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The problem of understanding in the study of Indian and European philosophies in the book 'India and Europe' by Wilhelm Halbfass

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Declaration

I, (first name and surname) hereby declare that this thesis, entitled "The problem of understanding in the study of Indian and European philosophies in the book 'India and Europe' by Wilhelm Halbfass", submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Eurоculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the bibliography.

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1. Introduction

The broad aim of the thesis is to look into the problems of cross-cultural understanding between India and Europe and try to understand how (or if) they can take place both outside the mode of Orientalism and outside the notions of 'construction' or 'invention' of (non-western) traditions.

In the humanities and social sciences, debates regarding representational inadequacies in the study of other cultures and systems of thought have become more prominent.[1] In the present climate of debate, the overwhelming task is understood to be to counter the dominant representations[2], their deep embeddedness in language and subsequently (through language), in culture, institutions, and the political environment.[3] Accordingly, the question of whether one can escape procedures of 'representing' in the making of interpretative statements about foreign cultures and traditions has remained one of the continuing preoccupations for cross-cultural studies.[4]

However, as compared to the bulk of the literature that has been produced from this critical (often, 'post-colonial') standpoint, there have been few self-conscious attempts to move beyond the critique and take responsibility of a new self-aware constructive cross-cultural engagement. Among the arguments levelled against post-oriental criticism is that (aligned with their criticism of the Orientalists) they often tend to speak *about* the Orient rather than *to* the Orient by engaging with its traditions.[5] Attempting to move away from the radical critique of representations, Wilhelm Halbfass's book 'India and Europe' is an example of a work which claims to engage in a renewed, constructive dialogue.

The primary focus of this essay will be on Halbfass's methodology and its broader implications not only for Indological studies, but also for cross-cultural studies as a

[1] S.N. Balagangadhara points to analogous dissatisfactions with the traditions of the social sciences and philosophy that have emerged in the past decade under the headings of the 'reflexive' or the 'post-modern'. "Understanding and Imagination: A Critical Notice of Halbfass and Inden." *Cultural Dynamics* 3.4, 1990. Pg. 387-405

[2] Among the concepts commonly used are 'discourse', the relationship of 'knowledge and power', 'hegemony', 'neo-colonialism', 'construction', 'representation', 'invention', 'deconstruction.', etc. Wilhelm Halbfass, "Research and Reflection: responses to my respondents." In *Beyond Orientalism: the Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian and Cross-cultural Studies*, edited by Wilhelm Halbfass, Eli Franco, and Karin Preisendanz. 1997., Pg. 2

[3] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed edition (Princeton, NJ: Vintage, 1979)., Pg. 273

[4] "On Orientalism" in James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Harvard University Press, 1988)., Pg. 255

[5] Francis X. Clooney "Wilhelm Halbfass and the openness of the Comparative Project". Ibid., Pg. 37

whole. The need to study his methodology stems from a recognition of the significance and limitations of the present debates that depart from Said's works. In Halbfass's reflections on methodology the words 'dialogue', 'horizons' and 'understanding' emerge with great frequency. These words and their associational network of meanings, along with the notions of 'East', 'West', 'India' and 'Europe' are ambiguous, often overused and problematic in their general usage.[6] It is important to study what Halbfass means by these terms, what implications and assumptions are inherent in these terms, to what extent these terms are a product of the 'Western' enterprise and to what extent these terms could be used as an effective methodological guide for further cross-cultural studies. It is helpful that Halbfass offers a sustained reflection on the problem of methodology, not only his own, but also of the many actors that remain embedded in his history of exchanges between 'India' and 'Europe'.

Most importantly, Halbfass conceptualises the inter-textual encounters with the methodological principles found in the hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer's concepts allow Halbfass to articulate the limits and the possibilities of 'understanding' across temporal, cultural or 'traditionary' contexts. It offers him an escape from the problematic methodological principles that dogged Indology and the historiography of ideas from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century, while allowing a new way to talk about the tradition of Indian and European interactions.[7]

The first part of the essay will deal with the key ideas of hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer as presented in his book *Truth and Method*. Halbfass is heavily indebted to these ideas and it will be useful to bring out the key concepts and vocabulary not only to illuminate Halbfass's methodological approach but also to understand the potentialities in Gadamerian hermeneutics for cross-cultural historical and philosophical analysis. Two additional essays of E.D. Hirsch, one of Gadamer's most noted critics, and of David Weberman, who attempts to defend Gadamer's work from Hirsch's criticism, will also be looked into as they provide a useful vocabulary with which to understand the importance of Halbfass's 'applied' philosophical hermeneutics. The next sections will briefly establish the 'hermeneutic situation' of

[6] For a discussion on the "semantic artifice" of such terms see J. J Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment the Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997)., Pg. 7 -11.

[7] Clarke cites a wide-range of books across disciplines that are now relying on the hermeneutical approach to understand Western engagement with Eastern ideas and traditions. See "Introduction" in Ibid.

Wilhelm Halbfass, before going on to elaborate on how Halbfass attempts to appropriate Gadamer's concepts in the context of his book *India and Europe*. The fifth section will deal with the 'intrinsic content' of the book itself and will mirror the structure of the book by being subdivided into the three categories— 1. India in the History of European Self-Understanding, 2. The Indian Tradition and the Presence of Europe. 3. Appendices: Illustrations and Reflections. This is the main section of the thesis and will look into Halbfass's treatment of the large number of prominent historical actors, from Classical Antiquity to the neo-Hindus, who engaged with Indian and European philosophies from their distinctive hermeneutical situations. The next section will look into Halbfass's criticisms of the Saidian approach, found, among other works, in the critique offered by Ronald Inden's *Imagining India*. And finally, the last section will deal with some general points that can be derived from the study which could be useful in the context of future cross-cultural studies.

2. Gadamer's *Truth and Method*

One of the central propositions of Gadamer's *Truth and Mehod* is that 'truth' within and outside the scientific method can be reached only if the ontological dimensions of 'understanding' are fully recognized. For the two inter-related forms of understanding— the historic understanding and the aesthetic understanding— Gadamer works out a phenomenological approach centred around the key concept of *Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*, translated to English as 'historically-effected consciousness.'[8] Accordingly, *Truth and Method* is divided into three sections: 1. the question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art (which deals with aesthetic understanding and the possibility of truth in art) 2. the extension of the question of truth to understanding in the human sciences (which deals with the implications of the ontological view of understanding in the humanities) and 3. the ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language (which deals with language as the medium of tradition within which truth is revealed). For the purposes of this essay, it is not necessary to go into Gadamer's discussion on aesthetic understanding and the discussion on language; the focus will be solely on part two, sections of which are quoted at length by Halbfass in *India and Europe*.

Keeping in mind the attempt to come to an understanding of Halbfass's borrowings from Gadamer as also the larger attempt to derive broad methodological principles for cross-cultural studies, the discussion below will deal with 1) the problematization of the scientific method as a means to truth in the human sciences 2) the critique of historicism and 3) the key concepts of philosophical hermeneutics – namely prejudice, tradition, the hermeneutical circle, the fusion of horizons and hermeneutical dialogue. [9]

[8] For the different translations of the term see "Translator's preface" in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*, 2 Revised edition (Bloomsbury Academic, 2004)., Pg. xv

[9] While Gadamer's discussion is on the shortcomings of the scientific method in the humanities at large, in this essay the attempt will be understand it within the cross-cultural context, where the problem of scientific method and objective knowledge becomes more acute, considered within the framework of asymmetric cross-cultural relations. Thus Sections 1 and 2 can be understood as an attempt to foreground the problematic nature of the scientific method especially for cross-culture knowledge-claims, while Section 3, which offers Gadamer's insights into what he thinks the human sciences *really* are, could be understood as the concepts that would provide the basis for cross-cultural understanding.

2.1 The Problem of Method

Since Gadamer's point of departure is Heidegger's conception of hermeneutics as a happening fundamental to human beings rather than the study of texts, his attempt is to look into the nature of understanding that is not limited by the bounds of scientific method.[10] At this level, understanding is irreducible to methodological applications as it is impossible to separate the thinking subject from the object in the world.[11] By abstracting an idea of understanding that is divorced from the subject, Gadamer argues that the traditional theories fail to grasp a fundamental principle which is that 'to understand something is to understand it while returning to oneself'.[12] He criticizes both the contemporary tendency towards positivism as well as the 'methodologism' of romantic hermeneutics.[13] Even when the human sciences attempt to justify its methodological independence, he argues, they continue to remain profoundly influenced by the model of the natural sciences.

Crucially, any discussion on extracting methodological principles from Gadamer to apply to a cross-cultural context, must highlight his insistence that his project is not to outline a method with which a correct judgement can be discerned but to reveal what it is that is common to all modes of understanding— i.e. what 'always already' happens when one understands. He repeatedly stresses the descriptive nature of his work and seeks to move away from the prescriptive tendencies of previous discussions on hermeneutics: "My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing"[14] This insistence however, has been appropriately criticized, most notably by Karl-Otto Apel. Apel argues that over and above the prescriptive suggestions found in *Truth and Method*, any philosophical hermeneutics which would attack objectivistic

[10] Gadamer writes, "Heidegger entered into the problems of historical hermeneutics and critique only in order to explicate the fore-structure of understanding for the purposes of ontology. Our question, by contrast, is how hermeneutics, once freed from the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity, can do justice to the historicity of understanding", Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Pg. 268

[11] Gadamer borrows Heidegger's criticism of the Cartesian reduction of truth to certainty. In explicitly Heideggerian terms, *Dasein's* thrownness, for Gadamer, is not to be understood a hurdle to objectivity but rather the fundamental condition of all knowledge-claims.

[12] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Pg. xiii

[13] More on this in the next section 'Historicity and Historicism'

[14] "Foreword to the second edition" Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Pg xxvi

methodologies would necessarily have normative-methodological implications and not merely meta-theoretical concerns.[15]

Gadamer's problematizing of methodology in the 'human sciences' is important for the discussion on Halbfass's appropriation of Gadamer, in particular, and the foundations of a methodology in cross-cultural studies, in general. The question of whether indeed there is a 'Gadamerian method' and consequently a 'Halbfassian' method can be raised in this context. Related questions on the 'significance' of Gadamer's insistence on not reducing the problem of inter-traditionary understanding to a problem of methodology *per se* can also be raised. Lastly, the insufficiency of objectivity as a guiding yet unattainable *ideal* and the reasons for the unattainability of objectivity need to be clarified. A discussion on Gadamer's forceful criticisms of the dominant methods in the humanities (and by derivation, in cross-cultural studies) will shed some light on these crucial questions.

2.2 Historicism and Historicity

Gadamer's criticism is directed towards the two dominant kinds of historicism: the teleology of Hegelian-Marxist historicism as well as the *verstehen* historicism of Schleiermacher and Dilthey.[16] Both these historicisms, Gadamer argues, in effect, condescend towards the past and do not elucidate the real nature of the knower's attempt to understand. They work against the potentiality of 'pastness' and 'otherness' to *teach* us something and dissembles what the knower himself/herself brings to the act of understanding. While his criticism of the Hegelian-Marxist historicism (the prototype of Saidian critiques of Orientalism) is directed towards the embedding of historical actors and events in a teleology towards a particular objective, thereby reducing history to a definitive non-history, his criticisms of *verstehen* historicism are more illuminating, especially for the cross-cultural context of this essay.

[15] In his response to Apel's criticism, Gadamer does acknowledge that a false scientific self-understanding will necessary affect practice and therefore hermeneutic insights would ultimately affect scientific research as well, but he remained tied to his view of hermeneutics as descriptive project. Jack Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate," *New German Critique*, no. 18 (October 1, 1979): 44–73, doi:10.2307/487850., Pg. 58

[16] See Koula Mellos, *The Fragility of Freedom Gadamerian*. Paidea World Philosophy Conference. 1998

The guiding principle for romantic hermeneutics since Schleiermacher, particularly for historicists such as Dilthey was to "understand a writer better than he understood himself."[17] Dilthey especially was never able to free himself from the concepts of 'empathy', 'transposition' and 're-experiencing' and thereby unable to do justice to the historical embeddedness of the knower.[18] The 'quasi-positivist' act of understanding attempts to achieve 'simultaneity' with the object and is to be seen as a reconstruction of the original production– i.e. the trajectory is from an unconscious production to a conscious reproduction.[19]

Gadamer's criticism of this historicism is thus directed towards the premise that one can suspend one's fore-judgements and one's subjectivity in order to enter into the mindset of an author embedded in some other time and place. He argues that the knower cannot factor himself out, that the knower, as a 'historical creature', can only think and function within one's horizon and recognize that one is coming face-to-face with another horizon and thereby try to bridge the two horizons.[20] Rather than placing the interpreter at the same level as the author, Gadamerian hermeneutics ultimately aims to fore-ground the difference created by temporal (or cultural) distance. He writes, "Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose contents interests the age in which it seeks to understand itself."[21] The meaning of the text thus necessarily goes beyond the author and his or her intended audience.[22] Understanding its truth-claims is thereby never a mere reproductive act, but is necessarily a productive act. This was the crucial element missing in historicism— it failed to take into account its own historicity.[23]

[17] The critical insufficiency of such an understanding towards a distant 'Other' is obvious, but it is useful to note that Gadamer's criticism is not only ethical but also ontological. The quote is sourced from Anders Odenstedt, *Tradition and Truth*. *Dilthey and Gadamer on the history of philosophy*. Lychnos, 2006, pg. 165

[18] Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate.", Pg. 51

[19] Ibid., Pg 51

[20] More on Horizons in 2.3 'Elements of a theory of hermeneutical experience'

[21] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Ibid., Pg. 296 Additionally, Mendelson points to Gadamer's reference to the 'great works' in the human sciences, each of which 'betray the hermeneutical situation in which they were written' since the preoccupations of each epoch inevitably enters into the work of scholarship.

[22] Weberman clarifies the ambiguities of Gadamer's anti-objectivist stance by arguing that the lack of an object-in-itself in the human sciences is *solely* because the knower's horizon is 'constitutive' of the 'object' being studied. See David Weberman, "A New Defense of Gadamer's Hermeneutics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60, no. 1 (January 2000): 45, doi:10.2307/2653427.

[23] Ibid., Pg. 300

Thus he writes, historicism, despite its critique of rationalism and natural law philosophy, is based on the modern Enlightenment and comes to unwittingly shares its prejudices.[24] Here, it may be useful to place Saidian criticisms of the 'quasi-positivist' human sciences, particularly 'academic Orientalism'. While Said argued against the unacknowledged presence of prejudice in the knowledge produced by the European 'tradition', Gadamer is arguing for the inevitable presence of 'some' prejudices in all knowledge-claims, which need to be fore-grounded. Here, Habermas's crucial criticism of Gadamer of 'absolutizing' hermeneutic understanding at the expense of critical reflection may be raised.[25] To what extent does Gadamerian hermeneutics deny the presence of *asymmetric* relations and dialogue among traditions in the name of salvaging the historicity of the concerned traditions? One of the key questions in transposing Gadamer's concepts to the cross-cultural realm, especially in comparison with Saidian critical approaches, comes to be of Gadamer's interpretation of the role of prejudice and tradition.

2.3 Elements of a theory of hermeneutic experience

2.3.1 Prejudice and Tradition

"The fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, thereby denying tradition its power."[26] Gadamer argues that prior to the Enlightenment 'pre-judice' referred to the initial judgement before all the elements that come to determine a situation have been thoroughly examined. The Enlightenment and it's assertion against the dogmatic interpretation of the Bible, takes an 'unfounded reason' to be the ultimate source of authority. He writes, "If we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being, it is necessary to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice and acknowledge the fact that there are legitimate prejudices."[27] The way to avoid the entry of arbitrary fore-judgements or the "tyranny of hidden prejudices" is thereby to make them conscious and examine their validity while remaining open to the possibility that they will "prove empty in the encounter with the

[24] Ibid., Pg. 272
[25] Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate."
[26] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Pg. 273
[27] Ibid., Pg. 278

text."[28] All understanding therefore, inevitably involves some prejudices, i.e. 'never fully objectifiable fore-meanings.'[29] Rather than claiming to eliminate all prejudice with reason and reflection, what is required is recognition of their limited possibilities.

"The idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms— i.e., it is not its own master but always remains dependent on the given circumstance in which it participates [...] In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it [...] the individual's self-reflection is only a flickering in the closed-circuits of historical life."[30]

However, Gadamer's critique of the Enlightenment is not to be understood as a reinstitution of tradition at the expense of reason. He insists that an unconditional and absolute anti-thesis of reason and tradition is untenable.[31] Tradition is not simply background knowledge, but a *happening* that is "affirmed, embraced and cultivated" through acts of reason or historical reflection.[32]

In the realm of cross-cultural studies, the recognition that all understanding rather than being far removed from prejudices is fundamentally *addressed* by it has important consequences.[33] Though this seems to be an inversion of critical approaches[34], there is a need for some semantic clarification. As Weberman notes, it may be more appropriate to translate Gadamer's *'Vorurteil'* as 'pre-judgment', rather than 'prejudice'; the pejorative connotations of 'prejudice' and the 'unfair, one-sided and discriminatory types of thinking' are not what Gadamer intends to restitute. Rather, he wishes to emphasize the initial links between the object of study and the tradition that exists at the beginning of research as well as its end: "in choosing a theme to be investigated,

[28] Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate." Pg. 55
[29] Ibid., Pg. 53
[30] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*, Pg. 276
[31] He refers to the romantic 'correction' of the Enlightenment, in that it tries to rehabilitate tradition as having a justification that lies beyond rational grounding and that in large measure comes to determine institutions and attitudes. However, it goes too far, in that tradition and reason come to be seen as incompatible.
[32] Ibid., Pg. 282
[33] Ibid., Pg. 283
[34] The debates between Gadamer and Habermas are illuminating in this context. Habermas argues that Gadamer underestimates the power of reflection and its ability to undermine the force of pre-structures on understanding. Gadamer in turn accuses Habermas of resurrecting the abstract binary between reason and tradition and not acknowledging that reflection remains situated in tradition, that reflection can bring to the fore "something, but not everything" and that effective-historical consciousness is thus "inescapably more *being* than consciousness." Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate.", Pg. 61

awakening the desire to investigate, gaining a new problematic."[35] Thus, he argues, "Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which the past and the present are constantly mediated."[36]

2.3.2 The Hermeneutic Situation and the Fusion of Horizons

Gadamer argues that one's understanding (and interpretation) of a particular subject stands in the tradition of previous interpretations of the same subject. The chain of interpretations that links the subject to the object represents the "effects" to which the knower is bound to and constitutes the 'hermeneutical situation' of the knower.[37] To avoid the illusion of immediacy, it becomes necessary to 'thematize' the knower's own 'effective-history'. Thus, "the true historical object is not an object at all, but [...] a relationship in which exist both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding."[38]

At the same time, Gadamer prefers the use of the term 'hermeneutic situation' since it implies that one cannot stand outside of it and have 'objective' knowledge about it. Therefore, knowledge about one's hermeneutic situation will always remain incomplete, to oneself as well as to others. The hermeneutical circle is not vicious, but iterative.

