INTRODUCTION

The root of evil (in theology) is the confusion between the text and the word of God.

J. S. Semler, Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon

A HISTORY OF GERMAN INDOLOGY

This book investigates German scholarship on India between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries against the backdrop of its methodological self-understanding. It pursues this inquiry out of a wider interest in German philosophy of the same period, especially as concerns debates over scientific method. This twofold focus, that is, on the history of German Indology and on the idea of scientific method, is determined by the subject itself: because German Indology largely defined itself in terms of a specific method (the historical-critical method or the text-historical method),

1. The “historical-critical method” is a broad term for a method applied in biblical criticism. The method sets aside the theological meaning of the Bible in favor of its historical context. The method can be summed up as “understanding the Bible out of [the conditions of] its time.” (The phrase is a common one, and used, for instance in both Tschackert’s article and as the title of Reventlow’s article; for both sources, see the third section of this chapter.) Within the confines of this method, scholars have developed and applied various techniques, such as literary criticism (Literaturkritik), form criticism (Formkritik), tendency criticism (Tendenzkritik), and determining the history of transmission or of redaction(s) (Überlieferungsgeschichte, Redaktionsgeschichte) and of the text (Textgeschichte). The last, especially in the adjectival form “text-historical [method]” (textgeschichtliche Methode) is often used as synonymous with the “historical-critical method” as it encompasses the largest part of its historical tendency. In this work, we use them interchangeably. Historical-critical method is used preferentially when discussing the method’s historical origins (i.e., as a school), text-historical method when referring to its application to Indian texts (i.e., in reconstructing histories of the text). As the present work demonstrates, the application of the text-historical method is not scientific, and caution must be exercised in using the terms text-historical or textual history: in the majority of cases, the textual histories German scholars came up with using this method were a projection of their fantasies. A standard but hardly critical overview of these steps can be found in Odil Hannes Steck, Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology, trans. James D. Nogalski (Atlanta, Scholar’s Press, 1995).
a history of German Indology is simultaneously a history of method. In other words, the history we trace here is not the history of the establishment and growth of scholarship on ancient India in Germany during this period. Nor is it a cultural history of German-Indian contacts (which has been pursued more or less critically elsewhere). That there was an unprecedented surge in interest in India in nineteenth-century Germany does not need to be restated here, nor do we need to examine the factors (Romantic interest in the Orient, imagined affinity to the ancient Germanic race, longings for a pristine civilization, etc.) that fueled this surge. These issues have been dealt with at length elsewhere. The reader wishing to learn more about these historical details is referred to the many excellent studies on these subjects. This book is also not a disciplinary history in the sense that it recounts details of departments or scholars (who studied what with whom, which department established what profile when, etc.).


3. Among the latter genre, the standard work is Wilhelm Halbfass's *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). Decidedly less objective and less useful, in contrast, are the works motivated by a desire to present a unique proximity between Indian and German culture; examples include Ludwig Alsdorf, *Deutsch-indische Geistesbeziehungen* (Heidelberg: Kurt Vowinckel, 1942) and Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker* (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler, 1960).


6. Not mentioned here are the numerous works on individual scholars or the extensive literature from a Saidian perspective on the subject of German Orientalism, as they are not germane to this book’s theme. The reader is referred to McGetchin’s book for a comprehensive review of the scholarship.

7. Indra Sengupta has produced detailed analyses of these institutional aspects of Indology; see her *From Salon to Discipline: State, University and Indology in Germany, 1821–1914* (Heidelberg: Ergon Verlag, 2005). Also see her "Shishyas of Another Order: Students of Indology at the Universities of Bonn and Berlin" and "State, University, and Indology: The Politics of the Chair of Indology at German Universities in the Nineteenth Century," both
Conditioned by the nature of the inquiry, there is some biographic information on the principal protagonists of this history, but our main focus is on elucidating how these personal biographies tied in with a certain understanding of method.

In what sense, then, is this book a history? The history dealt with in this book is discipline-reflexive, by which we mean it studies the self-presentation or self-understanding of the discipline’s practitioners: how did they view their discipline? In what way did they see themselves as contributing to the task of translating or clarifying Indian literature to European audiences? What were the means, the arguments, or the strategies used to justify their role as official purveyors of Indian culture to these audiences, and what role did the rhetoric of science and scientificty play in these arguments?

To be sure, this book also addresses wider historical issues, such as the longing for national identity (seen most dramatically in the creation of an Āryan ideology) and the institutional dominance of German scholarship (which was to influence scholars of other nations into thinking that they, too, had to pursue Sanskrit studies in a German key), but these issues remain tangential to our central concerns. Thus, although the first chapter is framed as a discussion of the epic fantasies of early German Indologists (Christian Lassen, Albrecht Weber, the two Holtzmanns), the chapter is not intended as yet another contribution to the genre of “how did


8. The materials presented here are but a fraction of the total materials gathered in the course of research, as the book originated in a much narrower project: intellectual biographies and bibliographies of the main German Gītā scholars. However, as the book’s focus widened, much of this material was edited out. See, however, the entry on German Indology at Oxford Bibliographies Online (www.oxfordbibliographies.com) for a useful survey of the field.

9. The term is Howard’s; see Thomas Albert Howard, Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 11. However, as we use the term, we intend not only a consideration of these documents but also the application of a “hermeneutics of suspicion.” Perhaps the word discipline-critical would have been better.

10. The terms translated here as “science” and “scientificty” are Wissenschaft and Wissenschaftlichkeit. The latter is occasionally also translated “scientism,” when we want to express its ideological use in German Indology. “Scientificty” is the rhetoric of “science” applied by Indology; “scientism” is this rhetoric viewed as a historical formation. Treatments of the rhetoric of “scientificty” can be found in Howard, Protestant Theology (especially concerning “scientificty” as the hallmark of Protestant scholarship as compared to Catholic) and in Sheldon Pollock, “Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj,” in Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia, ed. Peter van der Veer and Carol A. Breckenridge (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 76–133 (concerning the role played by the rhetoric of scientificty in National Socialist ideology).

11. Both Adolf Holtzmann Sr. and his nephew Adolf Holtzmann Jr. wrote books on the Mahabharata. For clarity’s sake, whenever we mention Holtzmann without any further specification, the reference is to the younger Holtzmann. Whenever we cite the uncle, we will always specify that it is the elder Holtzmann that is meant.
Introduction

German Indology contribute to Áryanism?” or “how did German Indology contribute to National Socialism?” literature. Without negating the importance of this literature and without denying the responsibility German Indology bears for these events, our book does not use German Indology as a lens to peer at wider German history. Rather, the focus remains squarely on the writings themselves and, above all, on the writers: what agendas, textual and otherwise, were they working out in their writings? What role did the idea of India play in these agendas, and how was this idea expressed, reformulated, or otherwise adapted to suit these agendas? What understanding of science and scientific method was operative in their researches?

The history we trace here is the internal history of German Indology: the history that does not appear in its official histories (Ernst Windisch, Theodor Benfey, Valentina Stache-Rosen, et al.) but is also not apparent from its nonofficial histories (however useful they may otherwise be). The present work differs from these in that it is both more specific and broader: more specific, because it is interested only in the development of the self-understanding of German Indology as a textual science; broader, because it makes general points regarding the nature of this textual science and especially the way

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14. The tremendous growth in interest in examining this underilluminated and undertheorized aspect of German history is surely a welcome development. Besides the historical works mentioned, there are a number of literary treatments (e.g., Gita Dharampal-Frick’s *Indien im Spiegel deutscher Quellen der Frühen Neuzeit* [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1994] and Kamakshi Murti’s *India: The Seductive and Seduced “Other” of German Orientalism* [Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001]). In addition, there are the edited volumes produced by Douglas T. McGetchin, Peter K. J. Park, and Damodar SarDesai (Sanskrit and “Orientalism”: *Indology and Comparative Linguistics in Germany, 1750–1958* [New Delhi: Manohar, 2004]); Eli Franco and Karin Preisendanz (Beyond Orientalism: *The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian and Cross-Cultural Studies* [Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997]); and Fred. R. Dallmayr (Beyond Orientalism [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996]). The reason this book does not engage many of these works is because its concerns are somewhat different and highly specific.

15. In that sense, the book it comes closest to is Tuska Benes’s *In Babel’s Shadow*, which also examines the link between this new philology and nationalism. However, this book makes points that are more closely related to the origins of this new philology in the scriptural hermeneutics associated with the Neo-Protestantism of the eighteenth century. In that sense, its most direct predecessors are Thomas Albert Howard’s *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* and *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W. M.*
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.  

