

Kraut-Indology

Jürgen Hanneder

The publication discussed here¹ has been reviewed in various journals, and despite scattered points of criticism, the general impression has at first been favourable. Most reviewers have accepted the authors' self-description to have presented in the N[ay]S[science]² one, or even the first real history of German Indology, since previous generations "have done little to question these methods or the assumptions behind them."³ Nicholas Germana⁴ raises a few points of criticism, but agrees that the book is an important contribution to "thinking about India 'after Indology' ". Another reviewer⁵ agrees that the authors have uncovered German Indology's "underlying Protestant theological and chauvinist agenda" and expressed the opinion that "The Nay Science is more than a history of German Indology."⁶

There was only one reviewer who asked a few critical questions, for example:⁷

I also have questions about the authors' frequent use of the word 'pseudo-critical.' Is their position that a true 'critical Indology' is possible, but that German Indology has fallen short? There are two instances where Adluri and Bagchee seem to suggest that Indology has succeeded in being genuinely critical. One is the critical edition of the Mahābhārata completed by scholars at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, to whom the book is dedicated. This critical edition stands in implicit contrast to the critical edition of the Mokṣopāya being prepared under the current supervision of Walter Slaje, which the authors say is 'in reality nothing of the kind,' without further elaboration.

The reader must have noted that one of the main questions would indeed be—as Nicholson asks—"What makes certain non-German historical-critical and text-critical scholars praiseworthy, while others are condemned?" Adluri and Bagchee (henceforth A&B) have not waited long to react to Nicholson's critique. In a response

¹ *The Nay Science. A History of German Indology*. Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee. Oxford University Press 2014. ISBN 978-0-19-993136-1. xvi, 494 pp. ² Thus the abbreviation used by the authors in their response to Nicholson's review: "The Real Threat to the Humanities Today: Andrew Nicholson, The Nay Science, and the Future of Philology." (online on academia.edu). ³ Brian Collins in *Religious Studies Review* 41.2 (2015), p. 53. ⁴ *American Historical Review* 2015, p. 1133. ⁵ Eric Kurlander in *Central European History* 48.3 (2015), 432–434. ⁶ Ibid. ⁷ Andrew Nicholson, pre-published on academia.edu.

named “The Real Threat to the Humanities Today”⁸ they produced a rather strong response by refuting the 6 pages of review on 16 pages. With condescending sympathy they explain to Nicholson that “The Nay Science is a very careful book, extremely precise in its scope”, but later also that “The Nay Science is not an easy book to review. It can easily be caricatured in a number of ways (for instance, as anti-Indologist, anti-German, anti-Western, nationalist, and so on). That Nicholson has avoided all of these pitfalls is to his credit. That he has missed the central point of the book is perhaps an indication of how much more work remains to be done.”

Only recently Eli Franco published a review⁹ which for the first time expressed the obvious: “If one thing is truly clear after reading this distorting and tendentious book, it is that this is anything but a history of German Indology.” As every reader who has studied the subject, Franco has problems to take the book very seriously. One passage from his review may suffice:

This is all very convenient: we no longer have to bother reading thousands upon thousands of tiresome pages to grasp the history of German Indology (whatever that may be, see below), *the method* will disclose its dark secrets to us. However, there is a tiny problem here: Indology—German Indology included—does not have a method, or rather, it does not have a single method, as inexplicably assumed by the authors.

To understand the absurdity of their claim, imagine that a selective review of scholarly studies of Hamlet in Germany was presented as a history of the studies in that country of English language, literature, history and culture as a whole, including English grammar, lexicography and dialects, manuscripts, inscriptions and paleography, epic and court poetry, novels and theatre, philosophy, religion and ritual, history, numismatics, architecture, art history, and so forth. It is hard to imagine that such a bizarre assertion would pass muster with even the most indulgent of referees, let alone be published by a reputable publisher like Oxford University Press, but nowadays anything seems possible in South Asian Studies. It is surprising that a respected scholar like Alf Hiltebeitel, who evidently has very little firsthand knowledge of German Indology, endorses and

⁸ The response is also available on academia.edu. ⁹ Eli Franco: “The Nay Science. A History of German Indology, by Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee”. In: *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 2016. DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2016.1207281.

praises this book on its back cover (and perhaps, significantly, no one else).

I could not agree more with Franco, who with brilliance and verve has stated everything that needs to be known about this publication. In such cases of blatant nonsense one could have preferred to remain, as the great majority of Indologists, silent, trusting that such phenomena are best not graced with too much attention. But the fact that this publication has found its way into a reputable publishing house may warrant a closer look at the circumstances surrounding this strange book. In the following I shall not refute the NS, as one would with a serious thesis, since I trust that the absurdity of this book will reveal itself without much intervention. But I feel that I owe the reader an explanation how and why one of the author's is now parading an Indological doctorate from a German university.¹⁰



The volume is divided into five sections: the first two deal with the history of studies of the *Mahābhārata*, the most voluminous of the Indian “epics”,¹¹ the third with the history of studies of the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is the most well-known episode in that text. The last two chapters concern “The Search for a Universal Method” and “Problems with the Critical Method”.

The main thesis of the work is not so much developed, but rather taken as self-evident from the start, and it is given already in the “prologue” (xi-xvi) to the book:

As it is precisely this confrontation between the meaninglessness of mortal existence and the need for ethical action that philosophical texts such as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā* address, we focus on these two texts as paradigmatic of the struggle of the German Indologist against philosophical, ethical, and normative concerns. However, as a positive interpretation of these texts remains beyond the scope of this work (for one must first overcome the prejudices against such an interpretation), let us now proceed with the deconstruction of this later philology (“Afterphilologie,” as Rohde calls it).

