

Schopenhauer's Initial Encounter with Indian Thought

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Comparison vs. Historical inquiry: A Word about Method

Comparisons of Schopenhauer's thought with Indian philosophy may involve ideas or movements that Schopenhauer was not at all acquainted with, for example Yogācāra, or philosophies which he only knew through questionable or possibly misleading sources, for example old Latin translations of the Upanishads or of Vedānta texts. Comparisons of ideas can, but do not have to be, bound by historical considerations; thus a comparison of, say, Schopenhauer's and Gandhi's attitude to animals, or of Schopenhauer's thought and 20th-century Indian philosophy, would be perfectly in order.

However, such comparisons often involve claims about possible influence of Indian thought on Schopenhauer. Max Hecker, one of the pioneers in the field of "Schopenhauer and India" studies, claimed for example:

Schopenhauerian philosophy, which from the outset bore the seal of Indian spirit on its front, was not directly influenced by it. [...] Only later on, when [Schopenhauer] acquainted himself with the fruits of Indian speculation, did he establish a direct connection between Indian thought and his own.¹

Unlike authors of other comparative studies, Hecker was quite open about his agenda and way of proceeding: he had noticed a "remarkable inner kinship"² between Schopenhauer and Indian thought and set out to demonstrate "only the fundamental congruence"³ which for him was a "fact" from the very outset.⁴ Numerous Indologists have since attempted the exact opposite, namely, to "prove" that their modern or post-modern understanding of Indian philosophy is "correct" while Schopenhauer's is different and thus flawed and inadequate.

¹ M. F. Hecker, *Schopenhauer und die indische Philosophie*, Köln 1897: pp. 5–6. Unless otherwise noted all translations from German, French, and Japanese into English are by the author.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ Hecker's term is "fundamentale Übereinstimmung" (*ibid.*, p. 253).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10. Hecker calls this a "Tatsache".

An exotic but typical example is found in a recent Japanese book about Schopenhauer and Indian philosophy:

If one investigates the matter thoroughly one finds that Schopenhauer's understanding of Indian philosophy is for the most part not accurate. This is what I prove in this book. He had no correct notion of the Upanishad's saying *Tat tvam asi*. His interpretation of the Bhagavadgītā and Sankhya-karika is wrong. He has not grasped the meaning of Brahman.⁵

In the present contribution I will conduct an inquiry that is fundamentally different from such comparative undertakings, and it is important to clearly mark the difference. Schopenhauer's encounter with Indian thought is a historical sequence of events; what we are after is thus historical evidence, not philosophical speculation. Many examples of voluntary or involuntary mix-up between these two approaches prove how important it is to make a firm distinction between speculative comparison and historical inquiry.⁶ Questions of encounter, acquaintance, or influence ought to be historical inquiries, and any answers to such questions need to be based on scientific evidence rather than speculation. This means, among other things, that any argument which bases itself on a modern Upanishad translation or a modern view of Indian religion unknown to Schopenhauer falls into the realm of comparison. In the case of the Upanishads, for example, a historical inquiry ought to rely on the Latin Oupnek'hat and, depending on the period in Schopenhauer's life and topic, on other translations he was familiar with. It goes without saying that Schopenhauer's own, richly annotated copy of the Oupnek'hat should be a mainstay of such research. With regard to Buddhism, arguments to the effect that Schopenhauer "only knew Buddhism in its degenerated form as it reigns in Nepal, Tibet, and China"⁷ reflect, besides being incorrect,⁸ a late 19th century view of

⁵ Yutaka Yuda 湯田豊, *Schopenhauē to Indo-tetsugaku* ショーペンハウアーとインド哲学 (Schopenhauer and Indian Philosophy), Kyoto: Kōyō shoten 晃洋書店, 1996: pp. 211–212. For another recent example see Johann G. Gesterling, "Schopenhauer und Indien", in: Schirmacher, Wolfgang, *Ethik und Vernunft. Schopenhauer in unserer Zeit*, Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1995: pp. 53–60.

⁶ The most extreme case in recent times is Douglas Berger's *The Veil of Maya: Schopenhauer's System theory of falsification: the key to Schopenhauer's appropriation of pre-systematic Indian philosophical thought*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000. This dissertation purports to be a study of Indian influences on the genesis of Schopenhauer's system but exhibits ignorance of even the most basic historical facts and sources concerning Schopenhauer's early sources about India. For example, Berger asserts that in his ethnography notes Schopenhauer "mentions nothing about India" (p. 38) and ignores that Schopenhauer borrowed *Das Asiatische Magazin* in 1813 (p. 39).

⁷ Max F. Hecker, *Schopenhauer und die indische Philosophie*, Köln 1897, p. 14. This is one of the endlessly repeated falsities; see for example the strikingly similar verdict in Arthur Hübscher, *Denker gegen den Strom. Schopenhauer: Gestern – Heute – Morgen*, Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Hermann Grundmann, 1973, p. 50.

Buddhism heavily influenced by European theology. They thus belong to the fascinating world of comparison and ought to be treated like the fictional counter-argument that the Indians knew Christianity not in its original Hebrew purity but only in the degenerated Syrian, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran forms. The question is not what Schopenhauer should have known but what he actually did know.

It is thus only through historical inquiry that can we hope to find cogent answers to questions such as: Exactly *when* did Schopenhauer first encounter Indian thought? From *whom* did he learn about it, and *what sources* did he consult? *What kind* of Indian philosophy did he first discover? Many other questions of interest, for example regarding the influence of this initial encounter, will barely be touched at this time; here we must first try to nail down a number of basic facts and to establish their historical sequence. We thus have to keep the eye firmly on all the historical evidence that we can muster up. For a start let us briefly examine Schopenhauer's earliest India-related notes.

Schopenhauer's India-Related Ethnography Notes from 1811

In the Winter semester of 1810/11 Prof. G. E. Schulze, Schopenhauer's first professor of philosophy, remarked that South Sea islanders are enfeebled because of their vegetarian diet in a warm climate. Schopenhauer wrote this down in his notebook and added his question: "What about the Hindus?"⁹ He obviously thought that Indians are not mentally or physically impaired because of their particular diet. Had Schopenhauer read about India? In the Göttingen university library records there is no indication that he had borrowed Asia-related books.¹⁰ At any rate, in the first decades of the 19th century German intellectuals had a broad interest in India which was in part fueled, as we will see, by the romantic search for origins. In 1811 Schopenhauer took a course by Prof. Heeren, a noted authority in Germany's nascent field of Asia-related studies.¹¹ His ethnography course of 1811 covered the entire expanse of Asia, from Turkey and Arabia through Persia, Inner Asia, India, Southeast Asia, China, Tibet, North Asia, and

⁸ See Urs App, "Schopenhauers Begegnung mit dem Buddhismus", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 79, 1998: pp. 35–56.

⁹ Arthur Hübscher (ed.), *Arthur Schopenhauer: Der handschriftliche Nachlass in fünf Bänden*, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985, vol. 2: p. 14. In the following referred to by HN and volume number.

¹⁰ Urs App, "Notizen Schopenhauers zu Ost-, Nord- und Südostasien vom Sommersemester 1811", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 84, 2003: p. 14 (note 6).

¹¹ App, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

Korea to Japan.¹² Schopenhauer's attendance record and detailed notes suggest that he harbored a certain interest in such matters from the time he began to study philosophy. But did he note down anything of interest about Indian philosophy and religion?

Schopenhauer's 1811 ethnography course notes related to India comprise ten densely handwritten pages.¹³ Almost all of the notes concern the geography and history of the subcontinent and its adjacent regions, and only a few passages are relevant for our theme. The first is about the holy city of Benares:

Benares ist die heilige Stadt der Indus enthält die Schulen der Braminen, die heilige Sanskrit Sprache wird gelehrt, u. die heiligen Bücher erklärt: es werden Wallfarthen hingethan um im Ganges sich zu baden.¹⁴

Benares is the holy city of the Indians [and] contains the schools of the Brahmins, the holy Sanskrit language is taught and the sacred books explained; it is the goal of pilgrimages in order to bathe oneself in the Ganges.

The second consists of Schopenhauer's notes from Heeren's description of the Brahmin caste:

Die erste Kaste ist die der Braminen, bey ihnen ist alle Religion u. Wissenschaft. Sie sind weißer, enthalten sich aller thierischen Nahrung, zeichnen sich durch eine braune selbstgeflochtene Schnur aus, dürfen in keine andre Kaste heyrathen. Bey den Braminen selbst sind große Abstufungen. Ihre Beschäftigungen sind nicht allein der Kultur sondern alle Gelehrt[e]it. Sie sind Aerzte Richter u.s.w. Die angesehenste Klasse hat die Erklärung der Veddams od: heiligen Bücher zum Geschäft u. versteht die Sanskritsprache die sie aber keinem aus einer andern Kaste lehren dürfen.¹⁵

The first caste is that of the Brahmins; all religion and science is with them. They are whiter, refrain from all animal food, and are marked by a brown self-braided thread; they must not marry into any other caste. Among the Brahmins there are large gradations. Their activities are not just cultural but comprise all learning. They are doctors, judges etc. The most respected caste is in charge of the explication of the Vedas or sacred books and understands the Sanskrit language, though they must not teach it to anyone from another caste.

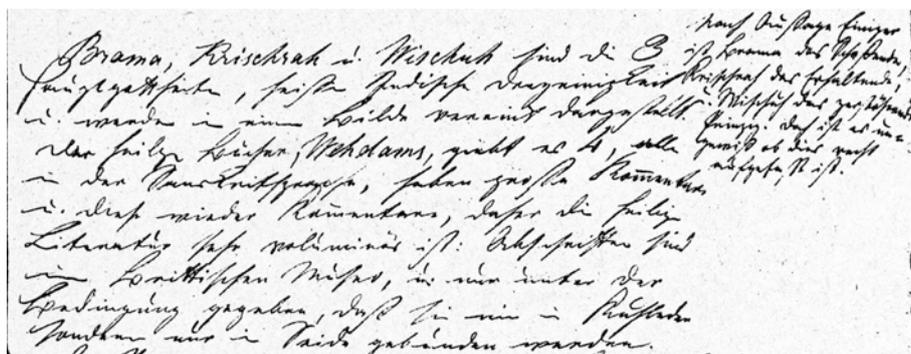
¹² See the list with page references to Schopenhauer's original notebook in App, op. cit., pp. 17–18; remarks on Prof. Heeren and his special interest in India on pp. 15–16.

¹³ Schopenhauer Archiv, case III, p. 83 to p. 92.

¹⁴ Schopenhauer Archiv, case III, p. 87. The left column is always my transcription of the still unpublished Schopenhauer manuscript notes. It exactly replicates the original spelling, abbreviations, etc. The right column contains my English translation. See the complete transcription and English translation of these India-related notes in this number of the *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Our third passage concerns the three main divinities and India's sacred scriptures. Our reproduction of Schopenhauer's handwriting¹⁶ shows the remark about the main divinities on the first three lines with an additional remark in the margin:



Brama, Krischrah u. Wischuh sind die 3 Hauptgottheiten, heißen Indische Dreyeinigkeit u. werden in einem Bilde vereint dargestellt. <am Rand> Nach Aussage Einiger ist Brama das Schaffende, Krishnah das Erhaltende, u. Wischuh das zerstörende Prinzip. Doch ist es ungewiß ob dies recht aufgefaßt ist.¹⁷

Brahma, Krishna and Vishnu are the 3 main divinities; they are called Indian trinity and are represented together in one picture. <in margin> According to the pronouncement of some, Brahma is the creative, Krishna the preserving, and Vishnu the destroying principle. But it is not certain that this is correctly conceived.

The subsequent fourth passage, also shown above, is Schopenhauer's first known reference to the Vedas:

Der heiligen Bücher, Wehdams, giebt es 4, alle in der Sanskritsprache, haben große Kommentare u. dieß wieder Kommentare, daher die heilige Literatur sehr voluminös ist: Abschriften sind im Brittischen Museo, u. nur unter der Bedingung gegeben, daß sie nie in Kuhleder sondern nur in Seide gebunden werden.¹⁸

There are four sacred books, the Vedams, all in the Sanskrit language; they have great commentaries and further commentaries on them, which is why the sacred literature is very voluminous. Copies are in the British Museum and were given only under the condition that they be bound in silk, never in cow hide.

¹⁶ Schopenhauer Archiv case XXVIII, p. 92.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 92. Many years later, in 1841, Schopenhauer adduced this silk binding of the Vedas in contrasting Indian feelings of compassion for animals with a lack of such compassion in Christianity.

