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PHILHELLENISM AND THE *FUROR ORIENTALIS*

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Focusing on the study of the ancient Orient in fin-de-siècle *Germany, this essay argues that "orientalism" had a wider range of cultural consequences than the term usually evokes in studies of Western imperialism and its ideologies. The essay describes the development of a generational movement in German scholarship that was characterized by its vigorous championing of the Orient over and against the dominant tendency to isolate and exalt classical civilizations, and especially ancient Greece, and by its role in destabilizing Western presumptions. It demonstrates that the* furor orientalis *did contribute to the decentering of the Greeks and the ancient Hebrews, bequeathing to the twentieth century both a much deeper and more diverse picture of the ancient Near East and an obsession with origins that could be mobilized by racist propagandists. The essay offers three case studies of groups which exemplified this* furor*—the Panbabylonists; the Religious-Historical School; and the iconoclastic mythographer Heinrich Zimmer, who represents a strong strain of Schopenhauerian Indology. It concludes by suggesting the more constructive directions taken by orientalists outside Germany in the 1920s–1940s, and poses the question: how long will the peaceful solutions they promoted last?*

In his 1926 *Kunstform und Yoga*, the young Indologist Heinrich Zimmer offered the following contrast between Indian and classical art:

The classical work of art presupposes an eternal eye that lingers on it, enjoying and interpreting it: it knows that it is beautiful and wants its beauty to make an impression. Like Salomé in her desperate love proposal to the Prophet, it triumphantly calls to its antagonist: "Man, look at me!"—and if we are not spellbound and our eyes sweep past it, removing ourselves from its presence, it may grieve, like Salomé over Jochanaan's head: "Oh, why did you not look at me? If you had looked at me, you would have loved me! . . ." Naturally we have no right to use here her words, "your eyes are blindfolded like those of one who wants to see his God," but with them and with Jochanaan's descent into the dark shaft of his lonely cistern, lighted by the face of his God, something of the world is sketched in which the images of Buddhas, gods, and the holies of India have their origin and their life.[1]

1 Heinrich Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga in the Sacred Images of India*, trans. Gerald Chapple and James B. Lawson (Princeton, NJ, 1984), 19–20.

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Zimmer's highly romantic analysis presumed his readers' familiarity with Richard Strauss's 1905 opera *Salomé*, an even more decadent version of Oscar Wilde's hyper-decadent play of the same title. His choice of metaphors may be explained by noting the young scholar's personal relations with Strauss's good friend and sometime librettist, Hugo von Hofmannsthal.[2] But the wordplay remains remarkable, especially for a member of the supposedly Euro-hubristic orientalist profession. Casting himself as the "oriental" Jew Jochanaan, Zimmer reversed the usual feminization of the Orient, assigning to Greek art—the model for nineteenth-century German self-formation—the role of the amoral pagan seductress Salomé. This cultural iconoclasm was not something Zimmer learned from his eminent father-in-law—nor was its passionate expression in keeping with the positivist philological habits of Zimmer's own father (also Heinrich), Sanskritist and Professor of Celtic Philology at the University of Berlin. But if Heinrich the elder did not share his son's aesthetic relativism and Schopenhauerian world view, the two Zimmers did share a common challenge, namely that of averting the public's gaze, at least briefly, from the spellbinding power of Greek culture. Both knew that to be an orientalist was *not* to be a classicist, and indeed to choose what might prove to be a rather lonely pursuit: explaining Jochanaan's apparently irrational disdain for Greek "light."

Zimmer's reflections on the plight of the German orientalist may be overly theatrical, but they transport us into an intellectual world so remote from the one now evoked by the mention of "orientalism" that we might profitably inquire further. His remarks illuminate, first of all, the orientalist's self-conception as cultural outsider, seeking to interpret the language of the "other" to a largely uncomprehending cultural world. They suggest a willingness to find other sources of light. And they underline the fact that the "orientalism" practiced by the Zimmers and many of their contemporaries had at its core not relationships between modern Europeans and backward "orientals" but rather the peoples of the *ancient* world, especially Greeks and Jews. The outgrowth of Renaissance biblical and humanistic scholarship, this "orientalism" took as its objects not the rational (but pagan) Greeks, but the rather more puzzling peoples of the East; this meant that the tradition produced not only the tools for converting the heathen (or the infidels), but also the imperative to understand them. It was a tradition which encompassed both iconoclastic critics of European norms and Christian or Western apologists—both parties drawing heavily on the same texts, including the Bible, classical authors like Herodotus and Plutarch, and an increasing number of travelogues. This tradition was very much alive in

2 Two years after the publication of *Kunstform*, Zimmer married Hofmannsthal's daughter Christiane, and he would later serve as the Austrian writer's literary executor.

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Zimmer's lifetime—but something important was happening to it. By the *fin de siècle*, occidental scholars had accumulated and deciphered so many oriental texts in previously unknown languages that the old humanistic historical frames threatened to collapse. In such circumstances, it was becoming possible to envision breaking Salomé's spell—and that of the all-too-modest, and all-too-liberal, positivist fathers who had not dared to give the Orient its due.

To understand the sort of "orientalism" I am describing we must see it not only in the context of the generational conflicts and scholarly innovations of the late Wilhelmine period, but also as a chapter in the much longer history of humanistic scholarship. Thus the essay seeks to carry forward the work of early modern intellectual historians such as Frances Yates, D. P. Walker, Frank Manuel, Anthony Grafton, Debora Shuger, and the great historian of classical scholarship Arnaldo Momigliano.[3] The essay challenges, thereby, the presumption shared by today's professional orientalists and their multiculturalist critics that by about 1850, the study of the Orient was being shaped exclusively by direct contacts between indigenous peoples (and/or their texts) and European scientists, whose political interests and scientific methods were thoroughly "modern." Though I agree that, in Edward Said's words, Orientalism "has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world," I cannot concur with the central contention of his now infamous study, that imperialism was the only important factor shaping this cultural discourse.[4] Of course, many travelogues and policy papers reflected this imperialist condescension; but offering this verdict on discussions of the *ancient* oriental world is to make either a trivial statement (yes, Europeans thought they knew better) or a misguided generalization. In studies of the ancient Near East, scholars frequently emphasized non-Western cultural achievements, compared the Orient favorably to modern Europe, acknowledged borrowings or descent from the Orient, and/or chalked up "oriental" woes to Western meddling. They did so, not surprisingly, usually with Western antagonists or personal projects in mind—but the net effect was often to destabilize Western presumptions, not to reconfirm them. This is something, thanks to Yates,

3 Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London, 1964); D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1972); Frank Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1983, 1993); Debora Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity* (Berkeley, CA, 1994). Of Arnaldo Momigliano's many important publications, I will cite only *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, ed. Silvia Berti, trans. Maura Masella-Gayley (Chicago, 1994), and *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middleton, CT, 1977).

4 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 12.

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Manuel, and the others listed above, that we now recognize in the worlds of Hugo Grotius and Joseph Scaliger, Athanasius Kircher and Richard Simon, Herder and Montesquieu. That it can be said, too, of the era after the onset of "actual" German colonization in 1884—an era which also saw a colossal increase in the scale of accessible "oriental" materials, as well as the most serious threats to elite humanistic learning since the Roman Empire's collapse—is what I hope to illustrate below.

The piece of the story told here concerns a group I have dubbed the "furious" orientalists, a group characterized by their vigorous championing of the claims of the Orient to historical, religious, philosophical and/or artistic priority (and sometimes even superiority) over and against the dominant tendency to isolate and exalt classical civilizations, and especially ancient Greece. It was not a self-conscious movement, or an entirely coherent strain of thought, but it had a recognizable set of enemies (classicizing *Gymnasium* and university professors; orthodox theologians; and bourgeois audiences unable to shake the now conventional, comfortable philhellenism and liberal Protestant piety dispensed by these cultural authorities). Prosopographically, too, the *furor* has at least loose coherence: its proponents belonged largely to the generation which came of age in the 1880s and 1890s, as post-unification anxieties (including colonial ones) came to the fore, as classical learning and scholarly positivism came under attack, and as new, more intensive bouts of collecting, editing, deciphering and publishing made available a vast new "oriental" arsenal. Trained as specialized philologists, but often subjected to long delays before receiving paying academic jobs, a number of these young scholars exhibited frustration with philhellenic cultural institutions that seemed outdated and unable to provide Germans with either a reliable account of their descent or an inspiring vision of their future. This frustration, and the attempt to further personal, intellectual and ideological interests by flinging open the doors to a wider, deeper and more powerful Orient, is what I call the *furor orientalis*—a moniker that might well have been coined by classicizing contemporaries, for whom the movement was, quite clearly, a newfangled sort of barbarian invasion. More moderate orientalists, too, those who did not share the aspirations to cultural and/or individual transformation so central to their more radical students and colleagues, generally cast a disparaging eye on the movement.