Another way in which Gadamer conceptualizes the hermeneutical situation is by means of the concept of the 'horizon'. Borrowing from Nietzsche and Husserl, Gadamer explains a horizon as the finite determinacy of thought, with the implicit possibility of expanding its range. It is 'always already' with us; however, it is never closed or just bound to a single standpoint. The horizon of the present cannot be formed without the horizon of the past in the same way as the horizon of the subject cannot be formed without the horizon of the object.[39] Understanding, or the ultimate achievement of historically effected consciousness, thus, Gadamer defines as the 'fusion of the horizons' in which two horizons transcend their particularities and thus disclose the yet-

[35] Ibid., Pg. 283
[36] Ibid., Pg. 291
[37] Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate." Pg. 55
[38] Ibid., Pg. 55
[39] Gadamer's discussion on the 'I-Thou' relationship (rather than the Self-Other) is pertinent in this context. "For tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou."

unseen. The task of interpretation is not to reconstruct the distant horizon from which the text speaks, but to grasp the "historical totality which embraces both the text as well as its effective history in which the knower is embedded."[40] "Transposing ourselves consist neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in the subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our particularity but also the particularity of the other."[41] The person trying to understand thus must be willing to expand the breadth of his vision.

2.3.3 Hermeneutical Dialogue

Another set of concepts that are fundamentally related to Gadamer's notion of philosophical understanding are that of dialectic and dialogue. Gadamer seeks to look into the "logical structure of openness" that he sees embodied in early Platonic dialectic.[42] According to him, fundamental to the 'hermeneutical experience' is the recognition of the priority of the question and the indeterminacy of the answer. "A question presses itself on us; we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion."[43] The difference between authentic and inauthentic dialogue is thus a commitment to Socrates' *docta ignorantia*, a willingness to hear something new without necessarily agreeing with it and a willingness to offer reasons and justifications for the propositions one puts forward. Gadamer writes, "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were."[44]

Lastly, in the context of cross-cultural studies, especially in comparison with critical methods such as Said's, Gadamer's three levels of conceiving the 'I-Thou' relationship may be most useful.[45] For Gadamer the retrieval of the possibilities of another tradition

[40] Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate.", Pg. 55
[41] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Pg. 304
[42] Ibid., Pg. 356
[43] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Pg. 360
[44] Ibid., Pg. 371
[45] Gadamer's discussion of the 'I-Thou' relationship can be weighed alongside the 'Self-Other' relationship that often dominates critical cross-cultural theory.

is found in the model of conversation and considering the tradition itself as a 'Thou'. [46] "A Thou is not an object, it relates itself to us."[47] In the first stage, the 'Thou' is conceived purely instrumentally and Gadamer borrows Kant's reasoning to point to the limits of such a relationship. In the second stage, the Thou is better understood than in the first stage, but the claim to understand the person in advance functions to keep the claims of the other person at a distance.[48] In the last 'and highest' stage, there is an experience of the 'Thou' truly as a 'Thou', there is an openness that 'resounds strongly against the Cartesian epistemological ideal of certainty and the modern conception of the self as fully autonomous.'[49]

2.4 Criticisms and Reinterpretations by E.D. Hirsch and David Weberman

While some of the important criticisms of Habermas and Apel were briefly mentioned in the preceding discussion, there is one additional conceptual clarification that would be useful to carry forward to the analysis of Halbfass's *India and Europe*.

In E.D. Hirsch's criticism of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, he makes a differentiation between two aspects of a text: its meaning and its significance. Meaning is understood as the fixed and immutable properties of the text, while significance is understood to be the changeable, context-dependent properties of the text.[50] The meaning of the text, however, for Hirsch, is found in authorial *intent*, and in terms of the purely formal characteristics of the text, event, etc.[51] Weberman, in turn, defends Gadamer and criticizes the reductive understanding of meaning and reformulates the meaning/significance divide as a divide between 'intrinsic properties' and 'relational properties'. This clarification is useful for the purposes of this essay. "Intrinsic properties are those properties that an object or event has in virtue of the way that thing

[46] Scheibler, *Gadamer: Between Heidegger and Habermas*. Pg. 53
[47] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*. Pg. 352
[48] "A person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changes the relationship and destroys the moral bond. A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to tradition destroys the true meaning of the tradition in exactly the same way" Ibid., Pg. 354
[49] Scheibler, *Gadamer: Between Heidegger and Habermas*., Pg. 53
[50] "Meaning may be conceived as a self-identical schema whose boundaries are determined by an originating speech event, while significance may be conceived as the relationship between that self-identical meaning and something, anything else." E. D. Hirsch Jr., "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted," *Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 2 (December 1, 1984): 202–25., Pg. 202-204
[51] As Weberman points out, the reference to authorial intent could be understood as a reversion to Schleiermacher and Dilthey.

is and nothing else' [...] Extrinsic properties or relational properties are those properties of an object or event that depend wholly or partly on something other than that thing." Unlike Hirsch's separation, (and without going into the details of Weberman's rigorous arguments, it is suffice to mention here that) Weberman argues that *both* intrinsic and relational properties have fixed and changeable characteristics that ontologically constitute the 'object'.[52]

The last question Weberman tackles, and that is also pertinent to analysis of Halbfass's *India and Europe,* is how this analysis of intrinsic and relational properties enables the knower to circumvent relativism i.e. how it enables one to distinguish between better and worse interpretations.[53] The positional ambiguity in Gadamer's work with regards to the middle-ground between objectivism and relativism needs to be clarified. Weberman argues that though understood within the knower's own historicity, the fixed intrinsic properties and the fixed relational properties of the text justify the need to adhere to objectivism as an (unattainable) *ideal,* thereby providing fidelity to the act of interpretation. The very nature of such properties, provide the constraining factors for understanding and interpretation. However, the intrinsic properties are to be analysed along with the secondary properties, i.e. the changeable, un-fixed properties. Together, they constitute the totality of that which is to be hermeneutically understood.[54]

Having discussed the hermeneutical concepts of Gadamer (and his critics) at some length, it is useful to look at how an *application* of this approach to another cross-cultural tradition would look like. While Gadamer's reliance on temporally distant cultural objects lends a certain cohesiveness that might be lost in its cross-cultural application, the exact nature of its possibilities, limitations and potential inadequacies comes to be highlighted more prominently. Here, we begin the discussion of Wilhelm Halbfass and his book '*India and Europe: an Essay in Philosophical Understanding*'.

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[52] Weberman provides an illuminating example of the Russian revolution to make this point: "For example, if the person describes the Russian revolution differently because she has undergone a political conversion, this descriptive change is the result of a change in that person's epistemic or attitudinal makeup and not the event itself. If, however, a person describes a Russian Revolution differently because the revolution has come to bear new relations to new events, then it is not the person that has changed but the Revolution, insofar as it now has new relational properties." Thus relational properties are constitutive of the objective just as intrinsic properties are. While the previous example was of temporal relational properties, the premise holds true for cultural relational properties as well, in that the relational significance of a particular object changes with respect to cultural specificities.

[53] This is the prime concern for Hirsch who argues that in Gadamer's account 'raises the spectre of relativism' that makes the discrimination between correct/incorrect interpretations difficult

[54] Pg. 64

3. The hermeneutical position of Wilhelm Halbfass

Wilhelm Halbfass, someone trained in western philosophy in the University of Göttingen, is acutely aware of his status as someone who approaches the Indian tradition as an outsider. His first book on philosophy, 'Descartes' Query about the Existence of the World', was published in the year 1968 and only five years later, in 1973, does he deliver his first Indological lecture dealing with Vaiśeṣika ontology.[55] He studied Indology only as a minor subject, along with the Classics under the Buddhologist Ernst Waldschmidt. The only training he received in Indian philosophy was under Erich Frauwallner in a half-year intensive seminar at the University of Vienna in the years 1961-62.[56] This initial training in Western philosophy and Indology and subsequent turn towards Indian philosophy crucially informs the authorial decisions of his works. However, following his initial studies on Vaiśeṣika philosophy, Halbfass moved his attention more specifically towards conceptual issues that were sidelined in the scholarship of Indian philosophy, namely in 'Observations on darśana' (1979) and 'Indian Philosophers on the Plurality of Religious Traditions' (1980).[57] At the same time, Halbfass continued to publish articles on another somewhat marginally related study of the reception of and responses to Indian philosophy by western philosophers.[58] It is indicative of Halbfass's awareness and interest in coming to terms with the broader and inescapable tradition he belongs to.[59] 'Hegel and the philosophy of the Hindus' and 'India in the historiography of philosophy' were first published in the years 1973 and 1976 respectively. However, these two separate strands of interest — one dealing with the philological study of Indian philosophical works and the other dealing with the European attitudes towards Indian philosophy— were expanded and brought together in a larger context, with the publishing of his most well-read book '*Indien und Europa: Perspektiven ihrer geistigen Begegnung*' (1981).

[55] "Halbfass, in an interview, has acknowledged that it was the encouragement he received from an Indian scholar Srinivasa Ayya Srinivasan and Indologist Ernst Steinkellner after the initial lecture, that confirmed his decision to turn towards Indian philosophy and Indology rather than in Western philosophy", *Beyond Orientalism: The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian and Cross-cultural Studies*, edited by Wilhelm Halbfass, Eli Franco, and Karin Preisendanz., Pg. XIX

[56] Ibid., Pg. 4

[57] Ibid., Pg. 8

[58] Ibid., Pg 12

[59] Among the most notable features of Halbfassian vocabulary is noted to be the prevalence of the 'self'-compounds: "Self-affirmation, self-alienation, self-articulation, self-assertion, self-centredness, self-criticism, self-definition, self-demarcation, self-expression, self-identification, self-interpretation, self-questioning, self-representation, self-understanding, etc." As quoted in Pg. XIX, Ibid.

At the same time, a brief discussion on the tradition of the field of Indology, cross-lingual philology and cross-cultural philosophy *out of which* and *for which* Halbfass is writing (in the late-70s, early-80s) is crucial. A significant moment of rupture in the tradition of these disciplines in this era is the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). It had a crucial role in reconfiguring the preoccupations of these disciplines and the most significant works that emerged from the tradition increasingly *betrayed* the presence of Said. But in some sense, the calls for a new critical re-evaluation of Orientalism and the 'West's' approach to the 'East' had already been sparked off much before in the post-colonial context, perhaps most notably in Anouar Abdel-Malek's influential essay "*Orientalism in Crises*" (1963).[60] Halbfass in his essay "Research and Reflection: Response to my Respondents" mentions his familiarity with Abdel-Malek's essay along with having read[61] Said's work prior to the publication of '*Indien und Europa*'. With regards to his initial reaction to 'orientalism', Halbfass writes, "It was obvious that this was a new, rhetorically powerful and polemically charged use of a term which appeared to be on the verge of becoming obsolete. However, I did not see any reason to include an explicit response to this within the context of my own limited project. This decision was made easier by the self-imposed limitations of Said's work, its focus on French and British (as well as American) approaches to Islam and the Middle East, and its relative neglect of Indian studies."[62]

'*Indien und Europa*' thus comes out of a situation where Said's work hadn't yet gained the comprehensive presence that it has come to have over the decades – i.e., it's 'significance' was still limited. The need for a critical evaluation of the relationship of India and Europe, which Halbfass was well aware of, needed to be located within the realms of Gadamer's hermeneutical methodology. Here, the question of the respect in which and the extent to which Halbfass uses and remains bound to Gadamer's concepts may be raised. Accordingly, the next section deals with Halbfass's explicit as well as implicit references to Gadamer's methodological precepts in '*India and Europe'*.

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[60] "The domain of human and social sciences are also proving to have need of an alteration, an extension, a transformation which would not be just narrowed to the field [...] This is because several factors, and principally the growing role of the Marxist methodology, universalist and historicizing, but also methods which tie in with it at such or such a point, that is, methods of modern science and rationalism, allow more effective syncretism and flexibility, though still profoundly insufficient."Anouar Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis," *Diogenes* 11, no. 44 (December 1, 1963): 103–40.

[61] Halbfass records his experience as taking a "casual and passing notice" of Said's book.

[62] Eli Franco, and Karin Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism: The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass,, 2006).

4 The Methodology of Wilhelm Halbfass and its relation to Gadamerian Hermeneutics

A great number of scholarly reviewers point to Halbfass's philological acuity, sharp exegesis of classical Indian texts, his technical attention to the problems of translation, the depth of his historical scholarship.[63] The sidestepping of those crucial aspects in this essay, however, will be assisted by the focus of '*India and Europe*' which is less towards traditional exegesis as compared to his later works such as '*Tradition and Reflection*' (1991) and '*On Being and What There Is'* (1992) and more towards the historiographical, ethical, political and philosophical concerns with regards to writing about other traditions.[64] The discussion here therefore would be limited to the more generalizable characteristics of his methodology or what one reviewer has referred to as an 'underlying teleology' in his works.[65]

It is in cross-cultural studies in particular that Gadamer's claim with regards to the knower's constitution of the object of study in an act of understanding becomes more acute and has fundamental implications that need to be drawn out. The question, given that post-colonial recalibration and critique of orientalist knowledge seems to be "nearing exhaustion"[66], is whether Gadamer's claim can provide new ways to critically examine colonial knowledge that is now inescapably a part of the historical tradition of '(mis)understanding' between 'the West' and 'India'. In other words: How does one re-approach the texts and engage with the philosophies of the 'West' and 'India' after the radical post-colonial critique?

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[63] Almost all reviewer's of *India and Europe* note his technical abilities: "Scrupulously and astutely documented and philosophically balanced", Harvey P. Alper, "Review of Indien Und Europa, Perspektiven Ihrer Geistigen Begegnung by Wilhelm Halbfass," *Philosophy East and West* 33, no. 2 (April 1, 1983): 189–96**.. "**The unity of scholarly care, precision, and erudition and philosophical subtlety" John Taber, "Review of Studies in Kumārila and Śaṅkara by Wilhelm Halbfass," *Philosophy East and West* 35, no. 3 (July 1, 1985): 311–14.. "His wide Indological scholarship, philological accuracy, intellectual acumen, critical discrimination and, in the appendix, an uncanny sense for detecting clues towards the solution of a problem of authorship attribution" Richard V. DeSmet, "Review of Studies in Kumārila and Śaṅkara by Wilhelm Halbfass," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 2 (April 1, 1985): 373–74. "Thoroughly documented" Ronald Inden, "Review of India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding by Wilhelm Halbfass," *History of Religions* 31, no. 1 (August 1, 1991): 95. And even the negative reviews, such as S.N. Balagangadharan's, note, "a masterly grasp of relevant texts" "Understanding and Imagination: A Critical Notice of Halbfass and Inden—S.N.Balagangadhara," accessed May 23, 2014, http://www.hipkapi.com/2011/03/05/understanding-and-imagination-a-critical-notice-of-halbfass-and-inden-s-n-balagangadhara/.

[64] "Wilhelm Halbfass: India and Philology," *Religious Studies Review* 33, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): Pg. 95–102

[65] Ibid., Pg. 96

[66] Sheldon Pollock, "Liberation Philology" *Sheldon Pollock at CSDS, Golden Jubilee Lecture, Part 1*, 2013, http://youtu.be/C2gZKjbEoMo.

To begin with, it is first important to look into how Halbfass defines 'the West' and 'India' and how he conceptualizes Western and Indian 'tradition(s)'. This is in turn related to the issue of conceptualizing a vast number of pluralities and yet avoiding a reifying, generalizing language.[67] It is important here to distinguish between the two interrelated levels of analysis: that of historical actors who respond, demarcate and identify with regards to specific systems of thought, and that of Halbfass himself, when he is strategically presenting a 'European tradition' and an 'Indian tradition' within his academic context. In his discussion, he distances himself from understanding 'India', 'Europe', 'the East' and 'the West' solely as geographical realities and cultural essences. Being interested in projections and horizons, Halbfass, primarily deals with traditions only in terms of self-definitions (i.e. of the historical actors as they understand what belongs to their tradition and not) and the imposing of definitions on others. However, it must be noted here that Halbfass, (in not keeping with the general analytical approach of the book) does not discuss his own use at sufficient length in the book.[68] Responding to a criticism which argued for the use of geographical term 'South Asia' over the political-nationalistic term 'India', Halbfass argues that all such categorizations necessarily fall short and deviate from his hermeneutic approach.

While justifying the inclusion of Muslims in the "European: section of the book, he writes, "Like the Greeks whose philosophical heritage they shared, the Muslims derive the name for the country and its inhabitants (al-Hind, Hindu) from the name of the river, and their sense of a fundamental Indian otherness is by no means less pronounced than that of other Westerners. On the other hand, the Indians ("Hindus") classify them, together with the Greeks and other invaders from the west or northwest, as *yavanas.*"

And similarly, while discussing the commencement of the European section with ancient Greek thought, he writes:

"For this, it is not essential whether or not the concept of Europe had any significance for the Greeks themselves. It is enough that once the idea of Europe began gaining momentum, Greece, the Greek language, Greek thought, etc., were inseparable from it. This includes, of course, the Latin adaptations and reinterpretations of Greek thought,

[67] For a critical and comparative study on this in relation to the Indian philosophical tradition, see Anna-Pya Sjödin, "Conceptualizing Philosophical Tradition: A Reading of Wilhelm Halbfass, Daya Krishna, and Jitendranath Mohanty," *Philosophy East and West* 61, no. 3 (2011), Pg. 534–46

[68] This issue will be taken up in the section relating to the criticisms of the book.

its uses and transformations in Christianity (which for many centuries provided the strongest factor of coherence and identity for what we call Europe), and finally, its contribution to the genesis of modern scientific and secular thought. Through these developments, Europe itself appears as a dynamic process of "Europeanization" and an expanding horizon, with layers of meaning being added to its identity in the course of history."[69]

It is significant that the discussion does not appear in *India and Europe*, but only retrospectively in his essay *Research and reflection*: *Encounter and Dialogue*. In the light of the (often controversial) criticisms of scholars as diverse as Martin Bernal, Samir Amin and Enrique Dussel, with regards to the Greek origins, the lack of problematizing and thematic treatment of such concepts emerges as one of the most important shortcomings of the book.[70] As mentioned earlier, this criticism will be dealt with later in section six.

