

2: Friedrich Schlegel's Writings on India: Reimagining Germany as Europe's True Oriental Self

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THIS CHAPTER LOOKS AT how Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) developed and applied his particular kind of orientalist thinking and writing within the German¹ geographical, linguistic, and cultural context of the early nineteenth century. Schlegel's orientalism developed in Paris (1802–4) in the context of the Pan-European clamor against French cultural (later political) hegemony and against modernity, capitalism, urban life, and individualism. His reflections on the Orient, particularly the topos of “India,” became part of a process whereby Germany was reimagined as no longer being part of Western Europe but rather as the “true” oriental self of Europe.²

Much has been written on the romantics generally and their influence on early German nationalism, and many scholars have come to similar conclusions.³ None, arguably, has been able to reveal through a close reading of *Reise nach Frankreich* and *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* Schlegel's use of Indian language and culture in his contestation of French cultural hegemony.⁴ This contribution seeks to compensate for this deficiency by bringing to bear the study of early nineteenth-century nationalism on the study of Schlegel's engagement with India.⁵

I. Friedrich Schlegel in Paris

Schlegel's interest in Sanskrit studies spans a period of nearly forty years, during which an enthusiasm for India took hold of many German intellectuals. The period begins in 1791 with Georg Forster's (1754–94) translation of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and ends in 1827 with Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770–1831) dismissive verdict on India.⁶ As a consequence of this heightened interest in India, in the course of the nineteenth century twenty-two university chairs of Indology were established in Germany, whereas in Britain, in the center of its colonial empire, only three such chairs existed.⁷

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Enthusiastic about what he called the “oriental renaissance,” Schlegel relocated to Paris in 1802 to learn Sanskrit. As a poet he was interested in translating *Shakuntala* from the original and researching the wealth of Sanskrit manuscripts in the *Bibliothèque nationale*.<sup>8</sup> His language teacher was the Scottish naval officer Alexander Hamilton, who was at the time held in France as an enemy alien. Schlegel seems to have lived a secluded life in Paris. Apparently he could not, or did not want to, integrate into French society.<sup>9</sup> Disgusted by the nouveau riche of the time of the Directorate and confronted with the insecurities of life in a city of the early modern age—the “capital of the universe” as he calls it in “Reise nach Frankreich”<sup>10</sup>—Schlegel seems to have experienced a form of culture shock.<sup>11</sup> Schlegel complains that he could find in Paris “keine Fantasie, keine Kunst, keine Liebe, keine Religion.”<sup>12</sup> He attributes this to the specific national character of the French and to the degeneration of Europe as a whole, which he thought was worse in Paris than in German-speaking lands. Remembering his travels through a largely agrarian Germany on his way to Paris, Schlegel abhors modern city life with its industry and commerce. He is taken by nostalgia for a time of joyous living and high morality, when people still lived in castles on hilltops, and recalls:

Seitdem die Menschen herabgezogen sind zu einander und sich alles um die Landstraßen versammelt hat, gierig nach fremden Sitten wie nach fremdem Gelde, stehen die Höhen und Burgen verlassen. (RnF 1:8)

What is most significant here is the allusion to the “alien ways” of capitalist, urban modernity and the romanticizing of the feudal and agrarian world of the Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup>

How did Schlegel’s French contemporaries perceive him and his fellow romantics, and how did their perceptions in turn influence him and his opinions about France? Here Harro Zimmermann’s 2009 biography offers some valuable insights. In Germany, prior to his relocation to Paris, Schlegel had faced one defeat after another. His literary journal, *Athenaeum*, had flopped. His novel *Lucinde* had earned him the reputation of a corrupter of morals. As a consequence he was prohibited from entering the city of Göttingen.<sup>14</sup> His circle of friends in Jena was quickly dissolving (FSSD 167–68). He was accused by his friends of living beyond his means and incurring huge debts (170). Hegel reproached him for not living up to what was expected of him as a university lecturer (174) and Clemens von Brentano (1778–1842) called him “lord of the empty pocket” (*Herr Friedrich mit der leeren Tasche*, 175), as he was not even able to meet the expenses of his doctoral dissertation through his lecture fees. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) called him “an airy figment of a human being” (*Ein Luftgebilde von Menschen*, 177). Financial strains

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increased when Schlegel and his partner Dorothea moved to Dresden. There they had to pay the discriminatory Judenzoll (municipal tax collected specifically from Jews) for Dorothea, the daughter of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. At that time she was not yet legally divorced from her husband, Simon Veit, and she had not converted to Christianity (176). A last chance was offered by Goethe, who helped Schlegel to stage his drama *Alacros* in Weimar^{3/4}a performance that was met with skepticism. The performance was a failure and thus Schlegel and Dorothea packed up and traveled to Paris via the Wartburg castle, Frankfurt am Main, Alsace, and Metz (177). They reached Paris at the end of July 1802 and found a flat in the rue de Clichy in Montmartre (180).

A hint as to how Schlegel perceived his new social environment is offered by Henri Chélin:

Die arrogante Reizbarkeit mancher Franzosen, insbesondere Napoleons, gegenüber den exquisiten Hervorbringungen deutschen Geistes macht Schlegel des öfteren zu schaffen. Treibt ihn ein *Gefühl der Machtlosigkeit* in die zunehmende Distanz zu allem, was französischen Geist atmet.¹⁵

Lucinde, published a few years earlier, gives no indication of any anti-French sentiments. On the contrary, instead of praising the Nordic and Germanic over the French, as he later would, Schlegel denounces “Nordic bad habits” (*nordische Unart*) and the “jarring dissonances of our Nordic mother tongue” (*die harten Übelklänge unsrer nordischen Muttersprache*).¹⁶ In contrast, he associates the French with the positive attitudes of love and gallantry (*Lucinde* 38, 74). What might have caused Schlegel’s discomfort with Paris and the French? Was it a reaction to how the Germans were perceived by the French? The literature and published sources give little indication. Günter Oesterle mentions that reports of the diplomat Carl Gustav Brinckmann (1764–1847), Rahel Varnhagen (1771–1833), and Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811) had cautioned Schlegel and Dorothea against the French.¹⁷ Zimmermann points to the apparent alienation of the seven-thousand-strong German community in post-Directorial Paris (FSSD 184). Quoting from the memoirs of Sulpiz Boisserée (1783–1854), he reminds us of the uncertainty and violence-prone suspense in which the population was kept during these times. Foreigners slowly disappeared, theater visits and strolls through the city became less frequent, and everyone retired into his own circle of friends (FSSD 185). In any case, Schlegel and Dorothea didn’t move to Paris out of enthusiasm for France or French culture but for financial reasons and because it allowed them to live their unusual alliance undisturbedly. They may have felt, as Dorothea writes, that they would always remain strangers there (FSSD 188). However, this cannot explain the vehement contempt, almost hatred, for everything French that appears in their

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writings. Schlegel calls the French “monkeys” and Dorothea calls them “stupid and pedantic.”<sup>18</sup> They have so little sense of originality and taste, Dorothea writes in her diary, that they ignore the prettiest woman if she is not à la mode.<sup>19</sup> She concedes “Auch die Menagerie hier ist sehr schön; besonders der Elephant hat mir viel Achtung und Theilnahme eingeflösst. Er ist unstreitig nächst mir derjenige welcher am wenigsten hier zu Hause gehört.”<sup>20</sup> For Friedrich, though, the French are just robots (*nullen Maschinen-Menschen*, FSSD 185) devoid of all human traits.