The number of players, then, is relatively small, comprising only a subset of those trained in oriental languages at the *fin de siècle*, and their names are now little known. But the three manifestations of the *furor* sketched below—Panbabylonism, the Religious-Historical School, and Schopenhauerian Indology—did have major cultural effects, and provide an important new context for the understanding of better-known figures such as Martin Buber, Max Weber, C. G. Jung, Aby Warburg, Ernst Troeltsch, Hermann Hesse, Werner Jaeger, Rudolf

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Bultmann and Gershom Scholem.[5] The brief concluding section, finally, takes us outside Germany to examine European and American reactions to their more moderate forms of the *furor orientalis*. Here, as in the preceding sections, there is still much research to be done, and the author hopes this survey will provoke others to take deeper soundings.

In this essay, however, I will be particularly concerned to show how the *furor orientalis* contributed to the decentering of classical aesthetics and history in Wilhelmine intellectual and institutional cultures. But I want also to draw attention to its contributions to the declining status of another special people in the cultural history of the ancient world, and that is, of course, the Jews. Many assimilationist Jews, like Sigmund Freud, were indeed philhellenes, the Greeks offering models for a secular, rational culture in which Jews could be expected to participate. But as Carl Schorske showed beautifully some years back,[6] Athens for Freud quite rapidly lost its thrall—and did so, I might add, precisely in the prewar years in which, I will argue, the *furor orientalis* was at its peak. Nor was this a failing on Freud's part; philhellenism, by about 1900, was not especially good for Jews, for as it moved into an ever more defensive phase the definition of the greatness of the Greeks increasingly set up racial and cultural models that neither past nor present Jews could imitate. But the new orientalism, in gentile hands,[7] concerned especially with pushing the histories of the ancient Indians, Assyrians, Persians, and to a lesser extent Egyptians to the fore, was if anything more Judeophobic than was classics, something that became especially clear in the avalanche of publications that appeared between about 1880 and 1930 treating the non-Jewish origins of monotheism. When I suggested above that the *furor orientalis* was instrumental in detaching German culture from its classical and Christian moorings, I should add that the Jews, often more than the Greeks, were

5 For a sketch of another archetypical "furious" orientalist, see Suzanne L. Marchand, "The Rhetoric of Artifacts and the Decline of Classical Humanism: The Case of Josef Strzygowski," *History and Theory* 33 (Dec. 1994), 106–30.

6 Carl E. Schorske, "To the Egyptian Dig: Freud's Psycho-Archeology of Cultures," in *idem*, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton, NJ, 1998), 191–218.

7 That there is a Jewish *furor orientalis* to be studied, I am certain; key proponents here would certainly be Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem and Franz Rosenzweig, all thinkers who emphasized the non-rational, more "oriental" side of Judaism in response, I believe, to the same sort of crises in classicism and liberalism (which here would include assimilationist doctrine and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*) to which the gentile orientalists I describe here reacted. For some examples, see Martin Kramer, ed., *The Jewish Discovery of Islam* (Tel Aviv, 1999).

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clearly scheduled for decentering. That this decentering was in some respects the continuation of enlightened efforts at increasing Christian toleration, and in others an attempt to Aryanize German ancestry, makes it, for the modern reader, both salutary and despicable, and it is time we grappled with this ambivalent legacy.[8]

ORIENTALISM IN A PHILHELLENIC AGE

To understand the impertinence of our "furious" orientalists, we need to venture briefly backward into the early nineteenth century, the period in which classical humanism so clearly gained the upper hand against its oriental–biblical brother. Into the later eighteenth century, both classical and oriental philology remained auxiliary sciences, subordinated to the higher science of theology, and often practiced by the same individuals. But over the course of just a few years, classics came to the fore. The educational institutions Wilhelm von Humboldt promoted to central prominence beginning in 1809, the philosophical faculty of the University of Berlin, the *Gymnasien*, and the Altes Museum, all gave special attention to classical languages and cultures, and helped to promote the idea that the imitation of the rational, secular, masculine and, above all, beautiful Greeks was the means to German cultural greatness. Especially after the so-called Creuzer Affair of the early 1820s, in which the Neoplatonic philologist Friedrich Creuzer was roundly denounced for seeking the source of all symbols and myths in the pagan Near East, classicists turned to secular subjects, focusing especially on the linguistic niceties and internal affairs of each of the classical lands. With the exception of a few archaeologists, Ernest Renan wrote in 1853, the scholars had all united in defending "the originality of Greek mythology against M. Creuzer. All agreed in rejecting that blasphemy, that Greece was ever a province of Asia, that the Greek spirit, so free, so objective, so limpid, could contain any element of the vague and obscure spirit of the Orient."[9] In the wake of the Creuzer Affair, university philosophical faculties—the suns around which so much German cultural life orbited—were increasingly inhabited by Protestant scholars of positivist mien, for whom the rational and supposedly areligious Greeks of the classical period were both models and the objects of intense scrutiny.

8 Some time ago, Frank Manuel began posing these uncomfortable questions; see his *Broken Staff*. See also Jonathan Hess, *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven, CT, 2002), and Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible* (Princeton, NJ, forthcoming 2005).

9 Ernest Renan, "Des religions de l'antiquité et de leurs derniers historiens," *Revue des deux Mondes* 23/2 (1853), 835.

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Orientalism, in the meantime, had also undergone a historicist revolution, one which virtually eliminated scholarly interest in things modern and transformed religious texts into *Volkspoesie*—something preferable, both for enlightenment thinkers and romantics, to treating them simply as catalogs of pagan errors. Orientalists, who had also long emphasized language learning (especially Arabic, Syriac and Hebrew, for the purposes of Old Testament exegesis), now added Persian and Sanskrit to their repertoires, and began to distance themselves from "unscientific" theological debates. When Germany's first professional organization for orientalists was founded in 1844, it explicitly ruled theological questions out of bounds, and its journal, the *Zeitschrift der Deutsch-Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, refused to accept contributions that dealt with religious, as opposed to culture-historical or philological, issues. Then, too, the quest for non-debatable, fundamental knowledge led German orientalists to emphasize the deep past; across *Orientalistik*, the motto later coined by Eugen Wirth held sway: "je älter um so interessanter."[10] Focusing on the interpretation of, for example, vedic literature, pre-Islamic Arabic texts, and the Pentateuch seemed to be the means to understand cultures in their purest states—and it also made it possible to compete, and sometimes win, the "origins of" game frequently played against the classicists.

This sort of hyper-historicist philology did in fact produce path-breaking, notoriously painstaking scholarship, and new respect from colleagues abroad. But that does not mean the Orient it studied was unmediated by domestic institutions and ideologies, or without consequences for German cultural history. Positivist historicism actually worked to the cultural disadvantage of orientalists compared to classicists; rarely permitted to specialize in just one language, oriental philologists usually could not make claims to perfect hermeneutical understanding of the Other. As universal history gave way to "scientific" history, treatments of oriental origins by non-orientalists—as in Creuzer's *Symbolik* or Hegel's *Philosophy of History*—were increasingly frowned upon; if this gave orientalists hegemony in interpreting Asian cultures, it also enabled the bracketing or dismissal of the question of Eastern origins, and the selection of Greece, every *Gymnasium* boy's specialty, as the necessary starting point for histories of art, science and philosophy.[11] Moreover, the conviction that knowledge of a nation's ancient language was the key to comprehending its soul made for

10 Eugen Wirth, "Orientalistik und Orientforschung: Aufgaben und Probleme aus der Sicht der Nachbarwissenschaften," in Wolfgang Voigt, ed., *XIX. Deutscher Orientalistentag (28. September bis 4. October 1975): Vorträge, Zeitschrift der Deutschen-Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, supp. III/1 (Wiesbaden, 1977), lvii.

11 See Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, NY, 1988), 148–59; Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), 46–7.

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a kind of contempt for modern, spoken languages and political conditions, something that "modernist" orientalists attempted to change in the wake of Germany's entrance into the colonial race, with little success. In 1920, Franz Babinger was still complaining about a peculiar kind of German "orientalist megalomania": "just because someone can read cuneiform," he lamented, "they feel entitled to pass judgments about the modern Orient."[12] What Babinger called megalomania was, of course, the legacy of the German orientalist tradition and its institutions, one which invested its energies in the ancient oriental past, and bestowed its laurels upon those with great linguistic, not comparative or analytical, talents.