In *India and Europe*, the references to Gadamer and the problem of method are discussed most explicitly in the chapters "Preliminary Postscript: The hermeneutic situation of the 20th Century", "Epilogue" and "India and the comparative method." However, throughout the book, Halbfass engages in in-depth discussions about the methodological approaches of the various historical actors constantly weighing them against Gadamerian methodological expectations.

In "Preliminary Postscript", Halbfass writes, "Gadamer's hermeneutics teaches us to accept "prejudice" ("Vorurteil") as something indispensable, and to discard the abstract and vacuous ideal of an entirely open and "unprejudiced" understanding. It shows that understanding cannot amount to slipping into somebody else's skin, as it were, and to comprehend or, experience the foreign, the other simply in its own identity, or by coinciding with it [...] What we need is not sheer "neutrality" and "extinction of one's self," but "the conscious assimilation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices: "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text" – and why not an Indian text? – "may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own

[69] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 154

[70] See Martin Bernal, *The Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1 (London: Vintage, 1991); Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, translated by Russell Moore (New York: Zed, 1989), pp. 91–92. Enrique D. Dussel, Javier Krauel, and Virginia C. Tuma, "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 465–78. All of which deal with the untenability of the European appropriation of ancient Greece.

truth against one's own foremeanings." Should Gadamer's concepts of "hermeneutical "conversation" or "dialogue" ("hermeneutisches Gesprach") and "fusion of horizons" ("Horizontverschmelzung"), which he develops in his controversial classic *Wahrheit und Methode* ("*Truth and Method*"), not also be pertinent to the interpretation of Indian thought and its literary documents?"[71]

The concepts that appear in quotation marks are pervasive in *India and Europe*. Words such as 'dialogue' and 'encounter' can often end up as empty or fuzzy concepts, or as mentioned before, as semantic artifices. In his "Research and Reflection" Halbfass seems to suggest that the concepts, irrespective of all theoretical and philosophical treatment, make more sense in their concrete application.[72] However, he does differentiate between the three terms 'encounter', 'dialogue' and 'understanding'. While the first one is a "convenient label", 'dialogue' and 'understanding', understood *through* Gadamer are problematic and need to be used with greater caution and scrutiny. While being aware of its overuse, he writes, "but in spite of the frequency of such questionable, thoughtless and merely rhetorical usages, I do not see any alternative."[73] And later, "Whatever the problems with "dialogue" and "understanding" may be - these are channels that have to be kept open."[74] He quotes J.L. Mehta "The whole enterprise of 'understanding,' it would seem, is a characteristically Western one. It must be added, however, that it is also a recent one, even in Western history. Yet the emergence of "understanding," at a time when the West tried to dominate, master and objectify other traditions (and, perhaps, to overcome the sense of tradition altogether), may nonetheless herald a new mode of thinking without objectifying, more appropriate to this new venture in mutuality."[75]

Another aspect that is most noticeable in Halbfass is perhaps the self-aware questioning of the method and a fundamental scepticism about methodologism itself. "Are the boundaries finally dissolving? Has there been a genuine "fusion of horizons"?"[76] There is a disinclination of simply borrowing concepts from Gadamer and formally applying

[71] Ibid., Pg. 165
[72] "In a sense, the entire book was meant to fill these concepts with content, to exemplify and illustrate them through concrete historical and hermeneutic processes.", Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*.Pg. 135
[73] Ibid., Pg. 142
[74] Ibid., Pg. 142
[75] Ibid., Pg. 143
[76] Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988). Pg. 161

them to the cross-cultural realm. Gadamer's project of 'understanding' itself is placed as an object of self-reflective inquiry as it is also a way of being *in* the European tradition. The universal claims of theory of the past have been shown to be "localisms masquerading as universalisms" [77] and therefore require the interpreter to be on guard. The inherent universalist claims of Gadamer's concepts need to be brought out; it's potentiality as another *formal game* for approaching any tradition in a scientific manner need to be made explicit. "Is [understanding] also a universal human potential which happened to become fully manifest in Europe, but is the implicit *telos* of other traditions as well? Does it fulfil their own aspirations to be "understood" in this sense? Or is this enterprise of historical "understanding" inseparable from its origin and fundamentally Eurocentric? Does this refer us back to Hegel?"[78] While some questions might be rhetorical, most are not. This self-questioning is the act of keeping one's prejudices open. The approximation of 'dialogue' within the realms of inescapable prejudice must necessarily give prominence to the question over the answer. "Is this scheme of historical subordination entirely obsolete? To what extent does it reflect earlier attitudes, and to what extent has it influenced or anticipated subsequent developments? Has it finally been superseded by the progress of Indian studies and by the self-articulation of modern India?"[79] And later, "Is the relationship between India and the West indeed an encounter between two traditions? Is the modern West still a tradition?"[80] Halbfass's applications remain contingent and explicitly self-aware. He discusses at length the problems involved in merely considering the colonial encounter between India and the West as the encounter of two traditions, and not recognize its character as the encounter between 'traditionality' and 'modernity'. Yet, (again citing Gadamer) he's disinclined to accept unquestioned the abstract antithesis of the categories of 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Halbfass is unwilling to write in – to use Richard Rorty's dictum – the 'final vocabulary' that has dominated cross-cultural scholarship thus far. This allows him a pragmatic recognition the contingency of categories such as the 'West', 'East',

[77] Sheldon Pollock, "Liberation Philology" *Sheldon Pollock at CSDS, Golden Jubilee Lecture, Part 1*, 2013, http://youtu.be/C2gZKjbEoMo.
[78] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 167
[79] Ibid., Pg. 434
[80] Ibid., Pg. 166

'Europe' and 'India'. This also allows him to de-emphasize the construction of vast schemes of historical continuity.[81]

In a discussion about historically-effected consciousness Gadamer writes, "Historical consciousness adopts a reflective posture towards both itself and the tradition in which it is situated. It understands itself in terms of its own history."[82] Halbfass's back-and-forth between the multiple layers of commentary and sub-commentary with regards to his own tradition, the Hindu tradition, the historicity of the scholars he writes about and lastly, his own historicity point in this direction.

Here, it is useful to discuss Halbfass's use of Gadamer's concept of prejudice. As discussed earlier, the use (and especially a defence) of the concept of 'prejudice' becomes problematic in the cross-cultural realm for several obvious reasons. Though Halbfass himself uses the word, Halbfass's applications may be better understood with the use of the word 'prejudgements' rather than 'prejudice' with its negative and derisory connotations. "Understanding proceeds from a standpoint, through prejudice and misunderstanding, but it also entails the readiness to return to oneself and one's prejudicial standpoint, and to be changed in the process."[83] This is clearly brought out in the context of Halbfass discussion of the Indologist Paul Hacker. Though there are many instances of substantial agreements between the two, they also diverge from each other in notable ways. Hacker claims to approach the Hindu tradition from the Roman Catholic theological tradition while Halbfass considers himself to be writing form the European philosophical and philological tradition. While the both of them strongly disagree to the nature and claims of Neo-Hindu thought, in Hacker it takes on a strong confrontational even slighting attitude, while in Halbfass the attitude is more conciliatory and dialogic. In Halbfass there is a greater recognition of the 'meaning' as well the 'significance' of neo-Hindu thought. While writing about Hacker's differing appreciation of Advaita Vedanta and the later neo-Hindu thought, Halbfass notes, a "fundamental respect seems to be absent when he is dealing with what he calls Neo-Hinduism."[84] Halbfass attempts to dispel the contempt for the Neo-Hindu scholars by

[81] For a critique of 'stagiest' interpretations of capitalist transitions in non-Western countries, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, New Edition (Princeton, N. J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).
[82] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Pg 228
[83] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 143
[84] "An uncommon Orientalist: Paul Hacker's Passage to India," Wilhelm Halbfass and Paul Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta* (SUNY Press, 1995).

making the crucial recognition that their reinterpretations of Hindu concepts (such as *dharma* and *darśana*) though *for* the West were also *against* the West.[85] Even the "mistakes" in the context of the hermeneutical situation of the neo-Hindus have something to inform us.[86] While discussing Hacker in the light of the critiques of Orientalism, he concludes, "[Hacker's] approach to India, awkward and offensive as it may appear in the present climate of debate, is perhaps less obsolete than it seems at first sight."[87]

Lastly, a discussion on Halbfass's reinterpretation of the comparative method in the light of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics may be useful. While all cross-cultural study can be considered to be some form of comparison, Halbfass draws out at length its possibilities and limitations. He points to the ambiguity of "comparative philosophy" as it stands today, without the required "critical reflection and hermeneutic awareness."[88] While the European interpreters have to be aware of their historical background of long-standing biases and their necessarily one-sided 'neutrality', the Indian interpreters need to come to a comparison that is acutely aware of the "historically determined"[89], "apologetic and cultural self-defense"[90] against the threat of the West. This awareness of the differing traditions of comparison means that the self-understanding of the knower needs to be grounded and that the attendant prejudices need to fore-grounded.

At the same time, there is considerable ambiguity in "comparative philosophy" of whether philosophy is the *subject* or the *object* of comparison. Halbfass seems to prefer the former in that it attempts a greater self-understanding rather than the mere comparison of philosophical data in the service of thinly-veiled political ideals. At the same time, interpreters ought to be careful of the mere grafting of concepts from one tradition to the other, i.e. the problems of understanding the intellectual achievements of another tradition in concepts such as "philosophy" itself is fraught with issues that need to be explicitly dealt with. He writes, "If "comparative philosophy" is supposed to be *philosophy*, it cannot just be the comparison of *philosophies*. It cannot be the

[85] *Beyond Orientalism: The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and Its Impact on Indian Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass,, 2006), Pg. XV
[86] Ibid., Pg. XV
[87] Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*., Pg. 13
[88] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 433
[89] Sheldon Pollock, "Liberation Philology"
[90] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 432

objectifying, juxtaposing, synoptic, comparative investigation of historical, anthropological or doxographical data. Comparative philosophy is philosophy insofar as it aims at self-understanding. It has to be ready to bring its own standpoint, and the conditions and horizon of comparison itself, into the process of comparison which thus assumes the reflexive, self-referring dimension which constitutes philosophy."[91]

While this section attempted to outline some of the broad methodological applications of Gadamer's concepts by Halbfass, there is a need to look into its concrete applications. Halbfass insists that the entire book is meant to fill the concepts with content, to illustrate and exemplify. A close reading of *India and Europe* will help to bring out the relative significance of 'understanding' that the hermeneutic method offers. The next section of this essay will discuss the formal characteristics of *India and Europe*, before going into an in-depth analysis of the book.

To end this section, a long quote from Halbfass's *On Being and What There Is* may be illuminating: "Using such [Western philosophical] terms does not mean that we know the true and precise meaning of their Indian counterparts; we can only say that we are dealing with comparable areas of thought, debate, and *potential confusion.* Inevitably, exegesis and translation will lead us into these open areas of philosophical reflection and debate. On the other hand, historical and philological problems will often interfere with conceptual problems. Philology, exegesis and philosophical reflection may seem to be inseparable; *we cannot always be sure what we are doing.* This may be frustrating; but it can also be a philosophical challenge."[92]

5. On the formal characteristics of '*India and Europe'*

India and Europe though considered a crucial event in the study of Indian philosophy is also crucial in that it departs significantly from traditional European approaches to Indian thought. It brings together the field of Indology and philosophical research in an attempt to chart out a somewhat unorthodox history of ideas. As for what could be understood as predecessors of the book, there is Helmuth von Glassenapp's work on the influence of Indian thought on German Philosophy, particularly the books 'Kant und die

[91] Ibid., pg. 433
[92] Wilhelm Halbfass, *On Being and What There Is: Classical Vaisesika and the History of Indian Ontology* (Suny Press, 1992), Pg. 15

Religionen des Ostens' (*Kant and the religion of the East*) published in 1954 and 'Das Indienbild deuscher Denker' (*India as seen by German Philosophers*), published in 1958.

As commentators have noted[93], the book does not follow the patterns of histories of Indian philosophy set up by Paul Deussen and continued by Otto Strauss, Erich Frauwallner and others, which "commence with the proto-philosophy of the Ṛgvedic and Brāhmaṇa periods or the philosophy of the Upanishads, continue with chapters on early Buddhism and the Epic, and then move on to classical Saṅkya and from there to other "systems" and later Buddhist developments."[94] At the same time it refrains from providing a survey of fundamental areas of Indian thought in European categories such as epistemology and logic (the pramāṇa-doctrines) or ontology (e.g., Vaiśeṣika "atomism" or Sāṅkya "evolutionism").[95] What makes the book significant for philosophy, historiography, Indology, religious and cross-cultural studies thus is Halbfass's noted ability to bring out philological particularities while also being able to make broad points relating to the history of ideas.[96] The book does not aim to offer an encyclopaedic view of Indian thought and avoids the chronological periodization of Indian philosophy in the manner of traditional western interpretations. As he describes it, the book is a study of the various attitudes that have been assumed, historically, during the encounters between 'the Europeans' and 'the Indians'. Here, it must be noted that the project of charting "creative-reflexive misconceptions"[97] lends itself more easily to Gadamer's understanding of scholarly work in the humanities than other possibly more exegetical works.

The first part of the book titled 'India in the history of European self-understanding' deals with encounters of Europeans with Indian thought from classical antiquity to the twentieth century, the second is titled 'The Indian tradition and the presence of Europe' and deals with the encounters of Indians with European thought, both, before and after colonialism, and the concluding part, titled 'Appendices: Illustrations and Reflections' provides a comparative conceptual analysis of tolerance, inclusion and the comparative

[93] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*.
[94] Ibid, Pg. IX
[95] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. IX
[96] Ibid., Pg. IX
[97] Ibid., Pg. IX

method itself, among other topics. In many ways, the book does not merely describe the encounter between India and Europe but now has itself become a part of the encounter.

Closely following the structure of the book, the next section will look into how Halbfass draws out and reinterprets significant moments in the history of Indo-European engagements and fleshes out the methodological precepts discussed in the sections above.

5.1 India in the history of European Self-Understanding

In the first section of the book, the historical figures that come to represent 'Western' interest in 'India' are embedded in a wide variety of epochs and cultures. The prominent figures included are Megasthenes, al-Bīrūnī, Dārā Shukōh, Anquetil Duperron, Roberto de'Nobili, F. Schlegel, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Deussen, among others. In Halbfass's vast historical survey, these figures, in their distinct hermeneutical situations, attempt to define themselves and their traditions by assuming specific attitudes towards an alien culture. In the previous section, the question about the 'European intellectual tradition' that stretches back to the Greeks and has, among others, a devout Muslim, has been raised. In the book, while he does raise doubts about the considering the modern West as a tradition[98] and while he's aware that a monolithic understanding of the European tradition is problematic, ("Within the European tradition itself, there has been a "fusion" of different cultural horizons - Greek, Roman, Hebrew, etc."[99]), he doesn't get into a full-blown discussion about the inherent problems of such a conception. Here it is suffice to mention this criticism before looking into what it is that Halbfass seeks to do with the eminent personalities that come to (however inadequately) represent the West. Crucially, Halbfass's attempt is not to bring out a commonality in their different approaches but to emphasize the very differences, cultural and temporal, which come to constitute the interpreter's own historicity. He writes, "It is a process which accompanies and reflects the development of 'European' thought in general– a process in which 'Europe' has defined and questioned itself, and in which misunderstanding and prejudices may be as significant as the accumulation of factual truth and correct

[98] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*.Pg. 166
[99] Ibid., Pg. 165

information."[100] For Halbfass, a crucial manifestation in the history of attitudes assumed by the 'modern West' was the emergence of the institution of Indology, which formalizes and sustains the West's production of 'objective' knowledge about the East. Accordingly, there is an implicit subdivision in the arrangement of his chapters in this section. The first five chapters deal with the pre-history of Indology, and the succeeding five deal with individuals who came to be influence and were influenced by the 'scientific' discipline that emerged in the 18th century.

5.1.a. Halbfass on Pre-Indological Indo-European encounters

5.1.1 India in Classical Antiquity

Halbfass begins his survey with pre-Alexandrian approaches to India. His scholarly approach bound to documentary evidence is seen in that he does not overstate or impose the intellectual exchange between ancient India and ancient Greece. This is in sharp contrast both, with the diffusion theorists for whom Indo-Greek exchange is accepted *a priori* rather than proven by archaeological evidence[101] and the neo-Hindu theorists who attempt to look for similarities "at the level of the spirit".[102] While such readings do offer a particular kind of comparison of ideas between Indian and Greek texts, they remain ahistorical, often speculative, and fundamentally opposed to Halbfass's methodological/philological inclinations.[103]

From the available evidence, Halbfass is able to note that for the ancient Greeks, "India is viewed as a peripheral phenomenon, a vaguely conceived realm at or beyond the Eastern horizon of the known world. There is no specific concept of Indian cultural achievements, no specific speculation about its potential influence on Greece, no "search" for India."[104] Unlike the diffusionists, Halbfass argues that the necessary 'Other' that played an important role for Greek self-definition was the Egyptians.[105] In

[100] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg.2
[101] See McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought* (Allworth Press, 2012).
[102] Ram Swarup, *On Hinduism: Reviews and Reflections*, 1st edition (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2000).
[103] See Section 5.3.3, "The openness of the comparative project"
[104] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*. Pg. 10
[105] "Egypt plays the most distinctive role as a precursor or cultural partner in this regard, although recent research suggests that the actual historical and cultural impact of the Phoenician, Hurritic and Hittite traditions may have been at least equally significant" and later, "Above all, Egypt continues to be seen as a storehouse of ancient learning, a tradition which precedes that of the Greeks and deserves attention as a possible source of inspiration for them." Pg. 10-11

noting the substantial influence of the Egyptians (and to a lesser extent the Phoenicians and the Jews) in the self-understanding of the Greeks, Halbfass proves to be relatively more grounded against the recent charges of 'Eurocentrism' in the survey of Greek thought.[106]

In Halbfass's interpretation of Greece's approach towards the 'Orient', there appear two distinct phases: one which he refers to as 'classicist' phase and the next phase (the final phase of classical antiquity) that begins with Alexander's campaign (327 - 325 B.C.). The classicist view is marked by the belief that Greece's autonomy was based on their ability to transform and ennoble their borrowings from the 'Orient'.[107] The fundamental change that comes with Alexander's military conquest is that there is a substantial increase in cross-cultural cultural encounters. With the increase in cultural encounters, there is "the readiness to accept the possibility of a philosophical partnership, of debate and instruction, in what is foreign, specifically Indian."[108] Halbfass is not concerned with the veracity of the claims made by the Cleitarchus, Onesicritus or Strabo but merely the attitude assumed towards the other, or more concretely, the light in which the Other is written about. Citing the well-known examples of Kalanos and Dandamis, Halbfass speaks about the attitude of the Greeks in the stories of the *gymnosophists* or the naked Indian sages; important to him is the fact that they are presented as an 'anti-dote' to the hubris of the world conqueror.