Schlegel’s developing contempt for French culture and people leads to an increasing valorization of everything German. For him, Paris is “eigentlich der Ort, wo man die Deutsche Literatur recht von neuem liebgewinnt.”<sup>21</sup> He calls French scholars blinkered specialists and claims that Germans alone have an idea of the “holistic” approach to knowledge.<sup>22</sup> While the French dislike everything foreign, Germans instinctively love everything alien. Whereas it is the national character of the French to be exclusively preoccupied with their own self, it is the prerogative of Germans to discover and familiarize themselves with other nations. Thus in contrast to Germans, the French have “absolutely no concept of universality.”<sup>23</sup>

For Zimmermann, the purpose of Schlegel’s journal *Europa*, published during his Paris years, consisted in fending off German feelings of inferiority vis-à-vis French culture and in promoting the programmatic idea that it was Germany’s destiny to save the Continent from its degeneration under French leadership (FSSD 193–94). In Zimmermann’s judgment, Schlegel thus separates the German romantic movement from the rest of contemporaneous European developments in the arts.<sup>24</sup> From then on, instead of following the mainstream with its universalistic pretensions, Schlegel discovers remnants of some form of humanity that he perceives as universal on an even deeper level, buried, as it were, in an immemorial Indo-Germanic past. However, Oesterle reminds us that Schlegel was not yet thinking in simple nationalistic terms during his Paris years.<sup>25</sup> As Schlegel writes in *Europa*:

Ferne aber sey es von mir, diese Gründlichkeit im Egoismus als einen Zug in dem Charakter einer Nation ansehen zu wollen. Es bedeutet dieses nur die Stelle, die sie in der allgemeinen Europäischen Verderbtheit unseres Zeitalters einnimmt. Auch der erwähnte Mangel an Phantasie, der nie natürlich ist, sondern immer nur die Folge einer gewaltsamen oder zufälligen Ertödtung, kann nur dem Zeitalter, nicht der Nation als ein ursprünglicher Charakter zugeschrieben werden, wenn gleich nirgends diese Aeüßerung des allgemeinen Uebels so auffallend erscheint als gerade hier. (RnF 1:27)

For Schlegel, the French nation displays most clearly only the general symptoms of the age, which he calls confused and middling. In a time of

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Manichaeism struggle between the principles of good and evil, Paris, the modern capital of the world, becomes the new Sodom.²⁶ In April 1804, just before he left Paris for Cologne, Schlegel wrote to his brother about his growing unhappiness in Paris, which he explained as founded in his hostility to Napoleon and his sympathy for Catholicism. Four years later in Cologne, Schlegel converted to Catholicism with his wife Dorothea. A few months later the two moved on to Vienna.

To understand how uncommon the idea of nationalism was at the time, we have to remind ourselves that around 1800 the nexus between nation and politics was not self-evident. The Schlegel brothers were still thinking along the lines of an amalgamation of the French and the German nation. This European patriotism, as they called it (FSSD 181), was intended to create a politically united Europe. However, as Oesterle has convincingly argued, such an idea is not to be confounded with any peace-loving cosmopolitanism. Moreover, Schlegel had already begun to harbor a growing aversion against the French as “eine Nation, die *immer stumpfer und brutaler zu werden verspricht*” (FSSD 181). He therefore abandoned the idea of a synthetic Franco-German nation in favor of a Nordic nation ruling supreme over all of Europe. For Schlegel, the future Europe should revolve around Germany—Europe’s actual core in his view—and not France. He dreamed of being the writer, poet, and historian of that nation, which he imagined to be a united German and Nordic Empire to which all other European countries and nations would stand in a feudal relation of liegeman to lord.²⁷ This blueprint of an anti-French and antimodern nationalism combines the idea of political sovereignty with an ethnically exclusive conception of the nation. It thus marks the inception of the idea of ethnic nationalism in Europe.²⁸

As “ethnic” is a very loaded term, implying race as much as culture, a brief clarification is in order. Schlegel’s idea of nationhood is clearly not racial, let alone racist, in the modern sense of those words. It is important to remember the difference between modern notions of so-called scientific racism, which emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and older notions of race, which are derived from aristocratic notions of nobility of blood. If Schlegel alludes to nations as communities of common descent, this is in imitation of these discourses whose purpose was to differentiate between noble and common. As Caspar Hirschi has pointed out, the German humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had already adapted the idea of noble blood to the emerging national discourse. However, their aim was to persuade the German princes to defend popular interests and not to denigrate foreign races.²⁹ Even though there may be certain continuities between medieval ideas of pure blood and modern racism, Schlegel’s discourse could not have been “racist” in the modern, social Darwinist sense.³⁰

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Ethnicity, however, has also been defined along cultural lines, notably by Max Weber. Long before Benedict Anderson, Weber defined ethnic communities as “imagined” (*geglaubte*) communities, in contrast to genealogical communities of common blood.<sup>31</sup> If Schlegel’s idea of nationhood was exclusive, it could only be so in this “imagined,” cultural sense.

## II. Friedrich Schlegel’s Discovery of India

The second part of this chapter attempts to show how Schlegel’s protonationalism was generated in a spirit of cultural defensiveness and German chauvinism. It used references to India, Asia, and the Orient to highlight its own venerability, evoking the East’s revered antiquity. Schlegel’s hopes for better knowledge of ancient India were directly linked to his search for a countermodel to modern—that is, French—society, which he perceived as fragmented and decaying. In his analysis, the Occident had been on the wrong track ever since antiquity. The Greek philosophers, according to Schlegel, had attempted to understand the world in the mode of rational reflection and had thereby fragmented it through these very categories of thought. In modern times, this allegedly led to the rationalism of the Enlightenment (for Schlegel especially, represented by Immanuel Kant [1724–1804]), the dictatorship of reason, and the idolatry of science and progress. For him this was the root cause of religious schism, loss of faith, and, eventually, the torments of the French Revolution. Only the Orient, in Schlegel’s view, was still capable of a holistic understanding of the world. In the mode of religion, Schlegel thought, the East was still in touch with original unity or, in the words of German idealism, with the Absolute. It was thus from the Orient, which he identified with India, that Schlegel sought to derive the remedies for an ailing Occident. Through the study of ancient Indic civilization, Schlegel hoped to recover the lost key to primordial unity. In his treatise *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*,<sup>32</sup> he postulated the linguistic kinship of Sanskrit and Persian with the European languages Latin, Greek, and German.<sup>33</sup> The oldest surviving language, Sanskrit, was postulated as the progenitor of all other Indo-European languages.

For Schlegel, the reference to Sanskrit also had a religious dimension. Since he conceived of the history of humanity as a process of continuous decline, Sanskrit was for Schlegel the language closest to “Uroffenbarung,” or primeval revelation (*ÜSWI* 105–6, 141, 197, 200–202).<sup>34</sup> This may seem confusing at first sight. Why would Schlegel look for the origins of religion in Sanskrit culture when ancient Indian religion seems so far removed from Christianity? In his treatise on Indian language and wisdom, Schlegel elucidates the connection between Mosaic and Indian religious documents. The Bible states clearly, he writes:

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daß der Mensch nach Gottes Bilde erschaffen sei, daß er aber die Seligkeit und das reine Licht, dessen er sich anfangs erfreute, durch eigne Schuld verlohren habe. Wenn die mosaische Urkunde . . . auf die Wege und Punkte hinweist, wie ein Strahl des ursprünglichen Lichtes, da die Nacht der Sünde und des Aberglaubens alle Welt umher bedeckte, dennoch durch göttliche Fügung sei gerettet und erhalten worden; so zeigen uns die indischen Urkunden die Entstehung des Irrthums, die ersten Ausgeburten, deren der Geist immer mehrere ergrübelte und erdichtete, nachdem er einmal die Einfalt der göttlichen Erkenntniß verlassen und verlohren hatte. . . . (ÜSWI 197–98)

