

Eastern Wisdom in an Era of Western Despair

Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe

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The modern Westerner's problem is: to become, on a higher level of consciousness, *entirely* whole, as was the Medieval person, to a high degree, and as Orientals, in many ways still are today.

—Thomas Mann to Hermann Graf Keyserling (1920)¹

Perhaps it is our expectation that "Orientalism" has everything to do with European imperialism, and nothing to do with the critique of European civilization that accounts for the fact that no one has written a comprehensive account of the use of oriental themes and images during the Weimar Republic.² This is to be lamented, for the interwar era saw the publication of some of Germandom's most interesting orientalizing novels and most innovative orientalist scholarship; in fact, it may well be the era in which orientalist scholarship was closer to the cultural pulse of the nation than ever before, perhaps precisely because it was in the Weimar era that the non-specialized literati were most drawn to *Orientalistik's* longstanding iconoclastic, anti-classical and often neoromantic worldview.³ Regrettably, too, this essay will not be able to do justice to the richness and variety of this literature, which includes works by Hermann Hesse, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann, Bertholt Brecht, Alfred Döblin, and the scholarship of pioneers like Rudolf Otto, Heinrich Zimmer, Paul Kahle, Fritz Saxl, Richard Wilhelm, and Karl Wittfogel. But in what follows, I do want to introduce readers to a little-known aspect of Weimar intellectual life: the deep and serious interest many took in what was usually referred to as "eastern wisdom."

For the purposes of giving this inquiry some coherence, I will also focus on the relatively obscure alternative institution which called itself, rather pretentiously, the *Schule der Weisheit*, founded in 1920 in Darmstadt, an industrial town with an avant garde past just a twenty-minute train ride from progressive, cosmopolitan Frankfurt where, simultaneously, the much better-known Institut für Sozialforschung was beginning its work. The brainchild of the eccentric Baltic aristocrat Hermann Graf Keyserling, the *Schule der Weisheit* lends itself to easy parody; it was, by the account of one visitor, a "super-Chatauqua," attended by poet-scholars

with Whitmanesque hair and Byronic open shirts, bluestocking yoga fanatics and a not inconsiderable number of astrologers.⁴ Keyserling, a man who claimed to be a descendent of Genghis Khan, and really was married to one of Bismarck's granddaughters, was the philosopher-king and impresario of the organization, which he himself described as part Platonic academy, part Buddhist monastery; he could, and often did, talk for hours on end, and orchestrated improbable conferences featuring psychoanalysts, vitalist biologists, philosophizing rabbis and Russian theologians. And yet, the *Schule's* meditation lessons and lecture series also drew in scores of important intellectuals from across Central and eastern Europe, and was central in popularizing scholarly findings and translations of non-western "classics" produced before and during the Great War.

Though the group that gathered at Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig's Darmstadt residence had far less coherence, and much less camaraderie, ultimately, than did the contributors to "the Frankfurt School," Keyserling's endeavor was indicative of another powerful train of thought, one that offered a different, but perhaps equally influential, critique of European scholarship and selfhood. By focusing on this little-studied world in its early Weimar heyday, this essay will explore some aspects of the longer tradition of Central European orientalism, a tradition which tended to be not enlightened and imperialist, but romantic and elitist; German orientalist certainly believed Europe culturally superior, but they also emphasized, especially in eras of western crisis, the spirituality, integrity, and antiquity of eastern cultures. Especially in the crisis years of the late 1910s and early 1920s, this tradition exerted itself powerfully, gaining expression in works like Keyserling's *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* and Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922). There were, of course, many other, more derogatory or dismissive images and usages of the Orient in the Weimar era, evident in the parodying of the purportedly mysterious East in films or popular novels, or the degrading of Jews as "orientals;" and as Muhammed Asad pointed out in 1954, Islam in particular rarely received sympathetic attention, even from "spirit-hungry" romantics.⁵ But the story of Weimar intellectuals' appreciation for "eastern wisdom" is one that needs telling, for it reveals a little-known side of this era's cultural politics, and may also help illuminate what is otherwise a dark chapter in the history of East-West cultural relations, the chapter that describes the transition from the era of high imperialist hubris to the multiculturalism of today.

Of course, this story is not one that can be confined to the Weimar era, and indeed, it is important to recognize both the longer- and shorter-term intellectual trajectories which shaped interwar Germany's images of the Orient. It should be noted that Europeans—at least some Europeans—have always been interested in eastern wisdom; this tradition stretches back (at least) to Herodotus, runs through the Church fathers, and perhaps reached its zenith in the early modern fascination with Hermes Trismegistus, an oriental sage whose profound thoughts had been pilfered by Plato and perhaps even by Moses. Though hermetic thought in its strongest forms died in the early seventeenth century, weaker forms persisted in Masonic and Rosicrucian thought, and in efforts to find the first forms of universal wisdom, which continued much longer than one

might think. Even during the period of high imperialist conquest, westerners could not forget that the Orient had been home to rich and learned civilizations much older than their own—nor could they forget that Christianity itself was an oriental religion, and one based on two books of indisputably Near Eastern origin. The antiquity and spirituality of the Orient could always be used to pull the rug out from under classicizing, or orthodox Christian smugness, and a considerable number of iconoclasts and orientalists, from Giordano Bruno to Martin Bernal, have tried this trick.⁶ This is to remind us that if some orientalists, in recent times, have served as handmaidens to imperialist ventures, there is a longer-term tradition of oriental iconoclasm, one that confronts the West with its own limitations and cultural dependencies, and has often suffered persecution or ridicule for its unconventional advocacy of the wisdom of the East.

I dwell on these older forms of iconoclastic Orient-fancying as I am convinced that this search for ancient, often esoteric, oriental wisdom is a perennial one, one that has been going on, in some fashion, since Aesop adopted Indian tales. At some times it is a subterranean quest, censured or forbidden by the authorities; at other times, especially during periods of flagging western self-confidence, it becomes more socially and politically acceptable. Once the critique has done its work—or when the authorities and the public become alarmed at its implications—it is forced underground again. There is a process of cultural production here that should interest us: the more popular forms of orientalist critique are always constructed from the previous generation's more scholarly ones, as Voltaire drew on Jesuit scholarship and Bruno on the expert forgeries of Annius of Viterbo.⁷ In the case before us, we have to do with a preparatory stage at the turn of the twentieth century, and then the blossoming of a new form of neoromantic orientalism in the early Weimar period. We need to look briefly at foundations laid in the Wilhelmine era in order to understand how a certain sort of "oriental wisdom" was transported to Europe; this excurs into the past should also help us appreciate the ways in which intellectual exchanges between neoromantic seekers and indigenous nationalists created important streams of critical thought that could be mobilized against European norms in the wake of the war's devastating impact on European culture and self-confidence.