This deconstruction by A&B claims to focus on two things: the history of German Indology from its inception in the early nineteenth century to the present, and the

¹⁰ See below, p. 15. ¹¹ The authors, despite all their critique of ill-applied European categorizations, use the word “epic”, which is an extrinsic literary categorisation from the early 19th century.

dissecting of its method, which is identified as historical-critical or text-historical. In this the authors follow the track of those who hold (German) Indology responsible for the worst evils in modernity.¹² Since to assume that the very limited number of specialists on Indian languages during the 19th and 20th century could have had such an impact borders on conspiracy theory,¹³ the thesis is sometimes expanded by including a wider range of individuals, from all sorts of academics to India-inspired fanatics outside universities, and suppose a common agenda, for which Indology is made responsible. One often quotes in this context Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, who was, together with Walter Wüst, the most explicitly NS-conform Indologist in Germany. But his work as an Indologist was relatively unimportant for his political activities, and he was not taken very seriously by colleagues, since—as Ruben writes in a review—he “practises his Indology not in pursuit of a philological or historical, but a religious interest”.¹⁴ Hacker indeed posed as the leader of a new religion.¹⁵

It is no doubt important to study the impact of such NS academics, but the focus on these figures¹⁶ has the side-effect that lesser known, but academically more acclaimed German Indologists—and absurdly those who actually suffered under the Nazis, were exiled or killed—have not received the same attention.¹⁷ But beyond the individuals within German Indology there is—according to the authors—“something fundamentally wrong” (p. 7) with it, which practically means to declare open season on German Indology as a whole,¹⁸ implying that defamatory statements are apparently

¹² The most pronounced thesis in that area was Sheldon Pollock’s *Deep Orientalism*, on which Adluri modelled his “Pride and Prejudice: German Orientalism and Indology.” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 15.3 (2011), p. 1–41. For a critique, see Reinhold Grünendahl: “History in the Making: On Sheldon Pollock’s ‘NS Indology’ and Vishwa Adluri’s ‘Pride and Prejudice’”. *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 16.2 (2012). ¹³ To which by the way A&B subscribe: “without denying the responsibility German Indology bears for these events” (p. 4) refers to “Āryanism” and “National Socialism” in the previous sentence. ¹⁴ “Hauer treibt seine Indologie ja nicht aus philologischem oder historischem Interesse, sondern aus religiösem”. ZDMG 1934, p. 89. ¹⁵ Karla Poewe: *New Religions and the Nazis*. New York: Routledge 2006. ¹⁶ There is more on Hauer and Wüst than on most other Indologists of the time, whereas in a description of their academic importance the reverse would be called for. ¹⁷ See, for instance: Jürgen Hanneder: “The Legacy of Otto Stein—New Evidence”. In: ZDMG 164.3 (2014), p. 811–816. ¹⁸ Sanskritists by the way are used to being called many things, like “cold-blooded pedants interested only in verbs and nouns” (Wendy Doniger), “anal-retentive” (the same), to which a whole florilegium of abuses could be added from the “Nay Science”, which however lacks Doniger’s literary humour.

in order.¹⁹

The book under review will also prove confusing to the unsuspecting reader of German classics, who is probably aware of the positive reception of Indian literature in early 19th century Germany. This is, for instance, what A&B say about the notorious Indological offenders: “Their Brahmans were creatures of their own imagination, caricatures of rabbis drawn with brown chalk” (p. 306). And this sets the tone for the whole work. For instance: “It is true that the German reception of the *Mahābhārata* had been evangelical in intent. It is true that theories of race, centering especially on the superiority of the white race, had played a major part in that reception. It is true that both these had been deployed in an attempt to reeducate Indians as to how to receive their own texts – specifically, to reject the traditional reception of the epic and to turn away from their traditional authority figures and preceptors, the Brahmans, to new ones: the Western-trained historical critics.” (p. 154) Statements as these need not be explained or proven, since there is “something fundamentally wrong” wrong with Indology. Distracted by such infallible theory, it may escape the reader that the actual arguments are sometimes abysmally poor: I am sure that in most European fields of study the relationship between a classical text and its modern transmitter or interpreter would be considered as non-trivial, but Indologists who pointed out this simple fact that Indian texts were reinterpreted over the century by Indian (and sometimes other) interpreters have been charged by A&B with racism. The authors are blissfully ignorant that with their argumentation they are providing arguments for the now fashionable brand of modern Indian cultural chauvinism, or perhaps they do not mind.

One important line of argumentation in this work is to emphasize a strong antagonism between “German” and Indian scholars, and since it is popularly assumed that German armchair philologists preferred to study India from a distance, some readers will not notice how weak the arguments actually are. A&B prefer to downplay the extent of the cooperation of (not just German) Indologists with Indian traditional scholars. German Indologists from the second part of the 19th century regularly travelled India,²⁰ and some of these scholars—as for instance Bühler, Kielhorn or

¹⁹ “... the kind of book burning Slaje and Hanneder advocate”. (p. 425) Is there not, I should like to ask, a modicum of etiquette enforced by a famous British publishing house? The late Prof. Hahn has recently, with hinting at his Jewish background, refused to tolerate being targeted in this manner by Adluri. See postscriptum by Michael Hahn in “Pretence and Prejudice”. In: *Indologica Taurinensia* 37 (2011), p. 137. ²⁰ This would include Bühler, Kielhorn, Hoernle, Thibaut, Jolly, Jacobi, Oldenberg, Geiger, Garbe, Hultzsch, Winternitz, Lüders, Heitmann, Beythan, Schrader, Führer, Strauss and Horsch.

Hultsch—spent years, some decades of research in India. Instead of dealing with this intensive cooperation, A&B build their arguments on shaky ground.²¹ Furthermore they repeat ad nauseam the criticism that German Indologists used a diachronical approach to Indian texts, whereas their Indian counterparts sometimes (but not always) championed a more synchronic view of their own culture. For A&B this is the deadly sin of German Indology, but this would apply also to all other historical philologies.

The authors deem new in their approach that they are writing the “internal history of German Indology”, whereas all other histories according to them belong to the “genre of hagiographical writing” (p. 4). There are probably few fields of academic expertise, where such pretentious nonsense can make it into print.

What their book presumes to rectify is “especially the way this science has been used to delegitimize an entire alternative tradition of hermeneutics, that “other philology” as we call it, which has its origins not in nineteenth-century Germany but in ancient Greece, specifically the Greek concern for the mortal soul.” And in a footnote they add: “Thus, this book’s direct inspiration is ultimately the radical philology of Nietzsche (articulated, among other works, in his *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*) and its contemporary descendants [...]” (p. 5). So after all this book is not so much about an “Indian” versus a “German” interpretation, but about using the authors’ private (“Greek”) philosophy for understanding the Indian world. As we shall see, there is a personal story behind this, for which we shall later delve into the “internal history” of more recent German Indology.