In this sense, the history traced here is more accurately described as a genealogy of method in Indology. Its focus is not on the great and official monuments (documents, events, authorized histories, or biographies) that mark the history of this discipline, but on the hidden and the obscure: the documents or events that, for one or the other reason, Indology has found convenient to forget, the origins it has buried or repressed. For example, we begin not with the self-important pronouncements of Hermann Oldenberg, but with two relatively minor German Orientalists: Adolf Holtzmann Sr. and Adolf Holtzmann Jr. And yet, it is our claim that it is precisely in the work of these and other writers, neglected as marginal and at odds with the image of itself German Indology sought to project (enlightened, rational, posttheological, and postconfessional), that we find the greatest clues to Indology’s textual project. By continuously shifting focus back and forth between its official communiqués (by

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L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historicism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Then again, its central chapter (on the Bhagavadgītā) owes much to Bradley L. Herling’s excellent and informative The German Gītā: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the German Reception of Indian Thought, 1778–1831 (New York: Routledge, 2006), although it begins after the point where Herling leaves off. Herling covers the first phase of Gītā reception in Germany, beginning with the work of J. G. Herder (1792) and F. W. Schlegel (1808) and continuing all the way to Hegel (1827 and 1831). We pick up the story in the second phase of Gītā reception in Germany with the Gītā interpretations of the Indologists Adolf Holtzmann Jr. (1893), Richard Garbe (1905), Hermann Jacobi (1918), Hermann Oldenberg (1919), Rudolf Otto (1934), and Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1937). Between these two phases, we might identify a transition phase, characterized by the Gītās of C. R. S. Peiper (1834), Christian Lassen (1846, a revised edition of A. W. Schlegel’s Gītā of 1823), F. Lorinser (1869), and Robert Boeberger (1870) (see bibliography for complete entries). This phase is dealt with in the first chapter as a prologue to our discussion of the German reception of the Mahābhārata.

16. 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, such as the work of Sean Alexander Gurd (see his Iphigenias at Aulis: Textual Multiplicity, Radical Philology [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005]). It also owes a tremendous debt to Reiner Schürmann, especially his Broken Hegemonies, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

17. The expression “Indology” translates the German Indologie and is used here as a broad term for a number of disciplines concerned with the study of the literary cultures of ancient India. It has been chosen because it is ultimately the term that established itself in German over against other possible terms, such as Indische Literatur, Indische Philologie, Indische Altertumskunde, Orientalische Philologie, Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft, Sanskrit Philologie, and Indo germanische Studien. All these terms refer, with slight differences in accent, to the study of Indian texts on the basis of a method known as the “historical-critical method”—although even that term has meant different things to different people at different times (see later).

18. This will ultimately turn out to be its origins in the Neo-Protestantism of the eighteenth century (see later) and its resulting theological inheritance.

19. Oldenberg’s extensive writings on the subject are discussed in chapter 5. Also see the bibliography for a complete list.
Indologists such as Hermann Oldenberg, Walter Slaje, Jürgen Hanneder) and its historical reality (the work of Indologists such as Richard von Garbe, Hermann Jacobi, Georg von Simson, and Erich Frauwallner), we break up the monolithic narrative of an enlightened nonpolitical, nonideological science. In that respect, the function of the history recounted here is to trace the vicissitudes of this passing phenomenon, which, for a brief chapter in European history, advanced a claim to being science and dominated Europe’s encounter with the Orient.\(^{20}\)

Is the history we present teleological? Is it essentializing? 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. 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.\(^{21}\) Far from essentializing something called German Indology, we deconstruct this idea. If genealogy is defined as the endeavor “to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but [only] the exteriority of accidents,”\(^{22}\) then the aim of this book can be summed up as showing how “truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know” (or think we know) about German Indology and how the knowledge about India that we think we possess in German Indology is “but the exteriority of accidents.”\(^{23}\) What are the ways, historically conditioned, in which we have been trained to think about Indian texts, and what are the problems with these ways, once we examine them in the light of the understanding of method in the European humanities? How did a method that was radically theological in its origins capture the imagination of Sanskritists around the globe and become identified with the ideal of objective, scientific investigation into Indian texts tout court? What are the broader consequences that can be drawn from the diremption of this method in German Indology for the humanities? These are some of the questions pursued by this study.

\(^{20}\) At least, at an institutional level. But the contemporary irrelevance of German Indology is testament to the fact that it never adequately met nor understood the German public’s interest in India after the Second World War.

\(^{21}\) See the bibliography for a number of texts attempting to survey the field. For obvious reasons, most of these works are now out of date, but a comparison of the number of departments listed with the number of departments still surviving is instructive. Also see McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism*, especially the chapter “The Study of Sanskrit in German Universities, 1818–1914” for a comparison with the situation in Indology’s heyday.


THE HISTORY OF GERMAN INDOLOGY AS A HISTORY OF METHOD

There are two reasons for this book’s focus on a narrower history of method. The first is pragmatic: because German Indology defines itself in terms of a unique methodological access to Indian texts, when seeking to define what makes German Indology German Indology, we have to look at method rather than, say, race or national identity. Pollock has found that these issues did inform the praxis of German Indology, but the international acceptance of this mode of “doing” Indology cannot be explained if one defines German Indology tautologically as “Indology done by Germans.” This is not to deny that German Indologists did see themselves as unique vis-à-vis their American or British colleagues, but to highlight the fact that this sense of uniqueness was founded on the consciousness of possessing a unique (and superior) method. However, a brief look at that method sufficed to show its problematic antecedents: the historical-critical 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. There was something fundamentally wrong about the way German Indologists perceived themselves. The perception gap between their self-assessment and their reality led to the formulation of the fundamental question of this book: what happens when one sets aside what Indologists say they do (or think that it is they are doing) and focuses instead on what they actually do?

24. Narrower, that is, as compared with the scope of a general cultural history, not narrower with regard to its implications, which, as we show, are wide-ranging.
26. Thus, among “German” Indologists, we also include a number of American scholars, including E. W. Hopkins and his latter-day incarnations James L. Fitzgerald and Kevin McGrath. The story of why American scholars were by and large (an important exception is Alf Hiltebeitel) unable to evolve an independent and self-confident approach to the Indian epic is a topic for a future work.
28. See, for example, the comments by Oldenberg, Hacker, Slaje, von Stietencron, and Hanneder cited later.
29. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf ("Zur Begriffsgeschichte einer theologischen Chiffre," Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte 28 [1984]: 214–68) attributes the term to F. C. Bauer. It has often been used as a synonym for the more widely used Kulturprotestantismus; nonetheless, as the latter has, at times, also been used pejoratively, we shall retain the term “Neo-Protestantism.”
30. Such a question, of course, cannot lead to contrasting words, written or otherwise imparted, with the way Indologists conduct themselves in their private lives. The point was not to show that private religion existed alongside its public disavowal, which would only correspond to the Kantian separation of the public and private realms and thus reinstate the German sense of somehow having banished religion from public life. Rather, the question became: can one detect, beyond or behind the overt comments German Indologists make or have made regarding their discipline, the faint lines of a religion, a theological inheritance that the Indologists might themselves not be aware of any longer? In that case, one would have to read this literature again with a view to its religious subtext, applying what Ricoeur, following Heidegger, has called a “hermeneutics of suspicion.”
This initial set of reflections defined the shape of this study. Because German Indology defined itself in terms of a method (philology), but that method, in turn, turned out to have a specific historical origin (in German academic theology), a history of German Indology had to be pursued as a history of philology. This history occupies the first four chapters of this book. We then return to the question of the allegedly scientific character of German Indology in the fifth chapter. Here we find that although the method in Indology is informed by scientific positivism, this is only partially so.\textsuperscript{31}

To anticipate the conclusions of these five chapters: Indology is an ill-conceived theology that rests on an incomplete positivism for its defense, or it is a stillborn positivism that is still hamstrung by a latent theology. In either case, it can be called a science only if by this we mean the institutional and hegemonic aspects of science rather than a rational, axiomatic, and universally demonstrable body of knowledge.\textsuperscript{32}

The second reason for focusing on a history of method was historical. The public statements of Indologists such as Hermann Oldenberg, Willibald Kirfel, and Paul Hacker showed that German Indologists were ill-informed about this history. Although they accepted and even valorized the historical-critical method as the fundament of their discipline, they were ignorant of its origins in the work of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theologians and biblical critics J. S. Semler, G. L. Bauer, and F. C. Bauer.

Thus arose a second complex of tasks for this study. It was not only that the Indologists were in error about what they thought they were doing \textit{but also that they were in error about their history}. In fact, we found that no one in the history of German Indology had actually undertaken a concrete examination of exactly when and where a break with theology had occurred in the history of this discipline. When German scholars spoke of the objectivity and agnosticism of the historical-critical method vis-à-vis the commentarial tradition, it was clear they did not mean this in a sense that was discipline-specific: they were merely assuming that their discipline, born in the aftermath of the struggle between science and faith in the Enlightenment, lacked a theological or metaphysical component. It is true that a general secularization of European life took place in the nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{33} but this cannot suffice

\textsuperscript{31} McGetchin makes a similar argument regarding the Romantic roots of Indology in Germany. However, our focus in this book is less on the Romantic inheritance of Indology (which, as McGetchin shows, was much greater than Indologists have historically been willing to concede) than on its theological inheritance, mediated via its adoption of historical methods and its faith in the critical potential of these methods to deconstruct traditional sources of authority.