The fifth note concerns religious practices:

Die Religionsübungen sind größtentheils Büßungen, werden besonders von den <u>Fakirs</u> getrieben. ¹⁹	Religious practices consist mostly of pe- nances; they are especially performed by the <u>fakirs</u> .
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Finally, the sixth relevant note is about Indian law and philosophy:

Ihre Gesezbücher sind durch die Engländer bekannt. Ueber ihre <u>Philosophie</u> , die auch spekulativ getrieben ist, finden man im <u>Spiegel des Akmar</u> die beste Nachricht. ²⁰	Their books of law are known through the English. About their <u>philosophy</u> , which is also done speculatively, one finds the best account in the <u>Mirror of Akmar</u> [Akbar].
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These notes show that the ethnography course by Prof. Heeren concentrated on geography, history, and commerce and – assuming that Schopenhauer’s notes are faithful – that Heeren furnished little information about Indian philosophy and religion. The fact that Schopenhauer missed few lectures and took extensive notes shows his keenness to know the world; and that he underlined certain words indicates that he had some interest in Asian philosophy and religion.²¹ Whatever its extent, such interest seems to have been poorly served in these lectures. Heeren provided some references to sources, but neither Schopenhauer’s lecture notes nor his other notes from the period exhibit any trace of an encounter with Asian thought. This encounter only happened after two more years of study in Berlin (1811-13) and the redaction of the doctoral thesis in Rudolstadt, when the young doctor of philosophy returned for half a year to his mother’s residence in Weimar.

Schopenhauer’s Account of his “Introduction to Indian Antiquity”

In a letter from the year 1851 Schopenhauer included the following information about this 1813/14 winter in Weimar:

1813 bereitete ich mich zur Promotion in Berlin vor, wurde aber durch den Krieg verdrängt, befand mich im Herbst in Thü-	In 1813 I prepared myself for [Ph.D.] promotion in Berlin, but displaced by the war I found myself in autumn in Thuringia.
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Preisschrift über die Grundlage der Moral, first edition, §19; critical edition p. 241, Zürich edition vol. 6, p. 281.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 92. Emphasis by Schopenhauer.

²⁰ Schopenhauer-Archiv, case III, p. 92. Emphasis by Schopenhauer.

²¹ Apart from two underlined island names, the underlined words in passages five and six are the only nouns emphasized in this way by Schopenhauer on the entire ten pages of notes.

ringen, konnte nicht zurück und sah mich genöthigt mit meiner Abhandlung über den Satz vom Grunde in Jena zu promoviren. Darauf brachte ich den Winter in Weimar zu, wo ich Göthe's nähern Umgang genoß, der so vertraut wurde, wie es ein Altersunterschied von 39 Jahren irgend zuließ, und wohlthätig auf mich gewirkt hat. Zugleich führte, unaufgefordert, der Orientalist Friedrich Majer mich in das Indische Alterthum ein, welches von wesentlichem Einfluß auf mich gewesen ist.²²

Unable to return, I was forced to get the doctorate in Jena with my dissertation on the principle of sufficient reason. Subsequently I spent the winter in Weimar where I enjoyed close association with Goethe, which got as familiar as an age difference of 39 years could possibly allow it, and which exerted a beneficial effect on me. At the same time, the orientalist Friedrich Majer introduced me, without solicitation, to Indian antiquity, and this had an essential influence on me.

One should note that in this statement there is no word of an introduction to "Indian philosophy" or to the *Oupnek'hat*. Schopenhauer simply says that Majer introduced him to "Indian antiquity".

However, tantalized by the sparseness of information, researchers soon began to fantasize. Ludwig Alsdorf, for example, had a vision of young Schopenhauer sitting for half a year at the feet of *guru* Majer:

Schopenhauer's first encounter with India leads us back to the beginning of our path: it was a student and heir of Herder who introduced him to Indian antiquity: the Romantic and Private University Instructor [Privatdozent] in Jena, Friedrich Majer (1772-1818) who, though ignorant of Sanskrit like Herder, occupied himself with India with more insistence than his mentor. From November 1813 to May of 1814, Schopenhauer sat at Majer's feet in Weimar. In the following years, while he wrote his major work *The World as Will and Representation*, the book [Oupnek'hat] fell into his hands which he subsequently chose as his bible.²³

For Alsdorf, Schopenhauer's long Indian apprenticeship had nothing to do with his discovery of the *Oupnek'hat*; he saw the discovery of this book as a chance event which took place years after the six-month teach-in with *guru* Majer.

Rudolf Merkel, on the other hand, thought it likely that Majer had given Schopenhauer the reference to A.-H. Anquetil-Duperron's famous *Oupnek'hat* so that he could borrow it from the local library:

It is probable that following a suggestion by Majer, Schopenhauer borrowed Anquetil Duperron's *Oupnek'hat* on March 26 of 1814 from the Weimar library. He

²² Letter to Johann Eduard Erdmann of 9 April, 1851; Arthur Hübscher (ed.), Arthur Schopenhauer: *Gesammelte Briefe*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1987: p. 261 (letter no. 251). Hereafter abbreviated as GBr.

²³ Ludwig Alsdorf, *Deutsch-Indische Geistesbeziehungen*, Heidelberg: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1942: p. 73.

returned the book on May 18 because in the meantime he probably had taken possession of his own copy.²⁴

We can infer that Merkel situated Majer's introduction shortly before March 26 of 1814, the date when Schopenhauer borrowed the *Oupnek'hat*. With the library practically at his doorstep, Schopenhauer was not likely to wait for weeks or months before following up on an interesting lead. However, Merkel's guess that Schopenhauer had soon bought the *Oupnek'hat* is contradicted by evidence.²⁵

A similar dating of Majer's "introduction to Indian antiquity" and a similar link of this introduction with the *Oupnek'hat* appears in the speculation by Arthur Hübscher:

The Orientalist Friedrich Majer, a disciple of Herder, opened up for him the teachings of Indian antiquity, the philosophy of Vedanta, and the mysticism of the Vedas. The reference to the *Oupnek'hat*, the Latin rendering of a Persian version of the Upanishads which Schopenhauer already was reading in spring of 1814, is likely to have come from Majer.²⁶

Hübscher's portrayal contains two additional unproven assertions: 1. that Majer introduced Schopenhauer to the philosophy of the Vedanta; and 2. that he did the same for the mysticism of the Vedas.

For Hübscher's wife Angelika, her husband's "likely reference" by Majer to the *Oupnek'hat* quickly congealed into a fact: "During his stay in Weimar during the winter 1813/14 he met Majer in the circle around Goethe. Majer recommended the reading of the *Oupnekhat* to him."²⁷ Such seeming facticity was destined to blossom, and to this day it regularly pops up in books and dissertations.

An author of a recent dissertation is not content with letting Majer supply the reference to the *Oupnek'hat* but suggests that he introduced the young philosopher to its content: "Schopenhauer receives a reference to the *Oupnekhat* in the winter of 1813/14 during his second stay in Weimar. It is the orientalist

²⁴ Rudolf Merkel, "Schopenhauers Indien-Lehrer," *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 32, 1945/48: pp. 164-165.

²⁵ It is rather unlikely that Schopenhauer already owned a copy of the *Oupnek'hat* in May of 1814. We know that he borrowed the two large volumes again in Dresden from June 8 to July 16; see Jacob Mühlethaler, *Die Mystik bei Schopenhauer*, Berlin: Alexander Duncker Verlag, 1910, p. 68. Why would he have done so if he already owned them? A more likely scenario is that Schopenhauer got possession of his own set of the *Oupnek'hat* during the first Dresden summer (1814).

²⁶ Arthur Hübscher, *Arthur Schopenhauer. Ein Lebensbild*, Mannheim: Brockhaus, 1988: p. 68.

²⁷ Angelika Hübscher u. Michael Fleiter, *Arthur Schopenhauer. Philosophie in Briefen*. Frankfurt a. M.: Insel Verlag, 1989: p. 200.

Friedrich Majer who familiarizes him with this text.”²⁸ Another dissertation even brings several translations of the Upanishads into play:

Majer, who wrote several essays and prefaces on Indian religion and literature as well as a book entitled *Brahma: on the Brahminical Religion of India* in 1818, suggested to Schopenhauer that he read the most recent translations of the *Upaniṣads* by Anquetil Duperron.²⁹

In fantasyland, Majer’s simple “introduction to Indian antiquities” continues to gain color and scope. In the eyes of Brian Magee, for example, Schopenhauer learned not only of a book: it was “Friedrich Majer, the orientalist who introduced him to Hinduism and Buddhism.”³⁰ U. W. Meyer thinks that Friedrich Majer familiarized Schopenhauer for the first time with the term *māyā*³¹ and asserts that “there is no doubt that Schopenhauer took over Majer’s understanding of *brahman*.”³² Stephen Batchelor has Majer *give* Schopenhauer a copy of the *Oupnek’hat*³³ while Moira Nicholls dreams up an early date for Majer’s “introduction” and is stingier in having Majer *sell* the *Oupnek’hat* to Schopenhauer: “Schopenhauer first acquired a copy of the *Oupnek’hat* from the orientalist Friedrich Majer in late 1813.”³⁴ In fantasyland anything is possible, and dates can of course also be freely manipulated. Thus Roger-Pol Droit can proclaim: “It is

²⁸ Werner Scholz, *Arthur Schopenhauer – ein Philosoph zwischen westlicher und östlicher Tradition*, Frankfurt/Bern: Peter Lang, 1996: pp. 20–21.

²⁹ Berger, op. cit., p. 38. Berger does not specify what other translations Majer might have had in mind. But Berger’s consistent mistaken reference to the title of the *Oupnek’hat* (“Secretum Legendum” instead of Duperron’s “Secretum Tegendum”) is an interesting slip because, thanks to Dārā Shakoh and Duperron, the *Oupnek’hat* had indeed become a “secret to be read” (legendum) rather than one that one should “keep silent about” (tegendum)! I could not yet consult the book version where such mistakes might be corrected: Douglas Berger, *The Veil of Maya: Schopenhauer’s System and Early Indian Thought*, Binghamton, NY: Global Academic Publications, 2004.

³⁰ Brian Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997: 14.

³¹ Urs Walter Meyer, *Europäische Rezeption indischer Philosophie und Religion*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1994: p. 149.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 250 (note 87).

³³ Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture*, Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1994: p. 255.

³⁴ Moira Nicholls, “The Influences of Eastern Thought on Schopenhauer’s Doctrine of the Thing-in-Itself”, in: Janaway, Christopher, *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999: p. 178. Nicholls refers to Hübscher for this interesting bit of disinformation (*The Philosophy of Schopenhauer and Its Intellectual Context: Thinker Against the Tide*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989: pp. 65–66). See note 26 for the the early ownership issue; in Nicholls’ case not even Schopenhauer’s first borrowing from the Weimar library would make sense. People who own books usually do not borrow the same, and to do so twice in a row would be strange indeed.

known that Friedrich Maier [sic], since 1811, made Schopenhauer discover the *Oupnek'hat*.³⁵ Frédéric Lenoir adds some more drama to this totally unsupported assertion by proclaiming that “in 1811” Schopenhauer “was seized by the *Oupnek'hat*”.³⁶

Whatever such creative authors happen to imagine: Schopenhauer unambiguously stated that Majer introduced him to “Indian antiquity”, no more and no less; and his letter leaves no doubt that this introduction took place “simultaneously” with his Goethe visits during the “winter in Weimar”, i. e. during the winter months of 1813/14. But luckily we do not have to leave it at that because we have additional sources at our disposal.

Goethe and Julius Klaproth

As we have seen, in Schopenhauer’s recollection the two major events of the Weimar winter were his meetings with Goethe and Majer’s “introduction to Indian antiquity”. Goethe’s activities during this time are so well documented that we can establish a timeline of his meetings with Schopenhauer; for Majer’s “introduction”, on the other hand, we must draw conclusions based on inferences from various sources.

After presenting his dissertation to the University of Jena near Weimar at the end of September of 1813, Schopenhauer stayed for an additional month in Rudolstadt. During this month he received his Ph. D. diploma³⁷ and had 500 copies of the dissertation printed. At the beginning of November Schopenhauer mailed his book to various people including Goethe.³⁸ Schopenhauer had already known the famous writer and statesman for several years, and Goethe had remarked the son of the hostess during gatherings at Mrs. Schopenhauer’s residence; but the two had never actually spoken to each other.³⁹ However, before Schopenhauer had left for Göttingen in 1809⁴⁰ and Berlin in 1811,⁴¹ Goethe had graciously agreed to write recommendation letters for the young student.

³⁵ Roger-Pol Droit, “Une statuette tibétaine sur la cheminée”, in: Droit, Roger-Pol, *Présences de Schopenhauer*, Paris: Grasset, 1989: p. 203.

³⁶ Frédéric Lenoir, *La rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'occident*, Paris: Fayard, 1999.

³⁷ *Gesammelte Briefe* GBr 5–6, No. 11 (letter to Heinrich Karl Abraham Eichstädt, written in Rudolstadt on October 5, 1813).

³⁸ GBr 6, No. 13. Goethe mentions the book for the first time on November 4, 1813; see Robert Steiger, *Goethes Leben von Tag zu Tag. Band V: 1807–1813*, Zürich/München: Artemis Verlag, 1988, p. 756.

³⁹ GBr 53, No. 56; see also p. 655.

⁴⁰ See Steiger, op. cit., p. 353.