Schlegel believed in a primeval revelation (*Uroffenbarung*) shared by all humans in a mythical past but also as a “Gefühl des Wahren,” an intuitive access to the divine (ÜSWI 106) in an eternal present. Subsequently, the divine gift is corrupted by human misuse, obscuration, and misinterpretation (*Misbrauch des göttlichen Geschenks . . . Verdunklung und Mißdeutung der göttlichen Weisheit*, *ibid.*), of which the Indian religious system gives the earliest proof.³⁵ For Schlegel, ancient Indian religion may be the oldest system of superstition (*das älteste System des Aberglaubens*, ÜSWI 103); however, he cannot deny the ancient Indians the knowledge of the true God (*wir können . . . den alten Indiern die Erkenntniß des wahren Gottes nicht füglich absprechen*, *ibid.*). As an indicator of their partially correct knowledge, Schlegel takes the fact that the ancient Indians knew about the immortality of the soul (*die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*, *ibid.*). He defers, however, the answer to the question of why knowledge of the immortal soul should be taken as a proof for the acknowledgement of the single God of Abrahamic religion.³⁶

The search for religion, which ultimately culminates in Schlegel's conversion to Catholicism, is only one vector in a complicated parallelogram of motivations driving him during these years.³⁷ Here, as well as in his deployment of the trope of “India” for the purpose of deciphering the contours of a German national identity, Schlegel seems to be motivated by his own existential questions more than by a scholarly interest in theology.³⁸ Faced with the dominant Greco-Roman genealogy of Western civilization, and the French who saw themselves as its heir and epitome, Schlegel was not the first to search the Orient for alternative genealogies of civilization. Early precursors were Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) and Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88).³⁹ Hamann's disciple Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) speculated that national tongues expressed the soul or spirit of those who spoke them. In *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, published in 1772, Herder asserted that language did not mirror a preexisting metaphysical or empirical reality. Rather, it was the historical product of particular human communities. He located the act of linguistic signification in the soul of the people (*Volk*),

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suggesting that individual languages expressed the character of a specific people. Herder thus diverged from the predominant Enlightenment conception of language as a universal tool of communication. For him, language represented the mode of consciousness through which particular linguistic communities experienced the world and gave voice to their inner life. Herder considered each language to be a living organism with its own internal laws of change.<sup>40</sup>

In contrast to Herder, for whom all civilizations had equal value, Schlegel placed the ancient Indian civilization above all others. For Schlegel, Sanskrit was the quintessential “organic” language, which he rated as “noble” (*edel*) from its origin (*ÜSWI* 49–50, 55–58, 64, 73). This evaluative approach served a quite contemporary purpose. By demonstrating that European civilization had its roots outside Europe, Schlegel decentered Europe and relativized its singular claim to a civilization that it had inherited from its Greek and Roman antiquity. Thereby, he could escape the classicist mood of his time, in the light of which France outshone the rest of Europe.<sup>41</sup> Schlegel tried to demonstrate that the so-called barbarians from the geographical area that the Romans had called Germania actually hailed from ancient India. Thus, for Schlegel, the Germanic tribespeople were not barbarian at all but rather a civilized nation that the Romans had unsuccessfully tried to subjugate.<sup>42</sup> Not only were they equally civilized, but they had access to a heritage even more ancient than that of Greece and Rome. By that claim to an even older heritage, Schlegel believed the Germans could free themselves from French tutelage and so pave the way for their national ascendancy. For Schlegel as well as other contemporary German romantics, the German claim to cultural supremacy was founded in the alleged greater authenticity of German culture. They saw their language in unbroken continuity with Sanskrit, whereas French, the language the Germanic Francs had adopted in late antiquity when they settled down within the boundaries of the Roman Empire, was seen as a hybrid language between Romance, Celtic, and Germanic vernaculars—a motif prominently exploited by Fichte in *Reden an die deutsche Nation*.<sup>43</sup> From this point of view, the French would appear, so to speak, as fake Germans who had betrayed their Germanic heritage and thereby forfeited any legitimate claim to be linked to the most ancient civilization, namely, that of India.

In 1808, Schlegel offered the fruits of his Sanskrit studies in *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*. The first part contains Schlegel’s genealogy of Indo-European languages. The second part deals with Indian mythology and philosophy (“orientalische Denkart”), while the third part suggests how the study of Indian literature might benefit the study of history in general. The following account of Schlegel’s argument in the first part (*Erstes Buch*) will reveal a bias in Schlegel’s argumentation that can only be explained on the supposition that he wanted the German

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language to appear as a more direct descendant of Sanskrit than French. If this could be shown, it could be demonstrated that Schlegel was not interested in India for the sake of better scholarly knowledge alone. He used Indian antiquity chiefly as a screen on which to project his own resentments against the French and his discomforts with the modernity that they represented for him.

Schlegel set out to prove that old Sanskrit is closely related to the languages of the Romans, the Greeks, and the Persians. He emphasized that this similarity is not only grounded in a great number of common word stems but also extends into the deep structure and grammar of the languages. He concluded that the similarity cannot therefore be based on accidental hybridization but rather points to a common origin of these languages. Furthermore, Schlegel thought that the comparison reveals that the Indian language is the oldest whereas the others are only derived from it.⁴⁴ His argument is straightforward. First he establishes the similarity between Indo-European languages, mainly Sanskrit, Persian, Greek, Latin, and German, by a great number of examples that he considers to be self-evident (*ÜSWI* 6–26). When he speaks of German, he really means the West Germanic languages, including English, but not the North Germanic languages like the Scandinavian ones.⁴⁵ For example, in discussing the similarities between Sanskrit “yūyon” and English “you,” Schlegel speaks of English as a form of German.⁴⁶ In a second step, Schlegel lends credence to the hypothesis that, in the evolution of languages, the longer and presumably more complete form is generally older than the truncated and degenerate form.⁴⁷ In all respects, morphologically, lexically, as well as grammatically, Sanskrit is more complex than Persian, Greek, Latin, or German, not to speak of its later derivatives like the modern Indian languages, the Romance languages with respect to Latin, and English with respect to German (*ÜSWI* 34–35). Therefore Sanskrit has to be the oldest of all.⁴⁸

Schlegel’s model (S) of the derivation of the Indo-European languages from Sanskrit is given in figure 2.1 below.

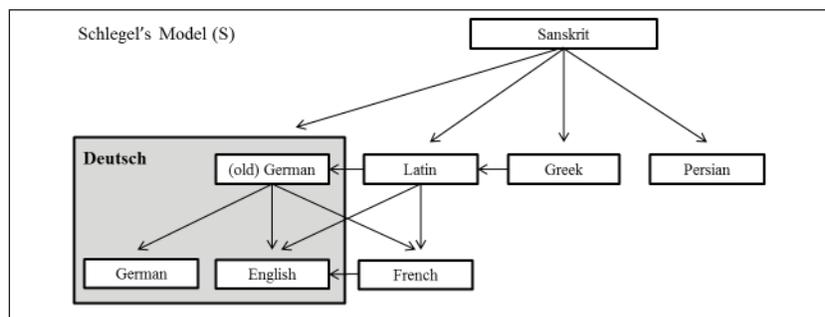


Fig. 2.1. Schlegel’s model (s). ©Michael Dusche.

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The interesting question to ask at this stage is why Schlegel deliberately ignored another possibility, namely, that Sanskrit and German as well as the other Indo-European languages could have derived from a common progenitor: Proto-Indo-European as it is now called,<sup>49</sup> and that therefore none is directly derived from the other. The alternative model (J) developed by William Jones (1746–94) is given in figure 2.2 below.