What the two authors lack in substance, they cover up with rhetoric. They are not trained Indologists, have never dealt with texts other than the *Mahābhārata* and therefore cannot comment on the variety of topics studied in Indology. But even this limitation they try to style as a methodological advantage,²² whereas in fact, it is

²¹ “But in a sense these problems could only arise because the German reception emerged in conditions of intellectual and cultural vacuum. As Ryan has noted, ‘whereas the reintroduction of Greek learning in the fifteenth century was . . . stimulated by the arrival of both manuscripts and commentators skilled in their exegesis, the nineteenth-century encounter with Indian literature was limited to the manuscripts alone, and only a small number at that. As a result, the burden of explanation and commentary fell upon a select circle of European philologists.’ ” (p. 154) ²² “To trace the story of the rise and fall of German *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavadgītā* studies is thus simultaneously to track the fate of the discipline as a whole.” (p. 20) It remains unclear why this is so, or rather it is quite obvious—if one looks at any Indological journal of the time—that there were many other foci of research in Indology, some—as the *Veda*—clearly more prominent. The authors are aware of this (p. 22, item no. 2), even promise further studies, but exclude the possibility that the picture will thereby alter.

plainly insufficient to reconstruct or rather deconstruct the history of Indology, and even claim to tell a kind of secret history of it, simply by limiting oneself to studies of the *Mahābhārata*. Unlike the two authors, few Sanskritists, and none of the famous ones, were “one-text scholars”.

This severe methodological defect that precludes most of the sweeping statements typical of the text under review,²³ is nonchalantly brushed aside by asking and answering a question that would indeed suggest itself, “Is the history we present teleological?” (p. 6), in the following manner: “By narrowly defining the scope of inquiry as German interpretations of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā* insofar as they are based on the historical-critical method and reflect certain Enlightenment and Protestant anxieties, we avoid the problem of a teleological narrative.” (p. 6) In fact, if they had been able to see a larger picture, the results would have been more diverse. But the authors are already beyond that point: “Further, if one can at all speak of a telos here, it is a negative telos: we do not explain how the discipline arose, but how it ended. Thus, it is really the dispersal or diremption of the text-historical method at the end of the twentieth century that interests us.” (p. 6) Even at the risk of stating the obvious: the authors wholly live in an imaginary world of their own. If, for the sake of writing this review, we have to enter this topsy-turvy world, it does not mean we accept its coordinates. Needless to say, in the real world Indology or textual criticism work just fine.

The other question the authors raise about their history right at the beginning is: “Is it essentializing?” (p. 6) Especially in a work that is informed by post-colonial and other highly politicized theories, the frequent use of the adjective “German” calls for analysis. Here A&B inform us that “German” does not denote “race or national identity”, but a scientific or academical method. This method “is a creation of the Neo-Protestantism (*Neuprotestantismus*) of the eighteenth century (as discussed later) and hence singularly unsuited to the task of a global, objective, and secular Indology”²⁴ (p. 7). This “German Indology” is therefore not at all limited to Germany, but pertains also to “a number of American scholars” (p. 7), who were “by and large” not able to escape from the clutches of the German, protestant, historical-critical method. Also the (British) *Mahābhārata* scholar Brockington in this sense would be German by method (p. 291). To be sure, the term “German Indologist” by default denotes all

²³ “German scholars were not interested in texts for the sake of texts. They took up the study of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā* only insofar as these texts could be used to confirm ideas of the German people” (p. 304). ²⁴ Again I refrain from commenting on the absurdity of this statement, but only add that the other methods—as the authors term it—and especially Greek philology, is apparently excluded from this verdict.

German born or German speaking scholars,²⁵ but includes also those merely trained in Germany, as the American scholars Whitney, Hopkins and presumably many modern scholars, who have spent some time in German universities (p. 22). Of course the grand thesis that German Indology was a form of protestant theology works only, if we take the adjectives German and protestant in a special sense. One German scholar with a supposedly neo-protestant agenda and—as a part-time *Mahābhārata* scholar—important for their argument was Jewish and working in London, but the authors are never short of explanations: “Goldstücker was Jewish, which especially makes our point that German Indology cannot be identified with nationality or religion.” (p. 347) For the authors the adjective German is an expedient term through which all they want to deconstruct can be denounced as evangelical, right-wing, or racist. Their argument has a historical dimension, but also a contemporary one. If we would compile a list from these passages, in which they mete out lavish scorn on contemporary Indologists,²⁶ we would probably have a fair covering of the subject in Germany and quite a few other Indologists and Sanskritists “German” by “method”.²⁷

A&B main rhetorical weapon, which they use whenever other arguments fail, is of course the allegation of being somehow connected to Nazi ideology. They have been to Germany long enough²⁸ to know that this never misses the target. Take the following passage: “It would be interesting to see if Indology made any efforts after the war to rehabilitate Jewish Indologists”. German universities were—to put it mildly—slow to rehabilitate victims of the NS regime. Even the illegal rescinding of doctoral degrees for “racial” or political reasons was not attempted until much later and not to the extent that would have been necessary.²⁹ All this is well-known and not a honourable page in post-war academia in Germany, but only few readers with some knowledge in the field will hear this for the first time from A&B. Their self-aggrandizing gesture in acting as judges in this field is presumptuous.

We have seen that “German” includes scholars of all sorts of European nationalities, but trained in Germany or adhering to a historical-philological method. What

²⁵ Most of which, by the way, trace their *guruparamparā* back to the Norwegian scholar Christian Lassen.

²⁶ Just to give one example: “Scholars from Peter Gaeffke to Paul Hacker, Heinrich von Stietencron, Angelika Malinar, Walter Slaje, Michael Witzel, and Jürgen Hanneder would make comments that in any other context would be condemned as racist.” (p. 349) ²⁷ It has puzzled me why no reaction to this type of defamation can be found in the anglophone world. When the whole of American Indology was treated recently in a similarly stupid way by Indian nationalists, the response did not take long.