A week after receiving Schopenhauer's dissertation, Goethe for the first time mentioned it to a visitor on November 11 of 1813.⁴² On that very day Goethe received the visit of another young man of particular interest to our topic: Julius Klaproth (1783-1835),⁴³ a renowned and ambitious orientalist with whose chemist father Schopenhauer had studied in Berlin.⁴⁴ Klaproth had first visited Weimar eleven years earlier, in the autumn of 1802, to examine exotic texts from the library of Büttner and to help Goethe with cataloguing orientalia. At that time Klaproth had managed to win Weimar resident Friedrich Majer as a major contributor to a two-volume collection of articles on Asia. This collection, edited by the 19-year-old Klaproth and published at the local Industrie-Comptoir under the title *Das Asiatische Magazin*,⁴⁵ is of particular interest because, as we will see, it became the first known Asia-related source which Schopenhauer borrowed from a library.

Since November of 1813 Klaproth was thus once again⁴⁶ in Weimar for close to two months;⁴⁷ this time he was busy finishing up the manuscript and arranging for the publication of his second exploration voyage report.⁴⁸ Ever curious, Goethe wanted to hear about this expedition to the Caucasus in detail and also took the occasion to question the orientalist about a Chinese painting set.⁴⁹

⁴¹ GBr 7, No. 14.

⁴² Six days after receiving the dissertation, Goethe spoke about it to Riemer. See Steiger, op. cit., p. 758.

⁴³ See the list of biographical sources in Martin Gimm, "Zu Klaproths erstem Katalog chinesischer Bücher, Weimar 1804 – oder: Julius Klaproth als 'studentische Hilfskraft' bei Goethe? –", in: Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, *Das andere China: Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1995: p. 559 ff.

⁴⁴ Klaproth's father, Martin-Heinrich Klaproth, was professor of chemistry in Berlin and is known for his discovery of uranium.

⁴⁵ The second volume calls the publisher "Landes-Industrie-Comptoir". More information in Gimm, op. cit., p. 568.

⁴⁶ See Gimm, op. cit., pp. 574 & 582 for further visits in November of 1803 and April of 1804.

⁴⁷ Gimm (op. cit. p. 567) overlooked that in 1813 an earlier meeting of Klaproth and Goethe took place in Dresden, not in Weimar; thus there is no evidence for an August visit to Weimar by Klaproth. This time, Klaproth left town after his new-year visit to Goethe; the problem Gimm (op. cit.: p. 581-582) had with the initials "H.R." Klaproth in the record of Goethe's son August is easily solved: it was indeed Julius Klaproth, and H.R. stands for Klaproth's title "Hofrat" (court counselor).

⁴⁸ *Geographisch-historische Beschreibung des östlichen Kaukasus, zwischen den Flüssen Terek, Aragwi, Kur und dem Kaspischen Meere*. According to Gimm, op. cit., p. 569 the introduction to this book is dated "Weimar d. 22. Dec. 1813".

⁴⁹ Steiger, op. cit., p. 758.

Schopenhauer and Goethe

Schopenhauer's first visit to Goethe's house took place on November 23 of 1813, and Goethe was favorably impressed by the young philosopher:

Der *junge Schopenhauer* hat sich mir als einen merkwürdigen und interessanten Mann dargestellt. [...] ist mit einem gewissen scharfsinnigen Eigensinn beschäftigt ein Paroli und Sixleva in das Kartenspiel unserer neuen Philosophie zu bringen. Man muß abwarten, ob ihn *die Herren vom Metier* in ihrer Gilde passiren lassen; ich finde ihn geistreich und das Übrige lasse ich dahin gestellt.⁵⁰

The *young Schopenhauer* has presented himself to me as a memorable and interesting man. [...] With a certain astute obstinacy he is engaged in raising the stakes three- or sixfold in the card game of modern philosophy. It is to be seen whether *the people of his profession* will let him pass in their guild; I find him intelligent and do not worry about the rest.

So it came that Goethe invited Schopenhauer to a series of intensive discussions and demonstrations of his theory of colors at his Weimar residence. On November 29 they held the first meeting which lasted the entire evening.⁵¹ Further meetings are documented for December 18,⁵² January 8 of 1814,⁵³ January 13,⁵⁴ January 26,⁵⁵ March 2,⁵⁶ and April 3.⁵⁷ On May 15 of 1814 Schopenhauer visited Goethe in Berka to say good-bye before leaving for Dresden where he was to write his major work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.

Let us now return to the beginning of December of 1813, i.e. the days just after the first study meeting of the aged writer with the young philosopher. Two days after that first evening-long meeting with Schopenhauer, Klaproth visited Goethe once more at his home.⁵⁸ December was a socially active season in the

⁵⁰ Letter by Goethe to Knebel of November 24, 1813; Steiger, op. cit., p. 756.

⁵¹ Goethe's diary features only one entry for this evening: "Abends Doktor Schopenhauer" [in the evening Dr Schopenhauer]. Steiger, op. cit., p. 766.

⁵² Steiger, op. cit., p. 771.

⁵³ Robert Steiger and Angelika Reimann, *Goethes Leben von Tag zu Tag. Vol. VI: 1814–1820*, Zürich / München: Artemis Verlag, 1993, p. 20.

⁵⁴ Steiger & Reimann, op. cit., p. 22. See also GBr 9, No. 18. Since other visitors (Wolff and Riemer) stayed for dinner scheint this meeting seems not to have been exclusively dedicated to discussion of Goethe's color theory.

⁵⁵ Steiger & Reimann, op. cit., p. 28. Since Goethe's diary features no other entries it is possible that Schopenhauer spent the entire afternoon and evening with Goethe.

⁵⁶ Steiger & Reimann, op. cit., p. 43. No other visitor is recorded for this evening.

⁵⁷ Steiger & Reimann, op. cit., p. 52. This meeting took place on Palm Sunday afternoon and was followed by visits of other people.

⁵⁸ Steiger, op. cit., p. 767.

small town, and Goethe not only received many visitors at home but also participated at social gatherings elsewhere. The house of Schopenhauer's mother where the young man lodged was a hub of social activity. In the evening of December 3, for example, Mrs. Schopenhauer held a party at her residence. Goethe spent the whole evening until after midnight at this party, and it is quite possible that Julius Klaproth, the well-known son of a professor of Schopenhauer and acquaintance of Goethe, was also among the invited guests. We do know, at any rate, that on the very next day, December 4, Dr Schopenhauer went to the library and borrowed, along with Newton's *Opticks* (which he certainly needed for his studies with Goethe), a book which is very different from the philosophical and scientific works that he usually sought: the two-volume *Das Asiatische Magazin* whose editor, as we have seen, was none other than Julius Klaproth.

Another possible participant in the gathering was Friedrich Majer who during this period was again living in Weimar; we know that two days after the Schopenhauer party he had lunch with Goethe.⁵⁹ It is impossible to say with any certainty who gave Schopenhauer the reference to *Das Asiatische Magazin*; since both Majer and Klaproth had many contributions in this work we can guess that one or the other talked to Schopenhauer about it, possibly at the party, and that Schopenhauer went to borrow it the following day; but in such a small town there were certainly also many other occasions to meet either man, and Goethe cannot be excluded either because he showed a pronounced interest in Asian matters during this period.

The Weimar Library Records from Fall of 1813 to Spring of 1814

During my 1997 Weimar visit the lending register of the ducal (now Anna Amalia) library was still extant. It had been perused by several earlier researchers; Mockrauer, for example, had examined it before 1928 and reported:

The register of the former Duchy library of Weimar shows that Schopenhauer during that winter borrowed the 'Asiatische Magazin', edited by Beck, Hänsel and Baumgärtner, vol. 1 – 3, 1806-1807, for four months; the 'Mythology of the Hindus' by Mrs de Polier, A. 1-2, 1809, for three months, and finally shortly before the end of his Weimar stay and the move to Dresden from March 26 to May 18, 1814 the *Oupnek'hat*. It is possible that Majer also provided him with appropriate literature.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Steiger, op. cit., p. 768.

⁶⁰ Franz Mockrauer, "Schopenhauer und Indien", *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 15, 1928: p. 4-5.

Schopenhauer had indeed checked out *Das Asiatische Magazin*, but both the 1813 page and the 1814 page of the library record unmistakably say “2 Bde.” (2 volumes), and Schopenhauer’s excerpts and references leave no doubt that what he borrowed was the two-volume set of *Das Asiatische Magazin* edited by Klaproth in 1802. This shows once more the importance of careful inspection of primary source materials. Since no transcription of this library record has been published to date I include here a draft transcription with some annotation and comments related to Klaproth, Majer, and to Schopenhauer’s study meetings with Goethe.⁶¹

<i>Book title as given in Weimar Library Record</i>	<i>Checkout</i>	<i>Return</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Platonis Opera Vol. V et VI Edit. Bipont.	1813/06/10	1813/06/26	Summer to fall 1813 period: Books for writing doctoral dissertation
Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft	1813/06/10	1813/07/21	
_____ Urtheilskraft	1813/06/10	1813/07/21	
_____ Prolegomena zur Metaphysik	1813/06/10	1813/07/21	
Euklides xxxxx Buch der Elemente	1813/06/10	1813/07/21	
Cartesii principia philosophiae	1813/06/10	1813/07/21	
Schellings System des transzendentalen Idealismus	1813/06/15	1813/07/28	
Platonis Opera. Vol. X. Ed. Bipont.	1813/06/15	1813/07/28	
Ab. Burja Grxxxxx x ^{xx} xx	1813/06/15	1813/07/21	
Reimarus xxxx xxxxx x.al.	1813/06/28	1813/07/21	

⁶¹ The book titles in the left column reproduce the entry in the library record; mistaken spellings (such as “apokriph” instead of “apokryph”, “Ouphnekhat” instead of “Oupnekhat”, “Dupperon” instead of “Duperron”, etc.) are also reproduced exactly as they appear in the original. Illegible words are reproduced as a series of x; their number approximately corresponds to the number of illegible letters. The titles and dates of check-out and return are given as they appear under “Schopenhauer” in the Weimar library *Ausleihbuch* for the years 1813 and 1814. The comments in the fourth column are of course by me.

Kiesewetters Logik	1813/06/28	1813/07/21	
Platonis Opera T. 7	1813/06/28	1813/07/21	
Leibnitii Opera T. II 4 ^{to}	1813/06/28	1813/07/21	
Eichhorn's Einleitung in die Apokriph. Bücher des A.T.	1813/07/29	1813/11/20	
Reinhold Theorie des Vorstellungs-Vermögens	1813/07/29	1813/11/20	
_____ Erklärung darüber	1813/07/29	1813/11/20	
Platonis Opera D. Bip. Vol. VII	1813/07/29	1813/11/20	
Kants Kritik der rein. Vernunft	1813/07/29	1813/11/20	
_____ Urteilskraft	1813/07/29	1813/11/20	
Essays moral. 8° Cc. 4, 135	1813/08/25	1813/11/20	
Aristotelis Opera. Vol. 1. Ano Allobr. 1607 8°	1813/09/01	1813/11/20	
Wolfii Ontologia 15, xx xxxx	1813/09/09	1813/11/20	
Kiesewetters Logik	1813/09/09	1813/11/20	
Schellings System des transzendentalen Idealismus	1813/09/09	1813/11/20	Nov. 20, 1813: Last borrowed book related to dissertation returned
			Nov. 11: Goethe writes in letter about Schopenhauer's dissertation; receives visit by Julius Klapproth
Essays moral. 8° Co. 4: 134	1813/11/20	1814/03/20	<i>Beginning of winter 1813/14 period</i>
Wolfii Iliados pars posterior	1813/11/20		
Paulus Commentar. N. T. III ^{te} Jg	1813/11/20	1814/02/04	
Cumberlands Plays T. I . II.	1813/11/20	1814/03/23	

			Nov. 27: Goethe writes that Klaproth is in Weimar (Nov. 1813 – Jan. 1814) Nov. 29: First study meeting of Schopenhauer with Goethe
			Dec. 1: Klaproth visits Goethe
			Dec. 3: Goethe spends the whole evening until after midnight in Mrs. Schopenhauer's salon
<i>Asiatisches Magazin, 2 Bde.</i>	1813/12/04	1814/03/30	<i>First documented borrowing of Asia-related book by Schopenhauer</i>
Newton's Optick.	1813/12/04	1814/03/02	
			Dec. 5: Friedrich Majer has lunch at Goethe's house
Paulus Comment. N.T. T. IV	1813/12/15	1814/02/02	
_____ Zusätze	1813/12/15	1814/02/02	
_____ Kritik	1813/12/15	1814/02/02	
_____ Comment. N.T. 1 2 3 ^{te} Jge	1813/12/18	1814/02/02	Dec. 18: 2 nd Goethe study meeting
			New Year 1814: Klaproth's farewell visit to Goethe
			Jan. 8, 1814: 3 rd Goethe study meeting; Jan. 13: 4 th Goethe study meeting
Voigts Magazin der Naturk. 1 . 11 u. 12 ^{te} Jge	1814 /01/16	1814/02/04	

Oken Ueber Licht & Wärme	1814/01/16	1814/02/09	
_____ Naturxxxx xxxx	1814/01/16	1814/03/02	
Mitfort Hist. de la Grèce, T. I. II	1814/01/26	1814/05/18	Jan. 26: Fifth Goethe study meeting
Spittlers Grundr der Chr. Kirche 3 Bde.	1814/02/02	1814/02/05	
Taßo Opera T. 9. 10.	1814/02/05	1814/03/02	
Steffens Naturgesch. der Erde	1814/02/09	1814/03/16	
Runge's Farbenkugel	1814/02/09	1814/03/02	
Eichorns Gesch. d. Litter. 1. & 2. Bd.	1814/02/09	1814/03/02	Mar. 2: Sixth Goethe study meeting
Harper über die Ursache des Wahnsinns	1814/03/11	1814/03/16	
Walchs Concordien-buch 1730	1814/03/16	1814/05/18	
Bacon moral essays	1814/03/23	1814/05/18	
Wolfii Iliados p. II	1814/03/23	1814/05/18	
Ouphnekat Auct. Anquetil Dupperon T. I. II.	1814/03/26	1814/05/18	<i>Second borrowed Asia-related book is the Latin Upanishad translation</i>
Polier sur la Mythologie des Indous 2 Vol.	1814/03/26	1814/06/03	<i>Third and last Asia-related book checked out from the Weimar library</i>
Platonis Opera Vol. X	1814/03/30	1814/04/03	Apr. 3: Seventh and last study meeting with Goethe
Oken über das Universum	1814/04/30	1814/05/04	
_____ natürl. System der Erze	1814/04/30	1814/05/04	
_____ über die Bedeutung der Schädelknochen	1814/04/30	1814/05/04	
			May 15: Farewell visit to Goethe

Books borrowed in the first (summer/fall of 1813) period are directly related to the redaction of Schopenhauer's dissertation, and from December onward several books show a clear connection to the study meetings and discussions with Goethe. In Schopenhauer's *Manuscript Remains*, various remarks, quotes, and themes can be traced to specific books in the above list; but here we are exclusively concerned with the three Asia-related works highlighted in the table by double enclosure lines. It is striking that after taking home *Das Asiatische Magazin* on December 4 of 1813, almost four months passed before he borrowed the next books related to Asia, Polier's *Mythologie des Indous*⁶² and the famous *Oupnek'hat*.⁶³ Of course we cannot exclude that Schopenhauer also borrowed Asia-related books from Weimar residents like Goethe or Majer; but so far there is no evidence for this.