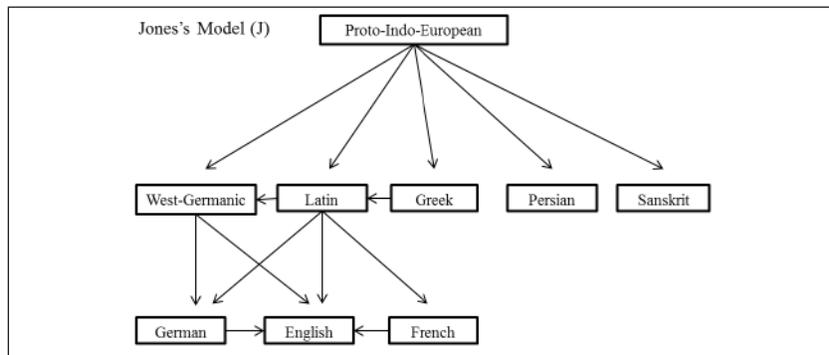


Fig. 2.2. Jones's model (j). © Michael Dusche.

This model must have been known to Schlegel, for he refers to Jones and the proceedings of the *Asiatick Society of Bengal in Calcutta* (*Schriften der calcutischen Gesellschaft*) (ÜSWI 90). Jones's argument had been that all Indo-European languages had a common progenitor. Thus he writes:

The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists: there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothick and the Celtick, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanscrit, and the old Persian might be added to this family, if this were the place for discussing any question concerning the antiquities of Persia.<sup>50</sup>

Schlegel, however, gives a different rendering of Jones's observation by submitting that Jones had meant that Sanskrit had been the progenitor of all of these languages.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, throughout the text Schlegel rarely distinguishes between old and modern German. Only in a few instances does he refer to Low German (*Niederdeutsch*) and English as modern variants (*Mundarten*) of older forms of German. Thereby Schlegel's notion of German becomes somewhat vague and ahistorical. His model (S) thus

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suggests that German (*Deutsch/Germanisch*) is derived from Sanskrit through fewer stages than French, which is derived from Sanskrit only indirectly via Latin. In twenty-five pages and with many more examples, Schlegel directly compares German (*Deutsch/Germanisch*) with Latin, Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit, as if they were all to be found on the same historical level⁵²—whereas English and French are only mentioned as derivatives of German and Latin, respectively. He takes only eight pages and as few examples to distinguish between different historical stages of German and never compares French directly with Sanskrit.⁵³

As we have seen, Schlegel was aware of the historical stages and branches of the Germanic languages, but instead of differentiating consistently between modern and older forms of German and between the various West Germanic branches of the genealogical tree, he used the general term “German” (*Deutsch/Germanisch*) and thereby blurred all historical and genealogical differentiations. As we now know, Jones was right in stipulating that all the old Indo-European languages had a common progenitor and that none was derived from the other. The standard model puts the Germanic and Romance languages on a par. Such a model, however, would have made it difficult for Schlegel to show the seniority of German vis-à-vis the Romance languages, notably French. While the French could only indirectly draw on the primordial heritage of ancient Sanskrit via Latin, the Germans had access to this valuable source via their own Germanic language. If in addition Sanskrit languages and culture were demonstrably closer, in a twofold mythical sense (see above) to primeval revelation, the Germans could present themselves as closer to *Uroffenbarung* than the latinized French and other southern European peoples, and thereby justify their claim to cultural and political leadership.

Schlegel consequently propagated an alliance of the Orient and the North against the Occident, which he identified with the West and the South of Europe.⁵⁴ The question remains as to what role Schlegel envisaged that the modern Orient, particularly India, should play in this vision of the future. Is India more than just a source of legitimacy for the claim to Germanic supremacy within Europe and has it any active part to play in the envisioned North-East confederation? There is no indication that Schlegel, unlike his brother Karl August and to a certain degree August Wilhelm,⁵⁵ had any interest in modern India at all. He made use of ancient India in the national competition with France for cultural seniority among the European family of peoples and left modern India to the colonial powers of Western Europe.

III. Germany: Europe’s “True” Oriental Self

The analysis of *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* lends plausibility to the thesis that Schlegel’s main interest was not India but rather

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Germany and its opposition to France. Schlegel's use of India was, however, embedded in a larger European Orientalist discourse. This section explores the status of his engagement with India in relation to this discourse. In the past decade, a number of studies have been published that inquire into the status of Schlegel's Orientalism. Some have called it a "positive" or "reverse" Orientalism<sup>56</sup> or an "internal colonialism."<sup>57</sup> However, his engagement with India did not involve an adoption of the reverse Indian perspective on Europe, with Germany being part of the West, but rather an evocation of a Germany as part of the East (but not identical to India) looking to the West as its other. This was a means that enabled the German romantics to establish a more intellectually persuasive and coherent idea of their own German self.

European discourse about what is called the Orient, besides attempting to reveal something about the Asian or African countries it purports to deal with, reflects the general attitudes toward history and modernity held by its leading proponents. Jürgen Lütt distinguishes two fundamental perspectives toward history and modernity that emerge in orientalist discourse in general and European discourse on India in particular. He calls these attitudes (1) the *romantic attitude*, and (2) the *utilitarian attitude*.<sup>58</sup> The romantic attitude is marked by a generally pessimistic view of modern historical developments that sees history as a process of decline and degeneration. On the contrary, the utilitarian attitude reflects a generally optimistic view of modernity in which history appears as the process of perfection of mankind. Generally, Lütt goes on to point out, German orientalists have tended toward the romantic perspective whereas British orientalists have been more inclined toward the utilitarian view. With respect to India, German Indologists had a penchant for positive, romanticizing conceptions of India, whereas British Indologists were inclined to highlight India's social and cultural problems and so its need to be governed, modernized, and developed.

The difference in attitude between German and British Indologists is partly due to the fact that the German Indologists originally had less direct access to the subcontinent, whereas British Indology was embedded in the colonial enterprise from the beginning. British orientalists were involved in the empire's attempts to modernize British India. They confronted contemporary issues such as the burning of widows, widow remarriage, and the codification of Hindu and Muslim law. By contrast, German Indologists were less concerned with such practical matters.<sup>59</sup> Their main concern was with European civilization, European modernity, and the place of German culture, and Germany as an emerging nation, in a modern European setting. In their perspective, European civilization was on the decline because of the ruptures caused by the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution, which resulted in religious disunity and political fragmentation; for them India stood for everything

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Europe had been but was no longer. India was *ancient* whereas Europe was *modern*, India was *one* whereas Europe was *fractured*, and India preserved, in the eyes of the romantics, some elements of the original divine revelation that Europe was about to lose.

All this resulted in what Ronald Inden has called Germany's "positive Orientalism," in contrast, for example, with the "negative Orientalism" of James Mill (1773–1836).⁶⁰ In contrast to Jones, who in 1784 had founded the *Asiatick Society of Bengal in Calcutta* and who was fascinated by the treasures of his Sanskrit library, Mill perceived India as backward and plagued by superstition, Brahmanism, and social oppression. In 1819, Mill became an employee and leading officer of the British East India Company and had considerable influence on the policies of the company for the following seventeen years. Figures like Mill best reflect the image of the orientalist as portrayed by Edward Said in his critical study *Orientalism* (1978). In personae like his, the nexus between knowledge and power became obvious. According to Said, orientalism as an academic discipline is geared toward producing the necessary knowledge and legitimation for colonialists to rule countries like India. Depicting India as backward justified British colonization just as expert knowledge of its society and laws facilitated colonial rule.