In a wonderful essay on the origins and context of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, Carl Schorske noted the cooling of Freud's affection for Athens and the Greeks around about 1904, and the new interest he began to take at that time in Egypt and the Near East.⁸ In making this turn, Freud was by no means alone; in the period between about 1895 and 1910 there was an upsurge in interest in the East, resulting in part from the sense that Graecophilia had become trite and banal. Tired of Athena, intellectuals sought a less rational, more archaic Greece, or turned to Zarathustra, Isis, or polynesian goddesses for inspiration.⁹ For some, too, the motivation for turning eastward was simply to stick it in the eye of the complacent classicist schoolmasters—or Protestant pastor fathers—under whose tutelage so many elite young men of the fin de siècle suffered. New discoveries about the ancient world heightened interest: the Babylonian Flood tablets, the Tell el Amarna letters, and the first Manichean texts, extracted from

Central Asian caves, all commanded widespread attention. Political events also spurred new interest in the East; among the most important, for German audiences, were the Boxer Rebellion and Germany's founding of its Chinese colony in Qingdao, the Russo-Japanese War and the Kaiser's widely publicized tour of the Near East of 1898. Officially, the purpose of Wilhelm's trip was to dedicate the German-sponsored Church of the Redeemer in Palestine, but in fact Wilhelm's visit to the tomb of Saladin made bigger news; his statements on that occasion were sufficiently Islamophilic that rumors floated thereafter that he had actually made the Hadj, and secretly converted in Mecca.¹⁰

In such circumstances, a few German scholars began to think globally—not only about the origins of religion, though that was a hot topic for the generation of James George Frazer and Emile Durkheim, but also about the past, and future, of human cultural development. In 1912, one East Asian specialist wrote: “The world has become wider in this last decade . . . Historians can no longer limit themselves to the narrow circle of European states, and touch on the world outside here and there with a few tentative words. The fate of the peoples of Europe is ever more intertwined with that of the peoples of other continents. The concept of ‘humanity’ itself is being widened. . . . Old Europe is no longer the middle of the world.”¹¹ There was, indeed, a surge in the number and types of global history in the first decade of the twentieth century; but there were still rather few who were able to escape from Biblical or Graecophile frames, or to develop their tastes beyond what one connoisseur called “store-window Japan” or another “commonplace bazaar trash.”¹² Only a very few wanted contact with the *real* Orient, unmediated by western values or tastes.

The late Wilhelmine era saw the production of two kinds of oriental texts which would have a powerful cultural impact after the war. The texts concerned are not histories or fictionalized treatments of the Orient, but translations of ancient eastern works already revered by (conservative) local intellectuals; the western translators concerned were iconoclasts at home, men eager to understand non-western traditions, if possible, *from the perspective of the non-West*. The first series of texts proffered ancient Indian wisdom, especially the sayings of the Buddha. The man who made accessible, and popular, translations of the Buddha's actual words was a now-forgotten Austrian intellectual, Karl Eugen Neumann, son of the Austrian tenor and Wagnerian theater director Angelo Neumann. At age nineteen, Karl Neumann had a life-altering experience: he read the works of Arthur Schopenhauer who, in his passionate contempt for bourgeois Christianity, had styled himself a connoisseur of eastern philosophy. Desperate to understand the great Schopenhauer's Indian sources, the young man returned to the university—ironically, he had first to devote himself to improving his Greek and Latin, so that he could be admitted to study a language quickly becoming an alternative European *ur-language*, namely Sanskrit. Neumann managed to drag himself through courses in Sanskrit philology, and by 1892, he was able to publish a translation of one of the key texts of Theravada Buddhism, the *Dharmapada*, verses attributed to the Buddha himself.

It is instructive that Neumann was drawn to the earliest and most original sources of Buddhist “wisdom,” just as generations of biblical exegetes struggled to identify the actual Aramaic voice of Jesus and classicists sought Homer’s authentic songs. His quest for eastern authenticity extended even further than did most of these quests, for Neumann became convinced that to understand the words of Buddha, he would need to get out of Europe, and study Buddhism in India—where, of course, it had mostly died out. In 1893, he went to England, and then, having failed to obtain a civil service job with a Maharajah, he traveled to Ceylon. Here he studied for a few months with Hikkaduwe Sumangala, one of the most renowned Buddhist monks of Colombo, and admired the local monks’ ability to discern the meaning of the words without any need for philologist analysis.¹³ In Calcutta, Neumann visited Dharmapala, a scholar who advocated India’s return to a puritanical form of Buddhism. Perhaps it was this on the ground experience which not only converted him officially to Buddhism, but also freed him sufficiently from scholarly philology that he devoted his life thereafter to translating Buddhist scriptures. He was also assisted in this by the fact that he owned his own copy of the recently printed Pali canonical texts, a present from the King of Siam.¹⁴ At first Neumann found it extremely difficult to find publishers for his texts, but in 1904, he collaborated with Richard Piper, also a Schopenhauerian, who was willing to publish the sayings of the Buddha.¹⁵ Piper Verlag would profit handsomely, in the long run, from the numerous editions of Neumann’s translations, though Neumann himself was still largely unknown and penniless when he died in Vienna in 1915.

The second set of “wisdom” sources for the 1920s come from a different source: from the Sinological work of Richard Wilhelm. Wilhelm sailed to China as a Protestant missionary in 1899, but was himself “converted” to Confucianism, especially after an important group of mandarins set up shop literally in his backyard in the wake of the Qing Revolution of 1911. Fleeing persecution, or at least confiscation of their books, Lao Naixuan and others settled in the German colony of Qingdao, and donated money to replace Wilhelm’s tennis court with a library. There the “Confucian Society” met for a number of years, and there Wilhelm began his work, together with his Chinese friends, on his compilation and translation of the *I Ging* (published in 1924), one of the oldest and most revered works of Chinese divination and philosophy. Wilhelm also undertook in this era to translate a wide range of other Chinese classics, including Confucius’s *Analects* (1910) and the compilation of his writings known as *The Book of Rights* (1911); Laotse’s *Book of the Way* (1911), and *The Book of Zhuang Zi* (1912). At first, Wilhelm had had terrible trouble selling his translations of Chinese “classics”; publishers doubted there was audience. As Wilhelm noted bitterly, “[T]he publishers devote themselves to singing the refrain: ‘We can’t do that, who here cares about China?’ Finally, one was almost ready [to commit]. He had just published [the work of] a ‘black’ philosopher from Abyssinia, and so, he thought, a ‘yellow’ philosopher might, under these conditions, nicely complement that.” Ultimately, even this lead fizzled out. At last Wilhelm approached the avant garde Eugen Diederichs Verlag in Jena. Die-

derichs took a chance on Wilhelm, one that, like Piper's backing of Neumann, eventually turned him a tidy profit.¹⁶

What is striking about the works of Neumann and Wilhelm is the following: the translators chose the oldest "classics" available, for, to put it bluntly, these were seen not only to be the closest to the pure expression of the spirit of the folk (on the analogies of the Pentateuch and the Homeric epics), but also, these were seen as closest to what might have been, in some secularized form, the primeval revelation. In many ways, the dream of finding the "key to universal wisdom" was not really dead, but simply transformed into oriental philology. These translations were also done with the consultation of local scholars, in Sri Lanka and in Qingdao, scholars who were most ardently in favor of religious purity and canonical authority, and opposed to modernization and to western imperialism.¹⁷ There are all sorts of ways in which these translations were the proverbial products of their time, and products of a shared, usually elitist, anti-modernism. But they also offered a less judgmental and much more extensive introduction to Buddhism and to Confucian thought than had been available to Central Europeans in years past; and they were, in some way, joint products of East and West. It would be Wilhelm's Confucius, together with Neumann's Buddha, which formed the core of what Weimar literati would think of as "oriental wisdom."