Majer's Introduction of Schopenhauer to Indian Antiquities

An unmistakable sign of Indian influence in the *Manuscript Remains* is the expression "Maja der Indier" in section 189.⁶⁴ Just before, in section 187, there is a precise reference to a book of the *Iliad* which Schopenhauer had borrowed on March 23, i.e. three days before Polier and the *Oupnek'hat*. It would thus appear that the section with "Maja der Indier" was written around the end of March of 1814 when Schopenhauer had borrowed these two books.

In view of Schopenhauer's library record we are now faced with the question: when did Majer's famous "introduction to Indian antiquity" actually take place? Assuming that such an introduction would trigger at least some reading activity, one would point either to early December of 1813, i. e. before Schopenhauer borrowed *Das Asiatische Magazin*, or to late March of 1814 (before he checked out Polier's *Mythologie* and the *Oupnek'hat*). The additional assumption that an introduction which had – according to Schopenhauer – an "essential impact" on him would produce some unmistakable trace in the *Manuscript Remains* leaves us only with March of 1814. It would indeed be strange if Schopenhauer had received such a stimulating introduction in December and refrained from reading up on the matter or writing about it for almost four months. We may thus hypothesize that Schopenhauer got the reference to *Das Asiatische Magazin* around the beginning of December of 1813 and that Majer's "unsolicited introduction to Indian antiquity" took place in March of 1814. This scenario would imply that what incited Schopenhauer to borrow Polier and the *Oupnek'hat* in late March

⁶² Antoine Louis Henri de Polier, *Mythologie des Indous*, Rudolstadt & Paris 1809.

⁶³ Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, *Oupnek'hat (id est, secretum tegendum)*, Argentorati: Levrault, 1801.

⁶⁴ HN1: 104 (No. 189). See below for the possibly earliest sign in section 171 of HN 1 (the elephant – turtle passage)

was Majer's "introduction". Is there any supporting evidence for this? What was the content of Majer's "introduction"? Why did Schopenhauer specify that it was an introduction to "Indian antiquity" rather than, say, "Indian philosophy" or "Indian religion"?

Answers to some of these questions can be found in the preface and first part of Majer's *Brahma or the Religion of the Indians as Brahmanism*.⁶⁵ This book was published in 1818, shortly before Majer's death. It is the culminating point of a typically romantic quest for mankind's original religion, the *Urreligion* (primeval religion). In this Majer rightly saw himself as an heir to Herder, the man who had written the laudatory preface to Majer's *Historical Investigations on the Cultural History of the Peoples*.⁶⁶ In a string of books from the early 1770s to the completion in 1791 of his *magnum opus* entitled *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*,⁶⁷ Herder had sought to trace the source of all religion and culture, and in this realm of prehistory myth was a guiding light. Seeing the Old Testament as just one local expression of a common *Urreligion*, Herder's search led via Persia ever closer to mankind's ultimate birthplace ... in the Caucasus perhaps, or in Kashmir?⁶⁸ On the way east, ancient texts such as the *Zend Avesta*⁶⁹ appeared to him as additional Old Testaments. But where was the oldest of them all to be found, that elusive *Urtext* of the *Urreligion*? Herder could not yet find it; but his pupil Friedrich Majer, who for a time had free access to Herder's house in Weimar,⁷⁰ was luckier.

From a time "when in Germany almost nobody other than Herder and Kleuker spoke in public about India", Majer thought that "in India, more than anywhere else, all development and education of mankind had its source in religion".⁷¹ He sought to document this *Urreligion* in various publications including "Klaproth's *Asiatic Magazine* and [...] in the entries on India in the *Mythological Lexicon*"⁷² and planned a *magnum opus* which, "on the model of Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*", was supposed to develop "on the

⁶⁵ Friedrich Majer, *Brahma oder die Religion der Indier als Brahmaismus*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1818.

⁶⁶ Friedrich Majer, *Zur Kulturgeschichte der Völker, historische Untersuchungen*, Leipzig: J. F. Hartknoch, 1798.

⁶⁷ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke. Band III: Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, ed. by Wolfgang Pross. München/Wien: Carl Hanser, 2002.

⁶⁸ Cf. Jürgen Faust, *Mythologien und Religionen des Ostens bei Johann Gottfried von Herder*, Münster: Aschendorff, 1977.

⁶⁹ Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, *Zend-Avesta, Zoroasters lebendiges Wort*, tr. by J. F. Kleuker. Riga 1776–1777.

⁷⁰ Friedrich Majer, *Mythologisches Taschenbuch oder Darstellung und Schilderung der Mythen, religiösen Ideen und Gebräuche aller Völker*, Weimar: Verlag des Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1811, preface.

⁷¹ Majer, *Brahma*, p. VI.

⁷² Friedrich Majer, *Allgemeines Mythologisches Lexicon*, Weimar: Landes-Industrie-Comptoir, 1803.

basis of the oldest history of India” a “history of the universe, our solar system, the earth, and mankind”.⁷³ For this purpose Majer collected a “considerable amount of materials on the history and antiquity of India”, but for various reasons he never got around to realize this grandiose plan. For us, however, even the plan is of great interest since we are looking for hints regarding the content of Majer’s “introduction to Indian antiquity”.

Around 1811–1813, Majer was still pursuing his dream, but now it had taken the form of a series of “mythological pocketbooks” in which he wanted to trace “the history of all religions”, beginning with “the aborigines of America”.⁷⁴ Almost a century before Majer, the Jesuit missionary Père Lafitau had already attempted a similar feat in a four-volume work, but at that time the origin of all things was firmly set in the Middle East of the Old Testament, and the American Indians had to get their *Urreligion* from Jerusalem and Greece by way of China.⁷⁵ For Majer, on the other hand, everything began in India.

Von den Brahmanen, welche in diesem Lande gebohren sind, sollen alle Menschen auf der Erde ihre verschiedenen Gebräuche lernen. Und eben hier liegen jene Gegenden Indiens, von deren zauberischen Reizen seine Dichter in allen Jahrhunderten mit der größten Begeisterung gesungen haben; jene Blumenthähler von *Agra*; jene im Abglanz eines ewigen klaren Himmels und der reinsten Sonne sich spiegelnden Gefilde von *Matura*; jene von der *Jamuna* blauen Wellen umwundenen Haine *Vrindavans*, wo die sanften Lüfte von *Malaya's* Hügeln die weichen Blüthen der Gewürzpflanzen also muthwillig umspielen, daß von ihren reichen Wohlgerüchen selbst die Herzen frommer Einsiedler verführt werden, wo die Bäume erklingen mit den melodischen tönen der Nachtigallen und dem Gesumme der Honig bereitenden Schwärme. Es wird begreiflich, wie von den wunderbaren Stimmen, welche aus dieser paradiesischen Natur zu den

From the Brahmans, born in this land, the peoples all over the world were destined to learn their various customs. And just in this land were those regions of India besung by its poets throughout the centuries in highest ecstasy; those flower valleys of *Agra*; those blessed realms of *Matura* mirroring an eternally clear sky and the purest sun; those meadows of *Vrindavan* encircled by the blue waves of the *Jamuna*, where the mild breezes from the hills of *Malaya* caress the soft blossoms of spice plants so playfully that even the hearts of devout hermits get seduced by their rich perfumes; where the trees resound with the melodious tunes of nightingales and the humming of honeybees.

These wonderful voices speaking from paradisiacal nature to the hearts of the first human inhabitants in whose breasts a

⁷³ Majer, *Brahma*, p. VI.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. VII–VIII.

⁷⁵ Joseph François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages Amériquains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, Paris: Saugrain, 1724 (4 vols.)

Herzen ihrer ersten menschlichen Bewohner sprachen, in deren Brust ein noch reines, unverstimmtes Saitenspiel ertönte, jenes frühe göttliche Aufflammen des menschlichen Geistes veranlaßt werden konnte, durch dessen späterhin nach allen Richtungen über die Erde verbreitete Lichtstrahlen alles höhere Leben, Weben und Daseyn der Menschheit hervorgerufen wurde.⁷⁶

still pure, unaltered harmony reverberated – does it not become apparent how that early, divine flare of the human spirit could thus originate, that light through whose rays later all higher life in all directions, the entire life and activity and existence of mankind, took its origin?

For Majer, even Mexican and Peruvian kings had “received the first light-rays of a revelation” from India. These light-rays had “appeared thousands of years earlier on the old continent, on the shores of the Jamuna and Ganga”. Thus culture had made its way from ancient India to the Americas “in all its splendor” and in due course enlightened “an entire society”.⁷⁷

The Indian primeval revelation was thus mankind’s original religion and the source of all culture which Herder had so passionately sought but had failed to precisely locate. According to Majer, “Roger, Baldaeus, la Croze, Sonnerat, Paulinus, Kleuker, Polier etc.” had all sought to portray it. But unfortunately all of these previous authors writing about India had done so in confused ways;⁷⁸ above all else, they had failed to properly distinguish between India’s pure, ancient creed – “the religion of Brahma” – and its degenerate successors which are “Shivaism, Vishnuism, and Buddhism”.⁷⁹ It was Majer’s plan to write a tome on each of these four religions and present the whole as a kind of blueprint for the universal history of mankind; but he lost a tragic struggle against adverse circumstances and a debilitating illness and barely managed to finish the first volume. But as this testament, the volume on the “religion of Brahma”, presents the foundation of Majer’s whole edifice it is quite sufficient for us to get an idea of his whole project. Everything rests on this original revelation, the oldest and purest form of religion; and just this religion forms the core of Majer’s “Indian antiquity”. Could it be that traces of this golden age had by chance survived in written form – a message in a bottle from the dawn of time, the oldest testament of them all?

⁷⁶ Majer, *Brahma*, pp. 17–18.

⁷⁷ Majer, *Brahma*, p. VIII.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. XI.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. XI–XII.

The Oupnek'hat and Polier Recommendations

According to Majer, mankind's oldest testament had indeed survived, and its name is *Oupnek'hat*. Thanks to the indefatigable efforts of "that old praiseworthy India sailor Anquetil du Perron, the man who had also made resound among us Ormuzd's word of life to Zoroaster,"⁸⁰ the *Oupnek'hat* had been brought to European shores and been translated into Latin. In the *Brahma* preface Majer retells in detail the story of Anquetil-Duperron's *Oupnek'hat* and defends its authenticity against critics. Majer acknowledges that the Latin translation from the Persian represents only "a mediated source" but emphasizes that it unquestionably is "a rich collection of genuine Veda-Upanishads" which ought to "occupy the first place among all sources for Indian history of religion and science of antiquity [Alterthumskunde] as long as we do not receive a direct translation of the Sanskrit original".⁸¹

Of course Majer was not exactly a prophet in the desert. He was only one figure among a whole group of German mythologists and symbologists who wanted, in the wake of Herder, to take advantage of this oldest testament of mankind to explain the entire course of early human history. Kanne, Creuzer, and Görres had received the same message from the dawn of humanity; after the publication of the Latin *Oupnek'hat* in 1802, this famous trio was busily constructing architectures of the history of mankind that were based on this fossil, the world's oldest text. The *Oupnek'hat* thus appeared as an imprint of the mother of all religions able to firmly anchor all ancient human culture and religion in mythical India. On this line Görres wrote in 1809:

From this [...] we conclude that in the *Upnek'hat* we really possess the System of the ancient Vedams; that the entire Asian mythology rests on it; that [Asian mythology] can exclusively be grasped in this common mother system; and that the book itself is thus of infinite importance for the religious and philosophical history of the Orient until the Vedams themselves, from which it issued, become accessible to us.⁸²

I will discuss the fascinating Franco-German *Oupnek'hat* tradition and its wondrous blossoms in a forthcoming monograph; in the present context it is sufficient to see 1. what "Indian antiquity" signified for Majer, and 2. that the *Oup-*

⁸⁰ Majer, *Brahma*, p. 6. Majer refers to Anquetil-Duperron's first feat, the pioneering study and translation of the *Zend-Avesta*: *Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre*, Paris 1771.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13. Majer insists that "doubts about the faithfulness of [Anquetil's] translation and even more so about the Persian one" are "unjustified" and mentions in his support "great admirers" of the *Oupnek'hat* in France like Senator Lanjuinais.