This nexus was of course absent in the German case because of the lack of colonies in the region, but colonial orientalism nevertheless had its impact on Germany. Notably Hegel and Marx were influenced by the utilitarian image of India as a society stagnating in an *Asiatic mode of production*.⁶¹ To a certain extent, Said exempts German orientalism from the allegation of seeking knowledge for the sole purpose of attaining power over the other. As he claimed, Germany did not have a "protracted sustained *national* interest in the Orient," and thus no orientalism of a politically motivated sort (O 19). As Jennifer Jenkins has pointed out, German orientalism was interested in the professional study of texts rather than in the exercise of colonial power,⁶² but for Said it had "in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism . . . a kind of intellectual *authority* over the Orient" (O 19). This comparatively positive depiction of German orientalism by Said and subsequent authors has been qualified and reevaluated recently by a number of scholars.⁶³ While, for the colonial powers, orientalism represented "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (O 3), for the Germans it traditionally functioned as an intellectual construct for their own national audience, especially in times of crises and conflict. At the time of the Turkish wars (1526–1699) its purpose was "to define the contours of the history and politics of the evangelical, confessional, and religious world in later Reformation Germany."⁶⁴ During the anti-Napoleonic wars, it served to model the incipient German nation on an oriental antiquity that was more ancient and hence truer to received conceptions

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of human origin than even Greek and Roman antiquity.<sup>65</sup> German orientalism was thus interested in giving credence and coherence to a conception of a German nation that, once politically unified, would merit a position equal or even greater than that of other major European powers.

It is true that German Indology had an obvious colonial context in that it was born out of British colonial scholarship, from which it received not only information and texts but also its analytical concepts. However, the notion of Schlegel's orientalism as a form of "internal colonialism," so termed by Sheldon Pollock (1993) and reiterated by Robert Cowan (2008) and Nicholas Germana (2010), does not seem convincing.<sup>66</sup> In what sense did the notion of colonizing or being colonized enter the discourse of the romantics? Schlegel, like others such as Kant and Herder before him, was clearly aware of the colonial phenomenon. But in what sense could Schlegel have "identified with the oriental victims of western imperialism," as Germana and others suggest,<sup>67</sup> when he was so little interested in modern India and his Indian contemporaries? Rather than speaking of "Schlegel's efforts to define Germany as the oriental Other of Europe," as Germana does,<sup>68</sup> one must speak of the inverse, namely, of Schlegel attempting to define Germany as the true oriental self of Europe. In large part, Schlegel's orientalism consisted of an inversion of values commonly associated with the staple categories of European orientalism. The notion of caste, for instance, which is associated with backwardness in utilitarian views of India, is turned by Schlegel into a positive notion associated with a form of political organization that seemed desirable to him, namely, the old European corporate society. Schlegel believed that the medieval hierarchy of estates (Christian clergy, warring noblemen, trading townsfolk, and toiling farmers) reflected its origin in the Indian caste system (with Brahmin priests, warring Kshatriyas, trading Vaishyas, and toiling Shudras as their equivalents).<sup>69</sup> In his later turn toward medievalism, Schlegel continued to romanticize the feudalism of the Middle Ages as the golden age of German history.<sup>70</sup>

The emphasis on sacred texts and on reconstructing a primordial India lost in time originated from both the Christian framework within which Indian religions were perceived, and from the contribution of Indian informants, usually Brahmins.<sup>71</sup> But Schlegel used these texts and analytical concepts for quite different purposes than those pursued by British or French orientalists. Tzoref-Ashkenazi is therefore correct in his judgment that "Schlegel's view should be examined in the context of early German nationalism."<sup>72</sup> This is not to say, however, that Schlegel himself can be called a nationalist. For this, his political ideas were far too fluid, beginning with republicanism, moving on to ideas of a political union first with France, then with the North and the East, and finally culminating in his reversion to monarchy. In 1815, Schlegel joined the service of Metternich as a writer of Austrian propaganda and a member of the

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Austrian delegation to the Diet of Frankfurt and the Congress of Vienna. He chose the Holy Alliance over republicanism and ethnic nationalism. Between 1802 and 1808, Schlegel had turned from a republican literary critic into a Catholic conservative with the kind of nationalist ideas that simultaneously emerge in the work of Müller (1809) and Fichte (1808).

IV. Conclusion

Schlegel developed resentment against several aspects of modernity: urbanization, industrialization, and commercialization, and came, finally, to resent everything French as the embodiment of this modernity: there was indeed a French hegemony in cultural affairs and French was the language of European elite culture and diplomacy.⁷³ The discussion has sought to highlight the reasons behind Schlegel's motivation to counter the overbearing influence of French culture and to carve out a place for German language and culture as a source of German national self-esteem: oriental studies offered him a way out from this predicament. Schlegel's principal motivation for his engagement with Sanskrit could not have been an interest in ancient India alone. The blurring of historical and genealogical differentiations within the family of Germanic languages and the repeated direct comparison of German with ancient and venerable languages like Sanskrit, Persian, Greek, and Latin raises doubts about the objectivity of his approach when at the same time French and English figure only as languages derivative of one of those (Latin, German). By representing India as a source of venerability, Schlegel deliberately played up the importance of German in the context of the Indo-European language family. For him as well as for other German writers at the time, this could have been a welcome source of pride and seen as an advantage over France in a European competition for national superiority.⁷⁴ Schlegel's particular kind of orientalism can be placed within the wider contexts of European orientalism by way of contrast. In critiquing terms like "positive orientalism" (Inden) and "internal colonialism" (Pollock), the idea of "Germany as the true oriental self of Europe" was evoked as a way to characterize Schlegel's use of India.

So, without implying any causal relationship with later uses of romantic thought by German nationalists, Schlegel's writings were part of a discourse of identity that uses the debasement of the French other to raise the esteem and the coherence of the German self. When in 1808 Fichte delivered his *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, the disparagement of the French was part and parcel of the valorization of the German. With this development, the discourse on national identity risked losing the politically emancipatory element of eighteenth-century liberal republicanism that had still been present in the writings of Kant and Herder. As historians of German nationalism have pointed out, the ideal community

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of romanticism appealed to its contemporaries because it promised to unite everyone organically without conflict or friction.<sup>75</sup> Nationalism so conceived, however, sacrificed individual liberty for the sake of collective liberation. It replaced the republican notion of political society with the concept of an organic community.<sup>76</sup> Romantic political thinking appears to be strangely apolitical here, as it denies the legitimacy of conflicts of interests as an acceptable part of any democratic political process. It can perhaps be seen as an expression of a certain lack of political maturity in its often noble and upper-class proponents who had little experience with democratic processes and, if in power, feared losing their hereditary sovereign rights. The prospect of a free interplay of political forces in the absence of a corresponding political culture of democracy must have seemed threatening to Schlegel's contemporaries. Of course, contemporary democratic movements existed nevertheless and they could draw on democratic traditions hailing from certain communities of farmers and burghers since the Middle Ages.

This discussion of Schlegel also resonates with contemporary debates. The question as to whether tribes who spoke some variant of Proto-Indo-European filtered into India in the second millennium BCE, or whether Proto-Indo-European originated in India and spread outward into Central Asia and beyond, is still discussed in India today.<sup>77</sup> Hindu nationalists in particular oppose the standard theory of Indo-European migration into the subcontinent. Since Schlegel was the first to propose the idea of a migration of Indo-European speakers *out* of India,<sup>78</sup> the question arises as to whether any line of influence can be traced from the German romantic to today's Hindu supremacism. Two recent studies have tried to chart the dissemination of German romantic ideas in the Indian subcontinent. Carsten Wieland (2006) and Tobias Delfs (2008) point to a conglomerate of European ideas that affected the development of ethnic nationalism in India.<sup>79</sup> According to both, the ideas of the German romantics particularly impacted on the ideologues of Hindu nationalists such as M. S. Golwalkar (1906–73) and V. D. Savarkar (1883–1966). The latter studied in England from 1906 to 1910 and was imprisoned until 1924 in the Andaman Islands, where he read Western political theory and taught nationalism to his fellow prisoners. Furthermore, Wieland and Delfs discern a contemporary affinity between Hindu nationalism and European fascism based on common ideological reference points. These references include Schlegel, Fichte, and later thinkers such as Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–96) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) as well as British utilitarians like John Stuart Mill (1806–73) and social Darwinists such as Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–95). This far-reaching thesis, however, stands in need of corroboration by further research. In particular it would have to take into account the mediation of German romanticism, nationalism, and idealism

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via the British by way of the trope of “Germanism”⁸⁰ prevalent in British scholarly discourses of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Notes

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¹ Here I am using the term “German” as shorthand for the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire.

