had been Vico and Montesquieu. Also, the comparative analyses of legal systems, art, literature, mythology, and philosophy were fostered by the time's progress in the understanding of foreign cultures as well as by the universalist belief that *all* human cultures manifested God. This belief was directed against the traditional Christian parochialism, but at the same time, even in Herder, it had theological roots.

In the following I shall discuss the interpretations of the Oriental world in three crucial authors, with a focus on India, since I know this culture best. I shall begin with a brief analysis of Friedrich Schlegel's pathbreaking work on India, since in it the connection between the philosophical background and the concrete Orientalist studies first became evident (I), and then pass on to Hegel (II) and Schelling (III). At the end I will quickly mention Schopenhauer's interpretation of the Indian religions (IV).[10]

I.

The range of Friedrich Schlegel's interests in the realm of human culture covers almost as much as Hegel's, even if he lacked the capacity, or the willingness, to bring the various areas together in a unitary systematic project. His first works were dedicated to Greek literature, and originally he had planned to co-operate with his friend and roommate Friedrich Schleiermacher in a new translation of Plato (which Schleiermacher then pursued on his own, completing one of the classical German translations of the epoch, still unsurpassed today and comparable in quality to August Wilhelm Schlegel and Dorothea Tieck's translation of Shakespeare). But after the collapse of the Romantic circle in Jena, Schlegel moved in June 1802 to Paris where, among other things, he began to study Sanskrit. His teacher from 1803 to 1804 was the British officer Alexander Hamilton, later to hold the Sanskrit and Indian languages Chair at London. In 1808, in the same year in which he converted to Catholicism together with his wife Dorothea, the daughter of the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, Schlegel published his book *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Alterthumskunde (On the Language and*

[10] "Together, Hegel, Schelling, and Schopenhauer represent what is still the most memorable episode in the history of European philosophical responses to India", writes Halbfass (1988, p. 100) in his excellent book, far superior to Sedlar 1982. I owe much to it.

Wisdom of the Indians: A Contribution to the Foundation of the Study of Antiquity). It was the first full-fledged study of Indian culture by a German scholar. At the end of his preface, SCHLEGEL mentions some of his predecessors, among whom was the Jesuit missionary JOHANN ERNST VON HANXLEDEN, who wrote, in the first decades of the 18th century, a grammar of Sanskrit (as well as of Malayalam; both remained unpublished, as did the first grammar of Sanskrit in Latin by the Jesuit HEINRICH ROTH, written around 1660). Biographically by far his most important predecessor was, of course, his own elder brother KARL AUGUST SCHLEGEL (1761–1789), who as a member of the East India Company had joined the circle around WARREN HASTINGS in Bengal, where he also met ALEXANDER HAMILTON and extensively studied the land and its culture. But his early death in Madras prevented him from publishing the results of his studies.[11] His manuscripts passed on to his brothers AUGUST WILHELM and FRIEDRICH, who both became founders of the study of India in Germany, which has continued for two centuries to excel in this discipline. AUGUST WILHELM spent his last three decades as a professor of philology in Bonn (from 1818 on) with the edition and translation (into Latin) of various Sanskrit texts as well as the editing of the journal *Indische Bibliothek*. He even commissioned a new font of Devanāgarī type in the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris, which was presented in his book *Specimen novae typographiae Indicae (Example of a new Indian typeface)* of 1821 and which spread through Europe and has remained in use almost until today. FRIEDRICH lacked the discipline and rigor of his brother, but his book of 1808 has the mark of genius: It opened up new perspectives, of which many proved enormously fertile. What are the most important ideas of this book?

The book is structured in three parts dedicated to the "Indian language" (i.e., Sanskrit, even if Vedic, Prakrit, and Hindustani are also mentioned), Indian philosophy, and general historical reflections. An appendix contains metrical translations from various Indian works, such as the *Bhagavadgītā*. Already in the preface, SCHLEGEL expresses the hope that a study of India will lead to a transformation of European culture comparable to that caused by the enthusiasm of the Renaissance for the Greek world (X, p. 211f.; echoed by SCHOPENHAUER 1977, I, p. 11). In the first part, SCHLEGEL insists that the thoroughgoing similarities between Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Persian, and Germanic cannot be the result of mutual influence, but presuppose a common origin (p. 3f.). He is more cautious with regard to Armenian, the Slavic, and the Celtic languages, but he sees even here morphological similarities to the aforementioned languages (p. 77ff.), which, for example, Hebrew lacks.

[11] See on him DE ALMEIDA/GILPIN 2005, p. 59f.

(He clearly recognizes the impossibility of reducing all the languages to one common origin: pp. 52, 85f.) Schlegel rightly avers that up to now etymology was not a serious science (in fact, his own etymologies are far from being always correct) and develops the enormously important maxim that there must be *general analogies* or intermediate steps that connect the phonemes of one language with those of the other (p. 7). A scientific study of language must inevitably be a historic study (pp. 41, 84). Interesting is his reflection that in the case of onomatopoetic words even striking similarities are not sufficient to prove that the words are cognates (p. 12f.). He presupposes the existence of *laws* that determine the change of the *meanings* of words, not only of their phonetic shapes (p. 26).