Decipherments and specialized publications abounded in the years 1830–80, but the main experience for orientalists in the middle of the century was that of loneliness—and often iconoclasm. This iconoclasm took them in two central directions: away from Christianity, and especially its Jewish forbears, and away from the classics. The case of Nietzsche's best school friend, Paul Deussen, is perhaps indicative. As late as the 1860s, Deussen (1845–1919) was the only student in Indologist Adolf Lassen's courses at the University of Bonn, and the young student felt guilty in these years for indulging in the "luxury" of studying Sanskrit, and indeed obtained a real job only at the age of 43.[13] When Deussen lectured, for a few months, on Indian philosophy at the University of Aachen in the late 1870s, local newspapers denounced him for asserting that in comparison to the all-knowing Indians, Christ was an idiot (*Dummkopf*). Much against his will, Deussen was eventually forced to give up lecturing on India, and teach the history of philosophy from Plato to Kant instead.[14] But, by the mid-1880s, things Indian were beginning to trickle into the youth culture, as was heightened interest in other non-Greek cultures. This is the world into which, adapting a time-honored French tradition of using oriental others to embarrass modern Europeans, Nietzsche launched his *Zarathustra* in 1883, knowing virtually nothing about the philosophy of ancient Persia, and his all-out assaults on Christianity, the *Genealogy of Morals* and the *Anti-Christ* (both written in the late 1880s), both of them heavily indebted to orientalist scholarship, from Julius Wellhausen's portrayal of desiccated late Judaism to Deussen's Schopenhauerian Indology.

By the later 1880s, despite having spent at least five decades as Europe's academic pacesetters, German orientalists still felt very much second-class citizens in their central European homes, as indeed they were. Greek and Latin were still central to *Gymnasium* curricula, and graduation from the *Gymnasium*

12 Babinger to C. H. Becker, Feb. 18, 1920, in Berlin (Dahlem), Geheimes Staatsarchiv, N. Becker, Mappe 6181.

13 Paul Deussen, *Mein Leben*, ed. Erika Rosenthal-Deussen (Leipzig, 1922), 87.

14 Ibid., 177–86.

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was required for university entry. Germany's Royal Museums were full of classical artworks and casts, purchased with state monies, while Indian, Chinese, Assyrian, and Islamic arts, insofar as they were exhibited at all, were closeted in the Ethnographic Museum (which had only opened in any event in 1886). The only place to go to learn the living languages of the Orient was Berlin's Orient Seminar, also founded only in 1887, and presided over by Ferdinand von Richthofen, the great geographer of China; Richthofen's Seminar was indeed busy training linguists and geographers, but scholarly philologists continued to look askance at its all too modern and "practical" pursuits. Funding for things "oriental" was largely left to private organizations, while classical archaeologists extracted large sums from the museums and the Kaiser. But now that orientalists could actually read the literature and inscriptions of the Orient for themselves, many felt they could escape their intellectual and institutional dependence on the classics. As Adolf Erman proclaimed in 1885, Egyptologists could now write the history of Egypt without the help of Herodotus and the Old Testament, testimonies hardly more reliable than modern tourist journals written by English lords and American ladies.[15] It was time for a change.

FROM THE SECOND ORIENTAL RENAISSANCE TO THE *FUROR ORIENTALIS*

The emergence in the later 1880s and 1890s of what I will call the *furor orientalis* is a complex phenomenon, both a generational attack on the philhellenic cultural institutions of the Reich, and an attempt to create both a new sort of humanism and a new hierarchy of the disciplines. It had numerous spokespersons, some of whom were what we might call cultural relativists, content to create a rough parity between West and East, some of whom were romantics, seeking a new religion, and some of whom were racist fanatics, eager to give Germany a purer past, present and future. What made the articulation of these new world views possible was: first of all, the specialized orientalist scholarship of the previous half-century (and the next 30 years); secondly, an emerging generational revolt which seriously threatened the status of the *Gymnasien*, and classical scholarship with them; thirdly, the onset of colonization and the new friendship established between the Kaiser and the Sultan; and finally, a neoromantic revival which made things religious, irrational, primitive and exotic once more highly appealing.

I will forego, for now, most of the proof that there was, beginning about 1880, a second, and perhaps more powerful, oriental renaissance, which arrived hard on

15 Adolf Erman, *Ägypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum* (Tübingen, 1885), 6–7.

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the heels of the romantic-era renaissance charted long ago by Raymond Schwab.[16] Suffice it to mention that this was the era in which cuneiform decipherments were finally cleared up and simplified, and huge caches of documents were found at Oxyrhynchus and Tell-el-Amarna in Egypt; in which German scholars, itching to crown their philological preeminence with "real" cultural conquests, began their excavations at Babylon and Assur. In this period, Flinders Petrie made his way to Egypt and the French hauled home the Code of Hammurabi; Max Müller and J. G. Frazer, not to mention Madame Blavatsky, began to find mass readerships. Aurel Stein, Sven Hedin and the Turfan expeditions opened up (and pillaged) the hitherto unknown cultural treasury of Chinese Turkestan; Ignaz Goldziher produced his monumental studies of Islamic law and Karl May his Orient cycle of popular novels. This was the era that saw the broad new popularity of oriental art, including not only carpets, but also Japanese prints, Chinese landscapes, Indian sculptures, and Islamic architectural design. By 1905, the Orient was becoming so fashionable that, wrote Leopold von Schröder, Buddha was replacing Socrates as the idol of the educated elite.[17] Though this was largely, for the Viennese Indologist, wishful thinking, his statement does indicate a real change in the cultural diet of, at least, the middle-class educated elite.

It is worth reiterating here that colonization had a critical part to play in enabling this new "Renaissance"—it is by no means accidental that its dates precisely coincide with those of the period of high imperialism. Colonial penetration opened the way for travel to new places, excavation in foreign territories, and the selling, by local elites, of large quantities of manuscripts, artifacts, and linguistic and ethnographic expertise. Moreover, the exaltation of the ancient East was linked to a nearly universal European disdain for the "fallenness" of modern oriental cultures, a view pervasive among orientalists as well. Though German orientalists could be vicious critics of Dutch, French, and especially English colonization, few believed the East capable of ruling itself.[18] Indeed, the East was not, in their view, able to write its own ancient history or appreciate its cultural traditions either; the West had to do that for them. But shouldering that "white man's burden" would, in the end, also have profound effects on the culture of the West.

16 Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York, 1984).

17 Leopold von Schröder, "Buddha und unsere Zeit" (1905), in *idem*, *Reden und Aufsätze, vornehmlich über Indiens Literatur und Kultur* (Leipzig, 1913), 216–17.

18 In 1885, Theodor Nöldeke commented that the Romans had rightly taken Aristotle's advice to Alexander to act as masters over the "Orientals" "just as, mutatis mutandis, the Europeans still today have the right to rule over the Asiatics." Nöldeke, *Ueber Mommsens Darstellung der römischen Herrschaft und römischen Politik im Orient* (Leipzig, 1885), 3.

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In this context, it seems, proponents of things oriental began to feel that the period of inferior status had come to an end. Now that sources could be read in the original, and independence from classical or biblical literature had been established, it was time for orientalism to become a fully fledged part of the humanities, to form more than the antithesis against which "the human" could be defined. This had already been attempted for India, by Peter von Bohlen in 1830, and for Egypt, by Christian Bunsen in 1844. But these attempts had come too early, before the *Bildungsbürger* had lost faith and interest in neoclassicism, before the clergy's power over theology faculty appointments had been fully broken, and before the popular press had discovered secular orientalism. In all three of these categories, the *fin de siècle* bested its predecessors, and the Orient, at least the ancient Orient, was the benefactor. And perhaps the biggest winner was the Near Eastern culture least accessible to the scholars of the first oriental renaissance, but hugely popular for those of the second: Assyria.

PANBABYLONISM, OR, ASSYRIOLOGY COMES OF AGE

Formally speaking, Assyriology really begins with the agreement in 1857 of four European scholars on a proper mode of deciphering one variety of cuneiform script. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that biblical interpretation would be of central interest once decipherment had been completed; Babylonian and Assyrian rulers and cities are, after all, often mentioned in the Old Testament (God orders Jonah to preach to the pagans at Nineveh, etc.). But the first generation of professional cuneiform scholars trod rather carefully, as did Leipzig professor Eberhard Schrader, collecting, translating and editing Assyrian texts rather than drawing conclusions about their historical or theological import.[19] Not so his students, a group which included Friedrich Delitzsch, Alfred Jeremias, Peter Jensen, Eduard Stucken and Hugo Winckler, all now obscure scholars, but once at the eye of the Assyriological storm. Like the "Romantics," this group had its name imposed on it by its critics; but the "Panbabylonists" seem to have more or less accepted the epithet. After all, it captured, quite accurately, their hyper-diffusionist world view and their radical cultural aspirations.