\textsuperscript{32} See Toulmin, who argues that there are two ways in which one can think of a science: “We can think of it as a discipline, comprising a communal tradition of procedures and techniques for dealing with theoretical or practical problems; or we can think of it as a profession, comprising the organized set of institutions, roles, and men whose task it is to apply or improve those procedures and techniques.” Stephen Toulmin, \textit{Human Understanding} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 142. German Indology meets the latter definition, but, as we show in this book, it fails to meet the former.

\textsuperscript{33} The thesis has been advanced most persuasively in Owen Chadwick’s book, appropriately titled \textit{The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). For a contesting view, see Howard’s \textit{Religion and the Rise of Historicism}, cited earlier. In his recent book, Howard takes the
as evidence of the secularism of Indology. It is not at all clear that this secularization was devoid of a religious element. Scholars have debated at length about the nature of the secularization Europe is supposed to have undergone in a debate that has pitted the defenders of the secularization thesis or secularization paradigm (Steve Bruce being the most prominent among them) against opponents of the thesis (e.g., David Martin, whose work brings much needed nuance and complexity to the thesis). Some have called attention to the fact that this presumed secularization was, in fact, no such thing, being rather another stage in the religious history of Europe itself. Far from the teleological narrative of history as a progression from the darkness of religious orthodoxy and superstition to the Enlightenment, the overt secularization of public institutions in the nineteenth century has left behind a complex and ambiguous legacy. Talal Asad has recently opposed: “a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable.” But even on a charitable reading of the Enlightenment (i.e., one that views it as it wishes to see itself and be seen by others), it is clear that secularization did not take place in the same way and to the same extent in all areas. There was need for greater precision. One would have to undertake individual and microscopic-scale analyses of the individual disciplines themselves before one could assume this or that discipline was secular. Further, what of Indology itself? There were no studies of German Indology we were aware of from the point of view of its relationship to religion. Was it really as secular and universal as its practitioners claimed?

view that the term (i.e., secularization) is “useful in a limited, heuristic sense, particularly when applied to cultural realities in Western Europe since the Enlightenment” but points out that “a priori notions of secularization have created great historiographical lacunae.” Howard, Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University 8, no. 29. It is in this sense that we concede a general secularization of European life here, although, as we shall see, this does not suffice to explain the continued presence of concerns that might be properly called religious and theological in German Indology.

34. See his God Is Dead: Secularization in the West (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), among numerous other articles.
36. Among those to have made this claim most strongly is S. N. Balagangadhara, The Heathen in His Blindness: Asia, the West & the Dynamic of Religion (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).
37. Of course, only a part of what is at stake in this debate concerns Europe’s historical reality: a greater part is concerned with the thesis that increasing modernity is necessarily accompanied by increasing secularism. Among those to have reconsidered this view is Peter Berger.
39. Marchand’s recent book does draw some connections, but for Orientalist disciplines more generally, as she does not delve into Indology specifically. Her work provides an important corrective to Said’s analysis, showing how scholarly concerns (mediated by Christian concerns with a universal narrative of history) played a significant role in German Orientalism. However, Marchand is simultaneously less critical (of the ideological potential of this scholarship) and more hopeful (of its emancipatory potential for a “fully universal Kulturgeschichte” [German Orientalism in the Age of Empire, 495]) than we are. In contrast, we see the practice of constructing such universal narratives itself as a remnant of Christian tradition. Bradley L. Herling (The German Gītā) and Peter K. J. Park ("A Catholic
This complex of questions forms a second axis of inquiry for this study. Whereas the first studies the history of German Indology from the perspective of its method, the second required us to address this history from the perspective of biography. Where and in what way were German Indologists concealed theologians? What was hindering them from being clear about their theological commitments? In what way and to what extent could German Indology be treated as a posttheological, postconfessional discipline? Once again, we trace these issues through the next four chapters of this book. In the concluding section of the fourth chapter, we take up the question of German Indology as a Neo-Brahmanic hierarchy (that is itself a Neo-Protestant legacy). Here we demonstrate how this new church of historicism constituted itself by giving itself a public mission (purification of Indian texts), an aesthetic ideal (the philologically tamed and purified text, whose antithesis is the “monstrous” Indian epic\(^\text{40}\)), and a clerical order (the scientist-scholars who must be defended, even when they are National Socialists\(^\text{41}\)). The fifth chapter then presents the “science” portion of our argument. We conclude with a brief résumé of the book’s argument.

The intersection of these two axes (method-philology and biography-theology) constitutes the vantage from which we contemplate the history of German Indology. This doubled perspective also explains the book’s interweaving of textual-philological materials (Holtzmann’s critical analysis of the Mahābhārata, Garbe and colleagues’ reconstructions of the Bhagavadgītā) with biographic-interpretive materials (Oldenberg’s views on Indian philology vis-à-vis classical philology, Slaje’s remarks on Indology as part of the landscape of the humanities, Hanneder’s views on the need for a functional Indology as a bulwark against the forces of religious fundamentalism). Finally, because both questions of scientific method and religious outlook are intimately bound up with the position of a discipline at the university, occasionally this book also enters domains that might be considered political. Especially toward the end of the book, we do ask what the justification for Indology is. But these questions remain subsidiary to the project of illuminating the theological inheritance of Indology. In the next section, we discuss how the historical-critical method originates in debates concerning the interpretation of scripture in eighteenth-century Neo-Protestantism. It is this Neo-Protestant inheritance, we contend, that is the key to understanding German Indology.

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40. For the expression, see Hermann Oldenberg, Das Mahābhārata: Sein Inhalt, seine Entstehung, seine Form (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922), 1, 2, 16, and 172.

41. For examples, see the work of Steinkellner and Slaje, discussed at various points in this book.
Our interest in a history of German Indology had generated the task of a history of method. The latter, in turn, had generated the need for a history of German Indology. The question of what German Indology was could not be answered unless we answered the question of what its method was, and the question of what its method was required us to examine the history of the discipline. Neither question could be answered unless we first looked at the origins of the method used in German Indology: origins that lay not in Indology itself, but in the Neo-Protestantism of the eighteenth century. Thus, at the outset some understanding of this background becomes unavoidable.

Although German Indologists speak of their method broadly as the philological method, this requires greater precision, for *philology* can mean and has meant many different things to many different people. At the outset, it is important to distinguish between two senses of textual criticism or critical method: a broader sense and a narrower sense. In the broader sense, the expressions imply any inquiry that takes a critical stance toward its objects. Drawing on a Kantian heritage, this concept of criticism or critique (*Kritik*) is too wide to be useful unless one specifies what is critical about this critique. In Kant, *Kritik* has two primary senses: first, a suspicion of traditional authority (specifically, spiritual authority; this is the sense that comes to the fore in his essay “What Is Enlightenment?” and other writings such as “Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone”) and, second, a criticism of dogmatic metaphysics (this is the sense that is at the bottom of his critical philosophy proper, i.e., the three great *Critiques*). It is not necessary to trace the further history of the concept of criticism here. Note, however, that it is not the second sense that comes down to German Indology, which neither is nor wishes to be philosophy, and the thought of critiquing metaphysics from the perspective of a reflection on the “two sources of human cognition” is as far removed from the minds of Indologists as possible.

Likewise, the sense of criticism found in German Indology is not the second, narrower, more technical sense of this term. In this latter sense, the expressions “textual criticism” or “critical method” refer to the two-stage process of a systematic *recensio* (collection and analysis of manuscripts), followed by an analysis of the relations of filiation between these manuscripts based on this *recensio*. This process culminates in a mechanical reconstruction of the archetype (the oldest text from which all extant manuscripts are derived). This is the method that has become famous under the name of “Lachmann’s method,” and it is this (or its latter-day variations, e.g.,

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42. For a history of the term, see Axel Horstmann, “Philologie,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 7, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel: Schwabe, 1989), 552–72. Plato is the first to use the term *philologia* in the *Theaetetus* (146a); he also uses the related *philologos* (*Theaetetus* 161a; *Laches* 188c, 188e; *Phaedrus* 236e), as discussed earlier.

the anti-Lachmannism of Joseph Bédier and his followers or the neo-Lachmannism of Giorgio Pasquale and the Italian School) that philologists mean when they speak of textual criticism. The method is critical because it seeks to eliminate sources of subjective influence (e.g., the editor’s personal views of the tradition) by making the process of the reconstruction of the archetype as mechanical as possible and because it insists that every stage of the process be documented so as to enable other scholars to follow, review, and, if need be, make changes to editorial choices.

This leaves the third possibility: the sense of criticism found in German Indology is inherited from the first of Kant’s two senses; that is, it implies a suspicion of traditional authority. This is the sense operative in Indology.