More important than similarities in single words are morphological similarities, and in this context Schlegel creates the term "comparative grammar" ("vergleichende Grammatik", pp. 28, 84). He rightly sees in the internal modification of the root of a word one of the peculiarities of the languages belonging to the group that he analyzes and distinguishes this type of language from those where, for example, the temporal determination of a verb is achieved by particular words or by particles (p. 33). Even if he later reduces this triadic typology to a binary one (inflecting languages and languages where grammatical information is given by individual words, p. 45), the earlier typology anticipates the classical subdivision developed by his brother August Wilhelm (1818, p. 14ff.) in what were later called inflecting, isolating, and agglutinating languages.[12] For Schlegel, inflecting languages like Sanskrit are organic, while agglutinating and isolating ones are mechanical (p. 41f.). An isolating language such as Chinese occupies the lowest level (p. 49), agglutinating languages represent a higher level of development, and inflecting languages are the most complex. For Schlegel, true inflection cannot be interpreted as a later phase of agglutination; it is an original principle of organic growth. Despite his clear preference for Sanskrit, he tries to avoid a simple correlation between linguistic and cultural development: The Chinese are praised as being an otherwise refined nation (p. 49), and Schlegel states that, due to the complexity of language, even on the purely linguistic level, inflecting languages are not in all respects superior: for instance, they tend to lose their morphological complexity (p. 55f.). Of greatest relevance for Schlegel is the fact that Sanskrit, despite its age, is such a morphologically rich language. Since his chronological ideas are very different from ours, he wants to deduce from it that already in a very early phase of human history enormous complexity existed; according to him,

[12] Wilhelm von Humboldt later added incorporating (polysynthetic) languages, a category used by Schelling (1976, I, p. 505).

this confutes models of human development as an evolution from simplicity to complexity (p. 62f.). From the beginning, God has guided human culture (p. 90). SCHLEGEL praises Sanskrit emphatically: "And perhaps no other language, not even excepting Greek, is as clear philosophically and as sharply determined as the Indian." (p. 68)[13] And later he calls the Indians "the most cultivated and wisest nation of antiquity" (p. 106).[14]

The second part of the book first touches upon mythology, which, like language, must have an inner structure that may allow one to find common origins (p. 90). But SCHLEGEL thinks that, due to the complexity of myth, the time is not yet ripe for a comparative analysis of mythology (p. 92) and, therefore, he prefers to focus on the Oriental way of thinking ("Denkart"), which he distinguishes from mere philosophy (p. 93), since it encompasses also life and actions (p. 128). He teaches that four main epochs of this way of thinking follow upon each other and thus contribute to the enormous intellectual wealth of India (p. 152). First, he discusses the system of emanation and metempsychosis, as he finds it exposed in the first chapter of the *Manusmṛti*. He insists on its difference from pantheism, which according to him subverts the difference between good and evil (p. 97f.). SCHLEGEL ascribes many errors to this Indian worldview; however, he does not deny it an obscure knowledge of the true God (p. 103). He can explain this, similarly to the late SCHELLING, only by assuming that a divine revelation occurred that was misunderstood (p. 105). His concept of revelation is relatively subtle, insofar as SCHLEGEL assumes that it occurred not through external events, but through the development of an inner feeling. Secondly, he sifts what he calls Oriental astrology, fatalism, and materialism, which he finds represented in a phenomenon such as Śivaism. Thirdly, he considers dualism. Its first manifestation is Zoroastrianism, the "religion of light" (p. 125), which he admires because of its idealism, its clear moral opposition, and its abolition of bloody sacrifices (p. 129; in truth, they were only limited). SCHLEGEL regards it as the most sublime of all oriental religions and inferior only to Judaism and Christianity (pp. 126f., 201).[15] Viṣṇuism is also interpreted as a manifestation of this dualism, and the belief in avatars is connected with the Christian doctrine of Incarnation (p. 131). Remarkable is SCHLEGEL's awareness of an inner evolution of the Indian veneration of Viṣṇu (p. 132). Fourthly, SCHLEGEL deals with pantheism, which he finds realized both in Buddhism and in the Vedānta. According to him, Buddhism teaches that all

[13] "Und vielleicht ist keine Sprache, selbst die griechische nicht ausgenommen, so philosophisch klar und scharf bestimmt als die indische."

[14] "das gebildetste und weiseste Volk des Alterthums".

[15] He rejects, however, any Persian influence on the Jewish religion (1961, p. 100). SCHELLING rightly disagrees (1976, II, p. 229).

is nothing (p. 140),[16] and thus fits weaker natures (p. 142)—an idea dear to Nietzsche.[17] In this second part Schlegel commits many errors, since his knowledge of India is still very selective (one should not forget that the historicity of Buddha was generally recognized by Western Orientalists only in the second half of the 19th century). A development through these four epochs did not occur: the system of emanation was not the first epoch of Oriental thought—the religion of the *Vedas* was polytheistic—and Zarathustra's dualism is much older than the belief in metempsychosis, to say nothing of the even later Viṣṇuism. But what remains fascinating is Schlegel's attempt to sketch basic types of worldview as possible alternatives to the dominant Western ones.

The third part begins with a short comparison of Greek and Indian mythology, the first being more beautiful, the latter more comprehensive. Schlegel avers that true poetry consists in a softening of wild myths, and he tends to privilege Indian poetry over the Greek, since its myths were wilder and their softening more graceful (p. 163f.). He then addresses the difficult issue of when common traits between cultures can be regarded as pointing toward a common origin, and he declares linguistic similarities more relevant than religious ones (p. 173). In the final chapter he sums up the value and utility of the study of the Orient. There is a certain tension in Schlegel's arguments, for on the one hand they are supposed to strengthen the authority of the Bible, since the superior truth of Christianity is not doubted (the similarities of Buddhism to it being like those of a monkey to a man, p. 201). On the other hand, Schlegel ascribes to the Orient peculiar merits, such as a perfect unity of philosophy and poetry (p. 210), which the Schlegel of the *Athenäum Fragments* had once himself aimed at. Only a combination of linguistic, historical, and philosophical knowledge will render justice to India (p. 211); the scholar, so it is presupposed, must possess a unity of knowledge similar to that of the culture he studies. The task of the future, so Schlegel anticipates Goethe's concept of world literature (which, however, was far more programmatic than the Schlegels's concrete work), is to comprehend the literature of all civilized nations as a continuous development and as a whole (p. 218). By doing so, we will also be led to a deeper knowledge of the divine (p. 219).