Before we circle back to the *Schule der Weisheit* and the Weimar era, I want to underline Keyserling's own formation in the years before the war. An omnivorous, cosmopolitan aristocrat, Keyserling ended his friendship with Houston Stewart Chamberlain and renounced Schopenhauerian pessimism—turning instead to Neumann's Buddha and Wilhelm's Confucius for inspiration. In 1911, he set off on a trip around the world, or, more specifically, a trip specifically designed to get him to the true seats of eastern wisdom, India and China, not to previous generations' founts of wisdom, Rome and the Holy Land. During his travels, Keyserling soaked in atmosphere and conducted extensive interviews with his mandarin and brahmin hosts in hopes of finding new truths. He returned to Europe with a new understanding of Being and of the limitations of the West's idea of selfhood.¹⁸ When, after his trip, he compiled his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, Keyserling made his motto: "The shortest way to the self leads one around the world." Full western self-development or *Bildung*, for Keyserling, could no longer be accomplished without encountering "eastern" wisdom.¹⁹

This was, to put it mildly, a minority sentiment in 1913, when Keyserling began to write his *Travel Diary*—but *Zeitgeist* would soon catch him up. The war had an enormous impact on German intellectuals' understanding of culture, history, and even geography, convincing Thomas Mann, among others, that Germany did not belong to the West—whose civilization was in any case doomed. During the war, too, Germans and Austrians made a number of overtures to anti-imperialist nationalists in India, Egypt, North Africa, Persia and Palestine in the hopes of cementing "friendships" against the French and British. The most consequential of these "friendships" was of course the German-Ottoman alliance, which provoked the Sultan to declare "jihad" on Allied, but

not Germanic, Christiandom. If Keyserling was an eccentric cultural pessimist before the Great War, by 1919, his sympathy for things oriental was right in style, and his *Travel Diary* an original, but not terribly palatable, psycho-philosophical cocktail, proved to be the second best-selling book of 1919—just behind Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918)—which, had it offered footnotes, would also have revealed its author's profound debts to the orientalist literature of the fin de siècle.

What made the East seem appealing in this context was first of all German certainty that the West as a whole had brought decline upon itself (a convenient way of avoiding questions about who had wanted the war in the first place). Secondly, a number of German intellectuals, right and left, shared a powerful sense that the colonized, or subcolonial world, was due to revenge itself on its former masters. We can better appreciate what it must have felt like to Europeans observing the colonial fallout of the war if we keep in mind the fact that most of this literature was written in the immediate post-war era, the period that saw, in 1919 the Amritsar massacre in India and the May 4 protests in China, in 1922 and 1923, respectively, the establishment of Egyptian independence and of Turkish statehood. Remember, too, that having lost their own colonies in the Versailles settlements, many Germans looked upon the travails of the other colonizing powers with a certain amount of *Schadenfreude*. There were some attempts, of course, to capitalize on the chaotic circumstances in China, Persia and the Arab lands by those who posed as, or really thought they were, “disinterested” friends or sympathetic advisors. The Hungarian journalist and charlatan Trebitsch Lincoln evaded arrest by going to China, where he became first, advisor to a warlord, and then a Buddhist monk; the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld helped spearhead the passage of an anti-western Iranian antiquities law both because he wanted to keep the French, British and Americans from pilfering or buying up artifacts at a time the Germans had no cash to spare, and because he believed the monuments should stay in Iran.²⁰ To take just one more example, having traveled to Palestine in the early 1920s, the Austrian journalist Leopold von Wiese objected so powerfully to the effects Zionist settlements were having on Arab cultures; he wrote essays denouncing European Jewish and British colonial politics in Palestine,²¹ and later returned to immerse himself in what seemed to him the primeval and deeply spiritual culture of the desert, and the anti-materialist, anti-classical truths of Islam. By the late 1920s, he had converted to Islam and became a friend of King Saud; working his way steadily eastward, he eventually became Pakistan's first delegate to the United Nations.²² All of these careers, and many more that could sketched, were proof that “the world had become wider” and that “old Europe was no longer the center of the universe”—and that non-Europeans, too, were actively involved in inventing the new forms, cultural and political, this decentered world would adopt.²³

One of the things that had changed, too, was that after the war, the postcolonial and impoverished Germans now actually had to care about the interests and indigenous cultures of the non-western world if they were to exert influence over them. In these circumstances, the romantic tradition provided important

resources—rhetorical and emotional—for coping with the new situation. The Central Europeans were lucky in that in places like India, China, and Japan, nationalist intellectuals were relatively sympathetic, the result of disappointment with the other western powers for their betrayal during the war, and in the peace negotiations after. Indian nationalists congregated in Berlin, and a whole wave of Japanese students came to German universities to imbibe anti-modernist philosophy. In China, Zhang Junmai, a leader in the May 4 movement, suggested that Germany might represent a third way between capitalist west and soviet Russia, and sought to establish linkages between Chinese neoconfucianism and German neoidealism.²⁴ But Central Europeans had to work hard, now, to convince others to listen to them. Attempting to organize an expedition to Central Asia, the world-famous Swedish traveler Sven Hedin could no longer simply sneak in by way of Kashgar. In 1927, he finally negotiated passage by agreeing to call his project the Sino-Swedish Expedition, and by taking Chinese scholars along. When they wanted an exact copy of a Lamaistic temple, they were forced to hire a Chinese architect to draw the plans. It is perhaps no trivial matter that the reports of this expedition featured actual images of Hedin's Chinese colleagues, as well as his local interpreters and assistants, and that Hedin himself would later publish admiring biographies of two Chinese leaders, Chiang Kai-shek and the Muslim warlord Ma Chung-yin.²⁵

The time was right, then, to look eastward for friends, and for inspiration: but for those who could not, like Hedin, actually get to Asia, what resources were available to westerners seeking to understand the “essence” of the East? The brief answer is, there was a vast amount of information now available about the geographies, arts, religions, and histories of eastern nations, and it is interesting that the group of moderate conservatives profiled below took the works of Confucius and the Buddha, in the translations that seemed least mediated by western norms, to be *the* classic statements of “eastern wisdom.” Karl Eugen Neumann's popularity, in particular, surged at the war's end. In 1921, the great poet and dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal devoted an essay to the obscure translator, calling his editions of Buddha's works “without a doubt one of the most consequential deeds for the German nation that our generation has done;”²⁶ and another elite fan described Neumann's work as an intellectual achievement “that corresponds less to A. W. Schlegel's Shakespeare than to Luther's Bible.”²⁷ Piper Verlag reissued his translations, and eminent cultural figures such as Albert Schweitzer, Edmund Husserl, Hermann Hesse, Stefan Zweig, C. G. Jung, and Thomas Mann paid tribute to his achievement.²⁸ Similarly, Richard Wilhelm's translations, as well as his Weimar-era works, *The Soul of China* and *Secret of the Golden Flower*, would be read by a huge range of intellectuals. Carl Jung, with whom Wilhelm collaborated on the *Golden Flower*, claimed that he had learned more from Wilhelm than from any other man.²⁹ Wilhelm became a fixture at Keyserling's *Schule der Weisheit*, as Neumann surely would also have done, had he lived long enough. What the *Schule der Weisheit*, and the Weimar era as a whole consumed as “oriental wisdom” was very much the product of the “conversion” and immersion experiences of these two men, Karl Eugen Neumann and Richard Wilhelm.