⁸² Review of the *Oupnek'hat* from the *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* of 1809; reprinted in Joseph Görres, *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 5: Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt*, Köln: J. P. Bachem, 1935: p. 325.

nek'hat formed its main pillar.⁸³ On the basis of the information presented above it is reasonable for us to conclude that Majer is a good candidate for the *Oupnek'hat* recommendation to Schopenhauer.

But what about the second book which Schopenhauer borrowed on March 26 of 1814, the *Mythologie des Indous* by the Swiss Colonel de Polier? Had Majer not named Polier among a bunch of authors guilty of having presented a “totally confused picture” of Indian mythology and religion?⁸⁴ Yes, of course he had; but there is another, quite compelling reason why Schopenhauer could have taken enough interest in Polier’s *Mythologie des Indous* to borrow it along with the *Oupnek'hat*.

Research on the *Oupnek'hat* is still in its infancy; this is also true with regard to Schopenhauer whose copious scribblings in the margins are not yet documented let alone analyzed. Since so few specialists have taken the trouble to actually examine these marvelous tomes it is not surprising that even prominent features have so far received scant attention: Anquetil-Duperron’s copious and interesting annotation, for example, and his appended explanations and *parerga*. Some of the most intriguing pages, and the most pertinent ones in the present context, form the “Parergon De Kantismo” in the first volume (pp. 711-724) of the *Oupnek'hat*. These seminal reflections on the link between Kantian and Indian philosophy influenced Madame la Chanoinesse de Polier, who in the comments included in her murdered cousin’s *Mythologie des Indous* (whose editor she was), also “wanted the *Oupnek'hat* to be compared with the metaphysical ideas of Kant”.⁸⁵ Can we not imagine that Schopenhauer, steeped in Kant’s ideas, would dart to the library at the mere mention of a philosophical connection between the ancient Vedas and Kant’s philosophy? But this would presuppose that Schopenhauer already had a pronounced interest in Indian thought. It is true that such an interest could have been the result of Majer’s “introduction”, but we simply have no way of proving this. What we do know is that Schopenhauer borrowed these two books on March 26 of 1814 and that the *Oupnek'hat* almost immediately exerted such an influence on the genesis of his philosophical system that Schopenhauer soon mentioned it ahead of Kant and Plato,⁸⁶ leading

⁸³ The *Laws of Menu* came a close second; see *ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. XI. See the translation above for other guilty writers.

⁸⁵ Review of Polier’s *Mythologie des Indous* by Görres, from the *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* of 1819; reprinted in Joseph Görres, *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 5: Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt*, Köln: J. P. Bachem, 1935: p. 341.

⁸⁶ HN1, 422 (No. 623): “I confess, by the way, that I do not think that my system could ever have taken form before the Upanishads, Plato, and Kant could throw their rays simultaneously into one man’s spirit.”

Hübscher to whine: “He should have mentioned Plato and Kant in the first place – yet he names the Upanishads.”⁸⁷

But was this encounter with the *Oupnek'hat* Schopenhauer's first acquaintance with Indian thought? Or was there an earlier, initial encounter which could have prepared the ground for Majer's arguments and the *Oupnek'hat* revolution? These questions bring us back to the odd 4-month hiatus between December 4th of 1813 and March 26 of 1814. Did *Das Asiatische Magazin* have any discernible impact on Schopenhauer? Did it contain anything related to Indian philosophy which could have stimulated the young thinker, and are there any traces of Schopenhauer's study of the *Magazin* in his *Manuscript Remains*?

Das Asiatische Magazin

The content of the *Magazin*, as we will call it for brevity's and German grammar's sake, has been almost entirely ignored in previous research. In an earlier contribution I mentioned some of the Buddhism-related articles in the *Magazin* which happen to constitute Schopenhauer's earliest known reading matter on Buddhism.⁸⁸ But the *Magazin* also contains a fair amount of material about Indian thought, and if Schopenhauer did not let these two volumes sleep for four months in a corner of his Weimar room we can assume that the *Magazin* also contains his earliest known reading matter in the field of Indian philosophy. Our list of Weimar book borrowings shows that Schopenhauer sometimes returned books after only a few days and visited the library frequently; so it is not far-fetched to think that he kept the *Magazin* for some purpose and harbored a definite interest in it. As it happens, two early excerpts from the *Magazin* from Schopenhauer's hand exist on an undated loose sheet;⁸⁹ and quotations, notes, and references⁹⁰ in Schopenhauer's unpublished and published works indicate that he did read the *Magazin* with attention; but the timing of such reading can at present not be conclusively established. His interest was not short-lived because at a later point he took the trouble to actually buy these two volumes.⁹¹

Each volume of the *Magazin* contains about 30 articles, and editor Klaproth and Friedrich Majer are the main contributors as each had furnished about a dozen articles. Both were young men eager to impress others and leave their

⁸⁷ Arthur Hübscher, *Denker gegen den Strom. Schopenhauer: Gestern – Heute – Morgen*, Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Hermann Grundmann, 1973, pp. 50–51.

⁸⁸ Urs App, “Schopenhauers Begegnung mit dem Buddhismus”, *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 79, 1998: pp. 35–58.

⁸⁹ Schopenhauer Archiv, case XXVIII, pp. 92–93; see the next sections.

⁹⁰ In HN5: p. 334 Hübscher provides only four references; this hardly scratches the surface.

⁹¹ See the indications in HN5: p. 334.

mark in the scholarly world, and both resorted to questionable means to achieve that end which included passing off other people's work as their own, either by leaving articles by others unsigned (editor Klaproth)⁹² or by stating in big letters "by Friedrich Majer" even when his was only the translation from English. More pertinent to the present inquiry, however, are questions concerning the content of the *Magazin* and evidence for Schopenhauer's interest in it.

A Loose Sheet with Notes

From the Weimar library records we know that Schopenhauer borrowed the *Magazin* for almost four months and we may assume that he read its contents; but do we have any proof of that? There is no conclusive proof, unfortunately, but we do have rather convincing evidence in form of notes from Schopenhauer's hand which, in my opinion, stem from the time between December of 1813 and March of 1814.

The notes in question are on a loose folded sheet of paper which forms four pages and which on pages 2 and 3 contains excerpts from Majer's *Bhagavadgītā* translation.⁹³ But let us first look at the entire sheet. Hübscher proposes two dates for it: "about 1815/16",⁹⁴ and "around 1816".⁹⁵ The only evidence he adduces for this dating is the "handwriting",⁹⁶ but in fact the handwriting of these notes is such that precision dating is absolutely impossible. Dating by content is more promising since some notes relate to specific newspapers or to books which Schopenhauer had borrowed from libraries.

On the first page, Schopenhauer copied out of a Nürnberg newspaper a story of someone who starved himself to death; this story appeared on July 29 of 1813, and because it is a newspaper report we may not be too wrong in assuming that Schopenhauer jotted this down not very long after it appeared, i.e., sometime during the summer of 1813.⁹⁷ The remaining three pages contain a total of ten notes or excerpts.⁹⁸ Page 2 contains notes 1, 2, and part of note 3. *Note 1* is a

⁹² For an example of Klaproth's plagiarism see Urs App, "Schopenhauers Begegnung mit dem Buddhismus", *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 79, 1998: p. 43 (esp. note 3).

⁹³ Schopenhauer Archiv, case XXVIII, pp. 91–94.

⁹⁴ HN 2, p. XXIX.

⁹⁵ HN 5, p. 334.

⁹⁶ HN 2, p. XXIX.

⁹⁷ See HN 1, p. XXIX; the story itself is reproduced in HN 5: p. 507. Schopenhauer made use of this story in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* vol. 1 (see HN 1: p. XXIX).

⁹⁸ These notes are transcribed in HN 1, pp. 245–247. To avoid confusion I use Hübscher's numbering scheme.

simple reference to a book review that had appeared in 1806 and cannot be dated. *Note 2* is related to the redness of hot iron and the possibility of vision in near darkness; these might well be notes for questions to be discussed with Goethe during their meetings which began on November 29 of 1813. *Note 3* is the excerpt from Klaproth's *Magazin* and begins with Schopenhauer's indication of the source: "Aus dem Asiatischen Magazin. Theil II. p. 287 Bhaguat-Geeta. Dialog 13." According to my hypothesis, this excerpt (which takes up a whole handwritten page and runs up to the first third of page 3) was written down between December 4 of 1813 and March 30 of 1814. Since it is from a later dialogue in volume 2, I would tend to place it in the first months of 1814 rather than December of 1813. *Note 4* contains several references with dates; the last of these, "März 1814", appears to point to the source of Schopenhauer's information. March or April of 1814 might thus be considered as possible dates for note 4. The rest of the notes mostly relate to books which Schopenhauer borrowed in Dresden between the summer of 1814 and the end of 1815/16; they have less importance here since the notes obviously were made sequentially at various times. Here we are primarily interested in the date of note 3 which consists of Schopenhauer's *Bhagavadgītā* excerpts.

The result of these rather technical considerations is that everything in the content and sequence of notes on this loose sheet supports the hypothesis that Schopenhauer's *Bhagavadgītā* excerpts were indeed written while he had borrowed the *Magazin* from the Weimar library. In the absence of evidence to the contrary⁹⁹ it thus makes sense to assume that the *Bhagavadgītā* excerpts from the *Magazin* stem from the time between December 4 of 1813 and March 30 of 1814 and can be regarded as a trace of Schopenhauer's initial encounter with Indian thought. While the evidence does not amount to solid proof it is sufficient for a strong conjecture. At any rate, Schopenhauer borrowed the *Magazin* and kept it at home for almost four months while its editor Klaproth (until early January 1814) and the *Bhagavadgītā* translator Friedrich Majer (throughout this period) were living in the same small town of Weimar. It is improbable that under such circumstances Schopenhauer would borrow the *Magazin* for such a long time just to leave it unread. Furthermore, there is another indication that he was indeed reading the *Magazin* during this period: a remark in Schopenhauer's *Manu-*

⁹⁹ Merkel's assertion (op. cit., p. 166) that Schopenhauer also "used" *Das Asiatische Magazin* in Dresden between September 24 and October 19 of 1815 seems too specific to be a simple conjecture. However, neither Merkel nor anyone else furnished any supporting evidence. Mühlethaler's list of all the materials borrowed by Schopenhauer from the Dresden library shows no trace of any *Magazin* entry during the period in question (op. cit., p. 72), and according to Perk Loesch of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek /Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (letter dated May 8, 1996) it is impossible to reconstruct what materials the "India closet" at the said library – which both Schopenhauer and Krause used – contained.

script Remains from early 1814. It appears to be related to a series of articles by Majer entitled “On the Incarnations of Vishnu”¹⁰⁰ and might well constitute the earliest sign of Schopenhauer’s India-related reading:

<p>Welcher Unsinn sich selbst erklären, sich selbst erkennen zu wollen! sich selbst zur Vorstellung machen zu wollen und dann nichts übrig zu lassen das eben alle diese erklärten (verbundenen) Vorstellungen hat! Ist das nicht die Erde vom Atlas, den Atlas vom Elephanten, diesen von einer Schildkröte und diese von Nichts tragen lassen?¹⁰¹</p>	<p>What nonsense to attempt to explain oneself, to know oneself! to want to turn oneself into a representation and then to leave nothing which <i>has</i> all of these explained (connected) representations! Is this not like letting the earth be carried by Atlas, Atlas by the elephant, the elephant by the tortoise, and the tortoise by nothing?¹⁰²</p>
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Whether this metaphor is related to Locke, Majer’s writing on Vishnu mythology or to his “introduction to Indian antiquity” we cannot tell; but since we are here primarily concerned with philosophy rather than mythology we may regard the *Bhagavadgītā* as the earliest source with which Schopenhauer came into direct contact. Of course Schopenhauer did not encounter a modern translation, and neither did he consult Wilkins. True to the principles of historical inquiry we must examine the exact same source as Schopenhauer, i. e. Majer’s presentation and interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the *Magazin*. It is through this prism that Schopenhauer initially got into contact with Indian thought, and since this encounter took place earlier than the one with Anquetil-Duperron’s *Oupnek’hat* (and, as explained above, possibly earlier than Majer’s “introduction to Indian antiquity”, too), Majer’s translations from the *Bhagavadgītā* in the *Magazin* merit a close reading.