[16] Similarly Hegel in the chapter on being and nothing of his *Science of Logic* (5.105; cp. 16.377). The vague reference to Chinese philosophy probably means Buddhism.

[17] See, e.g., *Der Antichrist*, Ch. 20f. (1980, 6.186ff.). Schelling ascribes to Buddhism the *positive* merit of taming the Mongolians (1976, II, p. 568; similarly Weber 1980, p. 701, who criticizes Nietzsche's explanation of Buddhism 1980, p. 304).

II.

In HEGEL's published books, the Orient is not very prominent. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* addresses in its chapter on "Natural Religion" (3.503–512) the Orient, specifically Persia and Egypt in its first and third sub-chapters respectively, while the historical referent of the sub-chapter "Plant and animal" is more general. In the *Encyclopedia*—I refer to the last edition of 1830—the systematic place of the Orient is in the paragraphs dedicated to the three forms of art (§ 561 ff.), but it is occasionally mentioned elsewhere, as in HEGEL's scathing criticism of the Chinese logograms, famously admired by LEIBNIZ (§ 459), and in the discussion of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the context of the analysis of the relation of philosophy and religion (§ 573). In the *Philosophy of Right*, the institutions of the Orient are contrasted with the modern institutions of freedom (§ 206, § 270): here HEGEL follows MONTESQUIEU and his idea, shared by many of his contemporaries, of despotism as being natural to the Orient, and at the end of the book the doctrine of the four realms of world history is sketched (§§ 355 ff.). But while these passages do not manifest a thorough interest in the Oriental world, both HEGEL's 1827 long review of WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT's 1826 essay *Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gítá bekannte Episode des Mahá-Bhárata (On the Episode of the Mahābhārata known by the Name Bhagavad Gītā)*[18] and particularly his lectures, published posthumously, on the philosophy of history, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, and history of philosophy demonstrate a remarkable knowledge of the field, which he acquired mainly in his Berlin years, even if he never supported it by familiarity with the original languages. (Already in his unpublished juvenile theological writings is evidenced his study of the Jewish world of the Old Testament.[19]) HEGEL speaks competently about China, India, Persia, Egypt, and the Semitic world, knowing Indian culture in particular depth,[20] and his remarks cover social and politi-

[18] Beside this essay, HUMBOLDT published in the journal *Indische Bibliothek* a more technical one on A. W. SCHLEGEL's edition of the *Gītā*. There he calls it emphatically "the most beautiful, perhaps the only truly philosophical poem" ("das schönste, ja vielleicht das einzige wahrhaft philosophische Gedicht", 1844, p. 111). HEGEL did not pretend to compete with HUMBOLDT's philologically precise approach (as defended at the beginning of the popular essay, 1844, p. 26 f.), but he did not believe that HUMBOLDT's evaluative statements were legitimate.

[19] Cp. YOVEL 1998. I must ignore here HEGEL's complex interpretation of Judaism and the rise of Christianity and can only mention the fact that in his Berlin lectures on the philosophy of religion Judaism was always treated before the Roman and three of four times even before the Greek religion, a sign of HEGEL's lack of respect for it.

[20] On his French, English, and German sources, see VIYAGAPPA 1980, pp. 11–60. A critical evaluation of HEGEL can be found in VON GLASENAPP 1960, pp. 39–60.

cal institutions as well as the arts, the religions and, where existent, the philosophies of these cultures. At the same time, Hegel is among the great intellectuals of his time probably the sharpest critic of the Oriental world and, even more, of the contemporary tendency to elevate it. He clearly prefers the sober work by Henry Thomas Colebrooke to Friedrich Schlegel's Romantic image of Indian philosophy (18.149), and despite his surface praise of Humboldt, his review is critical of any attempt to find superior insights in the *Gītā*. (Humboldt understood very well that Hegel regarded him as philosophically incompetent.[21]) In general, Hegel rejects the idea shared, among many others, by Schelling, Schlegel and his fellow Catholic convert, the French Orientalist Ferdinand Eckstein, that there had been an initial revelation of an original religion to an original nation (12.78ff.); he sees that there is no empirical evidence for assuming a profound wisdom at the beginning of history, an idea which is furthermore incompatible with his own evolutionism. Particularly sarcastic is the review, published in the last year of his life, of Johann Joseph Görres's *Über Grundlage, Gliederung und Zeitenfolge der Weltgeschichte* (*On the foundation, the structure and the temporal succession of world history*) of 1830, which teemed with such assumptions. Hegel opposes them with both historical facts and conceptual reasons (11.495). And while Hegel recognizes the extraordinary morphological complexity of many ancient languages, he interprets this as a sign of the cumbersome nature of ancient thought; only later humanity got rid of grammatical redundancies (12.85f., 93). Analogously, the Chinese logograms are regarded as inferior to phonetic writing systems (12.169ff.).

For Hegel, the ancient Oriental cultures constitute the first world-historical realm, i. e. the first stage of the self-unfolding of the human spirit—and they are as such inferior to the three later realms, the Greek, the Roman, and the Germanic. Note that the latter includes all European cultures after the Migration Period and in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* explicitly also the rise of Islam.[22] One of the peculiarities of these *Lectures*, on which I will focus, is that Hegel identifies geographical and historical progress: he analyzes neither Chinese nor Indian history from antiquity to modernity; both countries have their appearance only once, namely within the Oriental realm. This has to do with Hegel's belief that the Eastern Oriental cultures are static and lack inner development: "Even this history is itself

[21] See Nicolin 1970, p. 379f.