But, of course, obscure orientalist translators may make history, but they do not make it exactly as they please; they often need an impresario—and that, above all, was Keyserling's role.

We can return, now, at last, to the founding of the *Schule der Weisheit*, and the popularization of oriental wisdom in the early 1920s. Keyserling was able to launch his operation in 1920, thanks to funds supplied by his wife's fortune and his old friend Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hessen, who had himself visited India in 1902–03.³⁰ Importantly, Keyserling also had the endorsement of the publisher Otto Reichl, who printed endless pamphlets by school members as well as the School's official journal, *The Path to Fulfillment* and its pamphlet series, *The Candelabra*. Reichl did so, presumably, with little regard for circulation figures—for Reichl too was in Keyserling's thrall; again we glimpse the importance of the sympathetic publisher to esoteric thinkers. Those who attended the School were, above all, the moderate to conservative, post-Christian aristocracy and educated middle class intelligentsia of the region; commentators emphasize the School's appeal to well-educated women, and to those who, as Hans Driesch expressed it, "despite living in a republic gladly basked in the Grand Duke's light . . ." ³¹. As for their common reading matter, we can assume familiarity with Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, with Spengler and Thomas Mann. A goodly porportion of Keyserling's clientele also read more esoteric work, including books on astrology and alchemy, on vegetarianism and sex therapy.

These inquirers had little knowledge of, or interest in, works further to the left; they despised Marx and Marxism, and would have had little time for Brecht—even though he too was interested in China—or even for Max Weber (who, by the way, got his oriental knowledge chiefly from English sources). They were disdainful—as only reasonably secure people can be—of all forms of materialism, and reluctant supporters of Weimar's democracy. They tended to be anti-British, and after the war, anti-American (Wilhelm wrote to Keyserling already in 1912 about his attempts to "rescue ancient Confucian scholarship from the waves of anglo-American barbarism [*Unkulturwoge*]." ³² On the other hand, they recognized, as many other westerners did not, that, as Keyserling put it, "the pre-war prestige of the European and the Christian is gone." ³³ And they were not Nazis. Keyserling, though he flirted occasionally with forms of racial essentialism, rejected racial hygiene and Nietzschean nihilism, and despised the NSDAP not only because they were uneducated thugs, but also because he opposed militarism, and anti-Semitism. ³⁴ His project was about salvation from *within* the soul, a soul he believed could not be saved by politics, racial hygiene, or faith, but only by the transformation of western self-cultivation.

In founding his School, Keyserling hoped to offer others the same sort of "educational" transformation he had experienced during his travels; indeed, he surely had Rabindranath Tagore's ashram at Santiniketan in mind as one of his models for the school. In his opening lectures, Keyserling stressed the indispensability of western confrontation with "otherness" for the sake of spiritual renewal. If his lecture on the first day focused on western despair and alienation, the lecture on day two treated Indian and Chinese wisdom, emphasizing the

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East's superior ability to understand meaning (*Sinn*) and to perform self-mastery; only by following Laotse's way could Europeans progress, he proclaimed, quoting from Wilhelm's translation: "Act, without struggling."³⁵ The lecture on the third day was titled "Ancient and Modern Wisdom," and in a move repeated countless times by his contemporaries, Keyserling compared contemporary conditions to those of the period of late antiquity, as the Socratic logic of the Greeks was swamped by irrational mysticism (by which he meant both Mithraism and Christianity). Keyserling insisted that it was the School's intent not to let the mystagogues win, but rather to expand wisdom's scope to include the erotic, the irrational, and the Oriental, thereby avoiding the fate of the Greeks, the bankrupt scientificness of the Enlightenment, and the narrow-mindedness of nineteenth-century, philhellenic liberalism.³⁶ Only in this way could western individuals achieve wholeness and resist Spenglerian decline.

In his attempt to reshape *Bildung*, Keyserling pushed a program of what we would call interdisciplinary and cross-cultural experience; the *Schule der Weisheit* offered lessons in meditation and in yoga, but also invited philosophers and theologians to give lectures. But one of its most innovative departures was its issuing of invitations to non-European intellectuals, to attend conferences not as ethnographic curiosities but as honored guests. One of the first and most important visitors to Keyserling's School, in fact, was the Indian poet and novelist Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European to be awarded of the Nobel Prize for literature. Keyserling had visited Tagore on his travels through India in 1912, and now organized a whole week of events in celebration of the Indian sage during his first European tour. By the time he arrived in Darmstadt, Tagore was already a celebrity—so many students attended his lecture at the University of Berlin that the poet required a police escort.³⁷ Perhaps because he represented, as his son later suggested, a man fighting for *his* nation's freedom: "Germany then was a land partly occupied by the victors, and [the Germans] saw in this spiritual power of the Indians something worth striving for."³⁸

In any event, several thousand people attended Tagore's "June Week" at the *Schule der Weisheit*, eager to listen to Tagore, or better, to Keyserling's translations of Tagore's words, for the Indian sage seems to have sung in Sanskrit or spoken in English. What he said was, among other things, "[S]trive for unity, the kernel of all earthly religions, but leave aside uniformity, for God reveals himself in many ways in both East and the West"—sentiments which mirrored Keyserling's views and echoed the views promoted by Ram Mohun Roy and the Brahma Samaj in nineteenth-century India, as well as, in some ways, the much older ideas of Renaissance hermeticism.³⁹ Rather more provocative, and political, were Tagore's words in an evening lecture. As the Sinologist Erwin Rousselle paraphrased: "There are powerful empires in the East and the West, but on your side people have forgotten what an empire is for. Here the empty shell crushes humankind, and having become soulless such a land knows only one thing: power. Then such western empires extend their power into the East, bringing destruction and the poisoning of the soul. For to defend themselves orientals too will be untrue to the meaning of empire and want to counter power with

power.”⁴⁰ In this crowd, denouncing the West’s degeneracy and imperial expropriation was well received, and Tagore was deluged with flowers and praise. The Marburg philosopher and spiritual father of the youth movement, Paul Natorp, was particularly impressed, and wrote an essay (published by Diederichs Verlag) denouncing the evils of industrialized European society, and calling for westerners and easterners to work together as brothers in order to save mankind.⁴¹