Majer’s Bhagavadgītā

Having come to the conclusion that Schopenhauer’s initial encounter with Indian thought probably did not, as hitherto maintained, consist in Friedrich Majer’s “introduction to Indian antiquity” and the subsequent discovery of the *Oupnek’hat* around the end of March of 1814 but rather in an earlier encounter

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Majer, “Die Verkörperungen des Wischnu”; *Asiatisches Magazin* vol. I, pp. 221–244, 359–405 and vol. II, pp. 11–70; for Schopenhauer’s possible source for the elephant/tortoise metaphor see vol. I, pp. 235–236 and vol. II, p. 250.

¹⁰¹ HN 1: p. 96 (no. 171)

¹⁰² Cf. E. F. J. Payne’s flawed translation in *Arthur Schopenhauer. Early Manuscripts (1804–1818)*. Oxford/New York/Hamburg: Berg, 1988: p. 104. “Nothing” of course refers to the absence of a subject in which such *Vorstellungen* arise.

with the *Bhagavadgītā* in the German translation of Friedrich Majer, we must now investigate what Schopenhauer encountered in this translation.

Apart from the Vishnu-related series of articles that was just mentioned, the *Magazin* contains a number of contributions of interest in the Schopenhauer context.¹⁰³ Most pertinent to our present inquiry is a series of five contributions that all bear the title “Der Bhagvat-Geeta, oder Gespräche zwischen Kreeshna und Arjoon”.¹⁰⁴ Each article is proudly signed “by Dr. Fr. Majer”. However, as mentioned above, these articles are only translations into German from Charles Wilkins’ English translation of the Indian classic.¹⁰⁵ Majer’s original contribution is thus limited to his German translation, a number of notes, and a preface. The fact that the bulk of the five installments is no more than a translation from the English is only mentioned in Majer’s preface to the first article; all installments proudly bear the signature “by Friedrich Majer”. But the extent of Majer’s own contribution and the faithfulness of his translation is of little concern to our inquiry: it was through this translation with this introduction and these notes that Schopenhauer encountered the *Bhagavadgītā*, and neither Wilkins’ nor any other translation ought to concern us here. In his preface to the first installment, Majer explains the interest of the *Bhagavadgītā* as follows:

Keinem aufmerksamen Leser wird es entgehen, wie diese wenigstens viertausend Jahre alten Ideen und Träume der aus einer höchst eigenthümlichen Verbindung seltsamer Fabeln und Einbildungen, und der abstractesten Speculation bestehenden Weisheit des fernen Orients – in einem wunderbaren Zusammenhange mit dem stehen, was in ganz andern Zeiten und Himmelsstrichen ein Plato, Spinoza oder Jacob Böhm über die interessantesten Gegenstände des Nachdenkens glaubten und dachten, wenn auch in andern Formen sagten und vortrugen.¹⁰⁶

No interested reader will fail to see how these ideas and dreams, which are at least four thousand years old and constitute the wisdom of the remote Orient in form of a most peculiar combination of wondrous tales and impressions with highly abstract speculation, stand in a marvelous connection with what a Plato, Spinoza, or Jacob Boehme believed and thought in very different times and regions of the globe about the most interesting themes of thinking, even though they expressed and presented this in different forms.

¹⁰³ Of particular interest are the articles related to Buddhism such as “Ueber die Fo-Religion in China” (vol. 1, pp. 148–169) which probably constitute Schopenhauer’s earliest readings on this religion. See Urs App, “Schopenhauers Begegnung mit dem Buddhismus”, *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 79, 1998: p. 42 ff.

¹⁰⁴ *Das Asiatische Magazin* vol. 1, pp. 406–453; vol. 2, pp. 105–135, pp. 229–255, pp. 273–293, and pp. 454–490.

¹⁰⁵ *The Bhagvat-Geeta, or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon; in Eighteen Lectures; with Notes. Translated from the original Sanskreet, or Ancient Language of the Brahmans*, by Charles Wilkins, London 1785.

¹⁰⁶ *Asiatisches Magazin* vol. 1, pp. 406–407. The emphases stem from the *Magazin*.

Such words of Majer have a familiar ring for readers of Schopenhauer whose statements about the marvelous connection between his own philosophy and the wisdom of the Orient are well-known. Since we may here be facing the very beginning of this “marvelous connection” for Schopenhauer, one of the uppermost questions in our mind concerns its *content* at this early point in time. Majer regarded the *Bhagavadgītā* as one of the prime treasures of Indian antiquity, a highly relevant source worthy of his “still very imperfect attempts” to explain (via footnotes) “the scattered treasures of Indian metaphysics, higher theology, and mythical poetry and fable from a single common point of view”.¹⁰⁷

But before we take a closer look at Majer’s *Bhagavadgītā* we need to remind ourselves that we should be wary of reading too much into this initial encounter. After all, if we are to believe the philosopher’s account, Majer introduced Schopenhauer to Indian antiquity without being asked to do so. Assuming that this introduction indeed took place in March of 1814 we would thus have to conclude that Schopenhauer was too little interested or too shy to pose India-related questions to Majer, or alternatively that he did not have an occasion to do so. Most available evidence points to the *Oupnek’hat* as the match which definitely lit Schopenhauer’s fiery interest in Indian philosophy and religion. But there are the above-mentioned turtle-and-elephant metaphor and Schopenhauer’s excerpts from the *Bhagavadgītā*, both of which appear to date from the months before his encounter with Anquetil-Duperron’s Latino-Persian Upanishads. We thus return to the hypothesis raised above concerning a possible nursing of interest in Indian thought between December of 1813 and March of 1814. In the following we will look at some facets of Majer’s *Bhagavadgītā* while trying to find out what it was that attracted Schopenhauer’s interest to such an extent that he wrote down excerpts and kept them for the rest of his life.

Yogic Concentration

In a letter by Warren Hastings which precedes Wilkins’ *Bhagavadgītā* rendering and also opens Majer’s German translation, it is stated that “the Brahmans are bound to a kind of mental discipline” in which “the mind is concentrated on a single point” whereby “the mental confusion which engenders ignorance” is dissolved.¹⁰⁸

Die, welche sich dieser Uebung ergeben, vermögen nicht allein ihr Herz vor jeder sinnlichen Begierde rein zu erhalten, son-	Those who engage in this practice manage not only to keep their heart pure in the face of any sensual desire, but also to
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¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 408.

¹⁰⁸ Friedrich Majer, “Das Bhaguat-Geeta, oder Gespräche zwischen Kreeschna und Arjoon”, in: Julius Klaproth (ed.), *Asiatisches Magazin*, Weimar: Industrie-Comptoir, 1802, vol. I, p. 412–413.

dern auch ihre Aufmerksamkeit von jedem äußeren Objecte abzuziehen und gänzlich auf den Gegenstand ihrer Meditation zu heften.¹⁰⁹ withdraw their attention from any external object and to fix it entirely on the object of their meditation.¹¹⁰

This kind of “objective attention” was highly esteemed by Schopenhauer from an early period. When in the Winter semester of 1810/11 Prof. Schulze made a remark to the effect that “immersed concentration” (Vertieftsein) was nothing other than “an inability to direct one’s attention, while focused on one object, also on other things”, Schopenhauer wrote a sharp rejoinder next to Schulze’s observation:

Ego. An dieser Geistesschwäche hat Sokrates stark laborirt, als er, wie Alkibiades im Symposion erzählt, ein Mal 24 Stunden unbeweglich auf dem Felde stand.¹¹¹ I [say]: Socrates did thus acutely suffer from this debility of mind when he, as Alcibiades recounts in [Plato’s] *Symposium*, once remained immobile in a field for 24 hours.

Schopenhauer might thus have agreed with Hastings who stated in the introductory letter whose German translation appears before the *Bhagavadgītā* text: “Even the most diligent men of Europe find that it is difficult to fix one’s attention to such a high degree.” In India, by contrast, there are people who “often have had a daily habit of engaging in absolute contemplation [absolute Anschauung] from youth to mature age”, thus adding their own insights to the treasures accumulated by their forebears.¹¹² As the body gains strength through exercise, so does the mind; and according to Hastings it is exactly through such exercise that Indians were able to achieve “discoveries of new trajectories, of new connections of ideas” and to develop their own, original philosophical systems.¹¹³

[Solche Geistesübungen führten] zu Systemen, die, obgleich speculativ und subtil, dennoch gleich den einfachsten der unsri- [Such exercise led the Indians] to systems which, though speculative and subtle, could nevertheless be founded on truth – like the

¹⁰⁹ Majer 1802 I: p. 413.

¹¹⁰ In the interest of unbiased appraisal of what Schopenhauer actually read, this English translation was made by the author without consulting the English original.

¹¹¹ HN 2, p. 15.

¹¹² Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 414. As mentioned above, the translations from Majer’s contributions are (in the interest of unbiased appraisal of what Schopenhauer actually read) made from Majer’s German into English without consultation of the English originals.

¹¹³ Ibid.

gen, auf Wahrheit gegründet seyn können, da sie den Vortheil haben, aus einer von jeder fremden Mischung gereinigten Quelle herzufließen.¹¹⁴

most basic [systems] of ours – because they have the advantage to stem from a source which is freed from any foreign admixture.

The *Gītā*, in Hastings' view, is thus a work "of great originality, lofty inspiration, and an almost unequalled power of reasoning and diction" which, in spite of its special method, contains "as a peculiar exception among all religions known to us" a theology "which corresponds best with that of the Christian church and explains its basic doctrine in a glorious manner".¹¹⁵

Krishna's Revelation

Needless to say, the *Bhagavadgītā* is an episode from the voluminous Mahabharata epic and one of India's most acclaimed literary products. In this episode, the hero Krishna reveals himself to the Pandu prince Arjuna, who faces battle against his own kin, as the incarnation of the creator/destroyer Vishnu. Vishnu is, according to Majer, the indestructible "world spirit" (Weltgeist)¹¹⁶ which assumes myriad forms and is, among many other names, called "*eternal, universal, enduring, unchangeable, invisible and ungraspable*".¹¹⁷ Since Majer had also included a three-part series of articles about the incarnations of Vishnu in the *Magazin*, it is clear that the subject was of the greatest interest to him.

Let us now look at the first "conversation between Kreeshna and Arjoon", to use Majer's spelling. Whereas "men of limited capacity [...] deliver their heart to earthly desires" and expect "recompense for the deeds of this life",¹¹⁸ the accomplished man "attains true wisdom"¹¹⁹ which is nothing other than freedom from desire. "Free from duality",¹²⁰ he keeps "steadfastly to the track of truth",¹²¹ has renounced "all thoughts about the fruits of his actions"¹²² and devotes his mind "with constant application ceaselessly to contemplation".¹²³

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 415.

¹¹⁶ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 426.

¹¹⁷ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 440; the italics are from the *Asiatisches Magazin*.

¹¹⁸ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 442

¹¹⁹ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 444.

¹²⁰ Ibid. "Frey von der Zweyheit (Duplicität)."

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Majer 1802 I: p. 443.

¹²³ Majer 1802 I: p. 444.

Derjenige hegt wahre Weisheit in sich, welcher sein Herz jeglicher Begierde verschließt, der mit sich selbst zufrieden ist, und sein Glück in sich selbst trägt. Ihm schlägt im Unglücke sein Herz nicht unruhiger, er fühlt sich glücklich und zufrieden, wenn es ihm wohl geht, Unruhe, Furcht und Zorn bleiben ihm fremd.¹²⁴

He embodies genuine wisdom *who shuts off his heart to any desire, who is at peace with himself and carries his fortune within himself. In misfortune his heart is not less at ease, and he also feels as happy and content as when things go well for him. Unease, anxiety and ire are foreign to him.*

The similarity of such statements to Schopenhauer's "better consciousness", a conception he had been developing for years and which stands opposed to man's "empirical consciousness" marked by self-interest and ever unfulfilled desire, is striking. According to Majer's *Bhagavadgītā*, the deluded one who commits acts "only out of self-interest" (Eigennutz)¹²⁵ "harbors the illusion that it is he himself who does all these deeds which [in truth] are simply the result of the principle of his constitution",¹²⁶ and his mind is enthralled by "objects of the senses".¹²⁷

The wise man, by contrast, attains victory against passion, "that dangerous destroyer of wisdom and science" (Zerstörer der Weisheit und der Wissenschaft),¹²⁸ and finds something which goes beyond reason: "the essence" (das *Wesen*).¹²⁹ At the end of the first installment of Majer's translation this "Wesen" is defined as follows: "The encompassing soul, a world-spirit of which the individual soul forms but a part" ("Die allgemeine Seele, ein Weltgeist, von dem die Lebensseele nur ein Theil ist").¹³⁰ But only a wise man knows this *Weltgeist*, a man who "remains free from desire in all his actions" ("der bey allen seinen Unternehmungen frey vom Begehren bleibt"):¹³¹

Ein solcher begehrt keinen Lohn für seine Handlungen, er ist stets zufrieden und unabhängig, und kann, wenn er gleich an einem Werke Theil nimmt, doch immer als nichthandelnd betrachtet werden. Er ist ohne Unruhe, demüthigen Herzens und

Such [a wise man] desires no recompense for his actions, is always content and independent and can, even though he engages in some enterprise, still always be regarded as unengaged. He is without unrest, of humble heart and mind, and free of all

¹²⁴ Ibid.; the italics are from the *Asiatisches Magazin*. See also vol. 2, p. 118.