[22] The position of Islam in Hegel's philosophy of history is complex. Hegel regards its universalism as superior to the Jewish religion (12.429) and recognizes the temporary growth of its sciences (p. 432f.); but the latter did not last long. The Muslim world seems to be the highest point that the Oriental realm can achieve. Cp. the splendid book by Hulin 1979, p. 135ff.

still predominantly ahistorical, for it is only the repetition of the same majestic decline." (12.137)[23] The "world spirit" *(Weltgeist)*, which grants in different epochs a prominence to different national spirits *(Volksgeister)*, starts in East Asia and moves westward (12.134). Already SCHLEGEL had spoken in his book on India of a northwest movement of the historical migrations (p. 171), but HEGEL means that, independent of factual migrations, the ruling culture of world history shifts continuously westward. This theory entails that America is the continent of HEGEL's immediate future (12.114), but, thanks to the nature of our planet, it furthermore implies that a return of China as leading power will follow American hegemony. But of course HEGEL is far from drawing such consequences. Nor does he envisage that the principle of the modern liberal state with its independent civil society, which characterized the advanced cultures of his time, may, even if not without wars and civil strife, spread over the whole world due to the force of reciprocal commercial interests, as it possibly will do, thanks to globalization, in the course of the 21st century. Instead, he expected a European conquest of China (12.179).

HEGEL recognizes traits common to all Oriental cultures, such as the power of substantial ethical life or the lack of subjective conscience and of a sharp demarcation between state and religion. Within the Oriental realm, HEGEL distinguishes three main steps: China, India, and Persia. In a very implausible way, determined by his desire for parallelism between geography and history, he subsumes under Persia all the countries later subjugated by it, such as the Semitic empires and Egypt, even if these cultures are much older than the multicultural and tolerant Persian Empire, whose advanced political structure HEGEL rightly recognizes and admires (12.145, 232f., 236). The Persians are even granted the honor of being the first historical nation, since their empire has collapsed (12.215). With this statement HEGEL presupposes that there is no continuity between the Achaemenid and the later Muslim empire, even if he mentions Ferdowsī (12.226), while in the case of India he recognizes a continuity despite the partial conquest by the Muslims. The three main Asian nations are ordered by him according to his usual triadic scheme: China (and Mongolia) achieved early a political unity, while the Indian caste system prevented the formation of something analogous; Persia combines unity and plurality in its multiethnic empire.

According to HEGEL, characteristic features of China include its thorough tradition of historiography so lacking in India (12.147f., 202), loyalty toward the family, including ancestor worship and, for this purpose, the

[23] "Auch diese Geschichte ist selbst noch überwiegend geschichtslos, denn sie ist nur die Wiederholung desselben majestätischen Untergangs."

obligation to have offspring, as well as the idea of the empire and its fair administration. Almost like Wolff,[24] Hegel praises the Solomonic wisdom of several Chinese emperors, while in Europe rulers such as Solomon are neither possible nor needed (12.156f.). Hegel speaks of China's "patriarchal government" (12.161), Max Weber's famous distinction between patriarchal and patrimonial rule[25] being not yet available to him. He discusses the Chinese notions of imputability so different from modern ones (but far less from ancient European ones), and he acknowledges their early technical inventions, even if he rightly points out that they did not use them in an extensive way (172). But he does not pursue the question of whether this was based on an incapacity or on a deliberate decision, clearly being unfamiliar with the famous chapter XII of *Zhuangzi*. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the Chinese religion is characterized as the "religion of measure". It is a purely moral religion, and in this sense atheistic (16.323). While Confucius is regarded as merely a practical philosopher (18.142), Hegel recognizes in Taoism the beginnings of theoretical speculation (16.328). While Leibniz was fascinated by the *I Ching*, which he could connect with his own development of a binary numeral system, Hegel speaks with contempt of the meanings associated with the *guas*: "There is not a sparkle of concept in it" (18.145).[26] In the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Chinese art is ignored.

While Hegel shares to a very limited degree the 18th-century admiration for China, his attitude toward India is mainly critical, even hostile. He calls it an enchanted world, the country of fantasy and sentiment as opposed to China with its prose, and recognizes in it a form of idealism, but of an idealism yet pre-conceptual. Since the various national spirits are manifestations of God, Hegel can even say that in India we see God in the delirium of his dreaming (12.175). Central to his interpretation of India is his focus on castes. Since his negative attitude is often set aside as Eurocentric,[27] it is important to recognize that it is based on his thorough study of the Indian social system as well as his conviction that castes are incompatible with moral universalism (12.181ff.). Hegel took the reports of missionaries and British officers more seriously than the Romantic depictions of contemporary scholars, who had never been themselves to India. He did not regard it as acceptable to look only at philosophy and poetry, while neglecting the Indian

[24] Wolff spoke of Fu-Xi as a "philosopher emperor" who conceived of his empire as one family (1985, p. 86). But Wolff and Hegel disagree regarding the evaluation of the Chinese logograms and sciences (1985, p. 78ff.).

[25] 1980, pp. 580ff., 608ff.

[26] "Nicht ein Funke von Begriff ist darin."

[27] A defense of Hegel's moral evolutionism can be found in my essay of 1986. For a more refined discussion of the ethical issue at stake, see Hösle 2004, p. 176ff.

sacred law, the *Manusmṛti*, whose often shocking rules he reports correctly. It is worth mentioning that only one other of the great philosophers spent so much time with this book. I have in mind NIETZSCHE, who also quotes it often,[28] but feels inspired by it in his attacks against modern universalism.[29] Even if their ethical ideas are diametrically opposed, both thinkers agree on the central importance of this book for India. HEGEL is also correct in his observation that human life is less valued in India than in Europe (12.187f.). Even if one could counter that the *satī* owes its existence to the desire to sacrifice the most valued object, human life, to the dead husband, one can hardly criticize HEGEL for finding the institution inacceptable. But while HEGEL rightly points to the complete lack of a general idea of human dignity in India (16.367, 372f.), he only mocks the care for animals characteristic of the culture (12.198), without recognizing that in this respect something might be learnt from India.