Keyserling’s re-education project was rather less despairing than the related one articulated in Hermann Hesse’s orientalized version of the “novel of education,” *Siddhartha*, published in the terrible and chaotic year 1922. Hesse’s parents had served as missionaries in India, and his maternal grandfather was an Indologist; he had visited Ceylon himself in 1911. But his deep interest in, and attachment to, eastern wisdom (especially Indian and Chinese forms) developed in the late years of the war, and blossomed as he immersed himself in the translations of Neumann and Richard Wilhelm, and underwent a brief bout of therapy with Carl Jung.⁴² Hesse’s linkages to our cast of characters are extensive; in an essay of 1920, he hailed Keyserling as “the first European scholar and philosopher who has really understood India,” the only one who appreciated the fact that India “had to do with the soul,” and that “the Hindu way to wisdom is not a science but a psychic technique.”⁴³ Like Keyserling and Thomas Mann, Hesse juxtaposed eastern “wisdom” to western “science” and “philosophy”—but ultimately seems to have had less trust than the other two that the latter forms could be salvaged, and a new form of *Bildung* created. Rather than describing the coming of age of a striving western hero, Hesse’s *Siddhartha* narrated the story of an Indian contemporary of the Buddha, a man who learns to renounce book learning, material wealth, love and paternal authority to listen to the river’s “Om.” Hesse told a friend that he felt he had “reformulated for our era a meditative Indian ideal of how to live one’s life,” but found that even most of his friends did not understand the Taoist, Buddhist, and Hindu ideas he incorporated into it.⁴⁴ Perhaps the lessons drawn from this “wisdom”—and from the personal agonies Hesse was suffering at the time—were simply too nihilistic for those who did, after all, want to heal their culture’s war-ravaged soul.

Hesse, however, did harbor a vitalistic-apocalyptic hope that Europe’s turn to Asia would catalyze a necessary regeneration of European *Geist*; in several of his immediate post-war writings, he underscores the positive, reverse side of Wilhelmine cultural collapse, the birth of deeper and more powerful forms of spirituality in the context of “a passionate struggle for a new interpretation of the meaning of our lives.”⁴⁵ Inevitably, he paints this struggle in ways that primitivize Asia (a category in which he, like Thomas Mann, includes Russia), but also give the Orient credit for its superior antiquity, spiritual depth, and patriarchy-destroying power. In an essay of 1919, written as he was reading intensively in eastern philosophy and literature (preparatory to completing *Siddhartha*) simultaneously with re-reading Spengler, Keyserling’s *Travel Diary*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, he reflected:

The idea of the Karamozovs, a primeval, occult, Asiatic ideal, begins to become European, begins to devour the spirit of Europe. This is what I call the decline of Europe. The decline is a turning back to Asia, a return to the mother, to the sources, to the Faustian “Mothers,” and of course will lead like every earthly death to a new birth. It is only *we* who experience these phenomena as “decline,” we contemporaries, just as the abandonment of an old beloved homeland brings only to the aged a feeling of grief and irredeemable loss, whereas the young see nothing but what is new, what lies ahead.⁴⁶

“What we in our art, our intellectuality and religions have won, cultivated, refined, and finally made so thin and tenuous . . . through them we have nourished one side of mankind at the expense of the other side, we have served a god of light and thereby denied the forces of darkness,” he wrote in 1922. Embracing the exotic, he claimed “is not convenient, it is not attractive. But it is necessary.”⁴⁷

What Keyserling and Hesse shared was not only their heavy dependence on the works of Neumann and Wilhelm, but also their strong sense that western education was bankrupt, and that eastern wisdom was the only non-revolutionary means by which the discredited “fathers” could be removed and replaced. As the similarly minded Hofmannsthal put it, also in 1922, stepping over “the venerable ancient borders of classical/Christian *Bildung*” to grasp the stable, spiritual order and values of the East was the only consolation possible for a spiritually dead Europe.⁴⁸ Richard Wilhelm’s little book entitled *Chinese Life-Wisdom*, also published in 1922, offered the same sort of desperate attempt to find a cure for what ailed the West. What the East represented was not simply a spirituality to fill the void left by Christianity’s evaporation, but stability, and consolation. The title of Keyserling’s 1921 lecture series says it all: “Weisheit als Beharrung im Wandel,” Wisdom as [a Form of] Permanence in Times of Change.” This was neoromantic and condescending, to be sure; but it was also an admission of western failings, and represented an openness to other forms of knowing, and of self-fashioning.

It is difficult to measure the cultural impact made by Keyserling and the *Schule der Weisheit*; Keyserling certainly did his very best to blanket Germany, Europe, and America with his prose; he gave literally hundreds of lectures—at home and abroad—in the 1920s, and wrote endless newspaper articles, essays, and book reviews, and a large number of books as well. He drew participants from Schwabing, Munich’s prewar bohemia, and from Monte Verità in Ascona, Switzerland, an early alternative community which dabbled in nudism, vegetarianism, modern dance, and various forms of eastern spirituality.⁴⁹ He welcomed members of Freud’s circle, as well as university-trained philologists and neo-Kantian philosophers. Offering spiritual, rather than bodily therapeutics, the *School of Wisdom* offered a rather more respectable forum for the Ascona crowd and the psychoanalysts; on the other hand, he made it possible for a large number of what might be called “fringe” academics, people like the African ethnographer and inventor of “negritude” Leo Frobenius, and the Sanskrit philo-

gist turned student of yoga Heinrich Zimmer, to talk to one another, as well as to the counter-cultural crowd. In academia proper, there was still considerable resistance to the new ideas—Zimmer and Frobenius, along with a host of Keyserling's other visitors were ridiculed and marginalized. The *Schule der Weisheit* could not give them much financial support—and Keyserling himself was notoriously overbearing and his friendships of short duration. But surely the *Schule der Weisheit* demonstrated the possibilities for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural thinking, and for reaching out to the public outside the usual frameworks, in similar sorts of ways as did the Institut für Sozialforschung, or, for that matter, the Warburg School.⁵⁰ The most direct and formative impact of the *Schule der Weisheit* would be in the foundations it laid for the Eranos seminars, meetings of eminent scholars of the history of world religions, which began in Switzerland in 1933, and culminated in some of twentieth century's most formative inquiries in myth, religion, and cultural anthropology.

It would, from our perspective, be relatively easy to find lingering Eurocentrism in all of this work, and to ridicule many of these figures for their neo-romantic and self-interested pursuits of wholeness. But we have to think of the context: how many other interwar Europeans were willing to read the words of the Buddha, or to devote any time to thinking about China? And in the case of some individuals, like Richard Wilhelm, there was a very human side to the pursuit of oriental wisdom. Wilhelm made good, and lasting friends in China, and he respected their wisdom and scholarship; he tried to get the president of Beijing University, Cai Yuanpei, an honorary degree from the University of Frankfurt, and when that failed, he dedicated one of his major works—*The Soul of China*—to him. He and his wife Salome adopted a Chinese baby for a time when one of its parents died; the adoption would have been permanent, had not the Chinese family decided it wanted the child back. In 1929, in straightened circumstances and poor health himself, Wilhelm collected money for Chinese famine relief, and publicly denounced the Red Cross for taking a Malthusian attitude toward the crisis.⁵¹ Despite the pervasiveness of anti-western nationalism in China by the end of the twenties, Wilhelm continued to be admired there; at his death, Beijing University held a memorial ceremony, and created a fund to support erection of a chair in his name at Frankfurt.⁵²