In the post-classicist phase, Halbfass discusses the schools of the Stoics and Cynics and how they came to interpret the practical aspects of Indian wisdom. In accordance with their own emphasis on ethics, "modes of behaviour, mental dispositions, such as contempt of death, indifference towards pleasure and pain, self-control, freedom from social conventions"[109] gained prominence. By the time of Megasthenes's 'obviously favourable'[110] assessment in the remarkable *Indika*, the Greek appraisal of Indian thought points to a distinct withering of confidence in Hellenic autonomy. At the same time, however, Halbfass points to the disinclination of Megasthenes (also, the ancient Greeks and Romans, in general) to learn foreign languages and a readiness to use Greek

[106] See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1991).
[107] This view, Halbfass argues, is reiterated much later, in European understandings of Asia. Distinctive is its role in Hegel's universal history.
[108] Ibid., Pg. 12
[109] Ibid., Pg. 20
[110] Ibid., Pg. 14

concepts and proper names of heroes and Gods for the original 'barbaric' terms. Finally, by late antiquity, despite the intensive trade connections between India and the Roman Empire, there are few traces of the contact in the literary tradition. The factual knowledge of the traditionary texts of the Indians remained ignored and understanding of India came to be located solely within the associational network of a set of stereotyped ideas and images that originated with Alexander's conquests.

Summing up, Halbfass writes, "An awareness of hermeneutic problems does not develop, and no effort is made to understand Indian ideas in their own context and horizon. The image of India in classical antiquity remains largely a mirror of Hellenic self-affirmation, self-exploration and self-questioning. In its very openness, the Greek attitude towards foreign cultures and traditions is limited and ambiguous; its proclamation of universalism and cosmopolitanism remains, in spite of its programmatic potential, self-centered and abstract. The Greeks of antiquity did not like to learn foreign languages, and they did not favour translating into their own tongue. They never opened themselves to a foreign religious and literary tradition in a manner comparable to the comprehensive acquisition and translation of Indian Buddhist texts by the Chinese or Tibetans."[111]

The standard by which a cross-cultural 'understanding' is to be judged is distinctively Gadamerian: a readiness to accept the other as such, a readiness to be aware of one's own hermeneutic situation and a need to engage with the original context of the text and thought.

5.1.2 Islamic Encounters with Indian Philosophy

Again, the methodological problem of including the Islamic encounter in the framework of European self-understanding (and more importantly perhaps, the absence of a chapter of Islam in section II of IE) will be dealt with in a later section of this essay. That said, in Halbfass's narrative, the hermeneutic insufficiency of the Greeks is made all the more apparent with an immediate discussion on al-Bīrūnī whose work *Ta'rīkh al-Hind* Halbfass describes as "one of the greatest achievements not only in the history of

[111] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg.20

Islamic studies of India specifically, but in the study of South Asia in general".[112] Unlike Megasthenes, Bīrūnī learnt the Sanskrit language and had access to the original Hindu texts themselves.[113] Moreover, Halbfass is appreciative of the unprecedented preparatory work done by Bīrūnī for his research, particularly reading up on the available, previously published Arabic translations of Indian sciences. Bīrūnī himself was aware of the unexampled nature of his work on India and points to his interest in Indian philosophy as unique to his time.[114] Satisfying another criterion of modern philology, Bīrūnī approaches the Indian tradition as someone "who is convinced of his superior scholarly approach."[115] At the same time, though being a Muslim believer, unlike the Christian interpreters of Indian thought, he is not bound by the missionary impulse and thus refrains from understanding the Indian tradition solely as a means to another end; he is interested in the subject-in-itself. Bīrūnī is committed to his Islamic monotheistic standpoint and thus, from his standpoint the Greeks and the Indians make themselves available in a comparative framework.[116] Halbfass writes, "A clear awareness of his own religious horizon as a particular context of thought led him to perceive the "otherness" of the Indian religious philosophical context and horizon with remarkable clarity, and he understood the difficulties of penetrating it. This clarity of hermeneutic awareness is unparalleled in the world of classical antiquity with its attitude towards the "barbarians" and the Orient."[117]

In an illuminating paragraph which serves to bring out Halbfass's own scholarly 'prejudices', Halbfass compares Bīrūnī's approach to that of Megasthenes'. Megasthenes in his work *Indika*, in accordance with the Greek tradition, was given to translating the names of the Indian deities to Greek ones and thereby, incorporating it within the Greek pantheon. Bīrūnī refrained from this and chose to retain the Hindu

[112] Ibid., Pg. 26
[113] Edward C. Sachau in his Preface makes a passing note on the considerable difficulties for an outsider to learn Sanskrit in the 11th Century A.D. Bīrūnī writes (in Sachau's translation), "I have found it very hard to work my way into the subject, although I have a great liking for it, in which respect I stand quiet alone in my time, and although I do not spare either trouble or money collecting Sanskrit books from places where I supposed they were likely to be found, and in procuring for myself, even from remote places, Hindu scholars who understand them and are able to teach me." Pg. 24
[114] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*. Ibid., Pg. 26
[115] Ibid., Pg. 26. Sachau writes, "He sometimes supposes a text to be corrupt, and inquires into the cause of the corruption; he discusses various readings, and proposes emendations. He guesses at *lacunae*, criticizes different translations, and complains of the carelessness and ignorance of the copyists."Dr Edward C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co/New Delhi/India., 2002)., Pg. xxvi
[116] "For that which is not *the truth* (i.e. the true belief of monotheism) does not admit of any correction, and all heathenism, whether Greek or Indian, is in its pith and marrow one and the same belief, because it is only a deviation *from the truth*." Ibid., Pg 24
[117] Ibid., Pg. 27

terminologies. Similarly, Halbfass approves of the absence of any attempts to find a common denominator or an amorphous syncretic openness in Bīrūnī's work. It is an attempt to come to terms with a fundamental alienness of the Hindu tradition and 'understanding' the 'tradition' in its own terms.[118] "That is why he could comprehend and appreciate the other, the foreign as such, thematizing and explicating in an essentially new manner the problems of intercultural understanding and the challenge of "objectivity" when shifting from one tradition to another, from one context to another."[119] Bīrūnī understood the Indian otherness in that they remained ethnocentric and interpreted the foreign as the marginal, thereby withdrawing within the bounds of their own tradition. Halbfass characterizes Bīrūnī's book as marked by a "distinctive combination of detail and methodological, hermeneutic, reflection of factual statements as well as sensitivity concerning self-understanding and self-definition."[120]

Bīrūnī is also distinctive in that he explicitly reflects on the methodological principles and the difficulties involved in undertaking a cross-cultural study. He is aware of the problems involved in translation and the philosophical, social and religious antagonisms between Islam and Hinduism which intervenes in the acquiring and processing of information. [121] Halbfass argues that 'hermeneutical distance' allows Bīrūnī something significant – even the practices that Bīrūnī considered to be repugnant and strange, such as the caste system, he defines the strangeness as only a deviation from one's own 'horizon.' For example, Bīrūnī qualifies his discussion on the strangeness of Hindu customs, writing "The strangeness of a thing evidently rests on the fact that it occurs but rarely, and that we seldom have the opportunity of witnessing it."[122] Halbfass notes that though the ability to step back from one's assumptions of the world was not entirely new and was familiar to the sophists, in Bīrūnī "this understanding gains new content and concrete relevance by the very fact that it remains connected with the clear awareness and the conscious acceptance of his own position and horizon."[123]

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[118] The subtitle of the work in an abridged edition, edited by Qeyamuddin Ahmad is 'An Accurate Description of All Categories of Hindu Thought, as well those which are Admissible as those which much be Rejected'

[119] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*. Ibid., Pg. 27

[120] Ibid., Pg. 27

[121] He cites six barriers to his cross-cultural project: the difference of language, religious prejudice, the radical difference of manner and customs, aversion of the Buddhists to the countries of the west, Muhammadan conquest by Maḥmūd and the self-conceit of the Hindus and the deprecation of anything foreign, Sachau, *Alberuni's India*. Pg. 17-24

[122] Ibid.

[123] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 28

Another important facet of Bīrūnī's thought which was uncharacteristic for its time was that it attempts to provide a fuller image by differentiating historical changes in Indian self-understanding (the comparison between Vāramahira's positive attitude towards the Greeks and attitudes of 11th century Brahmans towards outsiders) as well as differentiating between the philosophical opinions of the Brahmin elite and the common views of people ("The educated among the Hindus abhor anthropomorphisms of this kind, but the crowd and the members of the single sects use them most extensively"[124]).

Subsequently, Halbfass's approval of Bīrūnī's methodological practice is contrasted with his remarks on Abu'l Fadl's *Aīn-i Akbarī*. While being more detailed than the *Ta'rīkh al-Hind,* Halbfass criticizes it for not possessing "the spirit of searching, questioning and the critical study of the sources' and the 'methodological and hermeneutic awareness" found in Bīrūnī's book. Moreover, Fadl hadn't learnt any Sanskrit. Later, again, while discussing the works of Dārā Shukōh, especially *Majma' al-bahrain*, Halbfass points to the lack of attention paid to the questions of intercultural hermeneutics. Dārā Shukōh however, remains a significant figure in the history of European attempts of interpreting Indian thought as it was his Persian translation of the Upanishads which Anquetil Dupperron later translates to Latin as the *Oupnek'hat.*[125]

5.1.3. The Missionary approach to Indian thought

Halbfass places Bīrūnī's methodological precision next to the interpretive positions of the missionaries, for whom 'understanding' the other was primarily informed by the desire to preach the gospel. The Jesuits therefore considered learning the language of a particular region among the main principles of missionary activity. The works of the early Christians was primarily 'instrumental' in nature, and the act of understanding was directed by the need to be understood in turn. In spite of its instrumental nature, Halbfass argues that with the arrival of the controversial figure of Roberto Nobilli, the missionary activities reached 'a new level of theoretical and hermeneutical awareness.'[126] For Halbfass, Nobili "exemplifies the idea and the problematic nature of the encounter between Christianity and Hinduism and, more generally, the hermeneutic

[124] Sachau, *Alberuni's India*., Pg. 39
[125] More on this in 4.1.4
[126] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*, Pg. 38

ambivalence and dialectic of missionary teaching and scholarship."[127] Here, it may be interesting to note that in recent times Nobili figures prominently as an exemplar of Hindu-Christian dialogue in Western academia[128] and as 'abominable scoundrel' in Hindu nationalist writings.[129]

What interests Halbfass is Nobili's wrestling with the problematic nature of transplanting ideas and terminologies from one 'tradition' or associational 'horizon' to another. Of the books Nobili wrote in Latin, Halbfass considers *Informatio de quibusdam moribus nationis indicae* (1613, published in 1972) and *Narratio fundamentorum quibus Madurensis Missionis institutum caeptumest et hucusque consistit* (1618-19, published in 1971) to be illuminating in terms of theory and methodology. In these books, inter alia, are found Nobili's attempts to correlate Christian concepts to Indian ones, i.e. to bring together two separate semantic-conceptual fields, the most significant are his attempts to associate the Hindu notions of 'Brahman', or 'Sarveśuran' to the Christian notion of 'God'.[130] However, the difference that Halbfass draws between Bīrūnī and Nobili is instructive.

Halbfass refers to Nobili's hermeneutic stance as *transitive* as in, in his impulse to introduce his own horizon into another, he was looking for 'pedagogic and strategic' points of entry. The very framework of the *mission* ensured that the fundamental questions of the communicability of the message will be ignored: "as much as he was willing to make concessions with respect to ways of life, so little was he able to allow Hindu thought to affect the dogmatic substance of his own Christian convictions."[131] Though falling far short of Bīrūnī's understanding of the strangeness of the other for its own sake, it was removed from the traditional missionary impulses of Nobili's time and created quite an uproar in orthodox Christian circles. Being a missionary and not a scholar, Halbfass notes, Nobili doesn't attempt a 'retrieval' of religious and philosophical ideas of the Indian tradition, for him it is a means to an end.

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[127] Ibid., Pg. 38
[128] See Richard DeSmet, "R. de Nobili a Forerunner of Hindu-Christian Dialogue" (1991), accessed April 25, 2014, http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1040&context=jhcs.
[129] Sita Ram Goel, "Sannyasins or Swindlers?", *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, 2nd Revised and Enlarged edition (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2010).
[130] For a detailed discussion on the possible reasons for "relocations" of divine terms see Sangkeun Kim, *Strange Names of God: The Missionary Translation of the Divine Name and the Chinese Responses to Matteo Ricci's "Shangti" in Late Ming China, 1583-1644* (Peter Lang, 2004).. Pg. 105-114
[131] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 43

All in all, Halbfass argues that the missionary attempts in India don't inaugurate the tradition of Indological research as the room for research and the dissemination of results was extremely limited. The "active hermeneutics"[132] of missionary thought, nevertheless remained one of "the most important channels of European access to Indian thought." Though the attitudes assumed must be criticized, the (perhaps unintended) historical significance is to be appreciated. Halbfass doesn't understate the 'intolerant polemics' and 'dogmatism' which often prevailed among the missionaries, but at the same time, he realizes the "goals of teaching and of translating the Bible into the languages of India resulted in an ever more systematic and thorough inquiry into the contexts of Indian thought which was carried out with the cooperation of native pandits."[133] Halbfass concludes, "The missionaries have performed pioneering, detailed work in several areas. But primarily, in spite of or perhaps precisely because of their "prejudice" and dogmatic limitations, they have also helped to define and clarify the central problems involved in approaching and understanding that which is alien: They, or at least their outstanding exponents, embody a desire to understand whose singular power and problematic nature arise from their deep and uncompromising *desire to be understood*."[134]

5.1.4 Deism, the Enlightenment and the Early History of Indology

Halbfass threads together the 'creativity' of some aspects of the missionary encounter with Indian thought and their attempt to distil the 'natural light' in the works belonging to the Hindu tradition (namely the Upanishads) with the religious and philosophical tendencies of Rationalism and the Enlightenment that are presented under the category of 'Deism'. In the western Age of Discovery, with increasing information about the diversity of views and practices in the world, there are also calls for a new 'openness', cosmopolitanism and a new interreligious 'dialogue'. Halbfass goes at length into Voltaire's reading of the book forged by the French Jesuits called the *Ezourveda*.[135]

[132] Ibid., Pg. 52
[133] Ibid., Pg. 50
[134] Ibid., Pg. 53
[135] The Ezourvedam could be cited as one of the most important examples of the constitutive nature of 'relational properties' as though the 'intrinsic content' was born out of post-Vedic sources, Christian ideas and the author's imagination (what Joseph Mansion refers to as 'apostolic zeal'), it is undoubtedly a work that stands at the threshold of European interest in Indian culture and religion. The origin and history of

Again, Halbfass is interested in how Voltaire's misunderstanding is related to his own hermeneutic situation. Quoting D.S. Hawley, he makes the point that what Voltaire read about India was of great importance for the articulation of "his (Voltaire's) own ideas about the origin and development of religion."[136] Chumantou's fictitious dialogues against the superstition of popular Hinduism were translatable to Voltaire's own present and self-understanding.

Looking into the dominant motifs of the day, particularly of the 'natural light'[137], of 'quietism'[138], of 'religious decay',[139] and 'of misunderstanding the metaphors and allegories of one's own tradition,'[140] Halbfass criticizes the western Age of Enlightenment's approach towards India which was ambivalent and often speculative in nature. Devoid of the original sources and the original contexts of understanding, the attempt to see oneself and others through the 'foreign eyes' was often a stereotypical practice and a stylistic device.[141] The systematic attempt however, to understand the texts *in the original* came only towards the end of the Enlightenment with the activities of the British Orientalists in the *Asiatic Society* of Bengal, namely William Jones (1764-94), Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) and Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837). Influenced by the deism of the Enlightenment, Jones, Wilkins and (to a lesser extent) Colebrooke began publishing their influential translations, and an event that is fundamental for Halbfass's narrative thread takes place– the establishment of the scholarly study of Indian intellectual achievements. Halbfass makes clear that the context for the emergence of Indology as a discipline was the economic and political presence of the British in India, and that it was to aid in "steering" the Indians from "within their own framework of thought". Towards the end of the chapter, he also briefly mentions the reversal of attitudes towards India in the first decades of the nineteenth century, primarily owing to the belittling accounts of Hindu thought by politicians and historians such as J.S. Mill and Thomas Macaulay.[142]

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the work and the attitudes assumed towards it are necessary elements in the historical growth and development of Indological studies.

[136] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*.Ibid., Pg. 58.

[137] Ibid., Pg. 59

[138] Ibid., Pg. 59

[139] Ibid., Pg. 61

[140] Ibid., Pg. 61

[141] Ibid., Pg. 62

[142] Perhaps the role of actors such as John Stuart Mill and Macaulay and their attitudes towards India would have been expanded upon in the light of recent post-colonial works such as Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (University of Chicago

However, here Halbfass introduces, somewhat anachronistically, the figure of Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805). While Anquetil belongs to the period of the pre-history of Indology, the influence of his seminal work the *Oupnek'hat* was felt well into the 19th century. Belonging, according to Halbfass, in the position between the Enlightenment, Romanticism and scientific Indology, Anquetil's importance lies not only in his role as a translator and the importance accorded to him by his most notable advocates, but also on account of his 'comparative method' and the philosophical and hermeneutical reflection he offers.[143]

Halbfass refers to Anquetil's plea to study the fundamental texts in the original language and to study the texts as the Christian West studies the texts of the Romans and the Greeks— "critically, but respectfully, without ridiculing them,"[144]. As compared to the Enlightenment, Halbfass notes that Anquetil managed to circumvent the abstract, unembodied openness of the Enlightenment and insisted on engaging with a 'dialogue' in order to come to terms with the extra-European achievements of thought.[145] Here it may be pertinent to mention Said's brief references to Anquetil's works in *Orientalism*, which ultimately reduces him to "an eccentric theoretician of egalitarianism."[146] Said considers the work of Anquetil to be a precursor for nineteenth century Orientalism and the western 'imperial enterprise' as it operates through the claims of objective science of philology. While Halbfass's project is limited[147] (focusing primarily on the *Oupnek'hat*) it not only manages to be a strong critique of European scientism (via Gadamer), it also looks at the established *textual* relation the

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Press, 1999). Parekh, Bhikhu. "Liberalism and colonialism: a critique of Locke and Mill." *Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power* (1995): 81-98., etc.

[143] Ibid., Pg. 64

[144] Ibid., Pg. 66

[145] "The majority of travelers content themselves with asking the Brahmins about the essence of their teachings or what they believe concerning this or that subject matter. Some go so far as to get for themselves extracts of their theological books. The answers and the extracts may be accurate; but they may also correspond to the circumstances, the spirit, the views of the person who asks the questions. The only way to know the truth is to learn the languages well, to translate oneself the fundamental works, and to confer subsequently with the scholars of the country on the subject-matters treated therein, the books in hand." Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*. Pg. 66.