Indian art is one of the steps of the symbolic art form, which has not yet achieved the perfect balance of form and content characteristic of the classical art form of the Greeks, which will be lost again in the romantic art form.[30] One may criticize HEGEL's devaluation of symbolic art, but one should recognize that he is the first to create a conceptual space for Oriental art. He speaks of "fantastic symbolism", and interprets the enormous size of some Indian statues as well as the multitude of arms and other limbs as an attempt to depict the absolute by transcending all measure (13.434ff.). Indian pantheism manifests itself also in poetry, whose enumerations can quickly become monotonous (13.471ff.). The mixture of animal and human traits (13.441) is an expression of a religion that has not yet grasped the peculiarity of the human mind. In his analysis of the Indian religion, which he calls "the religion of fantasy", HEGEL insists, possibly against SCHLEGEL, that the doctrine of Viṣṇu's avatars does not mean much, since he incarnates himself in animals as well as in humans (12.177). In an analogous way he points to the enormous differences between the Christian dogma of Trinity and the Indian Trimūrti, which, on the one hand, is called the greatest conception of Indian mythology (16.343), even if, on the other hand, the destructive nature of Śiva is sharply distinguished from the third principle in the Greek and Christian triad, which returns to the original unity (13.442). HEGEL grants that the Indian religion transcends the plurality of its theriomorphic gods, but its concept of the absolute, Brahman, remains utterly abstract, and so the cult is an oscillation between sensuality and ascetism (16.358ff.). An obvious limit of HEGEL's analysis is that he does not distinguish between Vedism, Brahman-

[28] *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1980, 6.100ff.), *Der Antichrist* 56f. (6.239ff.).
[29] See ELST 2008, who somehow shares NIETZSCHE's inclinations.
[30] On HEGEL's ordering of the various Oriental arts see DETHIER 1997.

ism, and Hinduism; of the other Indian religions, Jainism is never mentioned. Regarding Indian philosophy, Hegel has only some knowledge of three of the classical six schools, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Sāṁkhya (18.147ff.), but he completely ignores the Brahmasūtras and their commentaries by Śaṁkara and Rāmānuja, arguably the greatest achievements of Indian metaphysics.

While Hegel only touches upon Buddhism,[31] of whose various forms he knows mainly Lamaism and which he clearly prefers to Hinduism (12.209ff., 16.374ff.), his interest in Zoroastrianism is more profound. Again, it is mentioned in his *Phenomenology*, and in the Berlin lectures Hegel expresses a respect similar to that of Friedrich Schlegel for what he calls "the religion of goodness or of light" (16.395). "Here in Persia the light that shines and illuminates other people rises for the first time, for it is *Zoroaster's* light that belongs to the world of consciousness" (12.215; see also 220).[32] Hegel recognizes in Zoroastrianism a sharp distinction between the natural and the spiritual, not yet present in China or India, and a moral universalism alien to Hinduism (12.216f.). Zoroastrianism breaks with idolatry (12.221). Hegel mentions the old Zarathustrian idea of sanctification of thoughts, words, and deeds as well as the dedication to life (12.223, 13.427, 16.406), but does not grasp the original moral meaning of the Amesha Spentas (16.403). The dualism of Zoroastrianism appears to him as a progress compared with the multiplicity of polytheism (16.398). Given his own dialectic, it can hardly come as surprise that Hegel regards Zurvanism, the doctrine that Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu both stem from a common principle, as original, even if this is unlikely (despite *Yasna* 30.3). In Hegel's interpretation, dualism was not absolute, but only a moment, as he claims it ought to be (12.222). Hegel does not distinguish between the various strata of the *Avesta*, which he seems to ascribe as a whole to Zarathustra, whose historicity, still denied by James Darmesteter, he does not doubt. Hegel forcefully defends his high antiquity, and pointing to the primitive social conditions described (12.220) rightly argues that the Vištāspa mentioned in the *Gathas* cannot be identical with the father of Darius I (12.224), even if this identification has continued to be proposed up to our time. Hegel does not maintain that progress occurs in all spheres: Just because Zoroastrianism is a more abstract and elevated religion, it is less productive aesthetically (13.427ff.). In it, light is not a symbol for goodness, but immediately identical with it (13.425).

[31] Cf. De Pretto 2010, p. 195ff.

[32] "Hier aber in Persien geht zuerst das Licht auf, welches scheint und Anderes beleuchtet, denn erst *Zoroasters* Licht gehört der Welt des Bewußtseins an." In the recognition of Zarathustra's enormous importance, Hegel and Nietzsche agree again, even if Nietzsche's eponymous hero wants to subvert the basic moral intuitions of the historical figure, the first great revolutionary of the axial age.

Within the Semitic world HEGEL acknowledges the importance of the Phoenicians as a maritime trading culture (12.236f.) and is fascinated by the cult of Tammuz's death and resurrection, which belongs to what he calls "the religion of pain" (16.406ff.). The Egyptian religion is termed the "religion of the riddle" (16.409ff.), because in it the (however modified) dualism of Zoroastrianism is overcome through the integration of the negative moment into the absolute (16.411). But since this is not yet done in a conceptually satisfying manner, the religion remains enigmatic and symbolizes itself though the sphinx (13.465f.). HEGEL regards the Osiris myth as central, similar as it is to the Tammuz myth (12.257), because, like the latter, it acknowledges pain as something divine and because, and this is new, it is linked to the belief in the immortality of the human soul (16.424). This new belief explains the amazing fact that an enormous number of the economic and artistic activities of the Egyptians are dedicated to the cult of the dead (12.265ff., 16.431). Egyptian art is regarded as the highest form of symbolic art proper (13.448ff., 14.272ff., 447ff.), and HEGEL, based on his parallelism between arts and art forms, prefers Egyptian architecture to Egyptian sculpture, which he characterizes as lacking freedom and grace (14.448f.) when compared with Greek sculpture, which for him is the peak of all art, since sculpture is the single art corresponding to the classical art form.[33]