In other fields, too, one begins to find Europeans, and especially Central Europeans, beginning to attend more closely to the voices of non-western intellectuals. We have established, already, the increasing popularity during these years of the sayings of the Buddha, and of the classic works of Chinese philosophy, but there was also a new understanding among art historians and archaeologists that the era of imposing western judgments on the arts of the East had to end. Central European art historical work of the 1920s was nothing short of revolutionary; not only was this the great era of Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky and Heinrich Wölfflin; this was also the world that produced the great scholars of Persian and Islamic art, Ernst Herzfeld and Richard Ettinghausen, and breakthrough studies in Indian symbolism by Heinrich Zimmer (Hofmannsthal's son in law) and in Egyptian art by Heinrich Schäfer.⁵³ One could see similar trends

underway in other fields, in the study of theology, for example, where Rudolf Otto's cross-cultural study, *The Holy*, would prove the most widely read work of theology of the Weimar era⁵⁴—perhaps because it defended the uniqueness of Christianity in a way that did not rely either on history or on philosophical rationalism. Classics itself was forced to innovate by the pressures exerted on it from the widening Orient, and as scholars of that field know, the Weimar era was instrumental in opening up both the hellenistic and the archaic, pre-Socratic worlds for study. Finally, the era experienced a Renaissance in Jewish scholarship and philosophy, spearheaded by Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, and Franz Rosenzweig; many of these German-trained scholars, too, emphasized what they themselves would have called “the oriental” aspects of Judaism.⁵⁵ It is regrettable, but instructive, that the Jewish forms of oriental wisdom and the Indian-Chinese forms rarely met, except, on occasion, at the *Schule der Weisheit*.

In a large number of fields, Central Europeans were learning to listen to the East's voices—albeit in neoromantic translations of their ancient sages, or in the form of anti-modernist wisdom of indigenous conservative elites.⁵⁶ Some had recognized that western imperialism was not only destroying venerable non-western cultures and traditions, but also that it was the duty of Europeans, as the Islamicist Carl Heinrich Becker wrote, “to replace the mentality of Asian exploitation with the recognition of the equality of the Asians, with all the consequences of this for Europe and America.”⁵⁷ Some professional orientalists and some novelists, like Hesse, continued to explore the implications of these ideas through the 1920s; but after the Weimar Republic stabilized in 1924, the wider culture moved on beyond the pursuit of “oriental wisdom;” even Keyserling's passions for the East cooled.⁵⁸ In general, the German cultural world turned inward, and “oriental wisdom” became, once again, something pursued chiefly by iconoclasts and specialized scholars. In the late 1920s, Richard Wilhelm found himself dragging his slides around from one small-town lecture to another, trying to convince fellow citizens that the Chinese did not eat earthworms and only rarely exposed their female children. After 1933, virtually all of the innovative orientalists I describe above would be forced to leave Central Europe by the Nazi regime, and would be little mourned at home, though their contributions to their exiled communities would be monumental. To offer just a few examples: Richard Ettinghausen, Heinrich Zimmer and Elias Bickerman would contribute greatly to the study of Islamic art, Indian symbolism and Hellenistic religions in the US; Ferdinand Lessing, a specialist in Lamaistic art and religion and member of Hedin's Sino-Swedish Expeditions, would end up at UC Berkeley, the founder, as it happens, of their East Asian Studies department.⁵⁹

Perhaps, as I have suggested above, the much-maligned figure of the orientalist needs a bit more nuance, and deserves a bit more credit for—in some times and places especially—challenging Eurocentric norms. Orientalists have often played an iconoclastic role, as did elite consumers of “oriental wisdom” in the early Weimar era, exposing those brought up on the Bible, the classics, and European literature to other worlds—though of course some have also helped to create derogatory stereotypes or assisted in processes of securing and deepening

of imperialist rule. In the early Weimar era, some westerners, despairing of their own answers, showed themselves remarkably willing to imbibe this iconoclastic orientalism, to entertain other ideas, and to envision other means of self-fashioning. Unquestionably, this moment of openness was born of post-colonial *Schadenfreude* and of neoromantic primitivism, it was hedged around by elitist hostility to modern mass culture and limited in its interactions with the rest of the world by its preference for consorting with conservative elites. And yet, it opened the way for an important series of critiques which illuminated the many ways in which European histories, philosophies, educational systems, and ideals had been built on narrow and prejudiced understandings. In a series of radio addresses, in 1931–32 Carl Becker described the sobering lessons he had learned as a result of his recent visit to China. He had discovered, for one thing, how very small Europe was, compared to Asia, and how little Germany's fate mattered to the rest of the world. He was made to feel just how much Europe was still suffused with the traditions and symbols of the Bible and the humanistic tradition, and how little even the orientalists understood of what he called "the confusing riot of Asian symbolism." "We console ourselves, for the most part," he wrote, "with the superiority of our cultivation, which we consider to be qualitatively "higher." One reveres the uniqueness of Greek *Geist*, but with closer contact with this Asian world one cannot help raising the suspicion that our feelings of superiority are built on the quicksand of ignorance."⁶⁰ Here at last was the modest voice of the West, one that had been largely missing since Hermes Trismegistus had departed the scene in the mid-seventeenth century, and one that would be forced underground, again, through the 1930s and 40s. But in the 1950s, the time was right for a rebirth. Diederichs Verlag began reissuing much of Richard Wilhelm's work, and in 1956–57, Piper Verlag published a three-volume collected edition of Neumann's translations from the Pali canon. The echoes of *that* revival of oriental wisdom have proved long lasting, and have shaped in various ways the multiculturalism of the present.⁶¹ Institutions, contexts, and even translations change, but as the new departures in world history show, a large number of Europeans and Americans are finally beginning to lend the orientalists our ears. And for that, we might, in some small way, have Weimar orientalism to thank.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented as the Eugene Lunn Memorial Lecture at UC Davis in May 2008, and I would like to preserve its dedication to the memory of Professor Lunn, a pioneer in Weimar intellectual history. I am very grateful to my Davis audience, and to Peter Gordon, Martin Ruehl, and Kris Manjapra for their comments, bibliography and suggestions for revision. I would also like to thank Ute Gahlings for her help, a number of years ago now, in negotiating the Keyserling Archive in Darmstadt.

1. Mann to Keyserling, 1920, in Thomas Mann, *Aufsätze, Reden, Essays* vol. 3 1919–1925 (Berlin, Aufbau Verlag, 1986), 8.