[146] Said, *Orientalism*. He quotes Raymond Schwab at length to put forth his argument

[147] For a more in-depth analysis of Anquetil-Duperron, in his flaws and progressiveness, see Siep Stuurman, "Cosmopolitan Egalitarianism in the Enlightenment: Anquetil Duperron on India and America," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 255–78.

book acquires with other equally important works that lie outside of its historical context, most notably that of Schopenhauer.[148]

In any case, given that Anquetil had translated from a Persian translation (commissioned by Dārā Shukōh) Halbfass argues that the *Oupnek'hat* is not a pioneering work of *philology*; it is intended explicitly to a philosophical audience. The author called upon the "followers and opponents of the profound Kant" to consider the work not as a relic from the past but as "a serious philosophical challenge"[149] Halbfass argues that Anquetil allows for Christian thought and Indian thought to exist next to each other without any qualitative gradations. More importantly, he was interested in establishing links between the contemporary philosophy and the Upanishads. These developments, Halbfass argues are subsequently taken up by Schopenhauer, P. Duessen, Th. A. Rixner, and the most distinguished representatives of the field of 'comparative philosophy' in India.

5.1.5 India and the Romantic Critique of the Present

Though often considered to be "diametrically opposed" to the Enlightenment, Halbfass argues that the self-criticism of the Enlightenment with respect to its Christianity, and the search for origins informed the Romantic awareness of India and the Orient. Exemplary[150] in these respects is the figure of J.G. Herder. Halbfass, contrary to the pre-dominant characterizations of post-colonial texts[151], establishes that Herder's account of India is friendly and empathetic. In Herder's scheme, the Indian "infancy" of mankind is glorified, though the Western return to the infancy is considered to be undesirable and impossible. Halbfass is aware of the inherent problems of this conceptual ordering and goes at length to quote and prove that Herder's pluralism wasn't axiologically-loaded or hierarchical. Halbfass writes, "He stressed that the author of such a "natural history" was not permitted to have a "favourite tribe" or "chosen people" ("Lieblingsstamm," "Favoritenvolk"), or to presuppose a hierarchy of nations." And later, "By no means,

[148] Interestingly, Schopenhauer is mentioned tangentially only twice in *Orientalism* and both times in favourable light
[149] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 66
[150] This is one of Halbfass's characteristic terms. (see Pg. 21, 38, 44, 47, 51...)
[151] See Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory: Eighteenth-Century Colonialisms and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford Univ Pr, 2009).

moreover, could European culture serve as the general standard for comparison: "The genius of human natural history lies in and with each nation, as if it were the only one on earth."[152] In this context, Herder's critique of the missionary activity and colonialism in India as intolerant of the autonomous cultures of the Orient is also pertinent.[153]

What in post-colonial literature is dismissed as the 'essentialized' is critiqued in *India and Europe* as 'speculative'. Halbfass's interest, however, is also to bring out the attitude assumed through those speculative *imaginings*. The 'essentialisms' are dealt as historical features of an obsolete mode of 18th Century European scholarship. Halbfass concludes, "The picture Herder painted of India was essentially positive and occasionally glorifying, and anticipated in some ways the Romantic understanding of India. His programmatic pluralism and his openness to the diversity of human nature and human cultures did not, however, permit him to accord the Indians any kind of privileged position or meet them with an exclusive interest."[154]

Subsequently, India, in the stereotype of 'the eternal', assumed mythical proportions in the Romantic Movement in Germany. Halbfass echoes the argument made by D.S. Hawley, with regards to Voltaire's relationship with the Ezourvedam; that the Romantics, in effect, understood and used the trope of the eternal Orient to critique their mechanistic present. While criticizing the mythicizing tendencies, Halbfass notes that for the Romantic writers, a return to Indian sources came with a hope of bringing about a change for the better in their own society. In this context, Novalis' (1772-1801) and more importantly, Friedrich Schlegel's (1772-1829) recommendation of turning back to the original Indian thought is significant. Schlegel, just like Anquetil, was convinced of the relationship between Indian studies and philosophy. In sharp contrast to post-colonial discussions on the Schlegel brothers, Halbfass tries to understand how Schlegels' writings changed over the years and more importantly, how they related to the historical context and other historical actors. For example, Halbfass discusses at length F. Schlegel's initial fascination with the notion of pantheism and how he later came to consider it as a corruption of the original revelation and subsequently, criticized pantheistic Hindu thinking as a false concept that appealed to man's 'self-conceit' and

[152] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 72
[153] In Said's book, Herder is repeatedly mentioned as a 'populist and pluralist'.
[154] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*, Pg. 70

'indolence.' [155] Schlegel's philosophy, crucially, was countered by Schelling and Hegel; while the former, attempted a new defence of pantheism, the latter considered the idea of the original revelation as a unified-state-of-mankind as presenting an inversion of the true direction of history.

Halbfass writes, "Schlegel evokes the ideal of the Renaissance scholar who combined solid linguistic knowledge with philosophical training in his studies of classical antiquity; he hopes that it will inspire a methodical and yet not exclusively philological treatment of the Indian material."[156] Approvingly, Halbfass points to Schlegel's plea for greater contextual understanding of different literatures and cultures.[157]

Thus, in the 19th century, in Halbfass's epoch-spanning narrative, what began as 'Indo-mania' transforms into institutionalized Indology. What began as a search for alternatives to the mechanized European present itself becomes the methodological accumulation of 'objective' knowledge about India.[158] Romantic aspirations, however, Halbfass argues, survived and in part are found in the works of F. Max Müller who championed the motif of the 'origins', New England Transcendentalism as well as Theosophy.

5.1.b. Halbfass on Post-Indological Indo-European encounters

5.1.6 Hegel

In the book's narrative, Hegel and Schopenhauer provide two 'exemplary' models that illustrate European approaches to Indian thought after the establishment of scientific Indology. According to Halbfass, Hegel, just as the Christians missionaries, represents the fundamental problems of the encounter and dialogue between India and Europe. Halbfass cites H. Von Glassenapp's assessment of Hegel– a 'bookman', 'The prototype of the Westerner [...] who saw Western thought as the measure of all things' and

[155] Ibid., Pg. 77
[156] Ibid., Pg. 80
[157] " . . . just as in the history of nations, the Asians and the Europeans form just one large family and Asia and Europe constitute an inseparable whole, so should we exert ourselves even more to view the literature of all educated peoples as a continuous development and one single, intimately connected structure and framework, as one large whole. Then, many of those one-sided and limited views would disappear of their own accord, much would become understandable in this context, and everything would appear new in this light" Ibid., Pg. 80-81
[158] Halbfass notes the 'dialectical irony' of this development. Ibid., Pg. 83

someone unwilling to revise his conceptual schemes on the basis of empirical evidence. At the same time, Halbfass notes that Hegel's view of India, in terms of its historical and philological accuracy falls noticeably short. Though he made use of the reports and investigations concerning India, he made no attempts to learn Sanskrit or any Indian language. However, Halbfass argues that despite his 'prejudice' and his one-sidedness, rather than a 'de-constructivist' dismissal, his historical and systemic reflection requires a closer, contextual analysis to do it full justice. It may be important to note that Hegel, the post-structural critique, typified what was absolutely flawed not only in European understanding of the Indian tradition, but understanding in general.[159]

Halbfass begins his discussion by placing Hegel in the context of the Romantics. In relation to them, Hegel does not share their glorification of the past and remains committed to the European present. As for the depth of Hegel's knowledge in India, Halbfass cites that among the works of scholarship that Hegel considered indispensible were H. Th. Colebrooke's "On the Philosophy of the Hindus" and W. Von Humboldt's essay on the Bhagavadgītā. Moreover, Halbfass, pointing to the later remarks of Hegel, tries to argue that Hegel's own interpretation of Indian thought considerably changed over the years.

After drawing an outline of the source books to which Hegel refers, Halbfass attempts to explain the systematic context of Hegel's philosophy, which he considers to be "a challenge to the idea of objectivity itself."[160] The parallels to Gadamerian anti-objectivism and Halbfass's own cautious allegiance to it are pertinent. However, for Hegel, the history of philosophy is the unfolding of philosophy itself. "Historical understanding explicates and objectifies what is implicit in, and presupposed by, the current conditions of our existence. In particular, the history of philosophy aims at comprehending the fundamental constituents and the inner structure of our present existence and self-awareness".[161]

Halbfass draws out Hegel's metaphysical categorization of Hinduism as primarily concerned with 'substance' and 'substantiality'. While a concern about the substances of things-in-itself are the common ground of religion and philosophy, Hegel argued that

[159] For a thorough and radical critique of Hegel's thought, especially in relation to India, See Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India*, Auflage: 2nd Revised edition (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2000), Pg. 93-97.
[160] Here, Halbfass is assisted by the vocabulary of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*,
[161] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*, Pg. 87

Indian thought lacked the necessary *Aufhebung,* it denied individual self-affirmation and thus the 'being-*for*-itself' never emerged against and out of the 'being-*in*-itself'. Similarly, on the discussion about the Gīta, Hegel suggests that at its core lies the practice of Yoga, which mandates absorption not *into* objects, but *without* objects, i.e., it denies the 'dialectical interplay' crucial for creative evolution. Having been superseded by the Occident, Oriental thought can merely serve as a correctional impulse to the modern Western subjectivism and anthopocentricism. This call to 'drown the vanity of European subjectivity', is reminiscent of the Romantic context. Halbfass argues that Hegel's thought is inseparable from his anti-romantic criticism and the historical position of Europe in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Hegel, who comes to justify European colonial activities, is "the herald of European self-presentation"[162].

After the illuminating survey of the key ideas found in Hegel's works on India, Halbfass attempts to look closer into the 'historicity' and 'hermeneutic situation' of Hegel's thought.[163] Hegel is acutely aware of the historical conditions of his own thought, but in his thinking it comes to assume an unwarranted "superior reflexivity," adding to "his historical and cultural self-assurance and the confidence in the hermeneutic potential of his level and context of thought."[164] European 'horizons' having transcended Asian 'horizons', has the capacity to provide new categories for understanding Asian thought, but not vice versa.[165] The limited amount of information available to Hegel helps him advance his thesis. Halbfass points to the gaps in Hegel's knowledge, specifically with regards to the different systems of Indian thought, the changes that took place in them over the years and the debates between the Hindu and Buddhist philosophies. He criticizes, Hegel's adamant tendency to reduce what he found to a few basic abstractions (such as his notion of substantiality).[166]

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[162] Ibid., pg. 96
[163] "[Hegel's] motto that everybody is a son of his time is to be applied to him too." Ibid., Pg. 96
[164] Ibid., Pg. 96
[165] Ibid., pg. 96
[166] J. L. Mehta, one of the modern Indian philosophers who Halbfass often quotes from, and who is also heavily influenced by the works of Heidegger and Gadamer, considers Hegel's interpretive strategy as "a weapon" directed against the understood other. "The being of the other far from being acknowledged in its otherness and as a voice trying to reach me with its truth" can only appear as "spirit in a state of dream." It is the upending of Hegelian reduction of the contingency and possibilities of the past ("The beginning is the uncanniest and mightiest. What comes after is not development but shallowness and diffusion, the failure to hold on to the beginning, rendering it ineffective and harmless and exaggerating it into a caricature...") that make the thought of Heidegger and Gadamer relevant for his cross-cultural hermeneutics. J. L. Mehta, "Heidegger and the Comparison of Indian and Western Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 20, no. 3 (July 1970): 303

Towards the end of the essay, Halbfass fleshes out what he'd initially stated, with regards to Hegel's change of attitude with the increase in the available information on India. His reviews of Colebrooke's essays with regards to the Nyāya-Vaiśesika and Sāmkhya schools of thought, show a significant change from his earlier position and his arguments about 'real philosophy' having originating in the Occident. Towards the end, Hegel had argued for a greater distillation of philosophy from the religious ideas. [167]

Rather than providing a one-sided image of Hegel, i.e. neither a glorified portrait of his conceptual framework, nor focusing solely on his 'negative' and 'condescending' attitude or his historical scheme of subordination, by also looking at the uniqueness of his historicity, the implications to basic 'hermeneutic assumptions' in Hegel's philosophy, Halbfass provides us with a more complete picture with greater theoretical relevance. Considering its 'significance', it's flawed anti-objectivism, it's resolute anti-comparitivism, while criticizing its obsolete mode of conceptual ordering, the essay still allows for its profound mistakes of understanding *teach* us in the present. Halbfass sums up his nuanced position in the following paragraph:

"While it is true that Hegel did not do justice to Indian philosophy, he certainly did not treat what he knew about it as mere "information" or "opinions." He dealt with it in a subordinating and, at times, pejorative manner, but he did not forget that "it has an impact upon the highest notions of our understanding." Hegel was not a neutral scholar and expert. He was a philosopher par excellence, representing like few others the glory and greatness as well as the futility and arrogance of philosophy. His system is one of the most intense and spectacular efforts to think reality, to comprehend it, to subdue it to the power of the concept, and it is instructive even in its failures and excesses. And while Hegel was one of the greatest systematizers and universalizers, he was also one of the most deliberately European thinkers. He tried to demonstrate in concrete terms the universalistic potential of European thought, its conceptual power to cope with all other traditions, and to show that these traditions are in fact superseded by it. His approach exemplifies once and for all one basic possibility of dealing with a foreign tradition."[168]

[167] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*, Pg. 97
[168] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*, Pg. 98

5.1.7 Schelling and Schopenhauer

The other half of the "most memorable episode"[169] of the encounter of Indian and Western thought is found in the models of Schelling and Schopenhauer. Schelling's earlier works, Halbfass argues were marked by a general openness to non-European thought, while maintaining a distance with the Romantic glorification of the India. Coming from his distinctly Christian background, he remained critical, even when his thought preserved the influence of Oriental ideas, most notably in his metaphysical ideas relating to pantheism, world-soul, self-transcendence, philosophy as a striving towards absolute identity and intellectual intuition.[170]

Halbfass draws parallels between Hegel's and Schelling's appraisal of Indian thought, in spite of the latter's trenchant criticism of the former.[171] Just as Hegel, Schelling is not a neutral scholar and his book, Halbfass criticizes, is rife with idiosyncratic speculations. While being as committed to understanding Indian thought as Hegel, it is not a reliable sourcebook for facts on India.[172] However, Halbfass is not ready to dismiss the historically crucial 'event', and argues that its shortcomings are to be weighed along with its comparative conceptual scheme with regards to mythology. Also, Schelling had greater access to texts than Hegel and is therefore, among other things, also able to comment on the religious debates between the Hindus and the Buddhists and therefore engage more substantially. Lastly, Halbfass attempts to shed light on Schelling's acute awareness that all understanding of India will be necessary inadequate as any approximations of 'Spirit' would necessarily be based on the works produced by the higher, more educated castes and not the masses themselves.[173]

Halbfass then moves to his discussion on Schopenhauer and looks at his disagreements with Hegel in the light of their relationship with Indian texts. Both Hegel and Schopenhauer, he argues, stood in an ambiguous relationship with the Romantic

[169] Ibid., Pg. 100
[170] Ibid., Pg. 101
[171] Schelling argued that while Hegel's philosophy was more advanced in terms of reflexivity, but in its "thinking about thinking" it betrays an "arrogance of conceptuality" and is thought that is fundamentally negative, narcissistic and "without life" Pg. 105
[172] Ibid., Pg. 102
[173] Ibid., Pg. 104. Pollock's analysis of 'Deep orientalism' or 'Pre-oriental orientalism', in the sense that the archaeology of colonialism "elevated Brahmanic formulations to the level of the hegemonic text" may be cited in this context. "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj" in Carol Appadurai Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993)., Pg. 96

Movement and their mutual criticisms, especially of Schopenhauer's, were highly personalized in nature. However, the role that Indian ideas played in Schopenhauer's own philosophical thinking and self-understanding was far greater.[174] While never having learnt Sanskrit, Schopenhauer gained knowledge of the Upanishads only through Anquetil Duperron's *Oupnek'hat*, after which he read the translations of the *Bhagavad Gitā*, the Law books of Manu and the expositions of early Buddhist literature. Subsequent translations of the Upanishads by H. Coolebroke, H.E. Röer and Raja Ram Mohan Roy were treated with suspicion and dismissal. His views on India, Halbfass claims, were primarily informed by the specific translation of the Upanishads and his idiosyncratic readings of classical Indian texts. Halbfass's main thesis on Schopenhauer is that he remained interested in aspects of Indian religion and philosophy only in so far as he was able to *apply* them to his own metaphysical doctrines.[175] It is in Halbfass's discussion of Schopenhauer (particularly in its relation to neo-Hindu thought) that the strengths of the hermeneutic approach come into focus. A quote from Douglas L. Berger's essay on Paul Hacker's critique of Vedāntic and Schopenhaureian ethics is relevant. He writes "The interpretation of texts particularly in the practice of cross-cultural philosophy, inevitably involves conceptual appropriation of varying degrees that is initiated by the recipient or "hearer" of the text in question rather than uniformly by its "speaker" or author [...] In the context of Schopenhauer's appropriation of certain concepts and themes from classical Indian thought and then the re-appropriation of his interpretations of those ideas by contemporary neo-Vedantins, we observe this process and its consequences in its most remarkable and dramatic ways."[176]

Subsequently, Halbfass draws out the contrasting relationships with history that marks the works of Schopenhauer and Hegel. For the former, history was not an unfolding towards a greater complexity of thought, but a "farce". The inescapable contingency of history, he argued was lost in Hegel's "naive" conceptual reconstruction. In Schopenhauer's thesis, the role of the will, that evolved blindly, was fundamentally to *deny* the purposeless evolution.[177] In the context of his relationship to Indian thought,

[174] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., 106
[175] Ibid., Pg. 107
[176] Douglas L. Berger, "Does Monism Do Ethical work" Jorg Esleben et al., *Mapping Channels between Ganges and Rhein: German-Indian Cross-Cultural Relations* (Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008)., Pg, 114
[177] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 108

closely aligned with Hacker's discussion[178], Halbfass argues that the aim of his philosophy was to unite ethicism and metaphysics into a new, comprehensive system.[179]

Halbfass terms Schopenhauer's attitude towards India as "a recognitive historiography of philosophy," "which remained open to finding the same insights in the most diverse historical contexts."[180] Schopenhauer found his ideas reflected in Indian thinking not as a philosophical antecedent, but as *truth*, and considered his own works as a systemization of the metaphysical principles that lay hidden in the Upanishads.[181] He used the concepts of *māyā*, *tat tvam asī* of the Chandayoga Upanishad, of Buddhist *nirvāna,* to illustrate specific aspects of his own philosophy. In his search for aligning the concept of the Brahman to his own concept of the will, Halbfass establishes that he relied on specific translations while consciously disregarding others.[182] However, Halbfass is careful here not to overstate the importance of Schopenhauer's 'openness' as the manner in which he approached Indian thought remained ambiguous and bordered on a selective glorification. For him, his own works were the "standard of fulfilment" of Indian thought, and thus, rather than serving as a mirror, it was a "medium of self-representation and self-confirmation."[183] Here, Halbfass draws an interesting parallel to Hegel's own proclamation of universalism though in a completely different conceptual context. Also, for Schopenhauer, Indian thought was not relegated to a position in the pre-history of Christian thought, in fact, he stressed on the superiority of its 'horizon' to the Judeo-Christian 'horizon' of the West.