A remarkable series of archaeological discoveries, and their halting absorption into mainstream orientalism, shaped the careers of the "Panbabylonists." They experienced, as young men, British Assyriologist George Smith's discovery of

19 Schrader had, however, engaged in heated debate with the Jewish scholar Joseph Halévy, claiming that the (Semitic) Babylonians had been able to invent writing, mythology, art and perhaps even monotheism only as a result of contact with the indigenous Turanians. Jerrold S. Cooper, "Posing the Sumerian Question: Race and Scholarship in the Early History of Assyriology," *Aula Orientalis* 9/1–2 (1991), 52–3.

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the "flood tablets" in the early 1870s, and would be central participants in the excavation and interpretation of the Tell-el-Amarna letters, the Code of Hammurabi, and finally the cities of Babylon, Assur, and Boghazkoi (ancient Hattusha). In specialized studies from the 1870s onward, Friedrich Delitzsch and his fellows argued that the shaping force of the Babylonians on the early Hebrews could now be proved, and the taint of polytheistic irrationality and immorality should be removed from the Jews' pagan captors. *Gilgamesh* was raised to the status of an epic poem—and dated far earlier than the *Iliad*. The Code of Hammurabi was said to show striking similarities with the Law of the Torah, and allowed the Assyriologists to claim the first system of jurisprudence; as the Assyrians had long been credited with the invention of astrology, astronomy and other sciences as well, this now gave them superiority across much of the terrain known to nineteenth-century intellectuals as "civilization." But other scholars, and the educated public as a whole, were slow to accept the Assyriological revolution. Classicists were uninterested, theologians were hostile, and even other orientalists usually treated the discipline's new subfield with suspicion if not contempt (most liberal-era orientalists did not learn cuneiform). It was this combination of evidentiary triumphs and institutional disappointments that laid the foundations for the Assyriological *furor orientalis*.

Panbabylonism had slightly different casts in the works of each of its proponents. Chiefly interested in the origin of myths, Eduard Stucken's *Astralmythen* (Leipzig, 5 vols., 1896–1907) looked something like an historicized form of Charles Robert Dupuis's enlightened classic, *Origines de tous les cultes* (1795), in which the primeval astrological wisdom of oriental pagans was shown to have been taken up by the next world civilizations (rather than snuffed out or perverted by Christianity, as in Dupuis's work).[20] Jeremias developed a curious sort of populist Protestant apologetics from his study of Babylonian religion. This most closely resembled the position taken by Friedrich Delitzsch, Professor of Assyriology at the University of Berlin and clearly the most respectable member of the group. Winckler, on the other hand, claimed to be an atheist; even more than the others, he seems to have been driven by his desire as an eternal outsider for academic recognition. Peter Jensen, a cranky professor of Semitic languages at the University of Marburg, put his efforts into championing the epic of *Gilgamesh*, the *Ur*-source, he argued, of the Homeric epics and the model for the fictional characters Moses, Jesus and Paul.[21] What all had in common, however, was their

20 On Stucken see Ingeborg L. Carlson, *Eduard Stucken (1865–1936): Ein Dichter und seine Zeit* (Berlin, 1978). An abridged English version of Dupuis's 12-volume work appeared in 1872, and was reprinted as *The Origin of All Religious Worship* (New York, 1984).

21 The title of Jensen's work says it all: *Moses, Jesus, Paulus: Drei Varianten des babylonischen Gottmenschen Gilgamesh: Eine Anklage und ein Appell* (Frankfurt, 3rd edn, 1910).

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frustration with the older forms of positivistic modesty and their unwillingness to defer to credentialed classicists or theologians. It is all too clear to his many critics, wrote Jensen in a defiant introduction to his 1906 *Das Gilgamesh-Epos in der Weltliteratur*, "that I am no scholarly writer of the old school, nor of the new school, no priest of the thrice-holy pagan temple of Greekdom."[22] He, like his fellows, was committed, instead, to an aggressive new search for truth, one ready and willing to defy academic expectations and destroy bourgeois norms.

Having largely failed in the 1880s and 1890s to earn the academic accolades they thought they deserved, the Panbabylonists began to cultivate a more popular scholarly audience. Stucken's volumes were perhaps the first steps in this direction, but other members were even more concerned with popularization. Winckler became something of the patron saint of the orientalists' main book review organ, the *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*, and Jeremias and his colleagues sought to cultivate non-academic audiences by launching popular ventures like the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*, a series of short books for lay readers which were intended especially for students and women.[23] They were aided materially by the fact that a group of publishers—Eugen Diederichs Verlag and B. G. Teubner Verlag, to cite only the most important—now eagerly sought out modernist iconoclasts, especially those peddling experimental or revitalized religious orientations, while others—like the publishers of the *Volksbücher*, first Gebauer-Schwetschke Verlag, then P. Siebeck Verlag—saw potential profits in these popularizing endeavors.[24] This was a revolt against the liberal fathers not only in ideas, but also in cultural tactics.

Undoubtedly the pivotal events in the Panbabylonists' crusade were Delitzsch's first two "Babylon and the Bible" lectures, given before the Deutsch-Orient Gesellschaft—a high-society patronage organization to which numerous important businessmen, political leaders and even the Kaiser belonged—in 1902 and 1903. As numerous polemicists argued later, the content of these lectures was, for those engaged in specialized research in the field, not particularly new; as in his previous publications, Delitzsch attempted to demonstrate Assyrian origins for numerous Old Testament concepts (e.g. the Sabbath, the name of

22 Peter Jensen, *Das Gilgamesh-Epos in der Weltliteratur*, vol. 1 (Strasbourg, 1906), viii.

23 See Nittert Janssen, *Theologie fürs Volk: Eine Untersuchung über den Einfluß der Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule auf die Popularisierung der theologischen Forschung vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des kirchlichen Liberalismus in der lutherischen Landeskirche Hannovers* (Göttingen, 1993), esp. 156–7.

24 On Eugen Diederichs's interest in religion, see Gary D. Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890–1933* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1981), 61–76. On the involvement of Gebauer-Schwetschke and P. Siebeck Verlags, see Janssen, *Theologie fürs Volk*, 154–60.

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God, monotheism), and to suggest the superior moral qualities of the Assyrians. What created a sensation, indeed even an "affair," was the public demonstration that orientalist scholarship contradicted and indeed could replace the Old Testament—and the clergymen who preached it. The vigor of Delitzsch's critique surprised even Eduard Meyer, who wrote to a friend shortly after the second lecture: "He demonstrated to the Kaiser and the Kaiserin, in addition to the whole court including the Chancellor, more energetically than I had ever expected, the religious, political and intellectual inferiority of the Old Testament . . ."[25] Nor did the clergy (or the Kaiser) expect the vehemence, particularly of this second lecture, and an enormous flood of books and pamphlets appeared, most of them criticizing Delitzsch.[26] The Kaiser, as titular head of the Protestant churches, was compelled to distance himself from Delitzsch's position, which he did rather grudgingly (he thought the "chosen people" deserved taking down a peg), but Delitzsch was neither burnt (like Giordano Bruno) nor dismissed (like many a young Hegelian) for his radical claims.[27] He continued to serve as Berlin chair, and director of the Asia Minor section of the Royal Museums, until his death in 1921.

Historians of theology have written about the Babel/Bibel Affair, but the wider cultural significance of Panbabylonism remains to be studied. If public debate fizzled by about 1905, there were strong echoes of it long afterwards, both in theology and in the humanities more generally. The propaganda efforts certainly did not let up: in 1907, Winckler established a journal explicitly dedicated to the cause, entitled *Im Kampfe um den alten Orient*. He and his minions also carried the feud into the *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*. Few readers seem really to have adopted the grand narrative the most fervent of these orientalists laid out. But what was convincing in their program was the critique of the traditional study of the East based exclusively on Greek and Christian sources; as cuneiform readers, the Panbabylonists were uniquely able to attack the older scholarship, and they made the most of their special comprehension of this much less familiar Orient.[28]

25 Eduard Meyer to Georg Wissowa, Jan. 13, 1903, quoted in Christhard Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leiden, 1988), 166, no. 78.