2. For the purposes of this paper, I largely focus on the non-academic and/or semi-scholarly uses of Near and Far Eastern literature and philosophy in the early years of the Weimar Republic. For the sake of expediency, I often refer, as my subjects did, to the vast and diverse cultural territory east of Istanbul as “the Orient,” using the scare quotes only when it seems imperative to underline the derogatory or dismissive implications of the term’s usage.
3. I make the case for this characterization of German *Orientalistik* fully in my book, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), and so will not restate it here.
4. Herman George Scheffauer, *The New Vision in the German Arts* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1924), 263–64.
5. On films, see Wolfgang Kabatek, *Imagerie des Anderen im Weimarer Kino* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2003); the (negative) stereotyping of Jews was, of course, pervasive and ongoing, from at least the nineteenth century through the Nazi era. Muhammed Asad, *The Road to Mecca*, 4th ed. (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae Book Co., 1980), 4–6. Actually, Asad’s preface lays out much of the argument elaborated in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). Space does not suffice here to lay out my disagreements with Said’s presumption that professional oriental studies, in particular, parroted the same “discourse on the Orient” spoken by all Europeans. See my “Popularizing the Orient,” in *Intellectual History Review* 17, no. 2 (July 2007), 175–202, or the introduction to *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*.
6. On Bruno see Frances Yates’s classic study, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); for Bernal’s critique, Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).
7. Voltaire depended on the rich Jesuit sources for his highly favorable portrayals of China and of India; see Willy Richard Berger, *China-Bild und China-Mode im Europa der Aufklärung* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1990); and Dorothea M. Figueira, “The Authority of an Absent Text: The Veda, Upangas, Upavedas und Upnekhatta in European Thought,” in *Authority, Anxiety and Canon: Essays in Vedic Interpretation* ed. Laurie L. Patton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 201–30. On Annius and Bruno, as well as the great early modern philological skeptics who reined in their phil-orientalist fantasies, see Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
8. Carl E. Schorske, “To the Egyptian Dig: Freud’s Psycho-Archeology of Cultures,” in Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 191–215.
9. See Marchand, “Philhellenism and the Furor Orientalis,” *Modern Intellectual History* 1, no. 3 (November 2004): 331–58.
10. On Wilhelm’s travels, see Thomas Scheffler, “The Kaiser in Baalbek: Tourism, Archaeology, and the Politics of Imagination,” in *Baalbek: Image and Monument, 1898–1998*, eds. Hélène Sader, Thomas Scheffler, and Angelika Neuwirth (Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag 1998), 13–27.
11. Curt Glaser, “Ostasiatische Kunst” Der Tag 6 Oct. 1912, printed in *Die Ostasienausstellung Berlin 1912 und die Presse: Eine Dokumentation zur Rezeptionsgeschichte, Bibliographien zur ostasiatischen Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland*, ed. Hartmut Walravens, vol. 4 (Hamburg: Bell Verlag, 1984), 53.
12. Robert Breuer, “Die ostasiatische Ausstellung der Berliner Akademie,” *Weimarerische Landeszeitung* 29 September 1912, reprinted in Walravens, *Die Ostasienausstellung*

- Berlin 1912, 40; Ernst Kühnel, "Die Ausstellung Mohammedanischer Kunst München 1910," in *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 5 (1910), 209–51, here 210.
13. Hellmuth Hecker, *Karl Eugen Neumann: Erstübersetzer der Reden des Buddha, Anreger zu abendländischen Spiritualität* (Hamburg: Octopus Verlag, 1986), 16–18.
 14. Like the rest of his largely unstudied life, Neumann's relationship to the king merits further inquiry.
 15. Hecker, *Karl Eugen Neumann*, 58–61.
 16. Richard Wilhelm quoted in Salome Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm* (Düsseldorf, 1956), 154. See also Wolfgang Bauer, ed., *Richard Wilhelm: Botschafter zweier Welten* (Cologne: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1973); and Marchand, *German Orientalism*, chap. 10.
 17. One of the European orientalists Neumann respected most was George Buhler, who had spent many years in India and spoke fluent Sanskrit. Hecker, *Karl Eugen Neumann*, 43.
 18. See Keyserling, *Über die innere Beziehung zwischen der Kulturproblemen des Orients und des Okzidents* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1913). It is interesting to note that this book too was published by Diederichs Verlag.
 19. On Keyserling's work before the war, see Ute Gahlings, *Hermann Graf Keyserling: Ein Lebensbild* (Darmstadt: Justus-von-Liebig-Verlag, 1996), Diederichs 17–119; and Peter Struve, *Elites Against Democracy: Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 276–90.
 20. On Lincoln, see Bernard Wasserstein, *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); on Herzfeld, see Ann C. Gunter and Stefan R. Hauser, eds. *Ernst Herzfeld and the Development of Near Eastern Studies, 1900–50* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
 21. Leopold Weiss, *Unromantisches Morgenland* (Frankfurt: Frankfurter Societäts-Druck, 1924).
 22. See Asad, *The Road to Mecca*; and on Asad, Martin Kramer, "The Road from Mecca: Muhammed Asad (born Leopold Weiss)," in *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, ed. Martin Kramer (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University, 1999), 225–48.
 23. For some more fascinating case studies, see the essays collected in Sugate Bose and Kris Manjapra, eds., *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
 24. Felber, "Das chinesische Deutschlandbild in der Zeit des Vierten Mai," in *Berliner China-Hefte* 17 (October 1999), 27–40, here 40.
 25. Hedin's works were translated into many languages, including German and English (he was especially popular in Germany, having been an ardent supporter of the German side in the Great War, and having many friends in the National Socialist party). The German translation of his portrayal of Ma was published under the title *Die Flucht des Grossen Pferdes* by Brockhaus Verlag in 1935; his biography of Chiang Kai-shek (published by the John Day company in 1940 as *Chiang Kai-shek: Marshal of China*) could not be published in Germany because the Nazis feared his portrayal of the Chinese leader would anger the Japanese. On Hedin, see Detlef Brennecke, *Sven Hedin, mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowolt, 1986); on the Sino-Swedish Expeditions, see Marchand, "Traversing the Silk Road in a Post-Colonial Age: Sven Hedin and the Sino Swedish Expeditions of 1927–35," University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Conference on Transnationalism, April 2006 (unpublished paper).
 26. Quoted in Hartmut Zelinsky, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Asien," in *Fin de Siècle : Zur Literatur der Jahrhundertwende*, eds. Roger Bauer et al. (Frankfurt: Klostermann Verlag 1977), 508–66, here 540.