¹²⁵ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 451.

¹²⁶ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 450.

¹²⁷ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 448.

¹²⁸ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 452.

¹²⁹ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 453; the emphasis is from the *Magazin*.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 109.

Geistes, und von allem Sinnengenusse frey; und da er nur die Functionen des Körpers erfüllt, so begeht er keine Sünde. Er bleibt zufrieden, was auch geschehen mag: er hat die *Zweyseitigkeit* überwunden, und ist frey von Begierde. Im Glücke wie im Unglücke bleibt er immer derselbe, und ob er gleich handelt, so wird er doch von der Handlung nicht beschränkt.¹³²

sensual enjoyment; and since he only performs the functions of the body he does not commit any sin. He remains content whatever may happen: he has overcome *duality* and is free from desire. In fortune and misfortune he always stays the same, and though he may act he is not limited by his action.

But who can attain such marvelous wisdom, such “better consciousness”? Krishna, as relayed to young Schopenhauer by Wilkins via Majer, answers: “*He* attains it who combines his firm resolve with knowledge of himself” (“Der gelangt dazu, welcher mit einem festen Entschlusse die Kenntniß seiner selbst verbindet”).¹³³

Wessen Gemüth die Gabe dieser Andacht besitzt, wer alle Dinge mit gleichem Blicke betrachtet, der sieht die Weltseele in allen Dingen, und alle Dinge in dem allgemeinen Weltgeiste.¹³⁴

He whose soul possesses the gift of such devotion, who sees all things with impartial vision: he sees the world-soul in all things, and all things in the encompassing world spirit.

Unfortunately only very few mortals¹³⁵ attain such insight into this “primordial being” (“Urwesen”) which manifests itself in the material and spiritual elements of humanity.¹³⁶ But, lofty as such insight may be, it is not yet the highest:

Aber überdies wisse, daß ich ein andres, von diesem unterschiednes und weit höheres Wesen habe¹³⁷, dessen Natur das Leben ist, und durch welches die Welt erhalten

But you must further know that I have another essence which is distinct from this and far higher: [an essence] whose nature is life and by which the world is maintained.

¹³² Ibid. The emphasis is in the original. See p. 113 where freedom from duality (“Doppelseitigkeit”) is again mentioned.

¹³³ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 122.

¹³⁴ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 123.

¹³⁵ “Among ten thousand mortals only very few aspire to perfection, and among those who do and attain it there again is only a small number who know me according to my nature” (“Unter zehntausend Sterblichen streben nur sehr wenige nach Vollkommenheit, und unter denen, die danach streben, und dahin gelangen, ist wiederum nur eine kleine Anzahl, die mich meiner Natur gemäß kennt”). Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 126.

¹³⁶ “My primordial essence consists of eight parts, earth, water, fire, air, and ether (Khang), along with feeling, reason, and Ahang-Kar, [which is] knowledge of oneself” (“Mein Urwesen besteht aus acht Theilen, Erde, Wasser, Feuer, Luft und Aether (Khang) nebst Gemüth, Verstand und Ahang-Kar, die Kenntniß seiner selbst.” Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 126.

¹³⁷ Wilkins explains in a note: “The life soul” (“Die Lebensseele”).

wird. Wisse, daß diese beyden Wesen die Erzeugungsquellen der ganzen Natur sind.¹³⁸ You must know that these two are the generative sources of all of nature.

This fundamental essence constitutes everything, from the “wetness in water” to “light in the sun” and from “human nature in man” to “life in all beings”: it is “the eternal seed of nature as a whole”.¹³⁹

In the ninth and tenth conversations, Krishna finally reveals himself to his listener Arjuna as Vishnu, the creator and destroyer of everything, the “inexhaustible seed of nature”¹⁴⁰ and the “soul which inhabits the body of every being”;¹⁴¹ moreover, he shows himself also as “all-devouring death as well as resurrection of those who return to life”.¹⁴²

The following conversation, number 11, brings us to a peak of this divine revelation; watched by the stunned Arjuna, Krishna reveals his own body as “the entire living and lifeless world”.¹⁴³

Schaue, Arjoon, die Millionen meiner göttlichen Formen, deren Gattungen eben so verschieden sind, als die Gestalten und Farben von einander abweichen.¹⁴⁴ See, Arjuna, the millions of my divine forms, the species of which are just as different and varied as forms and colors.

In this way Arjuna is finally brought to the realization: “You are this everlasting essence, distinct from all transitory things”,¹⁴⁵ and he sings Krishna’s praise: “Everything is included in you; thus you are everything” (“Alles ist in dir eingeschlossen; du bist also Alles”).¹⁴⁶

Schopenhauer’s First Excerpt from the Bhagavadgītā

After Arjuna, trembling in awe, was allowed to see the entire cosmos in the body of Krishna, Krishna in the thirteenth conversation goes on to reveal himself, as it were, as the innermost being of Arjuna himself, namely, as the perceiver

¹³⁸ Majer, *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 126.

¹³⁹ Majer, *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 127. See also pp. 234 and 254.

¹⁴⁰ Majer, *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 234.

¹⁴¹ Majer, *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 245.

¹⁴² Majer, *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 253.

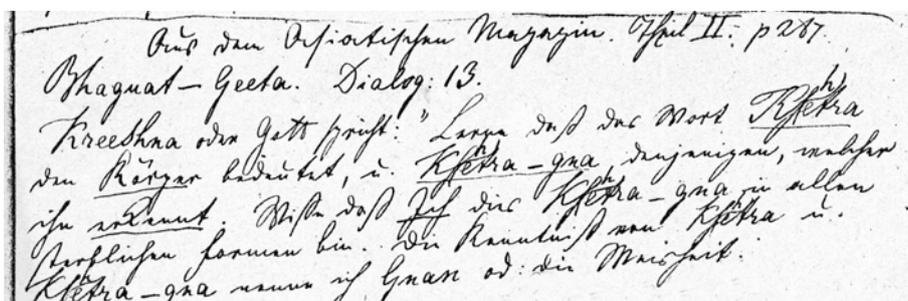
¹⁴³ Majer, *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 274.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 280.

¹⁴⁶ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 281.

(*kshetra-gna*) of Arjuna's own body (*kshetra*). This, characteristically, is the place where Schopenhauer's first excerpt from the *Bhagavadgītā* begins on the loose sheet of paper which might date from the first months of 1814:



Kreeshna oder Gott spricht:¹⁴⁷ Lerne daß das Wort Kshetra den Körper bedeutet, u. Kshetra-gna denjenigen, welcher ihn erkennt. Wisse daß Ich¹⁴⁸ dies Kshetra-gna¹⁴⁹ in allen sterblichen Formen bin. Die Kenntniß von Kshetra u. Kshetra-gna nenne ich Gnan od: die Weisheit.¹⁵⁰

Krishna or God says: Realize that the word Kshetra signifies body, and Kshetra-gna [means] him who perceives it. Realize that I am this Kshetra-gna in all its mortal forms. The knowledge of Kshetra and Kshetra-gna I call Gnan or wisdom.

What was it in this statement that interested young Schopenhauer to such a degree that he had to note it down on a sheet of paper which he was to safeguard for almost fifty years? Here, the body of the listener Arjuna itself, together with all its organs and capacities including the “perception of oneself” (des “Gefühles seiner selbst”)¹⁵¹ is revealed as the field (*kshetra*) through which wisdom can be attained. One’s own body is thus the avenue by which everything can be penetrated.

It is impossible not to note a striking development in Schopenhauer’s thought which took place just around the time of his initial encounter with Indian thought. I am referring to the importance of “knowledge of oneself” and of the role of one’s “body” in this enterprise. We have seen that the possibly earli-

¹⁴⁷ This introductory phrase (HN 2, p. 245) is by Schopenhauer.

¹⁴⁸ Schopenhauer (HN 2 p. 245) writes the word “ich” with an initial capital I.

¹⁴⁹ Starting from here Schopenhauer does not underline anything.

¹⁵⁰ HN 2, p. 245 (Schopenhauer Archiv XXVIII, p. 92). Schopenhauer cites Majer, *Asiatisches Magazin* vol. 2, p. 287; he only introduces the passage by “Krishna or God says” (“Kreeshna oder Gott spricht”) and adds the definite article “die” to “Weisheit” at the end. All emphases stem from the *Magazin*; differences to Schopenhauer’s excerpt are as noted above.

¹⁵¹ Schopenhauer indicates at the beginning of this note that this excerpt stems from the *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 287.

est trace in Schopenhauer's notebooks which betrays Indian influence is section 171 of the *Manuscript Remains* where the metaphor of the elephant and the turtle is used in the context of the futility of trying to know oneself: such knowledge, according to Schopenhauer, necessarily moves in a vicious circle because the subject "I" can ultimately only know itself as an object or representation and never as a subject; and representation without a subject is as baseless as resting the world on Atlas, Atlas on an elephant, the elephant on a turtle, and the turtle on nothing. The lead-up to the elephant-and-turtle passage lays this out clearly:

Wer nun aber *sich selbst erklären* will, der muß sich selbst, (das Subjekt) als *Grund* oder als *Folge* setzen: damit macht er sich selbst zur Vorstellung: zur Vorstellung aber von wem? alle Vorstellungen sind ja eben nur *seine* (des Subjekts) Vorstellungen. Was immer nur erkannt und folglich erklärt werden kann ist ja eben deshalb nur Vorstellung.¹⁵²

Now, he who attempts *to explain himself* must posit himself (the subject) as *ground* or as *consequence*: whereby he turns himself into a representation. But the representation of whom? All representations are, in the end, only *his own* (the subject's) representations. Whatever can at all be known and thus explained is for that very reason nothing but representation.¹⁵³

This certainly sounds like a vicious circle; yet it is just in this circle that Schopenhauer sees the possibility of breaking through the riddle of nature. Section 171 opens with the remark: "Gnōti sauton! [Know thyself!] Commentary: Square the circle, make five an even number (says the manual of magic): then the whole of nature will be at your service."¹⁵⁴

How would self-knowledge be a way out of this vicious circle? Is there "a hole in the veil of nature"¹⁵⁵ through which man could catch a glimpse of nature as it really is – the basis of the turtle, the whole universe, and himself – thus squaring the circle? This is exactly where Schopenhauer's first excerpt from the *Bhagavadgītā* comes in: man's own body is that keyhole to the universe. This thought appears, seemingly out of the blue, just two sections after Schopenhauer's first mention of the "Maja of the Indians". It marks a crucial breakthrough in the development of Schopenhauer's burgeoning philosophical system

¹⁵² HN 1, p. 96 (no. 171). The emphases are by Schopenhauer.

¹⁵³ Cf. Payne's different translation in *Manuscript Remains*, vol. 1, p. 104.

¹⁵⁴ "γνῶθι σαυτον! Kommentar: Quadrire den Cirkel, mache fünf grad, (sagt das Zauberbuch) dann ist die ganze Natur dir Unterthan." Payne misunderstands "grad" to mean "degree" instead of "even"; thus Schopenhauer's "make five [an] even [number]" is supposed to signify a nonsensical "make five degrees". These few samples from Payne's translation of the *Manuscript Remains* should suffice to warn all readers that it should never be used without careful comparison to the German original.

¹⁵⁵ HN 1, p. 99 (no. 176). This appears to be Schopenhauer's first allusion to *māyā*, the veil of illusion which will appear by name a few pages later: "die Maja der Indier" (HN 1, p. 104, no. 189).

and begins with a sentence in which Schopenhauer underlined almost every word: “The body, (the corporeal man) is nothing other than the will that has become visible”.¹⁵⁶

Although we cannot say with any measure of certainty to what degree Majer’s *Bhagavadgītā* influenced the young philosopher we cannot but note that the thrust of some of its passages points very much in the direction which the burgeoning metaphysics of will was going to take. One need only to replace speaker Krishna with “will” and open one’s ears:

In dieser animalischen Welt giebt es einen Theil meiner selbst, welcher der universelle Geist aller Dinge ist. Er versammelt die fünf Organe der Sinne und den Geist, welcher der sechste ist, um daraus einen Körper zu bilden, und ihn von neuem zu verlassen. [...] Der Thor nimmt ihn nicht wahr, weil er von den *Goon* oder Eigenschaften besessen ist, er mag sterben oder leben, oder genießen. Der aber sieht ihn, welcher die Augen der Weisheit hat. Auch die, welche ihren Geist in der Meditation üben, können diese Weltseele in sich selbst wahrnehmen; während jene, deren Gemüth ungebildet und deren Urtheil schwach ist, ihn ungeachtet aller Nachforschungen nicht finden.¹⁵⁷

In this animal world there is a part of myself which is the universal spirit of all things. It comprises the five sense organs and mind which is the sixth [sense organ], and it does so in order to form from them a body, only to [later] leave it again. [...] The fool does not perceive it because he is enthralled by the *Goon* or properties whether he is dying, living, or enjoying. However, he who possesses the eyes of wisdom does see it. Those who exercise their mind in meditation are also able to see this world-soul in themselves; whereas those of uncouth disposition and feeble judgment cannot find it regardless of all their investigations.