26 By 1905, the first lecture had sold 60,000 copies and the second 45,000; some 1,650 articles and 28 pamphlets appeared in the next two years. Reinhard G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel-Streit* (Göttingen, 1994), 50; Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel: Ein Rückblick und Ausblick* (Stuttgart, 1904), 3, 50.

27 Geoffrey G. Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York, 1981), 255–9.

28 E.g. Hugo Winckler, "Der alte Orient und die Geschichtsforschung," *Mitteilungen der vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft* 1 (1906), 17–18.

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It is an interesting tribute to the enduring memory of the Hermetic tradition, and its emphasis on *Egyptian* wisdom, that this critique was voiced most explicitly in a denunciation of Egyptology.[29] Winckler also discovered extensive material proof of the primacy of Assyria in his excavations at Boghazkoi (ancient Hattusha) after 1906, in which he and a few minions dug up another huge cache of letters—in cuneiform—linking the Egyptian, Hittite, and Assyrian empires. What others had called his "fantasies," Winckler exulted in 1907, had now become the stuff of science.[30]

In the hands of men like Winckler and Jeremias, this oriental "universalism" was meant to establish the superior qualifications of the Assyriologist to speak for the Orient, or even humankind, as a whole—a claim they had to make, not incidentally, against the burgeoning occultist movement as well as against the Judeo-Christian tradition. Panbabylonism by 1910 surely had won plenty of at least partial defenders as well as antagonists in the academic community, and was central to the launching of a grand debate on the origins of science as well as myth, to which scholars such as Franz Boll, F. X. Kugler, and Otto Neugebauer would contribute. But if this debate tended to produce fair-minded assessments of Eastern and Western contributions, the thrust of Panbabylonist history, as Max Weber perceived, took the movement in a different direction. In his essays on *Ancient Judaism*, published between 1917 and 1919, Weber called Panbabylonism "culture-historical universalism," but shrewdly identified two major features of the theory: (1) though supposedly universalist, it was really the creation of diffusionist-minded philologists, and as such, it radically opposed the "ethnographic universalism" of British scholars like Robertson Smith and Max Müller; (2) if it posed in the sharpest terms the question of "the indubitable peculiarity of Israelite religious development," it tended to answer this question in anything but a neutral way.[31] Weber's suspicions were certainly borne out by Delitzsch's final work, a two-volume diatribe entitled *The Great Deception* (1920–21), in which the aged Assyriologist—whom detractors, since childhood, had called a "Judenenkel"[32]—tried to prove that Jesus had in fact been a Galilean Aryan, and not a Jew. Championed too by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, this view obtained wide popularity among right-wing Christians, including the exiled

29 See Alfred Jeremias, *Die Panbabylonisten: Der Alte Orient und die aegyptische Religion*, vol. 1, *Im Kampfe um den alten Orient* (Leipzig, 1907), 21–2.

30 Hugo Winckler, *Die jüngsten Kämpfer wider den Panbabylonismus* (*Im Kampfe um den alten Orient* 2) (Leipzig, 1907), 71–3.

31 Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (London, 1952), 427–8.

32 Rumor had it that Friedrich's father, Franz, a noted Hebraist, was the illegitimate son of a Jewish boarder who roomed with the family. Cooper, "Sumerian Question," 56 n. 56.

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Kaiser.[33] In this light, Weber's essays, like Thomas Mann's "Joseph" novels and Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, can clearly be seen as an attempt to defend the world historical importance of Judaism in the face of Panbabylonist and other attempts to cut away these "oriental" roots from Europe's family tree.[34]

If inordinately proud of Assyria's achievement, the Panbabylonists did reopen debate on the Eastern origins of Western ideas, and helped to popularize the fruits of the "second oriental Renaissance" in ways that were both morally reckless and intellectually provocative. Precisely the same could be said of the work of another group of "furious" orientalists and theologians, which called itself the "religious-historical school." By no means was this group of scholars—loosely connected by similar penchants and training, but larger, and neither as coherent nor as unorthodox as the Panbabylonists—the first to devote itself to what we now call comparative religions.[35] But it did so in a way that departed, once again, from enlightened forerunners, and which reflected the inroads of the second oriental Renaissance. And, like the Panbabylonists, the German historians of religion by and large rejected the ethnographic universalism of their brothers across the channel. Their quest was not the newer search for the social or psychological origins of religion—but the much older one, for the pagan origins of Christian beliefs.

THE 'RELIGIOUS-HISTORICAL' SCHOOL, OR, THE DISCREET CHARMS OF ORIENTAL PAGANISM

Though German historians of religion at the *fin de siècle* busied themselves with the study of numerous world faiths, the most visible and consequential of their pursuits surely lay in the excavation of the sources of the New Testament. In this field, as opposed to that of Old Testament studies, orientalists entered as relative novices, contributing to a new round of powerful and painful historicization that had already been started by late romantic theologians and philosophers. Importantly, the Tübingen School, in the 1830s and 1840s, had

33 Wilhelm's letter to Chamberlain of June 3, 1923 opens with the statement: "My opinion is that Christ was of Galilean ancestry, and thus no Jew!" *Houston Stewart Chamberlain Briefe, 1882–1924, und Briefwechsel mit Kaiser Wilhelm II.*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1928), 273.

34 On Freud's attempt to revive the Enlightenment tradition of John Spencer and the illuminati, see Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

35 There is now excellent new material on early modern histories of religion; for one example, see Guy G. Strousma, "Richard Simon: From Philology to Comparativism," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, vol. 3, ed. Jan Assmann et al. (Munich, 2001), 89–107.

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made vigorous and, for their members, dangerous moves in this direction; here, internal philological critique (Greek, Hebrew and Syriac) and rationalist criticism were used to fuel bitter and intense debates about the chronology, veracity, and means of transmission of the Gospels. At the same time, as Susannah Heschel has shown, the Jewish theologian Abraham Geiger was hard at work on some of the same questions—though Geiger's Christian contemporaries generally rejected or ignored his attempts to understand Rabbinic Judaism on its own terms, as a vibrant and flexible faith.[36] Geiger can certainly be counted an orientalist as well as a theologian: as a young man, he had written an important book on the sources of the Koran.[37] But he was not, like his Tübingen School counterparts, a "furious" one, in terms of either attitude or source usage. Geiger did advocate using rabbinic sources (in addition to the Gospels themselves), but here, in New Testament much more than in Old Testament criticism, the findings of the first oriental Renaissance remained largely irrelevant, and, as in the case of Delitzsch's early work, the most radical claims did not reach either mainstream scholars or a wider bourgeois audience.[38] What the theologian Wilhelm Bousset would describe as "the transition from Jerusalem to Antioch," Christianity's origins in the wider Hellenistic world *beyond* Palestine was, again, the work of the *fin de siècle*.[39]

A central topic of mid-century debate was the role of Gnostic thought in the formation—or desired *re*formation—of Christian philosophy. Understandably, most theologians, while acknowledging some "oriental" spokespersons (e.g. Philo), treated Gnosticism as a Christian heresy, heavily freighted with Platonism—a view that is abundantly documented in the heresiological writings of the Church Fathers. As such, predictably, it garnered rather more respect from post-Renaissance scholars than many heresies, especially from those enlightened thinkers who preferred the philosophy of religion to the messy business of religious history and practice. Indeed, F. C. Baur's 1835 *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* defined two sorts of Gnosticism, an anti-Jewish sort (which he identified with the philosophy of Friedrich Schleiermacher) and a pro-Jewish sort, which had

36 Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago, 1998), esp. 186–228.

37 Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume ausgenommen?* (Bonn, 1833).

38 See William Foxwell Albright, *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism* (New York, 1964), 36–7.

39 Wilhelm Bousset, "Foreward to the First Edition," in *idem*, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville, TN, 1970), 13. This translation was made from the 5th edn, 1964; the 1st edn appeared in 1913.