²⁸ Bagchi has apparently studied the philosophy of Heidegger. ²⁹ See Margret Lemberg: “... eines deutschen akademischen Grades unwürdig”. *Die Entziehung des Dokortitels an der Philipps-Universität Marburg 1933–1945*. Marburg 2002.

about Indian scholars trained in Germany? There were quite a few, and some became very famous later as acclaimed Indian Sanskritists: One of the first was Vasudev Anant Sukhtankar who studied with Hermann Jacobi in Bonn and completed his PhD on *The teachings of Vedānta according to Rāmānuja* in 1908. Then there was Tukaram Laddu who studied in Halle with Hultsch and completed in PhD on *Prolegomena zu Trivikramas Prakrit-Grammatik* in 1912. Kunhan Raja dedicates his work *Poet-Philosophers of the Rigveda*³⁰ to Karl Friedrich Geldner, “under whom I studied Veda and Avesta in Marburg”. Nobel in Marburg supervised the thesis by Manilal Patel: *Die Dānastutis des Rigveda* (Marburg 1929). Then there is R. N. Dandekar, who completed his PhD in Heidelberg on *Der vedische Mensch: Studien zur Selbstauffassung des Inders in Rg- und Atharvaveda* (1938). Were these Indian scholars, like the Danish (Westergaard), Norwegian (Lassen), or American (Whitney) scholars, according to A&B’s reckoning “German Indologists” (through academical training)?

The authors, who have assembled a large body of material, cannot have remained ignorant of the facts that disprove their presuppositions. The critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* produced in Poona, which they champion, was edited by Sukthankar (PhD Berlin), and the Berlin Sanskritist Lüders as well as the Prague Indologist Winternitz were involved. And indeed the whole editorial methodology is as “German” (in the A&B sense of the word) as it gets.³¹ But here the authors make an exception: “There is a good reason why we defended the work of the Bhandarkar Institute scholars: textual criticism is mechanical, rigorous, and follows objective and explicitly stated principles. The Bhandarkar Institute scholars were following textual criticism, not the pseudo-critical, anti-Semitic method of historical criticism.”³² But as we will see below Indian tradition is always invoked, but remains conspicuously absent from A&B’s vision of Indian textual criticism. The problem with the claim of the authors that German Indology was characterized by “a rejection of Indian hermeneutics as ‘uncritical’ ” (p. 28) is that they do not even know what they are talking about: Indian exegesis of the *Mahābhārata*—since most of it remains untranslated—is completely

³⁰ Madras 1963. ³¹ If it was an instance of anti-semitic textual criticism (see below), then Winternitz, who was Jewish, did not notice. A&B construe a difference between textual and historical criticism as a defense, but in German, and outside of the “Nay Science” universe, the concept would be one of a “historisch-kritische Ausgabe”. ³² See “The Real Threat to the Humanities Today: Andrew Nicholson, The Nay Science, and the Future of Philology”, p. 2. The reader will have noticed that I have thought it unnecessary to add trigger the warnings “absurd” or “preposterous”.

outside their scope as Non-Sanskritists.³³

With this “Umwertung aller Werte” one wonders who are the winners in the New Indology? Who would be the Indologists uncontaminated by German Indology? There is first and foremost the mentor of the authors: Alf Hiltebeitel, then there are—all with reference to *Mahābhārata* studies—David Shulman, Frederick Smith, Gregory Bailey, Madeleine Biardeau and Wendy Doniger, who represent a “minority view”, whereas all the others are supposed to have followed the “racial approach pioneered by Christian Lassen and further developed by Adolf Holtzmann Jr. and Hermann Oldenberg.” (p. 25) In other words and in order to bring out the undercurrent a little more bluntly: the rest are apparently German racists. Again, no comment is needed here.

Since so much attention is given to the terms “philology” and textual criticism: the authors, who present themselves as those who look at, not what “Indologists say they do (or think that it is they are doing)” but “instead on what they actually do” (p. 7), are often rather lightweight when it comes to details. They seem unaware of the fact that the method of early Indologists was not the method of Lachmann.³⁴ There is also not a word on the frequent criticism of the stemmatic method in Indological circles, or of the methods adapted specially for contaminated recensions³⁵. Perhaps here a glance beyond the *Mahābhārata* into other scenarios of text transmission would have been helpful.

A fairly large part of the NS treats of pioneers of *Mahābhārata* studies, such as Holtzmann; it must suffice to note that in the history of Sanskrit Studies by Windisch—which A&B term the “official” or “hagiographical” history of Indology—we read about the first Holtzmann and his radical practice to elide from the text material he deemed spurious: “Trotz dieses sehr subjektiven Charakters seiner Kritik und seiner Rekonstruktion bleibt ihm doch das Verdienst, die kritische Betrachtung des Mahābhārata eingeleitet zu haben.” (Despite this highly subjective character of his criticism and his reconstruction, the merit of instigating a critical study of the Mahābhārata goes to him.)³⁶ On the nephew, again a Mahābhārata scholar, Windisch

³³ The “traditional” methods of Indian commentators are sometimes quite text-critical; they mark verses as spurious, exclude them with historical, stylistic and other arguments. Since many of these exegetes predate Martin Luther I guess in this case we have a textual criticism without (neo-)protestant, German influence. ³⁴ Jürgen Hanneder: “Introduction”. In: *Text Genealogy, Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique*. Ed. Jürgen Hanneder und Philipp A. Maas. WZKS LII–LIII (2009–2010), p. 5–16.

³⁵ The most elaborate would be: Srinivasa Ayya Srinivasan: *Vācaspatimiśras Tattvakaumudī: ein Beitrag zur Textkritik bei kontaminierter Überlieferung*. Hamburg: de Gruyter 1967. ³⁶ Ernst Windisch: *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*. Straßburg: Trübner 1917/1920, p. 93.

writes no more than the few lines: “An seine Ideen knüpft sein Neffe Adolf Holtzmann der Jüngere an, geboren in Karlsruhe 1838, gestorben als Professor des Sanskrit in Freiburg 1914, der mit seines Onkels Exemplar der Calcuttaer Ausgabe auch das Studium des Mahābhārata geerbt hat.” (His ideas were the starting point of his nephew Adolf Holtzmann jr., born Karlsruhe 1838, died as professor of Sanskrit in Freiburg 1914, who with his uncle’s exemplar of the Calcutta edition inherited also the study of the Mahābhārata.) The polemics in this single sentence, perhaps easily missed by the casual reader, show that at least German Indology had long moved beyond poor Holtzmann, before A&B made him take centre stage just to dismantle him on hundreds of pages. The half-informed audience, who has not read Holtzmann’s works, will not have noticed that this was no more than the flogging of a dead horse.