On the background of the opening of the crucial section 191 of Schopenhauer’s *Manuscript Remains* where Schopenhauer declares man’s body to be “*will made visible*”, the voice of the divine Krishna booms with even more *gravitas* from Schopenhauer’s first *Bhagavadgītā* excerpt: “Realize that the word *Kshetra* signifies *body*, and *Kshetra-gna* [means] him who *perceives* it. Realize that *I* am this *Kshetra-gna* in all its mortal forms. The knowledge of *Kshetra* or *Kshetra-gna* I call *Gnan* or wisdom.”¹⁵⁸

The characteristics of wisdom as portrayed in Majer’s *Bhagavadgītā* echo in many ways those of Schopenhauer’s “better consciousness”: “freedom from self-love, hypocrisy, and injustice”, freedom from attachment even to wife and chil-

¹⁵⁶ “Der Leib, (der körperliche Mensch) ist nichts als der sichtbar gewordne Wille.” HN 1, p. 106 (no. 191).

¹⁵⁷ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 460.

¹⁵⁸ See note 146.

dren, disgust about society, etc.¹⁵⁹ *Agnan* or *ignorance*, on the other hand, bears the marks of Schopenhauer's "empirical consciousness" as it is linked to "will" and to "evil desire or a passion inimical to man, a daughter of the sensual principle" through which "the world is veiled, just as the flame by smoke".¹⁶⁰

Unter der Form des Willens wird der Verstand des weisen Menschen durch diesen unversöhnlichen Feind verdunkelt, welcher, gleich einem verzehrenden Feuer die Verwüstung mit sich bringt, und schwer zu besänftigen ist. Am liebsten maßt er sich die Herrschaft über die Sinne, das Herz und den Verstand an. Durch dies weiß er die Vernunft zu trüben und die Seele einzuschläfern. Es ist also deine erste Pflicht, *deine Leidenschaften zu überwinden*, und diesen gefährlichen Zerstörer der Weisheit und der Wissenschaft zu bezwingen.¹⁶¹

Under the form of will, the reason of the wise man is obscured by this irreconcilable enemy who, in the manner of a consuming fire, brings with it devastation and is hard to pacify. It prefers to exert dominance over the senses, the heart, and reason. In this way it manages to cloud reason and put the soul to sleep. Thus it is your foremost duty *to overcome your passions* and to defeat this dangerous destroyer of wisdom and of knowledge.

Just like Schopenhauer's will, this pervading force is "indivisible yet distributed in all things. It is the ruler of all things; it is what in turn destroys and again creates."¹⁶² But ordinary man cannot perceive it; it is only by way of profound knowledge of oneself that one can catch a glimpse of the "Tattwa or first principle", the "object of wisdom".¹⁶³

Es ist ganz Hände und Füße; ganz Angesicht, Kopf und Auge; er ist ganz Ohr, und in dem Mittelpuncte der Welt wohnend, erfüllt er ihren weiten Raum. Er selbst hat keine Organe; er ist das Licht, was alle Fähigkeiten der Organe zurückstrahlen. Ohne an etwas gebunden zu seyn, umfaßt er Alles; und ohne alle Eigenschaft teilt er alle Eigenschaften. Er ist das Innere und Aeußere, das

It is entirely hands and feet; entirely face, head, and eye; it is entirely ear, and situated in the center of the world it fills its broad expanse. It does not have any organs of itself; it is the light which all capacities of the organs reflect. Without being bound to anything it encompasses everything; and without any characteristic it shares all characteristics. It is the Inside and the

¹⁵⁹ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 288.

¹⁶⁰ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 452. Needless to say, Schopenhauer's "empirical" and "better" consciousness are concepts that he had used for a considerable time before encountering Indian thought; thus there is of course no Indian influence implied, just an interesting similarity.

¹⁶¹ Majer *Magazin* vol. 1, p. 452.

¹⁶² "Er ist untheilbar, und doch in allen Dingen vertheilt. Er ist der Regierer aller Dinge; er ist es, der bald zerstört, und bald hervorbringt." Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 290.

¹⁶³ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 289; emphases are reproduced as they appear in the *Magazin*.

Bewegliche und Unbewegliche der ganzen Natur. [...] Er ist untheilbar, und doch in allen Dingen vertheilt. [...] Er ist die Weisheit, das Object und das Ziel der Weisheit, und er wohnt in allen Herzen.¹⁶⁴

Outside, the mobile and immobile of the entire nature. [...] Indivisible, it nevertheless is distributed in all things. [...] It is wisdom, the object and goal of wisdom, and it dwells in all hearts.

The passages just quoted stem from the thirteenth conversation of Krishna and Arjuna, and we will now turn to Schopenhauer's second *Bhagavadgītā* excerpt which reproduces almost the entire last page of this conversation.

Schopenhauer's Second Excerpt from the Bhagavadgītā

Schopenhauer's second excerpt from the *Bhagavadgītā* is substantially longer than the first. While the first reproduces the very beginning of conversation 13, this second excerpt reproduces the final paragraph of the same conversation. The excerpt is a rather faithful reproduction of Majer's translation; the one exception is Schopenhauer's omission of a sub-clause.

We have seen that Schopenhauer was interested in the opening of conversation 13 where Krishna reveals to Arjuna that "all things, whether living or not, have their origin in the union of *Kshetra* and *Kshetra-gna*".¹⁶⁵ In Schopenhauer's first *Bhagavadgītā* excerpt these terms were defined as follows: "*Kshetra* signifies the body, and *Kshetra-gna* the one who *perceives* it."¹⁶⁶ Krishna then tells Arjuna about his broad concept of body; its origin and essence, he says, can only be understood through *gnan* which is selfless wisdom and the "knowledge of *Tattwa* or the first principle".¹⁶⁷ The object of such wisdom is *Gneya*, defined by Krishna as beginningless Brahma which, as cited above, is "all hands and feet; all face, head, and eye" and forms the center of the world while also filling its wide expanse.¹⁶⁸ Indivisible yet distributed in all things, this is the object and goal of wisdom.¹⁶⁹

At the beginning of the final paragraph of this conversation, Krishna states that all things, living or not, have their origin in *Kshetra* (body) and *Kshetra-gna* (perceiver of the body). It appears that this topic was of great interest to Schopenhauer, as was that of the *Weltseele* (world-soul) which in this passage is

¹⁶⁴ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, pp. 289–290.

¹⁶⁵ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 292.

¹⁶⁶ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 287.

¹⁶⁷ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 288.

¹⁶⁸ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 289.

¹⁶⁹ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 290.

said to “illuminate all bodies”. But let us now look at the whole excerpt as Schopenhauer wrote it down (discrepancies with the *Magazin’s* original text are specified in the notes):

Derjenige¹⁷⁰ welcher alle seine Handlungen durch Prakreetee¹⁷¹, die Natur, vollzogen sieht, nimmt zugleich¹⁷² wahr, daß Atma¹⁷³ oder die Seele dabey¹⁷⁴ nicht thätig ist. Sieht er¹⁷⁵ wie alle die verschiedenen Gattungen von Naturwesen in einem einzigen Wesen begriffen sind [, von dem sie nach außen hin verbreitet und in ihre zahllosen Varietäten ausgestreut sind¹⁷⁶;] dann erkennt er Brahma¹⁷⁷, das höchste Wesen. Dieser erhabene Geist, dies unveränderliche Wesen handelt nicht, selbst wenn es in dem Körper ist, weil seine Natur weder Anfang noch Eigenschaften hat.¹⁷⁸ So wie Akas¹⁷⁹ oder der Aether, durch die Freiheit¹⁸⁰ seiner Theile, allenthalben hindringt¹⁸¹, ohne bewegt zu werden: so bleibt der allenthalben gegenwärtige Geist im Körper, ohne bewegt zu werden. So wie eine einzige Sonne die ganze Welt erleuchtet so erhellt diese Weltseele alle Körper.¹⁸² Diejeni-

He who realizes that all his actions are performed by Prakriti, nature, perceives simultaneously that Atma or the soul is not active in this. If he sees how all the different species of beings in nature are comprised in a single essence [from which they are spread toward the outside and dispersed in their numberless varieties;]¹⁸⁶ then he recognizes Brahma, the highest being. This lofty spirit, this unchangeable essence does not act, even when it is in the body, because its nature has neither beginning nor characteristics. Just as Akas or ether, by virtue of the freedom of its constituent parts, pervades everywhere without being moved: so the omnipresent spirit remains in the body without being moved. In the manner of the single sun which illuminates the entire world, this world-soul lights up all bodies. Those who perceive through the

¹⁷⁰ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 292 here has a comma.

¹⁷¹ Schopenhauer (HN XXVIII p. 92) did not underline (italicize) this word as in the original but only emphasized it by somewhat larger letters in Roman style.

¹⁷² Schopenhauer (HN 2, p. 245) wrote “zugleich” instead of the *Magazin’s* “zu gleicher Zeit”.

¹⁷³ Schopenhauer (HN XXVIII, p. 92) did not underline (italicize) this word as in the original but only emphasized it by somewhat larger letters in Latin style.

¹⁷⁴ Schopenhauer (HN 2, p. 245) has the spelling “dabei” as opposed to the *Magazin’s* “dabey”.

¹⁷⁵ Majer *Magazin* vol. 2, p. 292 here has a comma.

¹⁷⁶ Schopenhauer (HN 2, p. 245) omitted the sub-clause of the *Magazin*; it is here included in square brackets.

¹⁷⁷ Schopenhauer (HN XXVIII, p. 92) did not underline this word as in the original but only emphasized it by somewhat larger letters.

¹⁷⁸ In Majer’s *Magazin*, vol. 2, p. 292 this entire sentence is emphasized by italics.

¹⁷⁹ Schopenhauer (HN XXVIII, p. 92) did not underline (italicize) this word as in the original but only emphasized it by somewhat larger letters.

¹⁸⁰ Majer’s *Magazin*, vol. 2, p. 292 spells “Freyheit”.

¹⁸¹ Majer’s *Magazin*, vol. 2, p. 292 has “hin dringt” in two words.

¹⁸² Majer’s *Magazin*, vol. 2, pp. 292–293 emphasizes this whole sentence by italics.

gen¹⁸³ welche es mit den Augen der Weisheit wahrnehmen, daß Körper und Geist auf diese Art unterschieden sind, u.¹⁸⁴ daß es für den Menschen eine endliche Trennung von der animalischen Natur giebt, diese gehen in das höchste Wesen über.¹⁸⁵ eyes of wisdom that body and spirit are distinguished in this manner and that there is for man a final separation from animal nature: these will unite with the highest being.

Schopenhauer's two excerpts clearly give the lie to Zimmer's assertion that Schopenhauer "did not make use of the *Bhagavadgītā*".¹⁸⁷ At the same time, Zimmer's regret for this supposed failure is interesting. According to him, in the *Bhagavadgītā* ...

... the terribly lofty power present in the world and in oneself – what Schopenhauer called "will" – was indeed conceived as something all-divine [Allgöttliches] in whose contemplation and experience the devoted believer feels secure and is able to overcome the brutal contradiction of the life given to him, dissolving the total meaninglessness of all existence which rolls through universes and eons.¹⁸⁸

The sources which I presented above permit us to add several more points of convergence, not the least of which is the "final separation from animal nature" through acquisition of desireless and selfless wisdom – a thought that pops up at various places in Majer's text.

Conclusion

To conclude I must emphasize once more that I am not arguing that the materials presented above are sufficient grounds for unequivocally proving a strong *Bhagavadgītā* influence on Schopenhauer at this early stage. At present, the sources known to us simply do not support such a clear-cut conclusion. Given that my dating of Schopenhauer's *Bhagavadgītā* excerpts is not quite bomb-

¹⁸³ Majer's *Magazin*, vol. 2, p. 293 here has a comma.

¹⁸⁴ Majer's *Magazin*, vol. 2, p. 293 spells out the conjunction as "und".

¹⁸⁵ The text reproduced here was transcribed from Schopenhauer Archiv Ms. XXVIII, pp. 92–93 and corresponds to HN 2, pp. 245–246. The differences mentioned in the footnotes concern discrepancies between Schopenhauer's note and the original text as found in *Das Asiatische Magazin* vol. 2, pp. 292–293.

¹⁸⁶ The passage in square brackets appears in the *Magazin* but was omitted by Schopenhauer.

¹⁸⁷ Heinrich Zimmer, "Schopenhauer und Indien", *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* 25, 1938: pp. 268–269.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Zimmer was focused on Schlegel's Latin translation which included the earliest critical text edition and appeared only in 1823; he did not take into account Majer's translations from Wilkins.

proof, that relevant notes in the *Manuscript Remains* have an element of ambiguity, and that at present it does not seem possible to disentangle possible influences of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Klaproth, Majer, Polier, and the *Oupnek'hat*, conclusions can of course not be categorical. We can, however, state that Schopenhauer's initial encounter with Indian thought did not, as almost universally held in previous research, happen with the *Oupnek'hat* but rather with Majer's translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. We can further assert that Majer's text addressed a number of themes which already were – or soon became – crucially important for the genesis of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will.