Halbfass asks for a subtle re-evaluation of the relationship of Schopenhauer and Indian thought, looking beyond the binaries of unambiguous influence and non-influence, and the narrower debates with regards to philological correctness and incorrectness. Looking into how Schopenhauer used specific concepts such as the *māyā*, *brahman*, *jīva*, *puruṣa*, *nirvāna*, *karman*, *parkṛiti*, Halbfass points to a genuine engagement with the concepts and a readiness to "utilize them for the illustration, articulation and

[178] See "Schopenhauer and Hindu Ethics" in Paul Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta* (Suny Press, 1995).
[179] More on this in section 4.2.3 "Neo-Hinduism, Modern Indian traditionalism, and the presence of Europe
[180] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 110
[181] Ibid., Pg. 110
[182] In his essay, the most crucial point Halbfass makes is with regards to Schopenhauer's reliance on Anquetil Duperron's *Oupnek'hat*. Schopenhauer's encounters are not purely Indian, but are mediated by Anquetil's own thinking, interpretation and explicitly philosophical approach.
[183] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 114

clarification of his own teachings and problems."[184] At the same time, the concepts allowed him to offer "a radical critique of some of the most fundamental presuppositions of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, such as the notions of a personal God, the uniqueness of the human individual and the meaning of history, as well as the modern Western belief in the powers of the intellect, rationality, planning and progress."[185]

In conclusion, Halbfass hints at the association of Schopenhauer's work with the notions of pessimism and irrationalism and how the neo-Hindus in turn sought to distance themselves from these particular connotations while appropriating some of Schopenhauer's reinterpretations. The significance of this particular debate will be picked up later in another section of the book, when Halbfass gets into a discussion on Hacker's criticism of the *tat tvam asi* ethic.

5.1.8 Developments in the interpretation of India following Hegel and Schopenhauer

Halbfass makes the observation that Schopenhauer, though having enjoyed substantial fame towards the end of his life, remains an outsider to the canon of Western philosophy and his association with Indian thought, in turn served the purposes of sidelining Indian thought from the academic 'canon' of Western philosophy as well. Another outsider, Nietzsche is mentioned here and Halbfass attempts to provide a historical and hermeneutical assessment of Nietzsche's thought in its relationship to Indology.

Even though he had personal relationships with Indologists such as P. Deussen, Nietzsche is known to have openly detested the works of the professional Indologists and their attitude towards Indian thinking in general. His knowledge about Indian texts however, Halbfass notes, was less extensive and systematic than that of Hegel or Schopenhauer. Making initial criticisms about his style ("personal, aphoristic, at times erratic"), and a lack of a coherent presentation of his ideas, Halbfass seeks to look into the role Indian ideas play in the articulation of the his own philosophical understanding.

[184] Ibid., Pg. 119
[185] Ibid., Pg. 120

For Nietzsche, just as for Schopenhauer, Hinduism and Buddhism allowed for a possibility through which the condition of modern Europe could be criticised. As an alternative to the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is able to provide an example of a greater sense of *jasagende* ('yea-saying') commitment to the world as well as a more advanced sense of denial of the world. Halbfass deduces that among the key text for him in the Hindu tradition is the Law book of Manu, which to him is an exemplary expression of a "yea-saying", affirmative 'Aryan' religion.[186] A 'proud and non-moralizing' elite, without offering 'noble words', segregates society religiously and advocates active deception and suppression.[187] According to him, while both Christianity and ("nay-saying") Buddhism are rooted in the "monstrous disease" of the will, they differ in that the nihilism of the latter is more 'mature and cultivated' than that of the former. He went as far as arguing that the "superior" religion of Buddhism may eventually come to displace Christianity in Europe. However, a "European Buddhism" would be the intermediate step to the eventual stage of world-affirmation where a true transvaluation of values becomes possible.

Halbfass concludes his brief section on Nietzsche: "For Nietzsche, Buddhism is important as a counterpart and steppingstone to the great future affirmation. He never attempts to view Buddhism itself in the sense of this affirmation of, and liberation for, the world. Buddhism does point to the transformation of "perfect nihilism" into world affirmation, but only to the extent that it, when transplanted to European soil, will contribute to the self-destruction of Christianity and reinforce the European potential for an active "transvaluation."[188]

Another heir to Schopenhauer, who also had a personal relationship to Nietzsche, was Paul Deussen. Halbfass lauds his scholarly approach, philological instinct and the fact that he was also a devoted Sanskritist making pioneering contributions to Indian studies. At the same time, for Halbfass, his position among the historians of philosophy is diminished primarily on account of his "commitment to Schopenhauer".

Positioning himself between philosophy and Sanskrit studies, some of the issues dealt by Deussen correspond to Halbfass's own interests, such as, the problem of defining 'philosophy' in the absence of a unified discipline in India. For Deussen, the problem is

[186] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 126
[187] Ibid., Pg. 126
[188] Ibid., Pg. 128

eventually resolved by considering all study of the things-in-itself as "thoughts of importance" irrespective of whether they appear as religious thought or philosophical thought. As contrasted with Hegel's historical analysis, there is no superior form that shape of thought could take as ultimately, it is for historical actors to rediscover what is originally said. Halbfass considers this as a commitment to a single *philosophia perennis*, though slightly tempered with the willingness to learn from the previous contexts of thought. Halbfass's discussion on Deussen's interpretive position is interesting as it sheds light on his own wrestling with coming to terms with a suitable approach. He cites Deussen's remarks on the "colossal one-sidedness" of Hegel and questions Deussen's own one-sidedness, especially with respect to Schopenhauer's thought.[189] However, in the final analysis, there is a scholarly and methodological consistency that Halbfass appreciates in Deussen.

As opposed to the substantial body of work that emerged from the influence of Schopenhauer, Halbfass notes that Hegel's influences on Indological research have been sparse. His most noticeable legacy, Halbfass argues, is the Western academic sidelining of Indian thought as devoid of 'real philosophy', an idea that he himself had come to re-evaluate towards the end of his life.[190] A notable influence of Hegel's work in the context of Indian studies, is with the works of Marx. However, the newspapers articles Marx published on India were scant and Halbfass criticizes them for their lack of systemic engagement with the Indian ideas and a general reliance on the framework created by Hegel.

Lastly, Halbfass turns his attention to the positivistic critique of metaphysical thought and its role in Indology. Here, committed to Gadamer's thought, he proceeds to analyse the two important methodological frameworks of sociology, Auguste Comte's 'positivistic' approach and Max Weber's '*verstehen'* approach. Halbfass's analysis of the former is brief[191], but the latter, he considers to be a momentous event in the intercultural encounter between Europe and India.[192] Both attempts, Halbfass argues, points to a distinctive European need that had emerged then – that of posing the

[189] Ibid., Pg. 132
[190] Ibid., Pg 135
[191] He briefly discusses the sociological project as envisioned by Comte and the work of French Indologist P. Masson-Oursel whose quest for 'objective' openness, Halbfass argues, results in a peculiar "anthropocentric parochialism."
[192] Ibid., Pg. 143

traditional philosophical questions in the language of an empirical science.[193] He refers to Weber as a 'crypto-Hegelian' who nevertheless transforms the heritage of Hegel, Marx and Comte. Halbfass casts Weber's work primarily as an attempt to come to a self-understanding with regards to the emerging condition of the modern, European world. For Weber, it is this need to come to terms with the uniqueness of Europe that serves as an impulse to study other non-European traditions— notably that of the Far East, the Near East and India. However, significantly departing from Hegel, Europe is now not understood from a position of self-assurance. The changes taking place in Europe under the category of modernity, rational planning, the emergence of a value-free research and technological progress are not understood as positive or superior outcomes. He writes, "Value-freedom," "value-neutrality" ("Wert freiheit"') was the responsibility and vocation of the modern Western or Westernized scholar, but it was also his predicament."[194]

5.1.9 On the Exclusion of India from the History of Philosophy

In this chapter, Halbfass attempts to look into the two paradigms of understanding/interpreting Indian religious thought as philosophy– the first is that of Anquetil Duepperon, Schopenhauer, and P. Deussen, which does not distinguish between religious thought and philosophical thought, preferring to consider the category of the "metaphysical efforts" of people from all historical contexts and the second is that which stems from Hegel and is based on a strict separation of philosophy from religious thought. Halbfass argues that it is the second paradigm of thought that gained increasing relevance in the nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts of the History of Philosophy. Though Hegel's study of India was not as influential, his framework of real free-spirited philosophy of Europe superseding the metaphysical efforts of Orient gained traction. Indian thought, for Hegel, remained a "pre-historical abstractness and thus [reverted] to the form of myth". Halbfass argues that Hegel's account was not only in keeping with the universalistic historical accounts that were being made available in the light of the Enlightenment and Rationalism, but also with the Biblical horizon of humanity. Another crucial element that informed this restrictive ordering was the

[193] Ibid., Pg. 143
[194] Ibid., Pg. 144

emergence of Cartesianism and its opposition to the inclusion of pre-Hellenic and Oriental thought, on the grounds that methodologically ordered and progressive reasoning emerged first among the Greeks and then among the post-scholastic European philosophy.[195]

Halbfass then goes on to a compilation of "exemplary opinions"[196] of well-known works that emerged in the nineteenth century, all of which point to two kinds of justifications for the exclusion of Indian thought: 1. "the exclusion of the Oriental world from the genetic context of the European history of philosophy; 2. the exclusion of the Orient from the domain to which the concept of philosophy is applicable." [197]

Halbfass is critical not only of this deliberate exclusion, but also of the lack of criticisms from the Indologists who were primarily concerned with Indian Philosophy. He writes, "Apart from the question of genetic relationships, most of the remarks cited [...] seem to imply that the very concept of philosophy itself was fundamentally unsuited for dealing with the Indian and Oriental traditions. This is not just an expression of doubt concerning the factual occurrence of the "phenomenon" of philosophy in the Orient, but also a self-demarcation, self-representation, and self-assertion of Europe in the name of a particular concept of philosophy. At the same time, it reflects the European sense of superiority characteristic of the nineteenth century. And not only in spite of the ever more extensively available non-European material, but also in response to it, some historians of philosophy concentrated their efforts even more exclusively upon their own tradition and origins while emphasizing the singularity and uniqueness of "philosophy."[198]

A corresponding development has been on the part of Indologists who, in their orientation towards the "pure theory" interpretation of philosophy, failed to explicitly involve themselves in discussions about the applicability and characterizations of Indian concepts in Western terms.

[195] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 150
[196] Ibid., Pg. 155
[197] Ibid., Pg. 155
[198] Ibid., Pg. 157

5.1.10 Preliminary Postscript: The Hermeneutic Situation in the Twentieth Century

In his short 'postscript', Halbfass critically reflects on the conditions within which the "dialogue" and "encounter" between India and Europe will continue; while the information available has increased exponentially, he says, the dialogue itself has gotten more "ambiguous and questionable". Along with the historical and philological approach that attempts a historical reconstruction of the past, sociological, economic, anthropological, approaches have gained prominence. The presence of India in the West has proliferated and at the same time Indians themselves have begun to interpret and present their tradition to the West. Halbfass, in his characteristic style, poses a set of probing questions about the current scenario, questioning whether a genuine "fusion of horizons" has become possible, and whether Eurocentric exclusivism has subsided for good. However, his aim, he writes, is not to answer his questions in a comprehensive fashion but to hint at "certain trends and prospects" and "above all, to articulate some open questions."[199]

Halbfass hints that the attempts to include India in the history of philosophies have increased in the 20th century, but there is a general tendency, in line with the legacy of Schopenhauer's thought, to associate with Indian thought in a non-academic context. The motif of the "meeting of the east and the West" is evoked and there is an unquestioning reliance, particularly in the American West, on the personal representatives of Eastern religion. At the same time, an "analytic approach" attempts to apply criteria of modern logic and epistemology and weigh Indian thought in terms of Western standards, and more often than not, Halbfass informs, Indian thought comes to satisfactory approximation. While acknowledging the necessary attempts to 'naturalize' Indian philosophy, Halbfass, implicitly seems to want to move away from the more superficial encounters to more sober and patient textual work.

He quotes Gadamer to make a point regarding the problem of applying Western concepts to interpret and understand approximations of Eastern thought. Gadamer argues that while the study of Eastern philosophies has advanced a great deal, the lack of awareness of the associational contexts of translations have often altered the meaning of the original concept. This transformation of concepts would remain a disruptive and

[199] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 161

superficial venture so long as there is no explicit awareness and reflection with regards to the creative potential of one's 'prejudices'. This, Halbfass argues ought to be the crucial basis of all Indian-European "dialogue" henceforth. In this renewed dialogue, the approximations of concepts and the reinterpretation within new conceptual schemes are not to be understood as errors that would be dissipated over time with more accurate philological work, but are productive tendencies tied to the nature of language and associational contexts of concepts themselves. He writes,

"It is the lack of such recognition which accounts for the naive and superficial character of so many statements on Indian and "comparative" philosophy. In the context of hermeneutics, Gadamer's apparently negative and destructive critique has, nevertheless, a positive potential: It can encourage us to see the fact that, in approaching Indian thought, we carry with us our Western perspectives and presuppositions not merely as an impediment and aggravation, but as a necessary and positive ingredient of understanding itself."[200]

Here, Halbfass engages with Gadamer to deal with the relationship of modernity and tradition. In Gadamer's vocabulary, the problem is reformulated as the relationship of the scientific attitude towards the past and a living tradition. Halbfass agrees with Gadamer that the difference between the two has been overstated. The "abstract antithesis" of tradition and reason, "tradition and historical research, between history and knowledge (about it)" that has been the heritage of the Enlightenment does not hold on closer scrutiny and must be discarded. The "reciprocal relationships" between the two will be revealed once the "effect of historical research and the effect of the living tradition" is seen as constituting a unity. In the final analysis, historical consciousness is not "something radically new" but merely a new element in "that which has always made up the human relationship with the past."[201] However, unlike the Saidians, the renunciation of this binary of modernity-traditionality doesn't lead to a dismissal of the transformative impact that Western scientific knowledge has had. Halbfass argues that the European tradition is not merely a cultural tradition "among others" but owes its identity to the ideas of philosophy and its greater prominence of scientific thought.[202] In this context, Halbfass makes his most quoted pronouncement:

[200] Ibid., Pg. 164
[201] Ibid., As quoted in Pg. 166
[202] Ibid., pg. 167

"In the modern planetary situation, Eastern and Western "cultures" can no longer meet one another as equal partners. They meet in a Westernized world, under conditions shaped by Western ways of thinking. But is this "universality" the true *telos* of mankind? Could it be that the global openness of modernity is still a parochially Western horizon? Or was Europe itself somehow left behind by the universality which it had inaugurated? Did it help others to gain freedom and distance from their traditional foundations, while it remained committed to its own roots and - paradoxically within its "traditional" horizon?"[203]

Heidegger's enigmatic answer is that the "thinking of the future" will be beyond the categories of the Occident and the Orient and not in the vocabulary of the metaphysics or scientific thought, it cannot be "planned and organized", at what may be required now is above all, is "*Gelassenheit*", a serene willingness to wait.

5.1.11 Discussion on Section I

As we have seen, Halbfass's section *'India in the History of European Self-Understanding'* covers a vast span of time and yet manages to provide a cohesive narrative and a 'perspectival unity'[204] based around the attitudes assumed towards 'India'. Halbfass brings out the different kinds of 'understandings' that were a function of the unique hermeneutic situations, i.e. the social and intellectual environments, the historical actors found themselves in. Megasthenes's *Indika* understood Indian thought from within the horizons of ancient Greek thought, and while it was a monumental work in its openness towards an alien culture, it neither develop sufficient hermeneutical awareness nor did it grasp the particular context of the Indian tradition. In contrast, al-Bīrunī's *Ta'rīkh al-Hind* understood and wrote about the Indian tradition from an Islamic horizon, recognizing the object's fundamental alienness and its attendant hermeneutic difficulties. Nobili and the Christian missionaries, on the other hand, primarily on account of their overwhelming and dogmatic prejudice set about to understand Indian thought in the original context, solely driven by the need to be understood in turn. The Romantic thinkers, though speculative in their understanding of

[203] Ibid., Pg. 169
[204] Alper, "Review of Indien Und Europa, Perspektiven Ihrer Geistigen Begegnung by Wilhelm Halbfass."

the Indian tradition, sought to understand so that they could reformulate critiques of their own European present. Their attempt to critique mechanistic and objectifying tendencies in turn played a role in another kind of objectification, namely through the establishment of the field of Indology. At the same time, Hegel approached Indian thought only from within his expansive conceptual ordering of world history and his antipode Schopenhauer (who, elsewhere, Halbfass declared as his favourite philosopher) attempted to understand Indian philosophy in order to illuminate and support his own theories of the will and representation.

What is important, Halbfass informs us is to see in what ways the many interpretations attempted to go beyond merely dealing with Indian philosophies as information and to see how it related to their self-understandings. Each attempt to understand, in their differing degrees of openness was fundamentally prejudiced. While radical critiques (such as that of Inden's) attempted to bring to focus the significant flaws of many European thinkers, with Halbfass, the aim is to philosophically reflect on how these (mis)understandings that have built up over the centuries, even in Western self-critique, still have their significance and still continue to inform the 'dialogue' in many ways. In the absence of 'pure objectivity' the attempt is to re-engage with the ideas, and allow them to *teach* us about the present. For example, when Halbfass explores the ways in which his own approach is different from (or similar to) al-Bīrunī's or the universalist claims made by that of Hegel and Schopenhauer, he is fore-grounding his own inescapable prejudices. Here, it may be important to elaborate on the nature of prejudice that was seen in the first section of the book.

As mentioned in the section on methodology, 'prejudice', in this context, is not be understood as a subordinating bias, but as inescapable fore-meanings. As Gadamer mentions, it is an explicit acceptance of the finiteness of one's horizon. Thus, in the selection of historical actors that come to represent Europe, in assessing them and critiquing them, in coming to an understanding of the hermeneutic situation of the 20th century, there is an element of self-presentation that is unavoidable. The making explicit of the prejudice, not only recognizes the ways in which and the extent to which the interpreters are tied to their traditions, but also to allows for a more genuine recognition of otherness. This is the *necessary* dialogic situation.