One part of the thesis is the idea that German Indology is a form of protestant theology and German Indologists consequently “repressed theologians” (p. 420). Now many German Indologists were, unsurprisingly, protestant, others catholic, British ones by default Anglican, and there was a sizeable group of Jewish faith, especially in Germany.³⁷ But it is with the supposed all-pervading influence of neo-protestantism that the authors seem to have an axe to grind. With their own re-ordering of preferences, Indologists are adduced that would otherwise have escaped attention: Rudolf Otto is made “a mainstream figure in Indology” (p. 25) and “not so much an anomaly in an otherwise unproblematic tradition, but rather, the fullest articulation of that tradition.” (p. 259) Otto was “taking up the premises of the Indologists and radicalizing them from within.” (p. 264) Some readers might be aware of the fact that Otto was not an Indologist, but held the chair of “Systematische Theologie” in Marburg. As one founder of religious psychology he became especially influential in America, in Indology he was marginal. Especially because of his Indological interests and expertise, he was indeed a fascinating anomaly in the academic world.

But Otto is among those who wrote on the *Bhagavadgītā* and proposed his own stratification of the text, a deadly sin according to A&B,³⁸ and the reason for which he is singled out as a major target. As a theologian, he was in fact seen quite critically by many Indologists, whereas Stein—Jewish minority philology according to A&B—wrote a positive review on his *Bhagavadgītā* theory. Confusing? It certainly is. In the

³⁷ To A&B’s list (p. 21) one ought to add Lefmann, Scheftelowitz, Strauß and Neisser, all of them strict (historical) philologists, practising according to A&B an “anti-semitic” form of philology. ³⁸ Otto is here described as “A pupil of Garbe, the late Rudolf Otto, has carried this dissection of the Gītā to a far greater extent”. For those who wonder why Otto is introduced as someone who recently expired: This statement is taken over without mentioning the source from Kashinath Upadhyaya: *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgita*. New Delhi: 1971, p.3.

light of actual historical facts A&B's fanciful and inventive ideas vanish into thin air.

We have seen that in the *Nay Science* protestantism is the culprit, while Catholicism ranges among alternative viewpoints, to be exact: "alternative sources of intellectual authority – Jewish, Catholic, Greek or Indian." (p. 435). In another article, in which they endeavor to denounce the Indologist Paul Hacker as right-wing, evangelical and so forth,³⁹ his conversion to catholicism is consequently only a minor episode. It seems nothing can shake a good theory. Furthermore, Hacker is only rejected where it is expedient,⁴⁰ elsewhere (see below) Adluri has no problems to praise his methodology. It is only a minor wilfull misinterpretation among many that A&B think that Hacker's theological works were suppressed in "his" *Kleine Schriften*, whereas this series is bound by statutes to re-printing only Indological articles.⁴¹ But it is easier to make one's point with this type of half-knowledge. As regards Hacker's theological writings—instead of accepting A&B's judgement in yet another field they have not studied—I will only mention that Hacker was much appreciated by Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Barth and Josef Ratzinger.⁴²

Before looking at the wider background of the A&B's works I shall merely summarize a few stray points.

"At the end of our journey, it has become clear that so-called critical research does not offer a viable avenue for future scholarship on Indian literature, thought, or philosophy." (p. 434) Given the impressive self-consciousness of the authors in denying value to an academic discipline they hardly understand, one naturally expects to be shown the right way. Let us first review some of the salient points of their diagnosis:

"As we have seen, the real problem with Indology was not its method but that it did not have any." (p. 433) "Apart from nebulous ideas of positivism and empiricism, we found that what the Indologists meant when they claimed that their work was

³⁹ Joydeep Bagchee and Vishwa Adluri: "The passion of Paul Hacker: Indology, orientalism, and evangelism." *Transcultural Encounters between Germany and India: Kindred Spirits in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ed. Joanne Miyang Cho, Eric Kurlander, and Douglas T. McGetchin. New York: Routledge 2013, p. 215–29. ⁴⁰ For Indologists who actually read Hacker's works it is—depending on the mood I guess—either hilarious or absurd to read that "the best summary of Hacker's works is in Joydeep Bagchee, "The Invention of Difference and the Assault on Ecumenism: Paul Hacker Becomes a Catholic," paper presented at the 3rd Rethinking Religion in India conference, Pardubice, Czech Republic, 11–14 October, 2011." (p. 390). ⁴¹ In fact in the bibliography his theological works do appear. ⁴² The latter proclaimed in 2000 that the work of Hacker would have to be rediscovered. See Ursula Hacker-Klom et al. (Ed.) "*Hackers Werk wird eines Tages wieder entdeckt werden!*" *Zum 100. Geburtstag des Indologen Paul Hacker (1913–1979) Vorträge zur Tagung am 25. Mai 2013, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster*. (Wissenschaftliche Schriften der WWU Münster) Münster 2013, p. 28.

wissenschaftlich was that it was historicist. Here, it rapidly became clear that much of their objection to the tradition was in fact theological.” (p. 435) “Thus, at the end we return to the question we started out with: what does it mean to read a myth or a text philologically? As we have told the story, we have consistently highlighted the Rezeptionsgeschichte of texts as an essential element of their meaning. Our central contention was that in ignoring this history, German Indologists went astray—as self-taught amateurs are likely to do.” (p. 435)

One of the persistent tropes in A&B’s criticism is that German Indology held as one “central principle” “the superiority of critical consciousness over the exegetic tradition” (p. 433). Naturally the Classical Indologist, whose daily work it is to understand this very tradition, would like to see this New Indology based on the exegetic tradition in practice and learn how it returns to tradition. Now, that the authors have deconstructed the “Afterphilology”⁴³, we may ask for the promised “positive interpretation of these texts”.