HEGEL attributes to the symbolic art form also what is in truth inimical to the figurative arts—the "art of sublimity." The choice of term is important, because it signals the end of the career of the sublime, which in the 18th century had become, with BURKE and KANT, one of the two basic concepts of aesthetics, on a par with the beautiful. For HEGEL, however, the sublime names only the last phase of the first art form, as it manifests itself, on the one hand, in Indian, Muslim, and Christian mysticism (HEGEL, an admirer of GOETHE, praises particularly Hāfez). In the poetry of the Old Testament, on the other hand, God is conceived as transcendent creator, and thus nature becomes inevitably desacralized. Humans have to elevate themselves to God, as occurs in paradigmatic form in the Psalms (13.480ff.). It is worth mentioning that the book that began the search for the sublime, the ancient treatise ascribed to Longinus, already mentions the Old Testament (*Genesis* 1) as an example of sublime poetry (9.9).

[33] HEGEL's interpretation of Egyptian art influenced the fourth act of HENRIK IBSEN's *Peer Gynt* with its character Begriffenfeldt, clearly a parody of HEGEL; see GJESDAL (2007).

III.

Schelling's *Philosophie der Mythologie (Philosophy of Mythology)* is one of the most difficult works of classical German philosophy, for both philological and theoretical reasons. It was published, together with the *Philosophie der Offenbarung (Philosophy of Revelation)*, only posthumously in the 1850s, based on manuscripts that Schelling had written for his lectures over an extended period of time. Already the teenager had published on myths, which then find their place in the early Jena and Würzburg lectures on *Philosophy of Art (Philosophie der Kunst)*; here, however, solely Greek and Christian myths are discussed, as the forms of art compared are only ancient and modern art; there is not yet the third, Oriental art form introduced by Hegel. But Friedrich Schlegel's book provoked Schelling's remark, in a letter to August Wilhelm of 8/26/1808, that a complete Oriental academy should be founded, whose head should be the Brahmin Friedrich.[34] In 1821, Schelling began to lecture in Erlangen "on the meaning and origin of mythology", but he withdrew a first version that had already been printed.[35] Even if recently the transcripts of lecture courses for single years have begun to be published, a critical edition of all the extant material is not yet available. I will thus use the old edition, even if it amalgamates different materials. The combination of abstract metaphysical elucubrations with a general theory of the nature of myth and concrete analyses of the myths of various nations, including Oriental ones, is what renders the work so difficult from a theoretical point of view. It is part of Schelling's general philosophical reorientation, which demands a positive philosophy starting from the pure fact of God's existence and His revelation in history beside the negative philosophy analyzing the essence of God, his potencies, and the world. But this is not the place for delving into Schelling's metaphysics, nor can the peculiar nature of his concept of myth be reconstructed here. Suffice it to mention that Schelling ascribes an autonomous and irreducible meaning to mythology (1976, II, p. 422, 638ff.), rejecting both the idea that there is no truth at all in the myths, either because everything is intended poetically or is a result of ignorance, as well as the idea that there is truth in them, but either concealment of historical or physical truth or misunderstanding of scientific or religious truth (I, p. 214). Schelling's argument against the idea that the myths are poetical creations is the cogent one that people sometimes sacrifice their children to their gods, but never to literary characters (I, p. 194f.); as he writes: "The history of the gods creates itself in the poets" (I, p. 20).[36] In the

[34] Schelling 1962, p. 414f.
[35] Moiso 2001, p. 282.
[36] "Die Göttergeschichte aber macht sich in den Dichtern *selbst*."

slow development of the myths a power transcending the subject manifests itself: the history of self-consciousness is rooted in ontotheology.[37] And this objective theogony in the human mind expresses itself in theogonic myths that tell a nation about the genesis of the gods (I, p. 198)—myths that have their last root in the divine potencies that they somehow represent. Thus, the philosophy of mythology is a natural continuation of the early philosophy of nature (I, p. 224, II, p. 258). SCHELLING's concrete interpretation of the development of the non-Christian religions reminds the reader of the analogous enterprise in the second part of HEGEL's *Lectures on the philosophy of religion*, with which he clearly vies. The sharp distinction between mythology and revelation is typical of SCHELLING, whereas HEGEL sees more of a continuous transition to what he, too, regards as the superior, namely absolute, religion of Christianity. SCHELLING furthermore believes that the religion of the origins must have been monotheistic and ingeniously reconciles this assumption with the empirical fact of ancient polytheism through the concept of "relative monotheism": The first religion assumed a single God because of a lack of fantasy, not because it believed in the necessary unity of God, and thus soon became polytheistic (I, p. 126f.). Only through this transition could a saturated monotheism emerge that ascribes God a history.[38]

Of particular interest are the differences in the concrete ordering of the Oriental religions. SCHELLING does not presume in his "philosophical ethnology" (I, p. 128) any westward movement; history is disconnected from geography. While HEGEL dealt in his philosophy of religion with the Roman religion as the last of the pre-Christian religions, SCHELLING ignores it and has pagan mythology culminate in the Greek one (which is occasionally influenced by Oriental myths: II, p. 327ff.). China does not fit into his scheme, and he pokes fun at HEGEL's regarding it as the beginning of world history, since from such a static culture progress is not possible. Malicious is his remark that the philosophy of his adversary (not mentioned by name) has itself something Chinese about it (II, p. 557). SCHELLING considers the Chinese people, unlike the Jesuits (II, p. 527f.), an "absolutely non-mythological nation" (II, p. 521) even if this does not mean that they are irreligious (II, p. 523ff.). China's existence in God's plan is justified by the old metaphysical principle of plenitude (II, p. 526). SCHELLING even claims that China is by nature in that state of pure rationality which the other nations achieve only at the end of the mythological process through the impoverishment of Enlightenment (II, p. 539, 562). Like HEGEL, he does not admire the logograms (II, p. 553), and he rejects the comparison of Socrates and Confucius, since