But a generalized suspicion does not yet amount to a method. For this, we have to look at a second historical source of influence upon German Indology: the area of scriptural hermeneutics, especially as developed and practiced by scholars such as J. S. Semler and F. C. Bauer in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Although his name is all but forgotten by Indologists today, Johann Salomo Semler (1725–91) was one of the leading Protestant theologians of the eighteenth century and the father of the historical-critical method. Born in a family of Lutheran pastors (his father Matthias Nicolaus Semler was pastor of Saalfeld; his mother was the daughter of a Lutheran pastor), Semler was initially deeply influenced by Pietism but later distanced himself from the Pietists, mainly due to their opposition to science and to historical research. From 1743 to 1750, Semler studied theology in Halle with Baumgarten, one of the leading Übergangstheologen (transition theologians) of his day. It is mainly due to Baumgarten’s influence and patronage that he became one of the foremost Aufklärungstheologen (Enlightenment theologians) of the eighteenth century. Baumgarten was a representative of the Wolffian school of Enlightenment philosophy and was especially interested in applying methods of historical interpretation and rational demonstration (the latter borrowed from Wolff’s philosophy) to scripture. Scholars consider Baumgarten to be a forerunner of the historical-critical method, but it was his student who took the final step of separating the contingent historical aspects of scripture from its ethical and religious content. In doing so, Semler enabled a strictly historical understanding of scripture, albeit at the price of

44. The question of whether the expression “Lachmann’s method” can at all be used as an accurate description of what scholars today understand by “textual criticism” is one that need not concern us here. It has become commonplace to refer to textual criticism by this name, even though, as Timpanaro demonstrates in his book, Lachmann had many important predecessors and was neither especially consistent in his use of stemmatic analysis use nor its greatest champion. See Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann’s Method*, trans. G. W. Most (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).


46. See, for example, Oldenberg’s and von Stietencron’s comments (both cited later) regarding the untenability of setting out from the traditional view, disparagingly referred to by Oldenberg as “Inderwissen” (Indian knowledge).
dissolving the identification of God’s Word with holy scripture characteristic of old Protestantism.\textsuperscript{47}

Semler’s work is motivated by the desire to “secure firm ground for Christian religion, ground that could stand up to the increasing historical, philosophical, and scientific criticism [of Christianity] in the age of Enlightenment.”\textsuperscript{48} Aware that dogmatic theology had become untenable in the age of rationalism, his solution was to acknowledge that parts of the Bible were historical, while still retaining the idea of a true, unchanging, and divinely inspired religion. In his main work, \textit{Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon} (4 vols., 1771–75),\textsuperscript{49} he demonstrated “the contingent and historically conditioned nature of the canon and the significant difference between the Biblical books, which were [henceforth] to be considered as historical sources.”\textsuperscript{50} However, “he did not surrender the revelation of God thereby: rooted in the salvific event brought about by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, it [i.e., the idea of revelation] is attested to clearly [and] solely in the holy scripture that has become historically manifest, the primordial human testament of God’s word, and [it] serves as a ’moral,’ that is, as an ethical-religious instruction of man concerning the path to salvation…”\textsuperscript{51} In contrast, the remainder of the Bible, for Semler, mainly represented an “accommodation” (\textit{Akkomodation}) to the listener’s historical circumstances and intellectual horizons. How does Semler justify this separation of revelation from history?

In the main, he sets out to demonstrate a contrast between “the ’true Christian’ content of New Testament doctrine from its Old Testament-Jewish garb.”\textsuperscript{52} Thus, whereas orthodoxy taught that the Bible and dogma were absolute, “Semler taught that one must understand everything out of its time.”\textsuperscript{53} “The content of the Biblical books is to be ’localized’ and ’temporalized,’ that is, explained out of its geographic and temporal conditions, freed from these local and temporal components, and thus to be used in its moral content for the moral betterment of humanity. With this, Semler created the [method of] historical-critical exegesis [characteristic] of Enlightenment theology.”\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{47} Historically, Semler belongs among the group of \textit{Neologen} associated with the \textit{Neologie or Neue Lehre} (new doctrine or new theology) who sought to mediate between the rationalism of the Enlightenment and Protestant theology. The \textit{Neologen} were opposed, on the one hand, to orthodoxy but also, on the other, to the radical Enlightenment and to the critical rationalism of Kant. Caught between the orthodox camp and the modernizers, the Enlightenment theologians, as they were known, were successful in stemming the tide of rationalism for a while (even representing the consensus view for a time), before ultimately being overtaken in turn by history.


\textsuperscript{49} J. S. Semler, \textit{Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon}, 4 vols. (Halle: Carl Hermann Hemmerde, 1771–75).

\textsuperscript{50} Raupp, “Semler, Johann Salomo,” 1445–446.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 1446.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
It is not necessary here to enter into the further details of Semler’s work, but we note some important points regarding the historical-critical method that has been his most enduring contribution to textual studies. To begin with, Semler’s main interest was not the “problem of historical development as such”\(^{55}\); indeed, contrary to its name, the historical-critical method was a reaction to the forces of historicism, which it sought to accommodate alongside its theological commitments. Semler’s main concern was an “explicitly theological and simultaneously Enlightenment-pedagogical [aufklärerisch pädagogische] question: what are the contents of the individual Biblical texts, and how far can reading them spiritually edify the contemporary reader of the Bible…?”\(^{56}\) Semler considered this question to be the “final purpose and the consequence” of all “properly founded and rational religions” and hence “even more of the Christian [religion] (Canon I, 9/hg. Scheible, 18).”\(^{57}\) For Semler, this “aufklärerisch pädagogische” impetus, as Reventlow calls it, has as its goal the purification of Christianity itself in the name of “rational religion.”

Writes Semler:

> I will not permit myself to enter into a quarrel, for I have used the words “rational religion”; I know what one commonly says and can say, but I mean it in the honest, innocent sense that Paul could address with λογικε·ιατρεια. It is surely quite certain that even within Christian religion, as it has been accepted and applied by people, much that is irrational and incorrect has taken place: all this I wish to exclude through this rider.\(^{58}\)

Confronted with the dual challenges of defending faith against the radical Enlightenment, on the one hand, and of rescuing Protestant theology from orthodoxy, on the other, the historical-critical method presented an opportunity to combine the insight into the historicity of existence with the need for a transhistorical truth. It allowed for the creation of a religion that, at least according to its self-understanding, was rational (and hence, ahead of other religions).\(^{59}\) Practically, this meant sacrificing a section of the Bible (mainly the Old Testament and especially the books Ruth, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the narratives concerning the history of the Israelites). Of the Book of Esther, Semler says that it recounts “only insignificant, purely Israeli, local occurrences”\(^{60}\) and hence “for those readers who

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56. Ibid.
57. Ibid. (for the source of the quotation, see the next note).
58. J. S. Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon nebst Antwort auf die tübingische Vertheidigung der Apocalypsis*, vol. 1 (Halle: Carl Hermann Hemmerde, 1771), 9 (emphasis in original; quotation marks are the authors’ addition).
59. “This is a facet of the Protestant-German self-understanding we shall encounter again and again in German Orientalism. The Indologists’ claim to being more objective than the commentarial tradition is ultimately based on this consciousness of being ahead on the evolutionary scale, of having undergone a Reformation and Enlightenment that non-Western cultures are yet to undergo.”
60. Ibid., 34–35.
have not neglected their capabilities under the Jews, these books can be called perfectly useless as regards their betterment.”61 This also holds for all other events of Israeli history: these are, says Semler, “common human events [Veränderungen].”62 As Reventlow notes, “The entire domain of historical events is thus denied every salvific quality. Further, as they are special events of Jewish history, they are without significance for the members of other nations [Völker].”63 “Is it a correct conclusion,” Semler asks, “that because the Jews consider these books to be divine holy books, hence all other peoples [Völker] must consider this content divine and much more honorable than the narration of the history and special occurrences of other peoples [Völkern]?64 The “main objection,” as Reventlow notes, is that “Jewish history (the history of Israel) is a particular history, which [thus] cannot have any significance for humanity as a whole, since it contains no universal truths.”65 Once one surrenders the dogmatic claims to universal validity, the only means left of considering these works is the historical-critical perspective. The interpreter’s task becomes one of explaining the contents of the texts out of their specific historical—that is, geographic, social, and temporal—situation and, in so doing, of arriving at a “historically more nuanced evaluation of the Bible.”66

Likewise, the second of the two great names associated with the historical-critical method, Ferdinand Christian Bauer,67 relied on a dogmatic distinction between a Judaic-Petrine and a Christian-Pauline faction within early Christianity to set the dialectic in motion. Semler had used the distinction to drive a wedge between the Old and the New Testaments (and between the allegedly Judaic and Pauline sections of the New Testament as well) with the express intent of rescuing Protestant theology. Bauer now sought to establish this distinction as historical fact through his historical-critical researches into the Bible. Thus, in his 1831 article “Die Christuspartie in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christenthums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom,” he identified two completely opposed systems that emerged from the contrast between Judaism and Pauline Christianity. According to the one system, revelation is only the general disclosure of what is already present that comes about with time, and all instruction of what has been divinely revealed occurs only via extrinsic teaching; according to the other system, revelation is a καινὴ κτίσις [new creation] that must