A&B state that “in advocating a return to tradition, however, we do not mean to suggest that we should return to it uncritically.” (p. 435) As is customary in this academic milieu, if one is unsure about one’s argument, one invokes one of the French, more rarely German saints of textbook theory:⁴⁴ “Rather, as Gadamer has shown, the fundamental hermeneutic problem concerns the problem of application. Here, a look at Gandhi’s reading of the Bhagavadgītā can help us understand how it is possible to negotiate the various demands of reading a text meaningfully, of taking into consideration its reception, and of making it hermeneutically productive for one’s present.” (p. 435)

⁴³ The word quoted in the beginning of the text is from Rohde: *Afterphilologie. Zur Beleuchtung des von dem Dr. phil. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff herausgegebenen Pamphlets: „Zukunftsphilologie!“ Sendschreiben eines Philologen an Richard Wagner* (Leipzig: Fritsch 1872). For the announcement of “Zukunftsphilologie” as a new fashion by post-Saidian, reconverted American philologists see my “Zukunftsphilologie oder die nächste M[eth]ode”. In: ZDMG 163.1 (2013), S. 159–172. ⁴⁴ As the Sinologist Kubin has phrased it: “Viele Werke der Sinologie sind heute nämlich, was ihre Ergebnisse angeht, vorhersehbar. Dies hängt mit dem kollektiven Denken zusammen, das sich aus den USA kommend inzwischen auch in Europa breit macht. Man zitiert dort dieselben Quellen, momentan primär postmoderne französische Philosophie, man beruft sich auf dieselben Theorien, momentan Postkolonialismus und Gender Studies, man gebraucht dieselben Begriffe, momentan (urban) space, gender, the other, self, carnival etc., man führt dieselben Gewährsleute an, momentan Frederic Jameson, Matthew Arnold, Michail Bachtin, Edward Said und vor allem: Man hat dieselben textbooks gelesen, welche die wichtigsten Theorien der Welt in Übersetzung und Ausschnitten anbieten. So ist es kein Wunder, dass die im Original am schwierigsten zu lesenden europäischen Philosophen von jedermann so zitiert werden, als wären sie gute Hausfreunde.” Wolfgang Kubin: “Sinologia – Quo vadis?” In: *Bonner Universitätsblätter* 2008, p. 54.

After jumping from (classical) “Indian tradition” via Gadamer to Gandhi, we are treated to Gandhi’s reading of the *Bhagavadgītā*, who “reads yajña [i.e. sacrifice] in a way that includes his struggle for India’s freedom. Yajña, for him, thus does not mean only ritual action in the narrow (traditional) sense, but any just political action.” (p. 436). Here German Indologists (perhaps others too?) have diagnosed that Indian commentators were “reading their own political and religious ideology into the text” (p. 436) and the authors continue with a sigh: “If only matters were so simple.” (p. 436) According to the authors, (some) modern reinterpretations should be taken as philosophical statements on the text. Phrased in that way, no one would object, not even (German) Indologists. But what the authors try to suggest is that in the face of such interpretations we could as well stop the enterprise of historical-critical research altogether, since such reinterpretations can also be “closer to the original text”.⁴⁵

Nicholson has noticed this too and asked the authors why Gandhi is spared the application of criticism. They reply that they “extended [...] hermeneutical charity” to Gandhi because he used the *Bhagavadgītā* for a liberation theology and did not—as the Germans—place it in the service of “Kultusminister, Innenminister, Reichsführer-SS, Führer”.⁴⁶ A&B know that it is always safe in doubt to blame the Germans, so they come back to the topic at the most unlikely occasions, as two pages later in the same text: “We were baffled by the relevance of the phrase ‘ethnocentrism, plagiarism, and bias transcend national boundaries’ to our book, until Nicholson clarified that it was a ‘wink’ at his own controversy. We appreciate Nicholson’s concern: plagiarism is indeed endemic to the German academic system.” (p. 6) Then, after reviewing some recent cases of German politicians who were exposed as having plagiarized in their doctoral dissertations⁴⁷ and had to step down, they add “One of us personally experienced the problem when, a few years ago, he was alerted to the fact that Georg von Simson, in the introduction to his translation of the Mahābhārata, had lifted ideas from his PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Marburg.”⁴⁸ This “dissertation” was an early version of Adluri’s thesis, from which I have quoted elsewhere⁴⁹ to show that his “philosophical standpoint” was at that time, let us say, surprisingly unsophisticated. This is also why the charge of plagiarism has remained an empty threat, for drawing this text out into the public would have revealed the underlying absurdity of the allegation in all details.



⁴⁵ “Thus, in the struggle for independence, Gandhi brings his audience closer to the original text of the Gītā by translating it into the modern idiom.” (p. 439.) ⁴⁶ p. 4. ⁴⁷ Documented in the famous vroniplag.de. ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 7. ⁴⁹ See my “Pretence and Prejudice”.

In the above quotation we read that “future scholarship on Indian literature” will have to study modern interpretations and not wander astray as the “self-taught amateurs” that German Indologists are (p. 435).

It may not be necessary to test the patience of the reader further. What is still needed to put this disclosure of an “internal history of German Indology” (p. 4) on its feet is the internal history of the Indological career of one of the authors. Vishva Adluri, who holds the degree of “Doctor of Philosophy” from the New School of Social Research, New York, has never studied Indology. He himself satisfies the definition of a “self-taught amateur”. What the reader of the “Nay Science” may not suspect is that Adluri was very keen to receive an Indological doctorate from a German university. Because of the lack of proper qualification, it seemed for quite some time his attempt to be admitted would fail. This was the time when the publication of the “Nay Science” was announced, and this context may explain the unrelenting German bashing in his publications. But eventually, against the advice of Marburg (and other) Indologists, through the efforts of his prominent advocate from the Greek department and aided by the intervention of some American Indologists,⁵⁰ he eventually received a doctoral degree in Indology from the Philipps-Universität, Marburg, Germany.