² The formulation is August Wilhelm Schlegel’s: “Deutschland als der Orient Europas,” in Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Edgar Lohner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1962–74): 4:37.

³ The relevant strand of literature begins in the twilight of the Third Reich with Henri Brunschwig, *La crise de l'état prussien à la fin du XVIIIe siècle et la genèse de la mentalité romantique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947); and Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), and “Romanticism and the Rise of German Nationalism,” *The Review of Politics* 12, no. 4 (1950): 443–72, which attempt to lay bare the intellectual roots of national socialism. See also Michael Dusche, “Origins of Ethnic Nationalism in Germany and Repercussions in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 22 (2010): 37–46.

⁴ Herling, “German Gita,” offers a close reading of *Über die Sprache* (160–73) and contextualizes it in the discourse of European decadence (151). He thereby obscures the fact that European decadence is largely coterminous with French decadence owing to the overwhelming influence of French culture all over Europe. As a consequence, he misses out on the unequal treatment by Schlegel of the various European branches of the Indo-European language family, which removes French and English by one generation from Sanskrit as compared to German.

⁵ See Dusche, “Origins of Ethnic Nationalism”; “Ethnischer Nationalismus: Eine kritische Betrachtung,” in *German Studies in India: Aktuelle Beiträge aus der indischen Germanistik/Germanistik in Indien*, ed. Dorothea Jecht and Shaswati Mazumdar (Munich: Iudicium, 2006), 50–67; and “Die Geburt des Nationalismus aus dem Geist der Romantik,” *Akten des XII: Internationalen Germanistenkongress Warschau* (forthcoming 2013). Also Vasudha Dalmia-Lüderitz, “Reconsidering the Orientalist View,” *India International Centre Quarterly* 20, nos. 1/2 (1993): 93–114, discerns a “German national interest in India,” but misses out on the anti-French and anti-Western undertones of Schlegel’s engagement with India (101). Instead of realizing his construction of the German self as an oriental one, she stays with the notion of Germany being essentially Occidental: “the Indian ‘Orient’ was part of Occidental Germany” (106–7). Taking

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Germany's Westernness for granted would be an anachronism according to my reading of Schlegel.

<sup>6</sup> Anil Bhatti, "Der deutsche Indiidiskurs: Ambivalenzen im deutschen Orientalismus des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts," in Jecht and Mazumdar, *German Studies in India*, 23–38, points to the near contemporaneity of Hegel's verdict with Thomas Babington Macauley's infamous dictum that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" in his "Minute of 2 February 1835 on Indian Education," *Macauley, Prose and Poetry*, selected by G. M. Young (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 721–29, here 721. Ironically, during the period of the oriental renaissance in Germany we witness the "death of Sanskrit" in India: Sheldon Pollack, "The Death of Sanskrit," *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 43, no. 2 (2001): 392–426.

<sup>7</sup> Information from a lecture by Hermann Kulke at the award of the Padma Shri on 7 April 2010, the India International Center, New Delhi. According to Sheldon Pollock, "both the investment and the production of pre-1945 Germany in Indological research surpassed that of the rest of Europe and America combined." Pollock, "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj," in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> To compensate the defeat at the battle of Plassey (1757) and the decline of their influence in India, the French took to Sanskrit studies, and by 1800 Paris had become the European hub of scholarship on India. Cf. Raymond Schwab, *La renaissance orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1950).

<sup>9</sup> Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, "India and the Identity of Europe: The Case of Friedrich Schlegel," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 4 (2006): 725.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, "Reise nach Frankreich," in *Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Wilmans, 1803), 1:5–40. Hereafter cited as RnF and volume: page number.

<sup>11</sup> Réne-Marc Pille, "Von der Seine zum Ganges: Paris als Geburtsstätte des Indienbilds von Friedrich Schlegel," in *Akten des XI. Internationalen Germanistenkongress Paris 2005*, ed. J.-M. Valentin (Frankfurt am Main: Lang), 9:26.

<sup>12</sup> See Georg Hirzel, "Ungedruckte Briefe an Georg Andreas Reimer," *Deutsche Revue über das gesamte nationale Leben der Gegenwart* 18, no. 4 (1893): 100, quoted in Tzoref-Ashkenazi, "India and the Identity of Europe," 713–34, here 725.

<sup>13</sup> This is not to suggest that Schlegel or the romantics themselves were not modern—on the contrary, the critique of modernity is almost an indicator of a modern mindset. See Shaswati Mazumdar, Claudia Wenner, and Sharmishtha Lahiri, eds., *Romanticism and Modernity: Conceptions of Art, Society, and Politics in the Modern World* (New Delhi: Aryan Books, 2007), 4, on "how a movement which sought to respond with modern ideas to the challenges of the modern age could come to be seen as the very antithesis of the modern."

<sup>14</sup> Harro Zimmermann, *Friedrich Schlegel oder die Sehnsucht nach Deutschland* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009), 167. Cited in the first instance as FSSD and page number; subsequent page references to this work by Zimmermann are given in parentheses throughout this paragraph.

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¹⁵ Henri Chélin, *Friedrich Schlegels "Europa"* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1981), quoted and emphasis added by Zimmermann, *Friedrich Schlegel*, 180.

¹⁶ The quotations are from Schlegel, *Lucinde*, in *Friedrich Schlegel: Lucinde: Ein Roman: Mit Friedrich Schlegelmachers Vertrauten Briefen über Friedrich Schlegels "Lucinde,"* ed. Ursula Naumann (Munich: Goldmann, 1985), 32, 18. *Lucinde* was first published in 1799.

¹⁷ Günter Oesterle, "Friedrich Schlegel in Paris oder die romantische Gegenrevolution," in *Goethezeitportal* (http://www.goethezeitportal.de/db/wiss/schlegel_fr/oesterle_revolution.pdf, accessed on 28 June 2013), 1–16, here 3. Originally published in *Les Romantiques allemands et la Révolution française—die deutsche Romantik und die Französische Revolution*, ed. Gonthier-Louis Fink, Strasbourg: Université des Sciences Humaines, 1989, 163–79.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹ "Sie haben hier so wenig eigenen Sinn und Originalität des Geschmacks, dass sie die hübscheste Frau ganz gleichgültig ansehen, wenn sie nicht etwa Mode ist" (*ibid.*, 163–79).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² "Studium im Ganzen" (*ibid.*, 8).

²³ "ganz und gar keinen Begriff von . . . Universalität" (*ibid.*, 9).

²⁴ "Der Frankreichreisende Friedrich Schlegel spaltet in der Hauptstadt der Moderne die deutsche Romantik von der europäischen Kunstentwicklung ab, nur das Eigene kann noch den Anspruch auf das Universale erheben" (FSSD 194).