61. Ibid., 37.
62. Ibid., 24.
64. Semler, Abhandlung, 24.
66. Ibid., 189.
67. Indeed, the first recorded occurrence of the term that has since become the standard designation for the method can be found in Bauer’s “Über Zweck und Veranlassung des Römerbriefs und die damit zusammenhängenden Verhältnisse der römischen Gemeinde: Eine historische-kritische Untersuchung,” Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie 8, no. 3 (1836): 59–178. Bauer is also the first to coin the term Tendenzkritik to describe the critic’s task of grasping the immanent intention of the authors of the New Testament.
be understood in the depths of one’s own consciousness as a higher life-principle that has been imparted through the divine Spirit; here Christ is only the teacher, there he is the savior in the highest sense; here all religious value is accorded to legal dealings, there to faith in the death of the savior. 68

Bauer also adopts Semler’s idea of perfectibility (Perfektibilitätsgedanke), according to which history proceeds from lower forms of religion to higher. “The relationship of Christianity to heathenism and Judaism,” he writes, “can only be determined as that of absolute religion to the forms of religion that preceded and are inferior to it. It is the advance from servitude to freedom, from immaturity to maturity, from the youth of humanity to a period of adult ripeness, from the flesh to the spirit…. In Christianity, man knows himself for the first time to be elevated into the element of the Spirit and of spiritual life, his relationship to God is now the relationship of Spirit to Spirit.” 69 Apart from its polemical significance vis-à-vis heathenism and Judaism, however, one of the most important consequences of Bauer’s teleological conception of intellectual history was that it laid the intellectual foundation for a reflexive historical-critical examination of the documents of the past. The modern historical critic rather than the tradition was now established as the sole authority on the text. In fact, he became a kind of religious functionary entrusted with the task of mediating between the text and the present: historicizing the text had interrupted its ability to say anything to the reader, requiring the creation of a specialized corps of interpreters capable of translating it back into the present. 70 As Semler’s biographer notes, “Even if the task that results from this [starting point] for the interpreter is to understand the content of the concerned writings locally and temporally, the historical-critical Enlightenment scholar [historisch-kritische Aufklärer] nonetheless succeeds in transforming the content written for the reader of that era into our way of thinking and our representations and thus in presenting the very same New Testament previously criticized from a theoretical perspective as unnecessary now as not merely the first but also the unchanging source of Christian faith.” 71 At the price of a pseudocritical concession to the historical spirit of the age, Enlightenment theology ends up granting the critic absolute freedom to determine what is essential and salvifically relevant in the text. 72

70. Husserl will later call (European) philosophers the “functionaries of mankind” (Beamten der Menschheit), showing how completely this Erastian conception of religion has been internalized within Germany philosophy by the twentieth century.
72. This is a central part of our argument, which we will develop in the following chapters. The modern critic’s genealogy is theological, and even when he pretends to have no theological commitments, he is actually the spiritual and political successor to the Catholic chaplain (of course, now with an added civilizational, purificatory zeal). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the history of Mahābhārata criticism, which is why this work has
The further history of the method, which was later adopted by Schleiermacher, is unimportant for us here. What is important to note is that the origins of the historical-critical method are theological, both in the trivial and nontrivial senses. The historical-critical method had been developed by J. S. Semler and applied by G. L. Bauer to the study of the Old Testament and by F. C. Bauer to the study of the New Testament. It progressively replaced the Protestant hermeneutic principle of *scriptura sacra est verbum dei* (The Holy Bible is the Word of God) with the principle *scriptura sacra continet verbum dei* (The Holy Bible contains the Word of God). Coupled with this new interpretive tendency, there was a new urgency regarding the need to look past the literal sense of the text (the so-called *sensus literalis*, which earlier Protestant theologians had held to be the true sense of scripture) at the historical realities (the *realia*) behind the text. Semler held that only the historical-critical method was capable of retrieving the meaning of the text via a critical, scientific inquiry. Even though scholars from F. C. Bauer onward progressively set aside Semler’s concerns with private religion and progressively transformed the method into a free-standing literary enterprise, this did not diminish any of its theological significance. The growing secularization of the theological method was but the reverse side of a growing sacralization of literary studies themselves, while the absolute authority the method claimed for itself remains an uneasy reminder of its theological origins.\(^\text{73}\)

It is thus one of the ironies of history that a method that was to become such a core component of the methodological self-understanding of the textual sciences (*Textwissenschaften*) within the university not only had a theological origin but also was essentially theological: in spite of the name *historical-critical method*, what Semler was interested in was not history, but to identify that part of scripture that could be considered the pure Word of God.\(^\text{74}\)

In fact, since the separation and absolutization of the Word went along with a concomitant relativization of other aspects of scripture (parts felt to be Judaic) or other people’s scripture (the Old Testament as a whole), the method was not only theological but also religious. The entire critical enterprise was undertaken not to defend and legitimate reason, but to rescue a kernel of dogmatic truth. Further, because the method was essentially dialectical in nature, it had to assume a minimum of two redactorial agencies or ideologies in the text.\(^\text{75}\)

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\(^{73}\) This claim has recently also been made by Michael W. Kaufmann in his ”The Religious, the Secular, and Literary Studies: Rethinking the Secularization Narrative in Histories of the Profession,” *New Literary History* 38, no. 4 (2007): 607–28.

\(^{74}\) McGetchin points out (personal communication) that freeing oneself from religion is now considered “the miracle,” an observation that should place much of contemporary scholarship in a new light. We make a similar claim in chapter 4, when we discuss Rudolf von Roth and his conception of an “Allgemeine Religionsgeschichte” (universal history of religions).

\(^{75}\) In the case of the Mahābhārata, this requirement would be satisfied by positing an Āryan-Hindu or a Kṣatriya-Brāhmaṇa distinction. The practitioners of this method today (above all, James L. Fitzgerald and Kevin McGrath) do not even realize that their so-called critical researches into the text are determined a priori by the requirements of the method.
It did not matter whether these were called the New Testament–Old Testament–Jewish aspects of the text (Semler) or identified with the Judaic-Petrine and Christian-Pauline factions within early Christianity (Bauer): what was crucial was positing a difference in order to observe it (in the form of “scientific” propositions), only to then recover the part one had all along been interested in. The method was critical only in the weak (Kantian) sense identified earlier that it entailed an affect against scriptural authority. The fact that it, in practice, was frequently used to separate out the Judaic element in scripture makes it ethically questionable, even though the method was thereby simply carrying forward the legacy of Luther’s Reformation. Finally, we need to note that, in the historical-critical method, the method determines the results rather than vice versa, so that the question of its applicability to texts is always moot.

And yet it is precisely this method, so deeply permeated with the spirit of eighteenth-century Protestantism and Enlightenment theology, that was ultimately to be definitive for the new nineteenth-century discipline of Indology. The enormous prestige of the new biblical criticism practiced by F. C. Bauer and the so-called Tübingen School and the influence of nineteenth-century historicism made it a foregone conclusion that this new discipline would adopt the spirit, if not the very method, of this new historical-critical era. In practice, the introduction of the historical-critical method was mediated via Orientalists such as Heinrich Ewald at Tübingen. In a letter to his colleagues in 1840, Ewald warned them “in Germany to pay much more attention to history than has been the case until now.” According to Mangold, who cites the passage, this “impetus did not by any means echo unheard. Alongside the affirmation of philology, there were Orientalists even in the 1830s and 40s who were interested in historical themes and imbibed the critical method of the historians with its claim to a ‘systematic collection and critical examination of all sources.’” Polaschegg notes that “in the wake of new concepts of translation that focused on the uniqueness of the source languages and tried to give it expression, Orientalist literature...began to manifest as a linguistic and literary mode.” “Simultaneously, there was a transformation of the Orient, which transformed itself from a contemporary place, as it had been until then, to a historical space, and thus to one to which one could only gain access via making hermeneutic efforts.”

The text must have a history, because the method demands a history: it is in this sense that this method can at all be called a historical-critical method.

76. The analogue in material physics would be a physicist with a spectrometer who said, “I can only use this spectrometer to analyze samples composed of at least two elements or impurities, but I cannot use it to analyze samples composed of a single pure element. And because I am incapable of detecting a pure element, the only elements that I can detect in your impure sample will be the two that you tell me are already in it.” Would one accept this as science?


80. Ibid.
“Protestant theology, the sole science in Germany that traditionally had a cognitive interest in the Orient, held the methodical tools ready for such an understanding access to the Orient. Facilitated by the differentiation of historical and systematic research within Protestant theology, a field arose of a historical-critical Oriental science that institutionalized itself around the middle of the nineteenth century as an independent, yet still historical-critical discipline.”