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its culmination in the Tübingen School's hero, Hegel.[40] Discussions of Greek Gnosticism were important in the mid-century in the dividing, intellectually and chronologically, of the Gospel of John from the other three "synoptic" Gospels—the fourth gospel contains a fuller, and more "Gnostic," philosophy of religion than the other three—but the subject of Jewish Gnosticism seems largely to have disappeared. When the important liberal theologian Adolf von Harnack published his study of the second-century heretic Marcion in 1902, this context was missing. He, like his contemporaries, seems to have completely ignored Moritz Friedländer's *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus* (1898), which argued that the Hellenization of pre-Christian diaspora Judaism had produced the antinomian stance most important for shaping Christian Gnosticism.[41]

Harnack, thoroughly trained in Greek philology and himself a great proponent of the *laïque* view of classical antiquity, was willing to put the New Testament in Greek context—but he remained deeply suspicious of other, to his mind less flattering, forms of "orientalizing" historicization. He liked Marcion's Gnosticism in part because he saw it as essentially a Hellenizing, and rationalizing, point of view, one which could simplify the Christian message and make it relevant once more. In emphasizing God as savior, not as creator (something the Gnostics rejected, as the world was portrayed as intrinsically evil), and love rather than moral law, this form of Christianity could simply dispense with the Church's historical baggage and the Old Testament's contradictory voices. It was high time to take a step Luther had not had the guts to take, Harnack infamously argued: to embrace Marcion's excision of the Old Testament, and thereby to "clear the table" and give Christianity a rational, hopeful future.[42] Again, as in the case of Friedrich Delitzsch's Panbabylonism, it is significant that this Marcionism was being voiced, now, not by marginal and persecuted writers, but rather by the Chair of New Testament Theology at the University of Berlin, who was also overseer of the great edition of the Church Fathers, and a friend of the Kaiser.[43]

Reading Harnack's *Marcion* today, the author's combination of history and apologetics is quite striking—but his slightly younger contemporaries were also struck by something that takes rather more footnote digging to excavate,

40 Momigliano, "J. G. Droysen between Greeks and Jews," in *idem*, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography*, 315.

41 Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1990), 10–27, esp. 26 n. 41.

42 Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Darmstadt, 1985 [rept of 2nd edn of 1924]), esp. 215–35; quotation at 222.

43 Von Harnack, *Marcion*. But Harnack would not go as far as Delitzsch's *Grosse Täuschung*; in a note added to the 2nd edn, Harnack distanced himself from the view that the Old Testament should be completely thrown out (223 n. 1).

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and that is Harnack's reliance on Western (Christian and pagan) sources. The Orient was essentially irrelevant to the pursuit of Harnack's great quarry, "the essence of Christianity," and indeed in 1901 he would denounce the study of *Religionsgeschichte*, at least as a theological matter, and block the appointment of a chair in the field.[44] But in the years that followed, his view of Gnosticism, and his liberal-historicist theology as a whole, would face a major series of challenges precisely from the "history of religions" school, voiced most poignantly, perhaps, not by Friedländer, but by a classicist turned furious orientalist, Richard Reitzenstein.

Like many another classical philologist, Richard Reitzenstein had begun his career in the theology faculty; unlike most other converts to secular science, however, Reitzenstein did not forget what he had learned in his younger years. As a protégé of Theodor Mommsen in the 1880s and 1890s, he was already drawn to areas of the classical tradition not typically thought respectable—but the real change in perspective seems to have occurred as a result of a trip to the Orient, taken, too, just after the death of his liberal mentor in 1903. Upon his return, in 1904, Reitzenstein published his most interesting text for our purposes, a study called *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur*. This was, in fact, the first serious philological study of the *Pimander*, the first portion of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, since Isaac Casaubon's critical study of 1614; though Reitzenstein did not dispute Casaubon's post-Christian dating of the Greek text, he did insist that the material in it might reflect older traditions, and especially pagan, non-Christian ones.[45] In effect, Reitzenstein was asserting that the *Pimander* demonstrated the existence of a pagan, pre-Christian (and mostly Egyptian) Gnosticism—and even the existence of a practicing Gnostic community; he would later find another instance of this pagan Gnosticism in the world of the Mandaens, an Aramaic-speaking sect from the Tigris/Euphrates region.[46] This was a major, if oblique, challenge to Harnack's Graecophile view—as well as a rejection of Friedländer's Jewish origins thesis. Reitzenstein treated the Jews, rather, as recipients of Hellenistic

44 Adolf Harnack, *Die Aufgabe der theologischen Facultäten und die allgemeine Religionsgeschichte* (Giessen, 1901).

45 For a more extensive treatment of Reitzenstein's work, see my essay "From Liberalism to Neoromanticism: Albrecht Dieterich, Richard Reitzenstein, and the Religious Turn in Fin-de-Siecle German Classical Studies," in *Out of Arcadia*, ed. Martin Ruehl and Ingo Gildenhard, BICS Supplement 79 (2003), 129–60.

46 Naturally, there were numerous precursors to Reitzenstein here, from the Hermeticists to F. W. Ghillany, who argued in the 1860s that oriental religions, including Mithraism, had shaped Christian symbols and practices. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York, 1962; originally published 1906), 167.

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ideas from Egyptian sources, something that allowed him to admit the probability of a Jewish mystical Hellenism beyond the texts of Philo—but he did not give the Jews any special role in the development of Gnostic ideas.[47] However, the critique offered by Reitzenstein's associate Wilhelm Bousset was in many ways even more threatening. Not only did he take Harnack to task for failing to appreciate the preponderance of oriental influence in Gnostic thought; in his *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* of 1907 Bousset claimed that Gnosticism was actually a backward- rather than a forward-looking religion, and as such largely irrelevant to the development of Christianity. Still, it deserved study, Bousset argued, because the historian of religion, like the geologist, was duty-bound to excavate "the ancient remains of a bypassed religious past, to render it living again and to let it speak."[48]

That this was now possible as well as desirable was, again, the product of our second oriental Renaissance. As Kurt Rudolph notes, before the later nineteenth century the group of texts known as "Gnostic"—letters, poems, psalms, hymns, apocryphal stories about Jesus and the apostles, written by philosophical iconoclasts whom the Church deemed heretics—amount to fewer than fifty printed pages. In the next few decades, however, large numbers of texts were discovered, or edited for the first time, as European travelers and excavators penetrated regions beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire where actual writings of heretics—as opposed to Christian refutations of heresy—had, by accident or intent, been preserved. The new haul included the literature of the Mandaens, approximately as extensive as the books of the Old Testament, and the material known as *The Two Books of Jeu* (367 pages in its 1905 German edition).[49] The first actual Manichean texts were brought back to Berlin in the wake of the first Turfan Expedition of 1902–3. And, after Reitzenstein's *Poimandres*, it became acceptable to treat the *Corpus Hermeticum* as a species of "Gnostic" philosophizing. Thanks to the painstaking work of oriental philologists like F. C. Andreas, Richard Pischel, F. W. K. Müller, and Marc Lidzbarski, the heretics could now speak for themselves.

By using these newly translated sources, or sources like the *Corpus Hermeticum* and magical papyri that respectable nineteenth-century classicists had disdained, Reitzenstein and Bousset succeeded in expanding the study of Hellenistic religion, and especially of Gnosticism, much beyond the Mediterranean. New sources were brought to bear, including the Mithraic images lovingly compiled by the Belgian

47 Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1904), 181–90.

48 Wilhelm Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen, 1907), 7–8.

49 Theodor Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* (Halle, 1875); Wilhelm Brandt, *Die Mandäische Religion* (Leipzig, 1889) and *Mandäische Schriften* (Göttingen, 1893). See Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of an Ancient Religion*, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco, 1983), 25–30.

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scholar Franz Cumont. Carl Jung, who was, circa 1910, reading deeply in the works of Cumont and Reitzenstein, Creuzer and Albrecht Dieterich, found here inspiration to break with his "liberal" mentor, and to travel mythological paths that led far beyond the classical world, into prehistory and the unconscious.[50] As Hans Jonas would write of Reitzenstein's contribution some years later, "The freeing of vision from humanistic exclusivity was the decisive act. It sharpened the eye for the radically un-Greek in Greek linguistic or conceptual clothing of the age . . . it opened the way to see the 'barbaric' components as positive spiritual parts of the whole . . ."[51]

Naturally, this 'eye-sharpening' involved not just new sources, but also the perceived exhaustion of the old. The Greeks—at least in their rational, liberal costumes—had lost their appeal, and although an irrationalist, Dionysian Greece had come to light, this image could not entirely replace the worn-out Apollonian one. One can see this struggle to historicize the Greeks, and to emphasize the classical tradition's darker chapters, under way in the school of Hermann Usener in Bonn, from which innovative, but not irrationalist, iconoclasts such as Aby Warburg and Ludwig Traube emerged. This increasingly romantic abandonment of the liberal-era Greeks is reflected, too, in the prewar essays of another member of the 'history of religions' school, understood broadly, namely Martin Buber. In 1912, the Jewish theologian insisted that "of all the Orientals the Jew is the most obvious antithesis of the Greek. The Greek wants to master the world, the Jew to perfect it. For the Greek the world exists; for the Jew, it becomes."[52] Here Buber was clearly seeking to make Judaism more suitable to the neoromantic proclivities of his generation than the positivistic, domineering Greeks precisely by making it more "oriental." Reitzenstein in 1910 would even try his hand at orientalizing the Greeks themselves, breaking the Creuzerian taboo and returning to the subject of ancient mystery religions in a major, again path-breaking book.[53] New perspectives and new sources had flung wide the door to the East, and even for those like Warburg and Traube, who would not throw in the Athenian towel, classical antiquity would never again be so comfortable a home.