²⁵ Oesterle, "Friedrich Schlegel in Paris," 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁷ "Vereinigung aller Deutschen Nordischen Reiche zu einem einzigen—und Abhängigkeit (feudale) aller anderen Länder und Nationen in Europa von dieser—das wäre das grosse Ziel." Note by Schlegel from 1803 in *ibid.*, 10.

²⁸ Dusche, "Origins of Ethnic Nationalism"; "Ethnischer Nationalismus"; and "Geburt des Nationalismus."

²⁹ Caspar Hirschi, *Wettkampf der Nationen: Konstruktionen einer deutschen Ehrgemeinschaft an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), 498.

³⁰ Although I do not wish to imply any causal relation between Schlegel's Indo-Germanism and subsequent racist uses of the "Aryan" myth, the trope of the "Aryan" was of course influenced by Schlegel (see Dorothy M. Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins: Theorizing Authority through Myths of Identity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002); and Reza M. Pirbhaj, "Demons in Hindutva: Writing a Theology for Hindu Nationalism," *Modern Intellectual History* 5, no. 1 (2008): 27–53). Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), had criticized Schlegel for outlining a "proto-racist theory of origins that was eventually to have devastating effects" (99; hereafter cited as *O* and page number). However, as Herling points out in, "German Gita," the "proto-racist" character is not evident in Schlegel's work (169). Herling concludes: "While Friedrich Schlegel's thinking may

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have been appropriated in order to contribute to what would become a coherent ‘racist’ discourse, it does not represent a pure, primordial origin for this damaging set of views” (170).

<sup>31</sup> “Wir wollen solche Menschengruppen, welche auf Grund von Aehnlichkeiten des äußeren Habitus oder der Sitten oder beider oder von Erinnerungen an Kolonisation und Wanderung einen subjektiven Glauben an eine Abstammungsgemeinsamkeit hegen, derart, daß dieser für die Propagierung von Vergemeinschaftungen wichtig wird, dann, wenn sie nicht ‘Sippen’ darstellen, ‘ethnische’ Gruppen nennen, ganz einerlei, ob eine Blutsgemeinsamkeit objektiv vorliegt oder nicht. Von der ‘Sippengemeinschaft’ scheidet sich die ‘ethnische’ Gemeinsamkeit dadurch, daß sie eben an sich nur (geglaubte) ‘Gemeinsamkeit’ ist. . . . Die ethnische Gemeinschaft . . . kommt . . . vor allem . . . der politischen Vergemeinschaftung, fördernd entgegen. Andererseits pflegt überall in erster Linie die politische Gemeinschaft, auch in ihren noch so künstlichen Gliederungen, ethnischen Gemeinsamkeitsglauben zu wecken und auch nach ihrem Zerfall zu hinterlassen, es sei denn, daß dem drastische Unterschiede der Sitte und des Habitus oder, und namentlich, der Sprache im Wege stehen.” Max Weber, “Ethnische Gemeinschaftsbeziehungen” (1922), in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), part 2, chap. 4, 237–38.

<sup>32</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier: Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Alterthumskunde nebst metrischen Übersetzungen indischer Gedichte* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1808). Hereafter cited as *ÜSWI* and page number.

<sup>33</sup> According to Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2004), Schlegel’s *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* had a vast effect in fomenting German Indomania and Sanskrit study (139).

<sup>34</sup> Pascale Rabault-Feuerhahn, *L’archive des origines: Sanskrit: Philologie, anthropologie dans l’Allemagne du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2008), 66–78.

<sup>35</sup> “Es ist das erste System, das an die Stelle der Wahrheit trat; wilde Erdichtungen und grober Irrthum, aber überall noch Spuren der göttlichen Wahrheit und der Ausdruck jenes Schreckens und jener Betrübniß, die der erste Abfall von Gott zur Folge haben mußte” (*ÜSWI*, 106–7).

<sup>36</sup> “Den tiefverborgenen Grund aufzuhüllen, warum diese klare und gewisse Ueberzeugung von der Unsterblichkeit mit der Erkenntniß des wahren Gottes unmittelbar verbunden war, ist hier der Ort nicht” (*ibid.*, 104). For further discussion on this point, see Gary Handwerk, “Envisioning India: Friedrich Schlegel’s Sanskrit Studies and the Emergence of Romantic Historiography,” *European Romantic Review* 9, no. 2 (1998): 235.

<sup>37</sup> Bradley L. Herling points to a possible psychological motivation for Friedrich (and August Wilhelm) Schlegel’s interest in India, namely, to revisit the site of the loss of their brother Karl August (d. 1889 in Madras), but urges that it be properly contextualized. Herling, “The German Gita: The Reception of Hindu Religious Texts within German Romanticism (1790–1830)” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2004), 136.

<sup>38</sup> For a similar assessment, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*

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(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 154–55, although I disagree with her characterization of Schlegel's orientalism as “a lofty spiritual mission.”

³⁹ See the following: Sebastiano Timpanaro, “Friedrich Schlegel and the Beginnings of Indo-European Linguistics in Germany,” in *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier: Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Altertumskunde*, ed. E. F. K. Koerner (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1977), 11–48; Chris Hutton, ed., *History of Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 1995), vol. 1, introduction; Tuska Benes, “Comparative Linguistics as Ethnology: In Search of Indo-Germans in Central Asia, 1770–1830,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 117–32; Hirschi, *Wettkampf der Nationen*; and Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴⁰ Herling, “German Gita,” 43–62.

⁴¹ Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création de identités nationales: Europe XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 23–25.

⁴² Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, “The Nationalist Aspect of Friedrich Schlegel's ‘On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians,’” in *Sanskrit and “Orientalism”:* *Indology and Comparative Linguistics in Germany, 1750–1958*, ed. Douglas T. McGetchin et al. (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 107–30, here 119.

⁴³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1808), 133–44.

⁴⁴ Note that Schlegel received Sanskrit in its Bengali pronunciation, where often “a” turns into “o”; for example, the Devanagari “Sanskritam” [संस्कृतं] is spelled Bengali “Sonskrito” [সংস্কৃত] by Schlegel (*ÜSWI* 3); likewise Devanagari “manushia” [मनुष्य] turns into Bengali “Monuschyo” [মানুষ্য] “der Mensch” (7), and “atman” (आत्मन्) into “Atmoh” (আত্মা) “was sich in $\alpha\tau\mu\eta$ und Athem ganz erhalten hat” (14).

⁴⁵ Schlegel distinguishes between West Germanic (“deutscher Zweig”) and North Germanic (“skandinavischer Zweig”): “Nehmen wir vollends die Grammatik der ältern Mundarten hinzu, des Gothischen und Angelsächsischen für den Deutschen, des Isländischen für den skandinavischen Zweig unsrer Sprache . . .” (*ÜSWI*, 33).

⁴⁶ “Dagegen entspricht das schon angeführte $y\ddot{u}yon$ dem Deutschen in der englischen Form you” (*ÜSWI*, 21).

⁴⁷ “Doch zeigt auch hier [in German] oft die unmittelbare Vergleichung [with truncated Persian terms], daß die indische Form die ältere sei. Aus röktoh oder röhitoH kann wohl roth, aus Schleshmo—Schleim, aus vohulon—viel werden, da die Worte wie das Gepräge des Geldes im Gebrauch und Umlauf sich leicht abschleifen und verwischen, aber nicht umgekehrt” (*ÜSWI*, 15). “Die kunstreiche Structur geht durch die Abschürfung des gemeinen Gebrauchs besonders in einer Zeit der Verwilderung gern verlohren” (25).