The trajectory traced by Oriental science from theological beginnings to an independent yet still historical-critical discipline is the very one traced by Indology, with perhaps one exception. Whereas the boundaries between Oriental science and theology (especially Old Testament theology), conditioned by the nature of their subject, remained fluid, Indology was able, at least officially, to distance itself from theology even as it borrowed both tools (the historical-critical method) and agendas (a continuation of its anticlerical, anti-authoritarian stance) from the latter. For this reason, the history told here will largely take the form of interrogating the statements of German Indologists to see where and in what form this theological inheritance has, historically speaking, informed their concrete praxis.

DEFINING THE SCOPE OF INQUIRY

Although this book is intended as a history of German Indology, it naturally cannot claim to be exhaustive. German Indology is a huge and diverse field, extending from scholarship on the Vedic hymns, Upanisads, Dharmashastra, Puranas, and so on to treatises on systematic philosophy (śadārṣāna), Indian drama, poetry, literature, and grammatical and scientific texts. It encompasses a number of technical aids such as dictionaries, grammar books, and catalogues of manuscripts. However, the scope of our inquiry was delimited by its double concern of presenting a history of German Indology from the perspective of its method and a history of its method from the perspective of its theological inheritance (the two, in the end, being one and the same). It would make no sense to castigate lower criticism work for its ideological perspective.

For this reason, it seemed most appropriate to focus on German interpretations of the Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, and of a portion of the epic, the Bhāgavadvītā. These texts played a crucial role in German intellectual circles beginning in the

81. Ibid. (italics in original).
82. This has been attempted by Peter van der Veer in his essay “Monumental Texts: The Critical Edition of India’s National Heritage,” in Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia, ed. Daud Ali (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 134–55, but with less than successful results. Lower criticism work must be criticized from a lower critical perspective, higher critical work from the perspective of revealing its underlying ideology.
83. The Mahābhārata is one of two Sanskrit epics, the other being the Rāmāyaṇa. Although we could also have expanded our focus to include the latter (many of the authors studied in this book also wrote on the Rāmāyaṇa; some, like the Bonn scholar Hermann Jacobi, also published entire books on it), there were two main reasons for limiting discussion only to the Mahābhārata. First, the Mahābhārata played a much more central role in the formation of German ideas of “critical” research. Even though German scholars applied similar sorts of prejudices to the study of the Rāmāyaṇa, on the whole the text was less productive for their ideology. Second, Rāmāyaṇa studies largely avoided the kind
nineteenth century. 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. Additionally, the availability of a critical edition of the epic allowed us to delimit the scope of inquiry further. By presenting a comprehensive overview of the textual tradition, the critical edition ruled out certain kinds of hypotheses (e.g., Aryan “Urepos,” original bardic narrative). Further, when studying the stemma created by Sukthankar for this text, as well as the critical edition text itself, we became aware of a dissonance between the text’s literary self-consciousness and its Wirkungsgeschichte and Rezeptionsgeschichte, on the one hand, and the interpretations of German writers on the epic, on the other. The text-historical method, which was repeatedly called “scientific” (wissenschaftlich), turned out to be far from a presuppositionless science. What historical processes were driving the ideology behind the articles of faith in higher criticism? A careful study of the genesis of Mahābhārata studies in Germany thus became necessary.

We also could have extended this analysis across space and time (covering, for example, the British and French reception of the text or extending the analysis back in time to cover the first phase of Oriental studies in Germany), but this would have diluted the focus of the book and, moreover, made it unwieldy. Further, our argument was specific to a subunit of Oriental studies in Europe. We were claiming that academic Indology, as it developed in Germany between the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries, had been influenced by a Protestant inheritance mediated via the historical-critical method. It would be a different matter altogether (and a different book) to study what kinds of prejudices were in play in British or French Sanskrit studies around the same time, and it would require similarly detailed textual research to make those claims.

Although our analysis focuses on the vicissitudes of this discipline as it developed in Germany, it is important to specify that by German Indology we do not, obviously, mean all Germans. We do not define German Indology by national or racial identity, any more than we mean that all German Indologists are alike. In fact, the second chapter of this work (on German Gītā interpretations) is concerned to demonstrate the tremendous latitude (deriving from personal predictions) between these interpretations. These differences, like the personal and political differences between individual Indologists, must be borne in mind. There were frequent disagreements about approaches, the correct interpretation of texts, of problems that afflict Mahābhārata studies, largely due to the efforts of the scholars working on an English translation of the Rāmāyana’s critical edition. Under the guidance of Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland, the Rāmāyana translation scholars evolved a balanced approach to the study of epic, combining textual reflections with literary, ethical, and epistemological concerns.

84. The Bhagavadgītā has been the paradigmatic text for the German reception of Indian thought, as scholars such as Figueira, Sharpe, and Herling have argued. Herling has presented a lucid account of the first phase of German reception (the period 1778 to 1831). The first three chapters of this book cover the period thereafter (i.e., 1837–1937), tracing the way the historicist and epic fantasies of Christian Lassen, Adolf Holtzmann Sr. and Adolf Holtzmann Jr. provided the impetus for a less philosophical preoccupation with Indian texts in academic Indology.
and reconstructions of the tradition. These disagreements were exacerbated by personal and political antagonisms and by the inevitable competition that must result between members of a small, isolated community. One would not, for instance, want to place a scholar such as Heinrich Lüders (forced to resign his professorship at the University of Berlin in 1935 by the National Socialists) on the same level as Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (National Socialist German Workers Party [NSDAP] member and founder of the Äryan Seminar at the University of Tübingen) or Erich Frauwallner (NSDAP member and proponent of theories of racial superiority). Nor ought one overlook the small but significant minority of Jewish scholars (among them, Walter Ruben, Richard Simon, and Otto Stein) or women Indologists (Else Lüders, Betty Heimann) or the minority of German Indologists employed outside Germany (Georg Bühler, until 1880 at Elphinstone College, Bombay, and Franz Kielhorn, until 1881 at Deccan College, Pune).

What, then, do we mean by German Indology? As we use the term in this study, we have in mind primarily a mode of doing scholarship. Even though this mode originated in Germany, its application was international. For example, French, English, Dutch, and American scholars quickly assimilated the text-historical method.

86. Jakob Wilhelm Hauer was a founder of the Äryan Seminar (das Arische Seminar) at the University of Tübingen and a member of the SS and SA. Interned after the war and found guilty of collaboration with the Nazis, Hauer was banned from teaching until 1950. On Hauer’s life and work, see the recent book by Šā’ûl Bauman, Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung und ihr Gründer Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881–1962), trans. Alma Lessing (Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 2005). The older book by Margarete Dierks, Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, 1881–1962: Leben, Werk, Wirkung: mit einer Personalbibliographie (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1986), in contrast, is mostly inaccurate and highly partisan.
89. This rich and plural inheritance was, unfortunately, all but eliminated in the Second World War. It would be interesting to see if Indology made any efforts after the war to rehabilitate Jewish Indologists or to recruit new members to their ranks.
90. McGetchin (Douglas T. McGetchin, “Wilting Florists: The Turbulent Early Decades of the Société Asiétique, 1822–1860,” Journal of the History of Ideas 64, no. 4 [2003]: 565–80) traces the decline of French Oriental studies in the period 1825–60 at least in part to debates over method triggered by the “Florist” controversy of 1825–29. (The controversy had been triggered by two articles published in the journal of the Société Asiétique by the young German scholar F. E. Schultz in 1825. Schultz criticized the Florists, scholars more interested in the literary qualities of translations, for their lack of philological accuracy. The clash of methods “almost tore the Société Asiétique apart and succeeded in setting Orientalist scholars in France on an exacting, scientific course,” yet, as McGetchin notes, it also had “a serious unintended consequence: the adoption of this new agenda also inhibited the further growth of Oriental studies in France.” Ibid., 565). While there are a number of factors—cultural, political, and institutional—for the dominance of German Oriental studies by the mid-nineteenth century, there is little doubt that the perceived rigour of German scholarship vis-à-vis their European counterparts played a role in this rise.
The American Sanskritist Edward W. Hopkins studied in Berlin and Leipzig (between 1878 and 1881) and, on his return, introduced the method to America.\(^9\) Before him, William Dwight Whitney had studied Oriental languages under Albrecht Weber in Berlin and under Rudolf von Roth in Tübingen from 1850–53 and later undertook a highly public campaign against Max Müller, whom he considered to be popular as against the rigour of German academics.\(^9\) One could also characterize a number of other American Sanskritists (e.g., James L. Fitzgerald) who did not study in Germany as German Indologists. But although German Indology, in its practice, is international, in its essential formulation and in its inception, it remains German. For this reason, we are justified in speaking of German Indology. However, the reader must keep three things in mind at all times:

1. This epithet refers strictly and exclusively to an Indology based on the historical-critical method and following certain agendas that can best be understood out of German Protestantism.
2. This study takes a text-based approach, and its claims refer to a highly circumscribed group of texts and/or authors. Whether and in what way these claims can be extended to the work of other Indologists working in other fields (e.g., Vedas, Purāṇas) remains a subject for a separate study.
3. As German Indology is a broad term unifying various theoretical currents and approaches (e.g., Indische Literatur, Indische Philologie, Indische Altertumskunde, Orientalische Philologie, Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft, Sanskrit Philologie, Indogermanische Studien), the analysis here refers more narrowly to that part of Indology identified with a certain tradition of Indian historiography that followed specific ideological and fundamentalist agendas in its historiography of India.\(^9\)

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92. One of the reasons for Whitney’s virulent attacks on Müller was the latter’s relatively generous assessment of Indian commentators. In contrast, Whitney wished to inherit the mantle of German scholarship and thus joined scholars such as Albrecht Weber and Rudolf von Roth in their polemics against the tradition. Although disdain for traditional scholarship was commonplace among European scholars, there was variation between individual schools with some Indologists being more open to Indian knowledge. Whitney, resentful of Müller’s success, found that Müller’s more positive evaluation of Indian thought offered him a weak spot to target. See Douglas T. McGetchin, “The Whitney-Müller Conflict and Indo-German Connections,” in *Mapping Channels Between Ganges and Rhein: German-Indian Cross-Cultural Relations*, ed. Jörg Esleben, Christina Kraenzle and Sukanya Kulkarni (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 29–50, see esp. 46–48.
93. The term *historio-graphy* is Gerdmar’s, who clarifies it thus: “History, then, is much less an attempt to interpret historical empirical data of *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, than an ideological construct that expresses the author’s overall view on Jews and Judaism in relation to early Christianity, by telling the story in a certain way. I therefore consciously use the term *historio-graphy*, to stress that the writing of history is the writing of a story that is an expression of the author’s viewpoints, as much as it is a mere description of the object described.” Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2009), 10–11. It is in this sense that we adopt and use the term.
We shall therefore focus mainly on the Tübingen and Bonn schools of Indology. The former, via the tradition of the Tübingen School of F. C. Bauer, David Friedrich Strauss, and other evangelical theologians, has been most interested in prosecuting religious goals in the name of a scientific study of India. The latter, via the work of Christian Lassen, amateur historian and anthropologist of race, has been most
interested in historical investigations, whereby one must keep in mind that the histories these scholars came up with rarely existed outside their own minds.\footnote{This view is shared by Madeleine Biardeau; see her \textit{Hinduism: The Anthropology of a Civilization}, trans. Richard Nice (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. 4–6.}

Since it is this combination of religious, evangelical concerns with (pseudo)historical methodology that became definitive for the discipline known as German Indology, this book focuses mainly on what might be termed a Tübingen-Bonn axis. This is not to say that this approach was employed \textit{only} in Tübingen and Bonn. On the contrary, it was adopted all over Germany.\footnote{Other approaches were in play, such as the comparative linguistics of Franz Bopp (1791–1867), and these approaches too made a grab for the popular imagination as discussed by McGetchin in his chapter “Reaching the Public” (chapter 5 of \textit{Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism}). But the \textit{religionsgeschichtliche} method has dominated German studies on the epics, the \textit{Purāṇas}, and the \textit{Bhagavadgītā}. In terms of volume, these studies easily exceed the grammatical, linguistic, and lexical works produced by German scholars.}

However, since the methodological approach we are interested in querying first emerges from the crossing of the religious-historical (\textit{religionsgeschichtlich}) perspective of Tübingen Indology (Richard von Roth, Richard Garbe, Heinrich von Stietencron) with the historical reconstructions of the Bonn school (Christian Lassen, Willibald Kirfel, Paul Hacker), we shall attune our inquiry to two sets of questions:

1. What were the religious agendas German Indologists were pursuing, what was the religious context that shaped them in their formative years, and what role did an outwardly secularized conception of religion, namely, in the form of the “study of religions” (\textit{Religionswissenschaft}) or the “history of religions” (\textit{Religionsgeschichte}), play in their work?

2. What was the understanding of history these Indologists were operating with, how did historical topics go proxy for religious goals, and in what way did the positing of an outwardly secularized historical science as the end goal and culmination of human intellectual development itself contribute to the creation of a teleological narrative of history?

Finally, one might also ask: why only Germans? Why not, for example, the English? Extending this logic, one could generalize away the problems of Mahābhārata scholarship as one of inevitable misunderstandings that complicate any intercultural encounter. These issues have been dealt with admirably by Figueira and in the literature following her pathbreaking work.\footnote{See her \textit{Translating the Orient} and also her \textit{The Exotic: A Decadent Quest}, both cited earlier.} But this study is precisely \textit{not} adding to the already prodigious literature on European Orientalism. Rather, it concretely studies inventive and enduring interpretations of the Indian epic from two perspectives: a historical perspective and an epistemological perspective.
Historically, the dominant principles that inform Mahābhārata study, especially as "scientific" and "critical," were forged in Germany. The *Sitz im Leben* of early Mahābhārata criticism is not Europe in general, but among Germanophone scholars. The text-historical method itself arises historically out of a series of events that are first and foremost a part of German history. Further, certain theses regarding the Mahābhārata, such as the war narrative hypothesis, the Āryan hypothesis, and its correlate, the Brahmanic hypothesis, which have since become dogma within scholarship pertaining to this epic, were conceived and nurtured initially and for the most part by German Indologists in the German language. That these hypotheses were by no means compelling or even persuasive is shown by the work of the brilliant French scholar Madeleine Biardeau and her American counterpart, Alf Hiltebeitel. The reader ought to bear in mind that within Europe and in the United States, there are other approaches to the study of the epic that serve as contemporary counterexamples to German Indology as it pertains to Mahābhārata studies. 99

Epistemologically, at least since Foucault, we are aware of the hegemonic and normative dimensions of “science.” The term *Wissenschaft* occurs frequently in German Indology. What is the basis for this insistence on the rhetoric of scientificity? The text-historical method chooses a certain construction of history over every other understanding of truth. Thus, instead of asking whether something is true, we now ask, why did some people believe it to be true? Put simply, the truth of a thing is reduced to its history. Thus in evaluating the text-historical method as practiced by German Mahābhārata scholars, it would be inappropriate to apply some external veridical standard. This study therefore outlines the institution, hegemony, and diremption of the text-historical method. These larger questions concerning how truth is created and used guide this study; for this reason, we found it appropriate to relate it to other views of truth and textual hermeneutics, such as Gadamer, and other uses of texts, such as Gandhi.

**PLAN OF STUDY**

In chapter 1, we take a close look at some early interpretations of the Mahābhārata, including Christian Lassen’s “Beiträge zur “Beiträge zur Kunde des Indischen Altertum aus dem Mahâbhârata,” 100 Adolf Holtzmann Sr.’s *Indische
Sagen, and Adolf Holtzmann Jr.’s Zur Geschichte und Kritik des Mahābhārata and Die neunzehn Bücher des Mahābhārata. This inceptive chapter shows how concepts such as internal criticism (innere Kritik), tendency criticism (Tendenzkritik), and text history and redaction history (Textgeschichte and Redaktionsgeschichte) that originally developed in the context of biblical criticism were projected onto the Indian epic. Even though the original field of application of these concepts was Old Testament criticism, they were found useful in epic studies to separate out an “Urepos” (a primordial epic or an original epic) from the text as extant, a process that led to the postulation of two phases (stages or ideologies) in Indian history: an Aryan-Indo-Germanic phase and a Brahmanic-Hindu phase. These concepts had roughly the same heuristic value as the distinction between Petrine and Pauline factions in primal Christianity had for biblical criticism.

In chapter 2, we focus on the work of Adolf Holtzmann Jr. Although not the first to postulate an Indo-Germanic original epic at the root of the three epic traditions (i.e., Greek, German, and Indian), Holtzmann is the first to develop the hypothesis of an Urepos into a comprehensive theory. In doing so, he simultaneously creates the image of the Aryans that is to be definitive for all future German scholarship: a warlike race capable of both violence and greatness. Holtzmann also makes use of a second distinction that is fundamental to German Bhagavadgītā scholarship: the distinction between the war narrative and the didactic episodes of the epic.

The dynamic between these two pairs of distinctions (Aryan versus Brahmanic, war epic versus philosophical-didactic) constitutes the historical backdrop against which German scholarship on the Gītā must be studied. Hence, understanding their historical origins and the ideological value attached to them is a crucial step in mapping the history of this scholarship.

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102 Adolf Holtzmann Jr., Zur Geschichte und Kritik des Mahābhārata (Kiel: C. F. Haessler, 1892) and Die neunzehn Bücher des Mahābhārata (Kiel: C. F. Haessler, 1893).