[37] See the important book by GABRIEL 2006.
[38] Cf. JAMME 1991, p. 65ff.

the latter was not an individual innovator (II, p. 560). Within the mythological development proper, Schelling begins with the Sabians, whom he correctly distinguishes from the Sabaeans (II, p. 179f.) and whom he regards (incorrectly) as the first nomadic tribe, which worshipped the stars. For Schelling it is not the case that humans first perceived the stars and then divinized them: they saw them from the beginning as divine (II, p. 184f.). With the turn toward the cult of the goddess Urania, the truly historical age of mythology begins. Schelling's speculations about the early time are mostly untenable because he does not sufficiently distinguish between different religious conceptions falling under the same name. His etymologies are often absurd, such as when he connects the Aryan Mitra, an abstract God representing "treaty", with "mother" (II, p. 200). He is, however, right in averring that Mitra is older than Zoroastrianism, which he understands, like Buddhism, as an early anti-mythological religion (II, p. 204f., 224, 235). Like Hegel, he tones down the Avestan dualism, which, if absolute, would tear reason apart and could never warrant the final triumph of the good principle (II, p. 219). The two gods are interpreted as the internal struggle of a sole principle, and Schelling even assumes a priority of the negative one, quoting Mephistopheles's verses from *Faust* 1349f., which, however, Goethe himself would hardly have agreed with (II, p. 221f.). The Babylonian, Arabian, Phoenician, and Phrygian deities are interpreted as further steps in the development of this inner struggle, pointing toward some form of triadic unity. Schelling ascribes the most complex mythologies to the Egyptians, the Indians, and the Greeks. With regard to the first, he discusses the myth of Typhon (Set), Osiris, and Horus and the triad and ogdoad of the pantheon, his sources being mainly Greek ones.

It cannot come as surprise that, concerning India, which he does not regard as the original nation of humankind (I, p. 21ff.), Schelling too has a particular interest in the Trimūrti (II, p. 440ff.). He defends the destructive Śiva against Friedrich Schlegel and interprets Śiva as second, not as third potency. Regarding the avatars, Schelling insists like Hegel on the fact that Viṣṇu's various incarnations do not ascribe a specific dignity to humankind (II, p. 461). Thanks to Eugène Burnouf (II, p. 509), his ideas on Buddhism are more precise than Hegel's, but still vague. He rightly rejects its alleged development out of Sāṁkhya (p. 485), praises its moral universalism, which is absent in Judaism (II, p. 519), and speaks admiringly of a "true revolution" (II, p. 497) in India, while insisting on its predominantly melancholy character (II, p. 501). It distinguishes Schelling from Hegel, and brings him closer to Schopenhauer, that he appreciates India's caring attitude toward animals (II, p. 492). Schelling is aware of the six classical philosophical systems (II 483) and praises their subtlety of argumentation (II 450). But

he dislikes the *Upaniṣads* (II 480) and prefers to their pantheism the theism of the *Gītā* (II 518). Symptomatic is his attitude toward RAM MOHAN ROY. As much as SCHELLING's mistrust of his translation of some *Upaniṣads* is reasonable, influenced as it was by his own syncretistic religion and desire to please British Christians (p. 476; cf. pp. 443, 446f. as anticipation of the Clever Hans effect),[39] it is disturbing that he sneers at this remarkable man's attempt to combine Hinduism and Enlightenment: after all, ROY tried to abolish *satī* and engaged in many other political and social reforms. But the elder SCHELLING's political conservatism led him to scorn philanthropism and even defend the slave trade (I, p. 512ff.).

IV.

Although he does not belong to German Idealism proper, it is SCHOPENHAUER who can claim to have radically altered the course of European thought by having for the first time regarded Indian philosophy and Asian religions as superior alternatives to the Christian Western tradition.[40] Our four authors can be easily ordered according to the degree of positive evaluation they grant the Oriental world: HEGEL is a stern critic, SCHELLING is fascinated by Oriental myths, SCHLEGEL is enthusiastic about India, but harbors no doubt regarding Christianity's superiority, while SCHOPENHAUER embraces Buddhism *against* Christianity. This is rendered possible by his complete rejection of something which HEGEL and SCHELLING share: the idea of a philosophy of history based on the belief in humankind's progress. In fact, SCHOPENHAUER's knowledge of India was rather limited: While his friend and neighbor in Dresden, the philosopher KARL CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH KRAUSE, learnt Sanskrit, he did not know any of its languages (his etymologies are often absurd) and had no appreciation for its art and poetry, of which he is a much harsher judge than HEGEL, even if he concedes that translations may have destroyed much of its grace (X, p. 435). He dislikes even the hymns and rituals of the *Vedas* (X, p. 438). Of Indian philosophy, he had read with utmost enthusiasm in 1813 and 1814 the *Oupnek'hat*, which all his life he continued to regard as superior even to COLEBROOKE's translation of some *Upaniṣads* directly from Sanskrit. Beside this book, he admired of Indian philosophy only A.W. VON SCHLEGEL's translation of the *Gītā* and some of COLEBROOKE's renderings of the *Vedas* (X, p. 437). As a monist, he disliked the dualism between matter and mind in Sāṁkhya, which he tried

[39] On ROY see HALBFASS 1988, p. 197ff. SCHELLING's mistrust against ROY's translation is shared by SCHOPENHAUER (1977, VI, p. 309).