The whole process was highly anomalous. In Germany the primary supervisor has to be professor of the subject one is graduating in, in the present case: Indology. But here not only the candidate, but also the supervisor, who is in the German system also the person who writes the primary assessment of the thesis, was not qualified.⁵¹ In the introduction to his thesis some American Indologists are mentioned as taking part in this “pathbreaking collaboration”; even the legal advisor to Marburg university is explicitly thanked, who—amidst incessant threats by Adluri to resort to legal action and to fuel international scandals, and also in order to avoid repercussions from the American scholars who backed up Adluri—not only disregarded the express advice of the Marburg Indologists, but excluded them from the process as biased.⁵² What Adluri had done very efficiently is to charge the faculty in an open letter with using “Nazi methods” and pretending to be on the verge of being interviewed by the German

⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly some of those who found themselves on his list of those holding a “minority view” (see above). ⁵¹ In his doctoral thesis (*Authenticity and the Problem of the Beginning in the Mahābhārata*. Marburg 2014, p. 4) Adluri thanks his “Doktorvater Prof. Dr. Arbogast Schmitt”, professor emeritus of Greek Studies at Marburg University, who wrote one of the two “Gutachten”. Schmitt, whose works Adluri has translated into English, is regularly mentioned as an inspiration. ⁵² The reason given was that all who had been mentioned in a defamatory way by Adluri in a previous publication—this not only included the whole Marburg staff, but as the reader may now know the whole of German Indology—had to be excluded as prejudiced.

press on the case,⁵³ a scare crow that proved extremely efficient. I will leave the tricky question open, whether Adluri has now—and by his own standards—himself become a German Indologist.

Just to show that Adluri cleverly reacts to changing political events by quickly repositioning himself we may look at Adluri's most recent works, which are marked by a turning away from American Indology, which has unexpectedly found itself as the target of a smear campagne by Indian pressure groups. Now that Indologists like Sheldon Pollock have been targeted by right-wing nationalists in India and "American Orientalism" is suddenly and unexpectedly not the agent but object of Indian post-colonial criticism, there is no mention any more of the few enlightened American Indologists. Even Sheldon Pollock, to whom Adluri has tendered his services before, is now viewed with scepticism.⁵⁴ Now it seems that even American Indology as a whole is just German.⁵⁵

"In "Four Types of Indology," Devdutt Pattanaik identifies four schools of Indology: European, American, Diasporic, and Indian. The most problematic of these is, without a doubt, European Indology, especially German Indology.

Applying anti-Brahmanism systematically as a methodological principle, German scholars conducted the study of India as an exercise in German national identity, framing Brahmins as "priests," and presenting themselves as reformers and liberators, while they collaborated with the Prussian (and later, Nazi) state (*The Nay Science: A History of German Indology*).

I am skeptical that we can really speak of a distinct tradition of American Indology (see "The Real Threat to the Humanities Today"). That leaves us with three types of Indology: European (or, as I shall hereafter call it, German), Diasporic, and Indian."

⁵³ Letter to the faculty from 24.4.2012: "Throughout, I have tried to present Marburg University in the best possible light. I have offered many easy, face-saving alternatives: accepting compromises, writing a new dissertation, not going public with the circumstances even though I was asked to give an interview by Deutsche Welle [...] I hope you will understand and respect my decision to complete my Promotion speedily at Marburg rather than making it the epicenter of attention."

⁵⁴ In the response to Nicholson he now appears in—to Adluri's standards—unpleasant company: "Hermann Oldenberg, Sheldon Pollock, and Michael Witzel all attempt to claim for Indology achievements that properly belong to the classics."

⁵⁵ <http://swarajyamag.com/culture/how-we-should-approach-the-phenomenon-of-studying-hinduism>

This may not be the end of it.⁵⁶ But what should have become clear is that Adluri does his best to use all he can find to paint a picture of ugly Germany⁵⁷ to reinforce his jaundiced picture of—if we spell out the above equation—Indology as practiced by foreigners. His concluding statement in the article reads as follows:

In the discourse over Hinduism, Hindutva and Western Indology are often presented as two mutually exclusive alternatives. What goes unnoticed in this dichotomization is that the two share essential features: the emphasis on history, the idealization of the past, and the intolerant condemnation of alternate views.

Even the obsession with origins is common to both: they merely disagree on who is its true spokesperson and custodian. Queerly enough, diaspora Hinduism offers a third way and an intelligent alternative.

The reader will now be able to guess who the saviour of true Indology from the Hindu diaspora will be.

There is no need to explain more details, but naturally, having read the “diremp-tion” of the discipline of (German) Indology in the “Nay Science”, and with it of the whole field of text-critical and historical-critical studies, one wonders how the critic practices his new Indology in his unpublished PhD thesis. In this book we read: “This study explores ways to read the Sanskrit epic, the Mahābhārata, without following either the dogmas of the traditional readings of the text or of an “original” heroic oral bardic Aryan or Indo-European epic.” It seems that alternative approaches do not include Indian exegesis or approaches, since we do not hear again of Indian interpretations of the epic.

The work is spiked with the usual bold claims, balanced by broad denouncements

⁵⁶ I hope that the reader will by now have noted that intellectual consistency is not one of the strong points here. In the rebuttal of Nicholson we could read exactly the opposite: “Finally, Nicholson is also wrong when he attempts to set up an equivalence between Continental and North American traditions of study, for the simple reason that there is no comparable phenomenon to Indology in North America. There exist programs of Indian Studies, South Asian Studies, and Sanskrit Studies at American universities. But the form these studies took in the United States is quite different from the form they took in Germany.” ⁵⁷ The article just quoted goes from German Indology to current political protest parties on the extreme right fringe of the political spectrum like the AfD, straight to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*.

of previous scholars.⁵⁸ Then, Adluri unexpectedly introduces as the most important figures for the development of critical Indological scholarship (now in a positive sense) the Indologists Willibald Kirfel and Paul Hacker.⁵⁹ After dealing with Hacker's method he says: "This comparative, historical, and empirical method has been extremely productive in researches into the Pali canon and certain smaller Sanskrit texts (for example, kāvyā literature), but it has yet to be applied consistently to a study of the epic. In the following, I would therefore like to show how, using texthistorical methods, we can undertake a comprehensive and nonreductive interpretation of the text." (p. 39) Again, there is no point in asking for intellectual consistency.