103 The first was, in fact, his uncle Adolf Holtzmann Sr., whose book Indische Sagen we also discuss in this volume.

104 Although Holtzmann makes use of this distinction, he is not its inventor. It can be traced back to the work of Christian Lassen, who in his 1837 article had suggested that the original epic would have been expanded through the addition of didactic materials. Although the earliest references to a “Bhārata” as opposed to a “Mahā-” or “Great” “Bhārata” may be found in Lassen’s article, it is Goldstücker who gives the thesis its classic form, writing: “The groundwork of the poem, as mentioned before, is the great war between two rival families of the same kin; it occupies the contents of about 24,000 verses. This, however, was overlaid with episodical matter of the most heterogeneous kind…. ”

Theodor Goldstücker, “Hindu Epic Poetry: The Mahābhārata,” The Westminster Review n.s., 33 (1868): 386, reprinted in Literary Remains of the Late Professor Goldstücker, vol. 2 (London: W. H. Allen, 1879), 86–154. Goldstücker, however, was reviewing Lassen’s work (Indische Alterthumskunde, vols. 1–4), which tells us something about how scholarly myths, once they start, can be continually reinforced. By the time Hopkins gives the thesis his imprimatur (in 1901 in his The Great Epic of India: Its Character and Origin [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1901]) by introducing the terms “epic” and “pseudo-epic” to refer to the two parts, the thesis is a fundament of Western approaches to the Mahābhārata.
In chapter 3, we apply the hermeneutic perspectives gained in the previous chapter to a reading of six German Gitās. This chapter covers (in sequence) the “pantheistic Gitā” of Adolf Holtzmann Jr., the “theistic Gitā” of Richard Garbe, the “epic Gitā” of Hermann Jacobi, the “Kṛṣṇa Gitā” of Hermann Oldenberg, the “trinitarian Gitā” of Rudolf Otto, and the “Āryan Gitā” of J. W. Hauer. To these six “Indological Gitās,” we also add a final one: the “Brahmanic Gitā” of Georg von Simson.

Each of these Gitās operates with the basic conceptual vocabulary provided by Holtzmann. By reconstructing their (often complex and mutually contradictory) analyses of the poem, we are able to track how German Gitā scholarship oscillates between the two poles of a heroic Āryan inheritance and its rationalistic Enlightenment-Protestant inheritance. For example, Holtzmann valorizes the “pantheistic” elements of the Bhagavadgitā as being more original than its “theistic elements.” He sees the former (founded on primitive nature worship) as the genuine inheritance of the Indo-Germanic tribes. The latter, in contrast, represents Brahmanic influence on the Gitā. He is opposed by Richard Garbe, who wishes to reclaim the Indo-Germanic heritage as being consonant with nineteenth-century Enlightenment Germany. The theistic elements are an original inheritance; the pantheistic elements, in contrast, reflect the Indian tendency to dissolve all differences in the idea of an all-encompassing unity. Since pantheism, following the

It will not be questioned thereafter until the mid-twentieth century (in the work of V. S. Sukthankar, editor of the Mahābhārata critical edition; see his On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata [Bombay: Asiatic Society, 1957]).

105. The expression “German Gitā” is, of course, borrowed from the title of Herling’s book. We use it as a shorthand to designate German Gitā scholarship, although as Herling’s book (and now our work) suggests, there is no essential “German Gitā,” but only a plurality of interpretations. In spite of this plurality, however, there is a common ideology underpinning these interpretations and it is this ideology we have in mind when we use the expression in the singular.

106. Other Gitās might have been considered. We could also have included the Gitās of F. Otto Schrader (“the oldest Gitā as part of the pre-Viśnūite Mahābhārata was at an end with II, 38… but was possibly expanded with a number of ślokas in the same tone, before the Bhāgavatas placed the actual ‘Bhagavadgītā’ on this small foundation, which [Bhagavadgītā] in the final stage, [now] recognized as part of the Mahābhārata, passed through the hands of a Vedāntic revisionist”; “Über Bhagavadgītā II, 46,” Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 64 [1910]: 340) or of E. W. Hopkins (“This Divine Song… is at present a Krishnaites revision of an older Viśnuites poem, and this in turn was at first an unsectarian work, perhaps a late Upanishad”; Edward Washburn Hopkins, The Religions of India [Boston and London: Ginn & Company, 1895], 389) or of M. Winternitz (“I would like to believe that of the final songs of the Bhagavadgītā only the twelve verses XVIII. 55–66 are genuine and old, and these most probably constituted the conclusion of the poem…. I therefore do not believe that Garbe is fully in the right when he eliminates the 170 verses that contain Vedic-Brahmanic and pantheistic doctrines, but rather, I would hazard that we ought to eliminate at least another 200 verses so that the old and genuine Bhagavadgītā was smaller by more than one half of its present extent”; Review of Vier philosophsiche Texte des Mahābhārata, by Paul Deussen and Otto Strauss, Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 21 [1907]: 197). The problem with these Gitās is that they are derivative: Schrader and Winternitz wish only to extend Garbe’s ideas and Hopkins mainly sets forth his ideas of the evolution of the Mahābhārata epic, ideas that, as we shall see, he owes to Holtzmann’s Mahābhārata.

INTRODUCTION
Pantheismusstreit of the eighteenth century, had become socially unacceptable in Germany, Garbe rejects it. The lusty, blood-drinking Aryans valorized by Holtzmann now become good (proto-) Christians.

Chapter 3 concludes with an overview of these scholarly differences and debates. We argue that the German Gītā is constituted less by its content (which can vary enormously) than by certain presuppositions regarding the nature and function of scholarship. These may be summarized as:

1. A rejection of theology and philosophy.¹⁰⁷
2. Unbounded confidence in the historian’s ability to recover an “original.”
3. A rejection of Indian hermeneutics as “uncritical.”
4. A claim to sovereignty over both text and tradition.

This fourfold characterization justifies us in our claim that German Indology constitutes less a national tradition than a certain mode of doing scholarship.¹⁰⁸ It is this mode that needs to be subjected to analysis from both historical and critical standpoints.

In chapter 4, we take up this task. We first subject the statements of contemporary Indologists to historical analysis. Thus, we trace the antecedents of their views in nineteenth-century isms: historicism, secularism, and scienticism (Wissenschaftlichkeit). Following Howard, we argue that these concepts represent valid, albeit terminologically problematic, attempts to characterize fundamental changes in European intellectual consciousness in the nineteenth century¹⁰⁹ but that their legacy in the humanities is more complex and ambiguous than appears at first. Further, in the case of Indology, these processes were ill understood and rarely reflected upon. Only in this way could the situation arise that a method originating in a reflex against rationalism could come to be mistaken for the ideal of enlightened, self-critical, and progressive scholarship. Indology today, we argue, especially in some of its more reactionary strains, still reflects this dogmatic inheritance. Thus, a clarification of Indology’s method from a historical standpoint is an essential step on the way to a discussion of how the humanities can rethink their task after Indology.

Chapter 5 then subjects the statements of Indologists to critical analysis. Applying perspectives from Schürmann to Gadamer, we show how Indology became a progressively outmoded and isolated discipline. Even though contemporary scholars such as

¹⁰⁷. There are important exceptions here, of course. Some, like Paul Deussen and Otto Strauss, took philosophy seriously. They even accepted and emphasized important elements of Indian theology. But this book focuses on the mainstream of German Indology, which was not open to these ideas. In fact, Deussen, for all his significance for German philosophy via his translation of the Upaniṣads, rarely plays a major role in German histories of the discipline. An alternative history could be written about the path German Indology could have taken, but this book is concerned only with the path it did in fact take.

¹⁰⁸. However, the term should not be understood to mean that German Indology is merely a style, a historical phenomenon, one possible approach among others. There are serious ethical and epistemological implications to this way of approaching Indian texts, implications we clarify later in this book.

Stietencron emphasize Indology’s nature as a historicist science, they fail to see that just as historicism developed from the crisis of theology in the nineteenth century, hermeneutic phenomenology developed from the crisis of historicism in the twentieth. Thus, the very self-understanding of this discipline, as reflected in the statements of its theoreticians and defenders, is out of step with major developments in contemporary philosophy. Further, the positivism Indology subscribes to is an incomplete positivism: it takes the turn neither to a positivism dominated by social, emancipatory, and aesthetic concerns, as in Comte, nor to a critical positivism dominated by the rejection of a reality independent of the model-character of science, as in Mach, nor to a logical positivism dominated by the verification principle, as in Carnap.

The analysis of German Indology from both historical and critical perspectives sets the stage for an evaluation of the discipline in the conclusion. Here we focus both on wider problems in the humanities, especially as these have been articulated by thinkers such as Arendt and Adorno following the genocides of the Second World War, and on more specific problems relating to Indology. A brief section on Gandhi’s interpretation of the Gītā concludes our argument that, in the humanities, scientific and methodological considerations are inseparable from ethical ones.