But these sources had their dangers. Dates for the texts Reitzenstein and his fellows used ranged widely, but even more importantly, given the often meager knowledge of Eastern cultural contexts, it was difficult to decide whether the ideas these texts contained were archaic or contemporary, indigenous or borrowed.

50 See Richard Noll, *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung* (New York, 1997), 126–36.

51 Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (Göttingen, 1934), 3.

52 Martin Buber, "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism" (1912), reprinted in Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York, 1967), 66.

53 Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen: Nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* (Leipzig, 1910).

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Here, omission was as risky as addition; in an important sleight of hand, Bousset eliminated from his portrayal of Hellenistic Judaism all non-contemporaneous sources, which meant that he excluded the rabbinical sources Judaism itself regarded as authoritative.[54] That these two, like their contemporary Hermann Gunkel, drew on oriental sources without actually knowing all the relevant languages made them vulnerable to criticism from the older generation, and indeed Reitzenstein in particular raised the hackles of the most powerful "liberal" theologian, Harnack, and the most influential classical philologist, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff.[55] But for many who had seen the vast cultural territory between the two testaments open up over the course of the nineteenth century, who had read the recently edited Assyrian, Persian, Coptic, Manichean and Mandaen texts, and new work on Buddhism and vedic religions, the "history of religions" approach seemed the only way to make theology scientifically respectable.[56] Here Reitzenstein was hardly alone, and together with scholars like Rudolf Otto, Franz Cumont, Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Troeltsch, his generation succeeded in breaking away from an historicist theology which had come to the end of its usefulness, both for apologetic purposes and for text-critical ones. Here, as in the case of Assyriology, there were both dangers in departing from older humanistic practices, and insights to be gained from expanding theology's horizons.

What most skewed Reitzenstein's work, and that of many of his close colleagues, was the fact that their longing to probe the lesser known, more mysterious world of the pagan Orient tended to diminish or destroy their interest in the more traditional study of the ancient Israelites and Hellenistic Jews. Hermann Gunkel, in the introduction to his very important book on the sources of Genesis of 1896, claimed that he wasn't demoting the Jews, just adding new cultures to the mix[57]—but this was not entirely believable, either for Gunkel or for his colleagues like Bousset, whose first book was entitled *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum* (1892). Indeed, the school of *Religionsgeschichte* as a whole suffered from its conflicting commitment to raise "pagan" religions to the level of monotheistic ones while still insisting on the superiority of Christianity, almost always without the prefix "Judeo-" attached.[58] The tendency was to emphasize commonalities

54 See George Foot Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (July, 1921), 197–254, esp. 241–8.

55 See Marchand, "From Liberalism to Neoromanticism."

56 For a good discussion of the appeal of this approach, see Hans Kippenberg, *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte: Religionswissenschaft und Moderne* (Munich, 1997).

57 Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen, 1895), vii.

58 See, e.g., Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis*, 96; Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (London, 2nd edn, 1950), 142.

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between Christian and oriental pagan beliefs and practices, something which meant a subtle demotion of ethics and prophecy (where the ancient Jew excelled) in favor of theories of salvation and festivals of rebirth (where they did not). Naturally, with respect to both source materials and ethics, this was a flawed attempt at universalization, and numerous scholars, Jewish and not, were able and willing to pinpoint *Religiongeschichte*'s shortcomings. In this context, it seems to me, Aby Warburg's perpetual fear that Athens (nineteenth-century secular culture) would be swamped by Alexandria (twentieth-century authoritarianism and irrationalism) takes on special meaning.[59]

In the wake of the Great War, however, the Orient was largely removed from this theological context, and often given a bigger, and more urgent, role to play in the project of deepening and cleansing the Western spirit. In neoromantic circles such as the one that formed around Hermann Graf Keyserling in Darmstadt, or around C. G. Jung in Ascona, the Orient was expected to play a rather different role, which, following T. J. Lears, I will call "therapeutic."[60] And here, at last, we return to the young Indologist with whom I began this essay, Heinrich Zimmer, whose postwar "coming of age" offers much insight into the transformations orientalism had undergone in the course of less than forty years.

THERAPEUTIC ORIENTALISM, OR, INDIAN ART AND WESTERN SELFHOOD

In an autobiographical essay written in early 1943, Zimmer described his prewar, hyper-positivistic education, in which he and his fellow *Gymnasium* students were fed, as he remembered bitterly, on stones rather than spiritual bread, while outside the classroom they had feasted on avant-garde delicacies—Ibsen, Hofmannsthal, Kokoschka and Stefan George.[61] Heading for a career, like his father, as a comparative linguist, he had studied Greek, Latin, and even Sanskrit, but without any understanding of these cultures, and certainly with no sense of their possible relevance to his life. Apparently what had made such studies appealing to his father—a kind of brothers' Grimm desire to understand the earliest Germanic culture and history[62]—did not suffice for the son: first of all,

59 E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London, 1970). Of course, this problematic also refers to Warburg's struggle to retain his sanity.

60 Lears uses this term to describe American Brahmin orientalism, in *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York, 1981).

61 Ibid., 246–7.

62 For the orientation of Zimmer *père*, see Heinrich Zimmer, *Altindisches Leben: Die Kultur der vedischen Arier nach den Samhita dargestellt* (Berlin, 1879; rept Hildesheim, 1973), v–xiii.

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the young Zimmer had been bitten by the Schopenhauerian bug, introduced most powerfully into *fin-de-siècle* Indological circles by Nietzsche's childhood friend Paul Deussen. And the young Zimmer wanted more than a positivist-historicist India: "The current representation of India," he recalled, "lacked color, depth, intensity, consistency, life. For years I was in search of the 'real' India, of 'my' India, of Schopenhauer's India."[63]

Although he had been absorbed, at the beginning of the war, in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* as well as a Chinese grammar, and his Schopenhauerianism notwithstanding, it was not Zimmer's reading but his war experience that made returning to this career afterwards seem intolerable. "The only benefit which I derived from my participation in the war," he recalled, "was a complete liberation from the authority of the older generation who had managed the war and managed it into catastrophe. I said to myself: 'I do not criticize anybody or anything. But henceforth I shall decide what I take seriously, if anything at all.'"[64] In fact, it took him several years after he returned from the trenches to escape from the mind-numbing work of pasting together fragments of texts brought back by the Turfan expeditions. He read J. J. Bachofen, whose work on primitive, especially maternalist, myths and symbols would provide him a "master-key" in the unlocking of Indian symbolism; he studied Arthur Avalon's work on the Tantras, material that had long been ignored by scholars because of its relatively late date and its erotic components.[65] And he began to study Indian art—and to take it seriously.

He did so, it should be noted, without having traveled to India, and without having seen the collections in Paris; but he had the Turfan materials before him in Berlin and, by now, decades' worth of English as well as German publications on Indian art and mythology. Having embraced Expressionism as a young man, and studied with the formalist art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, he was able to apply to the fruits of the second oriental Renaissance a new perspective, one shaped by his deep resentment against classicizing aesthetics and his rejection, too, of Biedermeier medievalizing. He was intoxicated, instead, with exotic India, "its dense deep fragrance in my nostrils, the jungle before me, unknown, perhaps unknowable."[66] In his first publication after his "rebirth," *Kunstform und Yoga* (1926), he dove headlong into Indian art and mythology, not, however, to seek the origins of Western symbols but to understand from the inside the function of Indian art. Rather than assuming a confident positivist pose, he insisted that this

63 Zimmer, "Some Biographical Remarks about Henry R. Zimmer," in *idem*, *Artistic Form and Yoga*, 258–9.

64 Ibid., 250.

65 Ibid., 256–9.

66 Ibid., 248.

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task was an almost impossible one, for Westerners like himself were conditioned to delight only in the illusory beauty of the external image.[67] Naturally his philologist mentor, Heinrich Lüders, was horrified; as Zimmer himself notes, he was lucky that his father had died in 1910, and the Oedipal conflict he now experienced with the generation he still was able to call "scholar titans" occurred at one level of remove. Lüders tried, and succeeded, in hindering Zimmer's career; "But," wrote Zimmer, "I had been reborn, and the price paid for it was negligible . . ."[68]