[40] Cf. KOSSLER 2008.

to dissolve by suggesting to replace Prakṛti by the will and Puruṣa by the subject (X, p. 440). Occasionally, he quotes the *Manusmṛti* (II, pp. 419, 480, IV, p. 748, X, pp. 422, 679). He extols its spirituality and does not at all defend, as Nietzsche will do, the caste system. But he praises the Indian subordination of women, even if the misogynist magnanimously condemns *satī*.

His main work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (The World as Will and Representation)* of 1818, was strongly influenced by the reading of the *Oupnek'hat*, which he considers one of the three presuppositions of his book (beside Plato and Kant). While Schopenhauer thinks that he had innovative insights, he believes that all propositions upheld in the *Oupnek'hat* were corollaries of his system (I, p. 11). His ethics of compassion is inspired by his peculiar interpretation of the Mahāvākya *tat tvam asi* (thou art that) from *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.8.7 (II, pp. 442, 464; IX, p. 239), which, however, did not have an original ethical meaning. But Schopenhauer is right in seeing his idea of human compassion toward animals in continuity with the Indian tradition (VI, p. 278ff., X, p. 408ff.). The increase of his knowledge about Buddhism, of which he knew still little in 1818, led him to claim a surprising convergence between this religion and his own philosophy: he identifies more and more with Buddhism as the best religion and the one shared by the majority of humankind (III, p. 197, V, p. 142ff.). He even defends the idea that true Christianity was as pessimistic as Buddhism and was influenced by India. Preparing the later ideology of the Aryan Jesus, he demands that it get rid of the Jewish idea of a creator God, which is incompatible with suffering (VI, p. 281, X, p. 419ff.). But Schopenhauer's importance consists in his attempt to revitalize concepts of Indian philosophy as māyā (illusion) and mokṣa (salvation). His peculiar adaptation of them, however, is quite different from their use in the Indian context, the interpretation of which by Schopenhauer does not come close to modern hermeneutical standards.

Nevertheless, Schopenhauer's influence on professional Sanskrit studies was great, mainly due to Paul Deussen, Friedrich Nietzsche's schoolmate in Pforta and his close friend, who became one of the best and most rigorous Sanskrit scholars of the late 19th century. He dedicated his translation of *Sechzig Upanischad's des Veda (Sixty Upaniṣads of the Veda)* of 1897 "den Manen Arthur Schopenhauers", "to the Manes of Arthur Schopenhauer", and was furthermore active as founder of the Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft (Schopenhauer Society) in 1911 and as editor of the first critical edition of Schopenhauer's works. Earlier than Deussen, also Friedrich Max Müller had been influenced by German philosophy—after his dissertation on Spinoza, he studied with Schelling in Berlin and began to translate the *Upaniṣads* for him. His impact on the English speaking world was

enormous, since in 1846 he moved to England, where in 1868 he became Oxford's first professor in comparative theology and edited the *Sacred Books of the East*. He remained dedicated to German philosophy by publishing in 1881 his English translation of KANT's *Critique of Pure Reason* in the first edition of 1781—sharing SCHOPENHAUER's conviction that the first edition was superior to the second. HEGEL's pupil KARL ROSENKRANZ was not an Indologist, but his 1842 preface to the German translation of Kṛṣṇa Miśra's 11th century drama *Prabodha-Candrōdaya* shows his interest in the study of the Indian world.

Even if the majority of German Sanskrit scholars did not become followers of HEGEL, SCHELLING, or SCHOPENHAUER, it is not unlikely that their interest in India was often a result of an alienation from traditional Christianity. Like SCHOPENHAUER, they were fascinated by a worldview that seemed less inconsistent than traditional theism appeared to be. Another feature that distinguishes German orientalism from its British and French counterparts is that it had little to do with the political aspirations of Germany, which did not own colonies in the Orient. (During the First World War, however, the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient [Information Agency for the Orient]* was created, and one of its employees was the later well-known Indologist HELMUTH VON GLASENAPP.) EDWARD SAID in his book *Orientalism* has famously argued that

> the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual, the way Egypt or Syria were actual for Chateaubriand, Lane, Lamartine, Burton, Disraeli, or Nerval.[41]

This lack of interest in power struggles made German Orientalism appear particularly noble, and it is hardly an accident that the first Kyoto prize given to a German honored in 1988 an Indologist, PAUL THIEME.

But is there anything in our authors that deserves more than simply being recognized as precursor of the contemporary state of the art of Oriental studies? One of the most important features in the approach of the SCHLEGELS, HEGEL, and SCHELLING is its comparative nature: they wanted to grasp the unfolding of the human mind in all its cultures. Whenever modern discussions address comparative issues, for example while theorizing in the aftermath of KARL JASPERS about the axial age common to China, India, Iran, Israel, and Greece, something of the spirit of German Idealism is present. Its most original achievement, however, was that it connected philology and theology not by grounding theological claims on the philologically correct interpretation of Biblical texts, but by developing a rational theology

[41] SAID 1979, p. 19.

that took its inspiration not so much from nature as from the development of the human mind. From the latter the German idealists wanted to infer what the essence of absolute reason was; they believed that such an appeal to the absolute was indispensable if one wanted to take one's own stance seriously. To interpret the Orient in its own categories, to evaluate them, and possibly to integrate them into a viable philosophical conception are tasks nowadays tackled by different disciplines: Oriental studies, the history of ideas, and philosophy. The three tasks are indeed not easily made compatible. Whoever thinks that their radical separation is nevertheless unsatisfactory will probably benefit from looking at the four authors discussed in this essay: Despite their many errors, several of their ideas might still inspire Oriental studies in a century in which Asian cultures will regain an enormous importance in world history.

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