⁴⁸ Although it is not directly relevant for Schlegel's concern with German versus French and English, it should be mentioned that the distinction drawn by Schlegel between inflected and agglutinative languages has contributed to another theory of supremacy, that of Indo-European versus non-Indo-European, especially

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Aryan versus Semitic languages. As Figueira notes, Schlegel “projected onto Sanskrit what he could not find in Indian philosophy and religion. Unfortunately, the divine status he accorded to inflected Sanskrit [and thereby indirectly to German and other European languages] necessitated a less than divine origin for what he perceived as the agglutinative languages [like Chinese, Arabic or Hebrew].” Figueira concedes, however, that “this was clearly a negative by-product, rather than a motivating factor” (Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins*, 30). See also Rabault-Feuerhahn, *L’archive des origines*, 66–78).

<sup>49</sup> Edwin F. Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indi-Aryan Migration Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>50</sup> Third annual discourse before the Asiatick Society of Bengal, 2 February 1786 (William Jones, “Discourse on the Hindus,” *Asiatick Researches* 1 [1788]: 423).

<sup>51</sup> “William Jones, der durch die aufgezeigte Verwandtschaft und Abstammung des Römischen, Griechischen, Deutschen und Persischen aus dem Indischen zuerst Licht in die Sprachkunde, und dadurch in die älteste Völkergeschichte gebracht hat . . .” (*ÜSWI*, 85).

<sup>52</sup> See *ÜSWI*, 6–8, 10–11, 18–26, 28–29, 32–34, 61, 74, 76–77, 84–85.

<sup>53</sup> See *ÜSWI*, 7, 11, 22, 29, 33–34, 56, 79. “French” is mentioned only three times in the whole text.

<sup>54</sup> Oesterle, “Friedrich Schlegel in Paris,” 10.

<sup>55</sup> See Anil Bhatti, “August Wilhelm Schlegels Indienexperiment: Kulturtransfer und Wissenschaft,” in *Der Europäer August Wilhelm Schlegel: Romantischer Kulturtransfer—Romantische Wissenswelten*, ed. York-Gothart Mix and Jochen Strobel (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2010), 253.

<sup>56</sup> Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> Pollack, “Deep Orientalism?”

<sup>58</sup> Jürgen Lütt, “‘Heile Welt’ oder Rückständigkeit? Deutschland, Indien und das deutsche Indienbild: Das romantische und das utilitaristische Indienbild Europas,” *Der Bürger im Staat* 48, no. 1 (1998): 60.

<sup>59</sup> However, Schlegel seems to have been aware of the practice of “sati” (Naumann, *Friedrich Schlegel: Lucinde*, 16). Here also a differentiation is called for between Friedrich and his brother August-Wilhelm Schlegel, whose engagement with India was more sustained and less guided by the historical circumstances around 1800 (see Bhatti, “August Wilhelm Schlegels Indienexperiment” and “Deutsche Indiidiskurs”).

<sup>60</sup> Inden, *Imagining India*, 69.

<sup>61</sup> Avant la lettre, Marx developed the concept of the “Asiatic mode of production” in a number of essays on India in the 1850s. The first explicit mention of the term occurs in *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin: Duncker, 1859), vol. 13 of *Marx and Engels, Werke (MEW)*. In *Orientalism*, Said (154) quotes the following passage from “The Future Results of the British Rule in India,” published in *The New-York Daily Tribune*, 8 August 1853, 36: “England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other

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regenerating—the annihilation of Asiatic society and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.” A critical discussion of Said’s rendering of Marx can be found in Dirk Uffelmann, “‘Orientalischer’ Anarchismus: Marx und Engels über ‘asiatische Produktionsweise,’ Zarismus und ‘Bakunisterei,’” in *Was bleibt? Karl Marx heute*, ed. Beatrix Bouvier et al. (Trier: FES, 2009), 201–32.

⁶² Jennifer Jenkins, “German Orientalism, Introduction,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 97.

⁶³ See Benes, “Comparative Linguistics as Ethnology”; Susan R. Boettcher, “German Orientalism in the Age of Confessional Consolidation: Jacob Andreae’s *Thirteen Sermons of the Turk*, 1568,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 101–15; Gottfried Hagen, “German Heralds of Holy War: Orientalists and Applied Oriental Studies,” *ibid.*, 145–62.

⁶⁴ Boettcher, “German Orientalism,” 102.

⁶⁵ Tuska Benes points to the fact that even “the invention of historical grammar—which was the most dramatic achievement of early German language scholars [like the Grimm brothers]—responded . . . to precedents within comparative philology. German language study tailored itself more closely to the methods and concerns of Orientalists than to the techniques of classical scholars.” Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow: Language: Philology and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 118–19.

⁶⁶ Pollack, “Deep Orientalism?; Robert B. Cowan, “Fear of Infinity: Friedrich Schlegel’s Indictment of Indian Philosophy in ‘Über die Sprache und die Weisheit der Indier,’” *German Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (YEAR?): 334; Nicholas A. Germana, “Self-Othering in German Orientalism: The Case of Friedrich Schlegel.” *The Comparatist* 34, no. 3 (2010): 81.

⁶⁷ Germana, “Self-Othering in German Orientalism,” 81, 83.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁹ Tzoref-Ashkenazi, “Nationalist Aspect,” 120–21.

⁷⁰ This is not the place to go into the uses of alternative antiquities like philhellenism, which served a similar purpose of uplifting the German self. For the controversy between Hellenophiles (Goethe, Benary) and Indophiles (Schlegel, Hegel) from around 1800 onward, see Andrew Sartori, “Beyond Culture-Contact and Colonial Discourse: ‘Germanism’ in Colonial Bengal,” *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2007): 77–93. I am also leaving aside the romantics’ medievalism, to which Schlegel turned after abandoning his Sanskrit studies.

⁷¹ Tzoref-Ashkenazi, “India and the Identity of Europe,” 718.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 732.

⁷³ Schlegel called it the language “of cultural influence” (*des gesellschaftlichen Einflusses*) (*ÜSWI*, 177).

⁷⁴ For the role of notions of pride and honor in the history of nationalism, see Hirschi, *Wettkampf der Nationen*, and *Origins of Nationalism*.

⁷⁵ Kohn, “Romanticism and the Rise of German Nationalism,” 445.

⁷⁶ Rüdiger Safranski, *Romantik: Eine deutsche Affäre* (Munich: Hanser, 2007), 174.

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<sup>77</sup> Bryant, *Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture*; and Edwin F. Bryant and Laurie L. Patton, eds., *The Indo-Aryan Controversy: Evidence and Inference in Indian Society* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>78</sup> “So kann z.B. wohl nichts so viel Zweifel erregen, als wie eine Völkerschaft aus dem fruchtbarsten und gesegnetsten Erdstriche Asiens bis in den äussersten skandinavischen Norden hinauf habe wandern mögen. . . . In der indischen Mythologie findet sich etwas, was diese Richtung nach Norden vollkommen erklären kann; es ist die Sage von dem wunderbaren Berg Meru, wo Kuvero, der Gott des Reichthums, thront . . . Gesetzt also, nicht bloß der äussere Drang der Noth, sondern irgend ein wunderbarer Begriff von der hohen Würde und Herrlichkeit des Nordens, wie wir ihn in den indischen Sagen überall verbreitet finden, habe sie nordwärts geführt, so würde sich der Weg der Germanischen Stämme von Turkhind längst dem Gihon bis zur Nordseite des caspischen Meers und des Kaukasus leicht nachweisen lassen” (*ÜSWI*, 193–94).

<sup>79</sup> Carsten Wieland, *Nation State by Accident: The Politicisation of Ethnic Groups and the Ethnicization of Politics: Bosnia, India, Pakistan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2006); Tobias Delfs, *Hindu-Nationalismus und europäischer Faschismus: Vergleich, Transfer- und Beziehungsgeschichte* (Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2008).

<sup>80</sup> Sartori, “Beyond Culture-Contact and Colonial Discourse.”

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