Undoubtedly, the European role in the dialogue from within the Indian horizon would (and should) look entirely different from Halbfass's own interpretation. But this is the challenge that modern Indian intellectuals and thinkers have to take up. They have to engage with the texts in the original contexts of thought and as Halbfass puts it, "be able to speak for themselves."[205]

5.2 The Indian Tradition and the Presence of Europe

At the very outset it is made clear that there is no symmetry in the experiences of otherness in the Indian tradition and the European tradition. In the Indian tradition, one does not find any analogous development in the speculation of Europe. In Halbfass's reading of the texts of traditional Hinduism, it emerges that there is no reaching out, no "zeal of proselytization and discovery" nor the "urge to understand and master foreign cultures."[206] With respect to the ancient texts he writes, "India has discovered the West and begun to respond to it in being sought out, explored, overrun and objectified by it. Its initial position in the encounter was that of a target of European interests and expectations. It was not the course of Indian history, nor the inner dynamism of the Hindu tradition, that led to the encounter."[207]

The questions that Halbfass poses to this section are the inversion of what he had posed in the previous one, namely, with regards to the dynamics of self-demarcation and self-understanding that emerged in the Hindu response to the presence of foreigners. This broad and wide-ranging section too is divided into two sections, the first four chapters attempting a historical survey of Indian reactions to the West and the next four engaging with the subtle transformation of ideas of philosophy and religion in what Halbfass refers to as neo-Hinduism. While the first four, will be dealt with chapter-by-chapter, the next four, on account of its pure exegetical nature will be commented upon and condensed in one brief section.

[205] Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*., Pg. 14
[206] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 172
[207] Ibid., Pg. 172.

The main aim of this section will be to see how Halbfass reclaims 'prejudice' in the context of discussing Indian thought.[208] In the present climate of debate of the critique of orientalism and oriental constructions especially with regards to Hinduism these seems to be a hazardous proposition. At the same time, it is crucial to bring out the ways in which Halbfass appropriates and differs from Hacker especially in his understanding of 'neo-Hinduism' and the 'neo-Vedanta' which, for the purposes of this essay, will serve as a illuminating example of Halbfass's approach.

5.2.1 Traditional Indian Xenology

Halbfass, in his account of traditional Indian xenology begins by arguing against the traditional conception of the Indians being subdued by waves of foreigners. Among the history of the in-ward migration of 'outsiders'[209], Halbfass reminds us of the Indian merchants in the Mediterranean, the 'missionary' religion of Buddhism and, in reference to parts of Southeast Asia, the phenomenon of 'Greater India'. Adding to that, there was the assimilation of 'foreign' groups in India itself, what Halbfass refers to as "the gradual Hinduization of the autochthonous outsiders."[210] Methodologically, this chapter abruptly breaks away from the ones that preceded it. In his own words, his attempts here are to explain attitudes towards outsiders through the "theoretical and normative aspects of the traditional Sanskrit literature".[211]

He begins by looking into the referents of the words 'Aryan' and 'Dasyu' and the etymological transformations of the word 'Ari' – which, according to him, in ancient Greek transformed itself from 'foreigner' to 'guest' or 'host' but in Sanskrit came to mean 'enemy' or 'someone who does not seem worthy of respect.' Another crucial 'xenological'[212] word that Halbfass goes into is 'mleccha' – someone who does not speak Sanskrit, or someone who eats meat and does not follow Vedic norms. Among

[208] He writes: "We will, however, not pursue the evasive and vacuous goal of absolute neutrality and impartiality. Our survey is itself part of the unfolding and continuing historical and hermeneutical processes with which it deals. Absolute neutrality and "objectivity," if it were possible, would be utterly abstract; or it would again be one-sided and an expression and continuation of that very Eurocentrism which it tries to avoid" Ibid., Pg. 174

[209] He lists the Greeks, Persians, Central Asians, Muslims, Portuguese, Dutch, French and the British

[210] Ibid., Pg. 174

[211] Ibid., Pg. 174

[212] Halbfass borrows this term from Léopold-Joseph Bonny Duala-M'bedy, *Xenologie: Die Wissenschaft vom Fremden und die Verdrangung der Humanitat in der Anthropologie* (Freiburg Breisgau ; München: Alber).

other terms that Halbfass explores and that need not be discussed here are yavana (Ionians), Śakas (from Central Asia), *dravida* (from South India), *darada* (for people from the Afghan region) and *pahlavas* (Persians). But this discussion on mlecchas in the Sanskrit texts is placed in relation to the discussion on another kind of outsiders, namely, the low-castes and the out-castes. In relation to the varna system, Habfass points that the *mlecchhas* themselves appear as marginal figures, "below and beyond" the caste hierarchy. The cāndalas (the outcastes) come to be the negative constituents of the system, having to obey the prescriptions of the prohibitions imposed upon them while the mlecchas, though "impure" and "polluting" are not expected to recognize their exclusion. Halbfass cites Paul Hacker's characterization of the attitude as 'passive intolerance'.[213]

Halbfass attempts to show that the '*mlecchas*' in the Indian tradition did not play a role even in the negative-constitutive sense. It was never a composite identity against which the Hindu identity could seek to assert itself.[214] "They are neither targets of possible conversion, nor sources of potential inspiration [...] it has developed a complex, internally differentiated framework of orientation, a kind of immanent universe of thought, in which the contrast of the "indigenous" and the "foreign," of identity and otherness, seems a priori superseded, and which is so comprehensive in itself that it is not conducive to any serious involvement with what is different and apart from it - i.e., the "other" in its otherness." [215]

This point is further elaborated by taking the example of Buddhism, which has a different understanding of the caste hierarchy, of the relationship with regards to *mlecchas* and of 'sacred geography'. In Buddhist teachings– Halbfass cites Āryadeva's Catuḥśataka– in accordance with their mission of conversion, the language of the *mlecchas* is considered to be an important means for the transmission of the Buddhist

[213] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 181
[214] The only noteworthy mentions of the *mlecchas*, according to Halbfass, come in the works of Śabara and later, Kumārila, in the context of the division between the *laukika* (secular) realm and the *vaidik* (vedic) realm, with the *mlecchas* being allowed to generate valid knowledge solely within the secular realm.
[215] Ibid., Pg. 187

message.[216] The Buddha himself, preferred preaching in the vernacular Pali, as opposed to Sanksrit, which was the norm for philosophical teachings.

A crucial shift with regards to self-definition comes with the adoption of the word 'Hindu' used by the Persian-Arabic speaking foreigners. Halbfass shows that the word 'Hindu', excluded from Sanksritic literature (early self-definition was with the word 'ārya'), appears only in the context of outlining strained relations with the Muslims. Lastly, Halbfass looks for references to Christianity and Europeans, and points to the Sarvadevavilāsa and the Bhaviṣyapurāṇa, where they are portrayed in a negative light and are identified with the reign of Ravāṇa, the onset of the Kaliyuga and the general decline of *dharma*.

Halbfass is aware of the limits or the idealized and normative aspects of the etymological method. The discussion is theoretical and the texts themselves cannot be considered to be factual representations of the more practical aspects of interactions among the Indians and the foreigners. However, while being aware that historical realities cannot be reduced to textual representations, he is not entirely ready to dispose of the significance of these concepts that emerged in a particular historical framework.

Summing up, Halbfass argues that the most crucial feature about the Sankskrit literature in relation to the foreigners is its "silence and evasion". "There are no Hindu accounts of foreign and distant lands." And even the Muslims who were integrated to a sufficient extent with the Hindu society, come to be mentioned only in "vague and marginal references."[217] The narrowly philological chapter, deviating from the historical narrative that Halbfass seemed to be outlining, lays out the foundation for his analysis of the 'neo-Hindus'.

5.2.2 Ram Mohan Roy and his Hermeneutical Situation

One of the key chapters in outlining the importance of Halbfass's hermeneutical analysis in Part II of *India and Europe* is perhaps his discussion on the works of Ram Mohan Roy. In this chapter he raises important questions about what is

[216] Halbfass also notes how Buddhism adapted to the traditional milieu, as in the case of the orthodox Theravāda Buddhism, the insistence on transmitting Buddha's teaching in the original language, Pali, is seen.
[217] Ibid. Pg. 182

(problematically) referred to as neo-Hinduism[218], its interaction with European ideas and its own reinterpretations of the past and the present.[219] Halbfass's account is aware of the two dominant kinds of *understandings* of Roy's work, one, of a harbinger of a distinctive Hindu 'modernity' (a popular interpretation in contemporary India) and the other, a re-interpreter of the classical Sanskrit tradition (a somewhat dismissive interpretation of Western academics, especially since Paul Hacker's use of the term neo-Hindu). Halbfass's hermeneutic commitment allows us to move away from these reductionist interpretations and radical critique to a more genuine philosophical interpretation.

The Bengali reformer, who learnt Persian and Arabic and later the English language, appeared in the context of philosophical and religious debate between India and Europe, which in turn took place within the broader context of the increasing British economic and political dominance in India.[220] His first publication in Persian, called *Tuhfatu'l muwāhhiddīn* "Gift to the Deists", attempts to find the idea of one true universally monotheistic God in all religions. Subsequently, Halbfass notes, his reliance on Persian decreased and in 1815, he shifted his attention to the study of the Vedānta, translating five Upanishads into Bengali, and providing additional commentaries on Śankara. Another important work in the context of inter-religious hermeneutics was '*The precepts of Jesus, the guide to Peace and Happiness*' (1820) which interpreted the New Testament and focused primarily on the ethical and the practical aspects. Among other important works, Halbfass gives an overview of are the *Gosvāmīr sahita vicāra,* the Bengali *Cāri praśner uttara* and lastly, the "characteristically titled", *The Universal Religion: Religious Instructions Founded on Sacred Authorities* (1829).[221]

In giving these overviews, Halbfass argues that what ought to be highlighted while understanding and interpreting the works of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, is not only the influences of Western thought and ideas, or the relative adequacy or inadequacy of his evaluation of Western thought, but also "the ways in which the foreign came to be adopted as a means of self-understanding and self-presentation and how Ram Mohan's

[218] A more detailed analysis on this in section 5.2.3

[219] For a further elaboration on the discussion of Ram Mohan Roy informed by Halbfass's work see "Mlecchas, Yavanas and Heathens, Interacting Xenologies In early Nineteenth Century Calcutta", Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*.

[220] Ram Mohan was born in a Brahmin family in the era following the Battle of Plassey, when the influence of the English had been steadily growing.

[221] True to his philological commitments, Halbfass learnt Bengali and approached the texts in the original.

ideas achieved its peculiar cross-cultural ambiguity."[222] Here one can see Halbfass' hermeneutic commitment. "The interweaving of contexts and horizons of understandings" in the case of Ram Mohan, Halbfass considers to be unprecedented in the Indian tradition. His appraisal of Ram Mohan's thought is on the basis of his openness to inter-traditionary dialogue, his hermeneutic awareness and engagement with the other. With regards to his multilinguality, Halbfass notes that English and Bengali for Ram Mohan are not just vehicles of translation, but devices for opening up the tradition for the Indian present. He reformulates Ram Mohan's confrontation with his own tradition as one between 'true meaning' and 'false interpretation'.

While, Halbfass argues, Ram Mohan's use of notion of the utilitarian and pragmatic sense of common good and public welfare, the notion of returning to the purity of the original sources, of denouncing idolatry, and of emphasizing a sense of universalism bear the mark of 19th century European thought, drawing out these influences without elaborating on the context in which the reinterpretations took place, is to miss out certain constitutive elements of the text. Halbfass writes, "No matter what Ram Mohan may have adopted, he brought it into his own particular hermeneutic situation of appealing to and reflecting upon different traditions, of appropriating the alien, and of asserting himself against that alien."[223]

Halbfass also attempts to bring out the differences found in Ram Mohan's writings in English and Bengali. The most important difference was of the personalization of the *Brahman* was more conspicuous in his English works, i.e. a replacement of the monistic principle with the God of monotheism. Also, "when discussing the concept of absolute liberation (*moksha, mukti*), the English texts were considerate of Christian and European conceptions (as when they speak of "everlasting beatitude") in a way not present in the Bengali texts."[224] Thus, Halbfass makes the point that there is a distinctive element of self-presentation and self-assertion that creeps in the works of Ram Mohan.

For Halbfass, what is crucial in the figure of Ram Mohan was that he came to represent the *present* of the Indian tradition, and moreover, a present Indian reinterpretation of the Indian past. Ram Mohan, moreover, was interested in publishing his work and debating

[222] Ibid., Pg. 203
[223] Ibid., Pg. 207
[224] Ibid., Pg. 209

with the traditional representatives of Indian thought, missionaries as well as other representatives of European thought. Perhaps, most importantly for Halbfass, Ram Mohan makes use of the English language and even travels to Europe, eventually dying in Bristol, England in 1833.

Halbfass then goes on to outline the reception of his works in America, Europe and the Indian traditionalists. On the traditional Christians he writes, "The Unitarians greeted him as an ally; but for those more orthodox missionaries who initially saw in him a sign of hope for the Christianization of India, he later became a symbol of frustration and of Hindu self-assertion in the face of Christianity."[225] Similarly, among Western scholars many applauded his attempt to go beyond the "magical principle" and thereby move away from the "ancestral inertia". In this context, Halbfass quotes Max Müller, who wrote about Ram Mohan, "the first who came from East to West, the first to join hands and to complete that world-wide circle through which henceforth, like an electric current, Oriental thought could run to the West and Western thought return to the East."[226] Here, Halbfass notes that the accusations of Ram Mohan's willingness to compromise with the Christians came from the West, such as Schopenhauer, as well as from among the orthodox Hindus themselves. The traditional Hindus considered him to be an innovator and equated the work of the Brāhmo Samaj with the onset of the *kaliyug*.

As mentioned above, the two extremes within which Halbfass attempts to navigate is that of a simple reduction to Western models and the mythicizing tendencies of Neo-Hinduism. He writes, "As indispensable as the historical surveys and the psychological and biographical analyses of "influences" may be in this regard, they alone do not suffice for an understanding of the central hermeneutic question: this is not just a matter for factual "research"; more than that, it calls for philosophical reflection and clarification."[227] There is a need to go beyond a "biographical or developmental *explanation*" of Ram Mohan's work. In other words, importance is to be give to the relational properties (what he refers to as the "external circumstances") as well as the intrinsic properties of the work. In this context, a crucial criticism must be mentioned in passing before taking it up at length later. As argued by Sergei D. Serebriany, Halbfass

[225] Ibid., Pg. 198
[226] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 199
[227] Ibid., Pg. 200

has underplayed the importance of the Islamic dimension in Ram Mohan's 'hermeneutic situation'.[228] His first book, written in Persian with a preface in Arabic was characteristic in that Persian was the language of literary culture in eighteenth century Bengal. It is highly unlikely, Serebriany argues, that the book with dealt with monotheism in all religions was not equally influenced by the Islamic notion of monotheism itself. This criticism will be picked up later.

In any case, Halbfass concludes his assessment of the "much maligned Neo-Hindus"[229]: "Rammohan's most important and, in a sense, revolutionary step within the field of Hindu xenology was that he tried to guide India and Hinduism into the open arena of the "great wide world," that he exposed his own tradition to comparisons and contrasts with other religious and cultural traditions, and that he called for an openness towards and a willingness to learn from Western science and the Christian ethic. He was convinced that the sources of his own tradition were suitable for promoting and legitimizing such an openness; in his eyes, this was a confirmation of their own power and validity in the face of the challenge from abroad. In this sense, they were not just vehicles of receptivity, but also became sources of inspiration and instruction for the non-Indian world, able "to impart divine knowledge to mankind at large.""[230]

5.2.3 Neo-Hinduism, Modern Indian Traditionalism and the presence of Europe

In this chapter, Halbfass continues to outline the various facets of the arrival of modernity in India and particularly how, with the increasing presence of the British, Indians had to deal with the Europeans and the West, not out of choice, but out of necessity. While he cites a wide variety of authors and thinkers who interacted with the ideas of the West, his focus, he clarifies would be selective and would be restricted to a few important movements and leading individuals that, following Ram Mohan Roy, associated with the interaction with European modernity. But before we begin, it is useful to get into the crucial discussion on the concept of 'neo-Hinduism' or 'neo-

[228] "Marginal Notes on India and Europe", Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*.
[229] Ibid., Pg.XVI
[230] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*.., Pg. 216

Vedanta'. While recent research has complicated the use of the term further,[231] Halbfass's dialogic and interpretive openness becomes apparent with a comparison of his use of the term with that of Hacker's. The influence of Gadamer's notion of *understanding-as-interpretation* can also be seen in this context.

According to Halbfass, the term 'neo-Vedānta' itself was first used by Bajendranath Seal to describe the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Subsequently however, the term along with the associated term of the Neo-Hinduism started being used by Christian missionaries and Jesuit priests, most notably, by Robert Antoine, from whom the term was later adopted by Paul Hacker. Arguably, it was Hacker's use of the term that ensured its wide-spread and problematic turn in contemporary western academics.[232] Hacker writes, "[Neo-Hindu] intellectual formation is primarily or predominantly Western. It is European culture, and in several cases even the Christian religion, which has led them to embrace certain religious, ethical, social, and political values. But afterwards they connect these values with, and claim them as, part of the Hindu tradition."[233]

This definition becomes clear in the light of Hacker's famous essay "Schopenhauer and Hindu Ethics" where he makes a significant claim with regards to what he called the *tat tvam asi* ethic. He argued that the practical implications found most notably in the works of Vivekānanda, and subsequently in the works of other 'neo-Hindus' was adopted from Schopenhauer's own ethics-based reinterpretation of what was fundamentally an ontological-monistic principle. While Vivekānda initially lamented the inability of monism of the Vedānta to provide the basis for altruistic action, Hacker was able to show that it was principally after his discussions with Deussen that he started actively writing about its moral possibilities.[234] While acknowledging the importance of Hacker's historical-philological finding, Halbfass criticizes his use of the term 'neo-Hindu'.