27. Rudolf Pannwitz, *Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur* (Munich: H. Carl, 1921), 240.
28. See Hecker, *Karl Eugen Neumann*, 218ff.
29. Jung, "Richard Wilhelm," in *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*, German trans. (from Chinese) by Richard Wilhelm, English trans. from the German by Cary Baynes (London: Kegan Paul and Co., 1931), 151.
30. According to one account, it was actually Ernst Ludwig who approached Keyserling in 1919 with the idea of founding a "Gesellschaft für Freie Philosophie," out of which the *Schule der Weisheit* would be born. Margarete Dierks, "Initiative und Anfang: Die ersten zwanzig Jahre der Zweigstelle Darmstadt der Deutsch-Indischen Gesellschaft," in *Indien in Deutschland*, eds. Edmund Weber and Roger Töpelmann (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 1990), 296.
31. Quoted in Barbara Garthe, "Über Leben und Werke des Grafen Hermann Keyserling" (PhD diss., University of Erlangen, 1976), 268.
32. Wilhelm to Keyserling, 5 December 1912, in Mappe R. Wilhelm, Keyserling Archive, Darmstadt.
33. Keyserling, *Europe*, 344.
34. E.g., Graf Hermann Keyserling, "Warum Hindenburg, nicht Hitler?" lead, front page story in *Kölnische Zeitung*, 8 April 1932; also unpublished text, "Das Böse als geschichtlicher Impuls," 1936, in Darmstadt, Keyserling Archiv, Box 061, Nr. 0093. He did, however, long for an aristocratic, hierarchically ordered society, which made him look somewhat favorably on Italian fascism. See Struve, *Elites*, pp. 306–12. For a taste of his eclectic and intermittedly racist views, see Keyserling, *Europe*, trans. Maurice Samuel (New York: Hartcourt, Brace, and Co., 1928), 167–344.
35. Quoted in Werner Kilian von Tryller, "Die Eröffnung der Schule der Weisheit," in *Der Weg zur Vollendung* 1 (1920), 52.
36. Graf Hermann Keyserling, "Antikes und modernes Weisentum," in *Der Weg zur Vollendung* 4 (1922), 6–16, 42–43.
37. Dietmar Rothermund, "Rabindranath Tagore in Darmstadt, 10–14 June 1921," in *Indien in Deutschland*, 11.
38. [Rabindranath] Tagore quoted in Dierks, "Initiative und Anfang," 299.
39. On Roy and his tradition in India, see M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969).
40. Rousselle, "Rabindranath Tagore: Die Legende der Darmstädter Tagore-Woche (9.-14. Juni 1921)" in *Weg zur Vollendung* 2 (1921), 42–49; quotation, 46–47.
41. Paul Natorp, *Stunden mit Rabindranath Thakkur* (Jena: Diederichs Verlag, 1921). Tagore also epitomized "oriental wisdom" for many non-German intellectuals. See Nabaneeta Sen, "The Foreign Reincarnation of Rabindranath Tagore," *Journal of Asian Studies* 25, no. 2 (1966), 275–86.
42. See his letter to Richard Wilhelm 4 June 1926, in *Soul of the Age: Selected Letters of Hermann Hesse, 1891–1962*, ed. Theodore Ziolkowski, trans. Mark Harman (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), 136–37; and on Jung's analysis, Hesse to Lisa Wenger, 2 May 1921, in *ibid.*, 109.
43. Hesse, *My Belief*, 367. Apparently a Bengali professor of history in Calcutta paid Hesse a similar compliment, insisting that *Siddhartha* had captured in a remarkable and undogmatic way the authentic ideas of the Buddha.
44. Quotation: Hesse to Georg Reinhart 8 July 1922, in *Soul of the Age*, 116; also Hesse to Helene Welti, 29 August 1922, 117–18; and Hesse to Romain Rolland, 6 April 1923, 119, in *ibid.* In another letter written in February 1923, Hesse laid out his "credo," explaining that he had been forced to seek his path to God through Indian texts "because of

- the rigid piety of my upbringing, these ridiculous squabbles in technology, the emptiness and excruciating boredom of the church, etc.” He thought the Indian ways to truth “far more practical, astute, and profound,” but thought the truth itself, and the experience of it, was “always the same.” Hesse, letter to Berthli Kappeler, 5 February 1923, in *ibid.*, 120–21. Perhaps we have here another version of “the perennial philosophy”—but Hesse was deeply enough read in Indian traditions to conceive his alternative quest as exercising the Indian technique of *sadhana*, the seeking of religious experience through the study of other religions.
45. Hesse, “Our Age’s Yearning for a Philosophy of Life,” (1926–27), in Hesse, *My Belief: Essays on Life and Art*, ed. Theodore Ziolkowski, trans. Denver Lindley (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1974), 138.
 46. Hesse, “The Brothers Karamazov, or The Decline of Europe” (1919) in *My Belief*, 71.
 47. Hesse, “Exotic Art,” (1922) in *My Belief*, 124–25.
 48. Hugo von Hofmannsthal quoted in Zelinsky, “Hugo von Hofmannsthal,” 542.
 49. In 1926, Monte Verità was purchased by Eduard von der Heydt, the eccentric scion of a family of bankers and one of the first European collectors to value Chinese and Indian sculptures and paintings not as decorative objects but as high art.
 50. The idea of devoting attention to ancient oriental philosophy and symbolism was popular enough to appeal even to the deposed Kaiser Wilhelm II, who occupied his enforced leisure time by writing books about Chinese and Assyrian symbols, and who tried to organize his own little conference group in Doorn. See Cecil, *Wilhelm II*, vol. 2: *Emperor and Exile, 1900–1941* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 317–20. The expressly “oriental” interests of this group come across clearly in Wilhelm’s letters to Leo Frobenius, which I examined in the Leo Frobenius Institut in Frankfurt some years ago.
 51. Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm*, 354, 381, 388. Despite Wilhelm’s age and illness, in the late 1920s he and his wife moved to a third floor walkup, with no telephone, no central heat, and no telephone. *Ibid.*, 367–8.
 52. Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm*, p. 392.
 53. E.g., Zimmer, *Kunstform und Yoga im indische Kultbild* (Berlin: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1926); Schäfer, *Von ägyptischer Kunst besonders der Zeichenkunst* (Leipzig, 1919).
 54. Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 42.
 55. See, Peter Gordon’s intriguing chapter on Rosenzweig’s attempt to “orientalize” the Hebrew Bible; “Facing the Wooded Ridge,” in his *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 237–74. At the same time, too, the Bonn Semitist Paul Kahle was working closely with Jewish scholars from Eastern Europe to create a new edition of the Hebrew Bible, informed by the latest textual discoveries. Kahle was one of the first German professors to fully acknowledge, and encourage, cooperative work between German Christian and Orthodox Jewish scholars. On Kahle, see Henry Wassermann, *False Start: Jewish Studies at German Universities during the Weimar Republic* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003), 203–19.
 56. There were also highly racialized and bitter forms of *Schadenfreude* orientalism, such as J. W. Hauer’s *Indiens Kampf um das Reich* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1932).
 57. Becker, “Von Peking bis Damaskus: Eindrücke von einer Studienreise durch Asien,” in *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Dahlem, Nachlass Carl Heinrich Becker, Mappe 6788*, p. 5.
 58. Keyserling, *Europe*, 390.

59. On Lessing, see Hartmut Walravens, *Ferdinand Lessing (1882–1961): Sinologe, Mongolist und Kenner des Lamaismus* (Osnabrück: Zeller Verlag, 2000). There is no synthetic study of the impact of orientalist emigrés, among whom we can list also Paul Kraus, Joseph Schacht, Karl Wittfogel, Ernst Herzfeld, and Paul Kahle. For one recent attempt to judge the impact of this huge outpouring of talent and intellect, both on German *Orientalistik* and on the receiving cultures see Martin Kern, “The Emigration of German Sinologists, 1933–1945: Notes on the History and Historiography of Chinese Studies,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118, no. 4 (October 1998), 507–29.
60. Becker, “Von Peking bis Damaskus: Eindrücke von einer Studienreise durch Asien, in M. 6788, Nachlass Becker, pp. 2, 4, 5.
61. It is noteworthy that today, most of Wilhelm’s works are still in print and available on amazon.de, and Neumann’s masterpiece is now available on CD-ROM.