Here the sudden turnaround from the bad "anti-semitic" "historical-critical" editions to the Pune critical edition is made as follows: "I then discuss how Sukthankar evolves a set of principles to identify the reading of the archetype. Although Sukthankar's principles represent an enlargement of the canon of classical textual criticism, his principles are unimpeachable – both theoretically (from the point of view of Lachmann's method) and practically (from the point of view of their application to the *Mahābhārata*)." It is quite obvious that Adluri does not understand what he is saying. Lachmann's method for him is equivalent to the handbook of Maas,⁶⁰ but Maas, if taken seriously, would have immediately discarded all attempts at arriving at a stemma by referring to contamination. Recent attempts to tackle the stemmatics of the *Mahābhārata* with cladistic methods are unknown to Adluri.⁶¹

More interesting for his methodology is that the critics of the Critical Edition, which include many of those scholars Adluri imagines to be on his side, had argued that the vulgate is at least a historical version, whereas the status of the Critical Edition is at best unclear. Adluri's argument is—at least for a reviewer who has read hundreds of pages of the *Nay Science* with its diatribes against the text-critical, historical-critical and other methods—quite astonishing: "I restrict myself in this study to the Critical Edition for the simple reason that I wish to circumvent criticisms

⁵⁸ "The search for an older version of the text crosses the line from critical, historical methods to unprovable speculation." (p. 7) "... they [scil earlier scholars] used textual analysis as a way of confirming various a priori ethnological, anthropological, and religious prejudices about Indian tradition." (p. 8) "I therefore set aside these circular and self-confirming approaches for a more objective evaluation of the text." (p. 9) "meaningless speculation" (p. 19). ⁵⁹ See p. 38. Naturally no mention is made of the adjectives hurled at Hacker in the publication referred to above. ⁶⁰ For wide-spread, but mistaken ideas about Lachmann's method, see P.L.Schmitt: "Lachmann's Method: On the history of a Misunderstanding." In: *The Uses of Greek and Latin*. London: The Warburg Institute 1988, p. 227–236, an article that should not have escaped someone, who claims to represent Greek philology. ⁶¹ Wendy Phillips-Rodriguez: *Electronic techniques of textual analysis and edition for ancient texts: an exploration of the phylogeny of the Dyūtaparvan*. PhD, University of Cambridge 2007.

that the Vulgate edition is a late, Purāṇa-influenced or Purāṇa-informed version of the Mahābhārata and hence is not representative of the “genuine” or “old” epic.” (p. 7) One would have thought that such terminology had gone down the drain with German Indology. And what about the editor of the Critical Edition? Sukthankar, who took over the program from Lüders and Winternitz, who had studied in Germany and to make things worse used textual criticism, would he not qualify for the title of German Indologist? It seems not when Adluri needs him.

But Adluri does not only accept the Critical Edition, he even defends it with a full turnaround: “Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that the Critical Edition is not an artificial text as a certain section⁶² of scholarship has claimed. It is created on the basis of a rigorous method and following methodological canons that have been established for centuries and successfully applied in the criticism of classical (that is, Greek and Latin) sources.” (p. 24) Here, as in many other places, one wonders whether Adluri does not know better, or whether he is taking the unsuspecting reader for a ride. In any case we may give up the search for methodological consistency or even earnestness in the works of Adluri. If he were not responsible for accepting this mock PhD, one might even pity the “Doktorvater” Arbogast Schmitt, who was led to believe Adluri, and who wrote in his assessment of the dissertation that while European scholars of the *Mahābhārata* held an analytic view of the text, South-Asian and American scholars tended to a unitarian one.⁶³

But what would be his approach to the *Mahābhārata* in his doctoral thesis? Here Adluri introduces the word “Gestalt”, which he borrows from Oldenberg, in order to describe themes in the text which define its unity. It is at that point no more relevant whether Adluri does not know better or whether he tries to test the endurance or the mental health of the readers, who will with a minimal knowledge of German notice that Oldenberg uses the term for the *metrical form* (“*metrische Gestalt*”) of the text.⁶⁴ No Indologist need be told that the *Mahābhārata* is in *anuṣṭubh*, the metre used for virtually all kinds of Sanskrit literature, from poetry through philosophy to collections of medical recipes, surely the most general and least specific metre. But in Adluri’s imagination this “metrical Gestalt” means that “Oldenberg touches on an

⁶² This section consisted of the minority view Indologists adduced in the NS. See above. ⁶³ “Für den Klassischen Philologen interessant ist, dass ein vergleichbarer Prozeß in der Indologie noch lebendig und (zumindest zu einem guten Teil) auf einerseits kontinentale und andererseits südasiatische und amerikanische Forschungstraditionen verteilt zu sein scheint.” ⁶⁴ “However, from the perspective of my work, it is Oldenberg’s second methodological contribution that is more interesting: this his idea of a “Gestalt” developed in the context of a discussion of the epic’s metrical form ...”. (p. 41)

essential concept here for conceptualizing the phenomenon of continuity and change in Sanskrit literature. The concept of a “Gestalt” that endures through all the changes it undergoes provides us with a tool for thinking about how the epic, from its earliest text to its latest recensions, would have demonstrated a certain consistency.” (p. 41) I would like to add that at least the outside reviewer of Adluri’s doctoral thesis expressed doubts about the proper use of the term Gestalt. The Marburg “Doktorvater”, who is no Indologist, may not have understood why this is plainly absurd. The “enduring Gestalt” is no more than a rhetorical trick to suggest that his ideas about the unity of the *Mahābhārata* are somehow prefigured in the writings of Oldenberg.⁶⁵ and which is equally far removed from the approaches of European Indological Studies as it is from traditional Indian approaches, need not be discussed here.

In the end the whole matter can be dismissed. It has to do with the hardly-known field of Indology, and the inability of most readers to check sources written in 19th-century German, that normal readers have not been able to call the bluff. For a reputable publishing house the publication of the “Nay Science” should be the cause of embarrassment and apologies. It is as convincing as the recent “proof” that the ingestion of (German) “Sauerkraut” raises the level of xenophobia.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ There are other idiosyncracies in his works, like the emphasis on “being and becoming”, which is the topic of his book on Parmenides, but which Adluri makes into an Indian key concept. His co-author Bagchee praises him for this idea in a reader’s review on amazon.com: “Adluri’s Parmenides, Plato and Mortal Philosophy is one of the most sublime books I have read, standing alongside Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* as one of the most profound meditations on the relationship of the ancients to us. It is easy to affirm Being, and philosophers since antiquity have done so. Adluri’s book is one of those rare works, which also affirms Becoming.” ⁶⁶ “Nazis by Kraut”. In *Psychology* 6, p. 1144–1149. Reported in *Forschung und Lehre*. April 2016. The article tried to show that not everything that can be made the object of research also answers a meaningful question.