After Zimmer's "rebirth," his work rather rapidly moved from Schopenhauerian cultural critique toward a kind of philosophical therapeutics. This he articulated in two short sentences in *Philosophies of India* (1951): "Our academic secular philosophies are concerned rather with information than with that redemptive transformation which our souls require. And this is the reason why a glance at the face of India may assist us to discover and recover something of ourselves."[69] Zimmer's "glance," like that of his contemporary Hermann Hesse, was much more than a casual one: he did not relinquish it, as Goethe or even Deussen occasionally did, for the superior world of the Greeks. Indeed, as Wendy Doniger has written of him, Zimmer relished the peculiarities of Indian myths: "He liked the things that were not like Greek mythology."[70] Perhaps this was the result of his conviction that India was a better mirror of the unconscious—and its myths had important lessons to convey about the proper construction of the ego. This construction, it should be pointed out, was for Zimmer not an historical task, but rather a personal one: the situation of the king with the corpse, to take an example from a book in progress when Zimmer died in 1943, was "our" situation as well.[71] Again, the distance traveled in German cultural history from Humboldt to Zimmer deserves notice; and though there were indeed philhellenists in the 1920s who tried to reiterate the special bond between Germany and ancient Greece, the Greece they now found appealing was a much more chthonic, Dionysian—or one might say, "oriental"!—Greece than that of the liberal philhellenes.[72] Small wonder, then, that Freud in 1933

67 Zimmer, *Artistic Form*, 233–4.

68 Zimmer, "Some Biographical Remarks," 249.

69 Zimmer quoted in Matthew Kopstein, "Schopenhauer's *Shakti*," in *Heinrich Zimmer Coming Into His Own*, ed. Margaret Case (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 108.

70 Wendy Doniger, "The King and the Corpse and the Rabbi and the Talk-Show Star: Zimmer's Legacy to Mythologists and Indologists," in *Heinrich Zimmer Coming Into His Own*, ed. Case, 56.

71 Heinrich Zimmer, *The King and the Corpse: Tales of the Soul's Conquest of Evil*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Washington, DC, 1948), e.g. 222.

72 For an interesting discussion of Weimar-era philhellenism, see Charles Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and the Greeks* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), esp. 46–56.

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could muse, more than metaphorically, that his Athena "had lost her spear."[73] Rational Greece, for the interwar generation, had lost its originality, its aesthetic normativeness, and its exclusive right to shape the European self; it would never entirely recover from the shift in perspective necessitated by the second oriental Renaissance, and initiated by the *furor orientalis*.

But what then of Judaism, the other great ancient civilization to suffer decentering? As we have seen, those who tried to move in the direction of a universalizing of culture and religion often became critics of the supposed exclusivity of the Jews—and of Christian disdain for pagan achievements. Already in the premodern era, some of these writers, Giordano Bruno and Voltaire, for example, had turned this critique of exclusivity into bitter anti-Semitic polemics (from which the Churches, of course, were not themselves free). Others, like Pico della Mirandola and J. J. Rousseau, did not. The same could be said for our "furious orientalists," the majority of them falling into Bruno's, rather than Pico's, camp. But Zimmer, in lectures given in New York in the winter of 1942, articulated a vision that harks directly back to Pico's *philosophia perenius*. The exiled Indologist first invoked Dante's "Elysian lobby," where virtuous non-Christians such as Socrates, Cicero, Averroes and Moses linger, spared the worst torments of the inner inferno. A second brief reverie then offered a telling sketch of his hopes for the future:

> During the Renaissance, there was even a moment (represented strikingly in the figure of Pico della Mirandola) when the last walls of orthodox exclusiveness seemed about to yield, and Ovid, Homer, the Kabbalah, the Koran, were being found to be in essential concord with the sacred pamphlets of the Christian movement. Behind the variety of symbols, a universally constant, vastly sophisticated, tradition of human wisdom was joyfully recognized, and was on the point, even, of being officially conceded by the guardians of the "One True Faith."[74]

Zimmer's therapeutic orientalism may not have been politically correct from our standpoint, but a brief contrast between the work of his disciple Joseph Campbell and that of the radical racist Indophiles who remained in Germany does show that there was more than one possible culmination for the *furor orientalis*: it did

73 Freud quoted in Schorske, "To the Egyptian Dig," 191.

74 Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Washington, DC, 1946), 218–19.

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not have to end in Auschwitz.[75] It ended too, as it seems in Zimmer's case, in Rome.[76] And it also ended at Dura Europos.

DURA EUROPOS AND THE *PAX ORIENTALIS*

Dura Europos, on the Euphrates, was the site of a Seleucid, then Parthian, then Roman-controlled city, with a diverse population which included large numbers of people of Iranian and Semitic ancestry. The discovery of the site occurred in exemplary "orientalist" fashion: ruins were uncovered during the digging of trenches to be used in British operations against the Arabs. Those who investigated the site were all exponents, albeit less belligerent ones, of the *furor orientalis*: James Henry Breasted published the first photos and description in 1921, and Franz Cumont came to excavate in 1924. But the lion's share of the work, and the publications, fell to the great Russian historian Mikhail Rostovtzeff, who led excavations at Dura on behalf of Yale University after 1928. The discoveries during the years of his supervision would be the ones to turn the orientalists' stormy *furor* into more pacific channels.

In late 1932, the young American orientalist Erwin R. Goodenough, convinced that a non-rabbinic, mystical Judaism must have existed (beyond Philo) in New Testament times, took his speculations to Rostovtzeff. Coincidentally, the Russian exile had just received a cable from Dura announcing the discovery of a huge synagogue, whose walls, it was reported, were covered with paintings. Goodenough eagerly awaited the first photographs, which arrived in January 1933—a moment at which German orientalists were probably otherwise occupied. The images changed Goodenough's life, and inspired a grand debate on Hellenistic culture and religions which would involve many of the major founders of what might be called a *pax orientalis*: Rostovtzeff, Goodenough, A. D. Nock, W. F. Albright, Elias Bickermann, Arnaldo Momigliano, and C. H. Dodd.[77] In

75 Though, sadly, it often did: numerous orientalists collaborated with the Nazi regime. See Ludmila Hanisch, *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten: Deutschsprachige Erforschung des Vorderen Orients in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 2003), 114–73.

76 Though Zimmer's biographers do not address his religious inclinations, it seems from scattered evidence that he had, by the later 1930s, developed sympathy for a kind of Creuzerian Catholic universalism, which would fit, too, with his associations with the Hofmannsthal family. For some Delphic statements to this effect, see his "Some Biographical Remarks," 257; *The King and the Corpse*, 52; and Gerald Chapple, "Heinrich and Henry R. Zimmer," in *Heinrich Zimmer Coming Into His Own*, ed. Case, 84.

77 Erwin R. Goodenough, "The Problem," in *idem*, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 32–5. See also Neusner's "Editor's Foreword" in this volume. See William Foxwell Albright's attempt to balance the picture in *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism*, esp. 17–40; also Arthur Darby Nock, "The Study

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the work of these scholars the Orient, both Jewish and pagan, was given its due; the fruits of the second oriental Renaissance were at last digested, and subjected to corrective testing against classical and Jewish sources (some of the latter, such as the Ugarit and Ras Shamra finds and the Dead Sea Scrolls, were only just coming to light). Generally sympathetic to religion as a lived reality and weary of debates over *Ur*-origins, this group was highly critical both of philhellenists and of furious orientalists, and—as their historiographical essays show—keenly aware of the cultural consequences of taking sides. It was their mission, in books like Momigliano's *Alien Wisdom*, to put the "special" peoples, Greeks and Jews, into the context of the wider, now much more familiar, oriental world, without diminishing the "specialness" of either.[78] Similarly, since the 1940s and 1950s, art historians and museum curators have sought to make it possible to admire oriental art without applying a blindfold, and to understand Greek art in the context of its times. Thanks to them, Europeans and Americans seem now to be experiencing something like a period of peaceful coexistence in the study of the ancient Mediterranean—though there are subjects, like the origins and ownership of monuments in Israel or the Afroasiatic origins of Greek culture, that still excite passionate polemics.[79] Perhaps this is in part because we are living in an age that no longer cares so passionately, as the citizens of the early twentieth century still did, about historical origins. But as the Greeks and Indians always knew, and as the Romans found out, peace does not last forever.[80]

of the History of Religion" (1933), reprinted in *idem*, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Zeph Stewart, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1972), 337.

78 Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge, 1975).

79 The latter is a reference, of course, to Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afro-Asian Roots of Classical Civilization* (London, 1987).

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