[231] See Brian K. Smith, "Questioning Authority: Constructions and Deconstructions of Hinduism," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 1, 1998): 313–39
[232] See Halbfass, "Introduction An uncommon Orientalist: Paul hacker's Passage to India" in Ibid.
[233] As quoted in Smith, "Questioning Authority.", Pg.325
[234] While in the Bhagavadgītā (13:27-28) there is a 'rudimentary' pantheistic justification of ethics, Hacker argues that the commentarial literature on the verse in the Hindu tradition had been theistic rather than ethical

"For Hacker, the "Neo" in "Neo-Hinduism" implies a lack of authenticity, an apologetic accommodation of Western ideas, and a hybridization of the tradition."[235] As contrasted with Hacker's polemic and "simplistic"[236] use of the term, Halbfass places greater emphasis on the context which necessitates a reinterpretation. He writes:

"Neo-Vedanta" and "Neo-Hinduism" [...] are simply abbreviations for important developments and changes which took place in Indian thought since the period around 1800, i.e., the relatively unprepared opening to foreign, Western influences, the adoption of Western concepts and standards and the readiness to reinterpret traditional ideas in light of these new, *imported and imposed* modes of thought."[237]

In contrast to Hacker, there is a greater recognition of the context of reinterpretation, i.e. social and intellectual environment in which the interpretation occurs not only *for* but also *against* Western claims. The context is constitutive of this reinterpretation and needs to be dealt with in equal measure to come to a more genuine understanding of the text. Ram Mohan's present was constitutive of his reinterpretation of the past and this recognition allows Halbfass to criticize and distance himself from Hacker's remarks of neo-Hindu 'inauthenticity'. At the same time, Halbfass also reflects on the possibility of the term "Neo" itself being a value-loaded term. He writes, "What is the significance and legitimacy of the "Neo" in expressions like "Neo-Hinduism" and "Neo-Vedanta"? Could we speak of "Neo-Christianity" as well?"[238]

Halbfass attempts to show how other Indian (mainly Bengali) thinkers following Roy, came to react against, question and even imitate Roy's strategy. The first thinker that Halbfass discusses is Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), the second most important figure in the Brāhmo Samāj after Ram Mohan, whose position is described as that of a 'conservative universalist'. Unlike Ram Mohan, he does not subscribe to Śaṅkara's non-dualism, and was not inclined to change Hindu religious customs, or look for common denominators among different faiths. However, in his insistence on certitude, and in attempting to find inspiration intuitively, "in his own heart", Halbfass point to the presence of the concepts and vocabulary of the Scottish school of common sense in Tagore's approach. Similarly, this scepticism towards the infallibility of the Vedas and

[235] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*.
[236] Ibid. Pg. 307
[237] Ibid., Pg. 307, emphasis added.
[238] Ibid., Pg. 307

the contrast between scripture and intuition becomes more prominent in the works of Debendranath's contemporary, Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884). In his own branch within the Brāhmo Samāj, he proclaims a 'New Dispensation' which offers a collection of quotes from Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Chinese religious sources. However, like Debendranath, Halbfass shows that he too, deploys the concepts of instinctive belief, of common sense and primitive cognitions through which to reinterpret the Vedas. Another Bengali figure in the 19th century was Ramakrishna (1836-86), who comes to be seen as a famous representative of 'living Hinduism'. Halbfass uses Paul Hacker's differentiation between 'inclusivism' and 'tolerance' to characterize Ramakrishna. While Ramakrishna was critical of the activities of the Brāhmo Sāmaj, he too, like many of its members with whom he regularly associated, put forth the claim that Islamic and Christian gods could be worshiped *within* the cults of Hinduism. This apparent openness, Halbfass argues, itself may be understood as a form of self-assertion. This becomes clearer with the discussion of Ramkrishna's most famous disciple, Vivekānanda.

Halbfass's discussion on Vivekānanda, begins by criticizing his reliance on rhetorical, stereotypical, popularizing and more often than not, reductive interpretations of the classical Vedānta. He writes, "Whoever searches here for theoretical consistency or philosophical originality may find himself as disappointed as with Ram Mohan Roy; similarly, the tangible historical and practical success with which Vivekananda met may be as questionable as that attained by Ram Mohan."[239] Moreover he argues that the rhetoric, often expressed in a quasi-missionary language, was used to appeal to the ideas and values that the Europeans (and America) found to be lacking in the West's own tradition. For Halbfass it "demonstrates the extent to which the Neo-Hindu "dialogue" with the West employs or presupposes Western means of self-reflection and self-critique."[240]

Halbfass then goes on to elaborate on Vivekānanda's engagement with European philosophies and the relationship with Ramakrishna, who for Vivekananda, "was the inner fulfilment of the Hindu tradition, and the living demonstration that India was ready for Europe without ever having searched for it and was thus equal to the challenge which the encounter between the two represented: Through its embodiment in

[239] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 228
[240] Ibid., Pg. 229

Ramakrishna, Hinduism did not just demonstrate its potential of receptive openness, but also the power to go beyond itself and to affect or even transform the West."[241] Halbfass is referring to Hacker's motif of inclusivity.

Nevertheless, Halbfass acknowledges the 'significance' of Vivekananda's thought. Particularly, in a Rortyean neo-pragmatic[242] way, he hints that indeed reinterpretation of the neo-Vedanta by being associated with Indian nationalism had socio-ethical relevance. In many ways, Halbfass's interpretations is in keeping with Gadamer's idea of downplaying 'authorial intention' for a repeated re-understanding, re-appropriation, and re-engagement with tradition in new and unplanned ways.

5.2.4 Supplementary observations on modern Indian thought

Halbfass follows up him analysis of Vivekānada with three other Indian figures, namely, Aurobindo, Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan, and A.K. Coomaraswamy. In contrast to Vivekānanda's approach, Halbfass considers Aurobindo to be the superior intellectual figure, who returned to India from Europe and "discover his own tradition as a kind of foreigner."[243] Aurobindo himself is heavily influenced by the thought of Vivekānanda and he pushes Vivekānanda's practical reinterpretation of the Vedanta to the extreme by conceiving of a 'Political Vedantism' and thus reinterpreting the concept of salvation or *moksha* for the political realm. Most importantly, Halbfass is appreciative of Aurobindo's sharp criticism of the hasty improvisations of his contemporaries. He quotes approvingly from Aurobindo:

"We have tried to assimilate. We have tried to reject, we have tried to select. But we have not been able to do any of these things successfully. Successful assimilation depends on mastery; but we have not mastered European conditions and knowledge. Rather we have been seized, subjected and enslaved by them [...] Let us not [...] select at random. Make a nameless hotchpotch and then triumphantly call it the assimilation of East and West [...] India can never cease to be India or Hinduism to be Hinduism, if we

[241] Ibid., Pg. 230
[242] For an elaboration on this argument and a philosophical critique of Hacker's critique of neo-Hindu and Schopenhauer's ethics (what Hacker calls 'a logical monstrosity') see Douglas L. Berger, "Does Monism do Ethical work? Assessing Hacker's Critique of vedantic and Schopenhauerian Ethics" Esleben et al., *Mapping Channels between Ganges and Rhein*. Pg 107-118.
[243] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 249

really think for ourselves. It is only if we allow Europe to think for us that India is in danger of becoming an ill-executed and foolish copy of Europe."[244]

This sort of explicit self-criticism and self-doubt seems to be the path to greater openness. At the same time, there is a recognition of the relative difficulty of such an open self-criticism. The loss of cultural self-confidence of the present out of which Aurobindo wrote and which colonialism necessarily engenders is acknowledged. David Shulman in a book review titled '*The Revenge of the East*' brings to focus similar responses from other parts of Asia. Nearly all Asian advocates of modernist reform, he informs, in sheer intellectual terms, were profoundly compromised, but nevertheless elevated posthumously to the role of spiritual frontrunners. He writes: "It is probably this festering psychic wound that makes thinkers like the South Indian reformer Kandukuri Veeresalingam or the Egyptian modernist Muhammad Abduh or the fierce Vietnamese nationalist Phan Bội Châu so dreary to read. They often seem dissociated, blocked off from the deeper sources of their distress and thus utterly unable to articulate it in convincing ways." [245]

Lastly, Aurobindo, breaking away from tradition, attempts to come up with wholly 'original' (though speculative) ways to approach the Indian tradition, and for Halbfass, "it is in precisely this way that he responds to and acknowledges the European challenge." [246]

Sarvapelli Radhakrisnan's work, on the other hand, for Halbfass, is more typical of the fundamental dilemmas and ambiguities of neo-Hinduism. The parallels between Vivekāndanda's and Radhakrishnan's works are illuminating. Both of them often deployed rhetoric and never acknowledged the exclusivistic aspects of traditional Hinduism, and their discussions on concepts such as *mlecchas* sought to elide over and even misrepresent the texts.[247] Moreover, they were convinced of the ethical possibilities of the Vedānta, and the inclusivistic superiority of the traditional concepts. The last figure that Halbfass discusses briefly is that of A.K. Coomaraswamy (1877 – 1947) who defended traditionalism and was strongly critical of neo-Hindu attempts to modernize. Coomaraswamy's invocation of the *philosophia perennis*, however does

[244] Aurobindo, as quoted in Ibid. Pg. 249
[245] David Shulman, "The Revenge of the East?," *The New York Review of Books*, October 11, 2012, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/oct/11/revenge-east/.
[246] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 251
[247] Ibid., Pg. 253.

show an awareness of relativism of tradition as well as modernities loss of orientation. Halbfass's comments on these thinkers are however far too brief.

Halbfass ends by citing J.L. Mehta who he considers to have summed up the hermeneutic situation of modern India:

"Can we simply turn our backs on our past, just discard it, and appropriate the final fruits of Western self-understanding as the inner *telos* of man universally and as such, or shall we reject the spiritual-philosophical endeavour of the West altogether as of no consequence and seek to entrench ourselves into a specifically Indian philosophizing in the language of the past and supposedly undisturbed by the alien world of meanings embodied in the English language we employ for the purpose? Or shall we begin to understand both in their mutual otherness, to learn the language of each and so to evolve ways of thinking and talking which will be truly appropriate to our membership of both worlds, striving in such fashion to transform it into one?"[248]

The unreflective use of the English language, without a sense of hermeneutic awareness about the reinterpretation of the ancient concepts is for Halbfass, and J.L. Mehta, perhaps, the original and most significant fault of the neo-Hindu and contemporary Indian cross-cultural engagement.

5.2.5. Darśana and Dharma

As mentioned earlier, Halbfass's extended discussion on the concepts of *darśana* and *dharma*, spanning three chapters, on account of its strict exegetical focus will be condensed to this one section. In these chapters, Halbfass elaborates on the difficulties involved in finding conceptual correlations of the words *darśana* and *dharma* which in the nineteenth century came to be inadequately reformulated to 'philosophy' and 'religion'. These sections are, as one commenter put it, "an invisible conversation with Hacker".[249] While Halbfass disagrees with the former on many instances, he appreciates the fundamental significance of Hacker's arguments in the overall discursive encounter between the two traditions.

[248] Ibid., Pg. 262.
[249] "Debasish Banerji, Book review of India and Europe by Wilhelm Halbfass," accessed May 17, 2014, http://www.debashishbanerji.com/sawiki/sciy/www.sciy.org/blog/_archives/2006/9/27/2367727.html.

The first term that Halbfass looks into is *darśana* and as Harvey Alper notes, it is a term that touches at the very constitution of the field of cross-cultural philosophy. The 'semantic ranges' of the words *darśana* and philosophy are vastly different and an equation between the two has to be cautious and hermeneutically informed. Halbfass begins by surveying a wide range of Hindu (Bhartṛhari, Śaṅkara, Kauṭilya), Jain (Haribhadra, Manibhadra, Gunaratna) and Buddhist (Candrakīrti) literature to deal with a series of terms such as *tantra, tarka, dṛṣṭi, naya, pakṣa, mata, vāda, śāstra, samaya, siddhāntha, ānvīkṣikī* and *darsana*.[250]

Halbfass shows that in the traditional works, the concept *darśana* appears in the singular in reference to a particular 'system' or 'view' or as a neutral, non-committal doxographical compilation of many such systems. The philosophers themselves never used the term to refer to what they and their partners and opponents in debate, i.e. the representatives of other systems are doing.[251] A particular area of contention in which both Indian and Western thinkers have extensively commented is that of the absence of 'pure theory', or the ideal of the 'theoretical life' in Indian literature, i.e. the desire to know, in the Indian tradition, has always been guided by a practical purpose *(prayojana)* that may often be soteriological.[252] However, characteristically, Halbfass problematizes their misleadingly simplified and "stylized" characterizations of this binary between 'pure theory' and 'practical knowledge'. While the 19th century Indian thinkers asserted against the West's idle curiosity and theory for its own sake (and ironically, Halbfass notes, made the soteriological motivation itself an object of theoretical inquiry), Western thinkers themselves blurred the distinctions between Greek theory, the Christian idea of contemplation and the secular idea of 'value-free research'. At the same time, more recently, with Heidegger and Gadamer, there has been a re-evaluation of the role of tradition in the West itself. Halbfass is wary of constructing vast historical continuities that overlook the context-bound transformations that occur. While the Indian 'darśana' and the western notion of 'philosophy' have parallels in that they are theoretically-oriented, systematized world-views which "more or less exclude matters of religious practice"[253], in the Indian concept there is no specific

[250] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 266-69
[251] Ibid., Pg. 264
[252] There are however traditions such as the Lokayata tradition which was openly secular critical towards the Veda, which Halbfass discusses later in the contexrt of his discussion on anviksiki, Ibid., pg. 269
[253] Ibid., Pg. 273

methodological implication[254] and in its doxographical usage, it is synoptic and retrospective. However, Halbfass argues that in the colonial encounter, the *alien* concept of philosophy came to be adopted, played a distinctive role in Indian self-understanding, and continues to do so. Darśana itself came to be grounded on 'experience' and 'intuition', which became canonical in modern Indian reinterpretations of Indian philosophy.

Another instructive instance of reinterpretation is that of the concept of *dharma*. Halbfass brings out the various (often conflicting) interpretations of the concept ranging from a primeval 'upholding' (in the Ṛgveda) to the universal and ethical (derived from *ahiṃsā* and found in edicts of Aśoka and in the *Panchatantra*), to its relation to *artha* (success), *kama* (sensual pleasure), *karma*, *moksha*, and those that are narrowly bound, 'radically empirical' interpretation based on ritual and caste (that of the Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya schools) and the exclusion of *mlecchas*. Following Hacker, Halbfass argues that the casteist meanings of the word were purged by the reinterpretations of Ram Mohan Roy, Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Vivekānanda. The need to be inclusive of the *mlecchas*, and even of the conditions of modernity was influenced by their encounter with the Western liberal, humanist values. At the same time, Halbfass attempts to articulate the reaction and reinterpretation of the neo-Hindus against the claims of Christianity and especially the presentation of the Christian message under the heading of *dharma*. Halbfass writes, "By trying to deprive the Hindus of their dharma, which they [the European Christian missionaries] expounded as a false "religion," and trying to convert them to another religion, they channelled the Hindu reaction in two directions: first, to a self-definition and a new interpretation of the Hindu tradition in the name of "religion," and second, to a reassertion of the *dharma* concept against the concept of religion." [255]

As in the other instances throughout the book, Halbfass is keen to foreground the differences and transformations rather than the similarities in the historical evolution of concepts over several millennia. At the same time (to the extent that there is information available) the hermeneutical context within which the (re)interpretations take place have

[254] The methodological aspect (though not emancipatory or anti-traditionalist) is found in the concept of anviksiki (understood as a "investigative," "reflective" reasoning) for which he discusses Kautalya, Vatsyayana, and Uddyotakara's usage of the word and H. Jacobi's translation and Paul Hacker's subsequent criticisms of the translation.
[255] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*.Pg. 342

to be emphasized. An attempt is made to make explicit the pre-judgements of the text as they are constitutive of the process of *understanding* the text itself. This implies taking a account of the traditions the author comes to represent, to engage with, to reinterpret, and at the same time the traditions against which the author wishes to assert himself (implicitly or explicitly). This is the fundamental tension of the cross-cultural hermeneutic situation.

5.2.6. Epilogue

Halbfass concludes his section on India by restating some of his observations and chalking out what he believes to be the hermeneutic context out of which modern Indians have to respond to their own tradition as well as the traditions outside their own. Any attempt to treat the European and Indian realms of thought and philosophy as symmetrical is bound to be unsatisfactory. It was the proliferation of science, technology and philosophy that began under colonial Europe that set the stage for an unprecedented exchange of ideas between India and Europe, and that laid the foundations of what can be understood to be a predominantly 'Westernised' mode of inter-cultural engagement.

Characteristically, he leaves us with a few open questions, declaring that the attempt to answer and discard these questions has itself led to a great deal of 'abstract rhetoric' in cross-cultural engagement.[256] He asks:

"Is there a philosophy today which is nourished by an equal, and equally committed, familiarity with Indian and European sources? Has the encounter between India and Europe, and the "comparison" of Indian and European philosophies, opened new prospects for philosophy itself? To what extent have we gone beyond the projection of speculative images of India on the one hand and the accumulation of historical and philological information on the other? To what extent have the Indians gone beyond apologetics, reinterpretation, and the combination and interplay of Indian and European concepts? Will Indian and European thought come together in a "truly cosmopolitan world-philosophy" ("wahrhaft kosmopolitische Weltphilosophie")? Will there ever be a "global philosophy" and a genuine "fusion of horizons" ("Horizontverschmelzung"), i.e.

[256] Here, Halbfass has an interesting discussion on what he refers to as neo-Christian thought

a new context of orientation and self-understanding which would be fundamentally different from what Troeltsch called "bookbinder's synthesis" or from a merely additive accumulation of data about foreign traditions, and a non committal recognition and "understanding" of alternative world-views? In what sense can the "dialogue" between India and Europe affect our way of asking fundamental questions, as well as our reflection upon the meaning and limits of philosophy itself? Is there hope for a philosophically significant "comparative philosophy" which would imply the freedom to transcend philosophy in its European sense?"[257]

5.2.7 Discussion on Section II

Thus, Halbfass's section '*The Indian tradition and the presence of Europe*' in accordance with the caveat that one shouldn't expect any sort of symmetric treatment, takes a different set of approaches to understand the Indian tradition. Halbfass shows that traditional Hindu xenology, unlike the Buddhists or even the Greeks, did not engage substantially with traditions outside their own. Accordingly, Halbfass attempts to analyze the limited references and most importantly (in a method that will come to provide the most illustrious chapters of this section) an analysis of the cross-cultural interactions of both the words and the gradually changing meanings.[258] Halbfass then engages with neo-Hindu thought and how their attempts to understand their own traditions came to be mediated by the presence of the colonial British. While Ram Mohan Roy opened up a renewed and unprecedented engagement with Western thought, his understanding and appreciation of European philosophies came along with the overwhelming instinct of the colonized, namely that a cultural self-defence and self-assertion. In Vivekānanda, this instinct of self-assertion against the West came in the form of a near-missionary language and involved reinterpretations of traditional concepts in the renewed self-presentation of the Indian tradition. The presence of Paul Hacker looms large on this section and against Hacker's interpretations, Halbfass's approach recognizes the interplay between of "self-assertion and receptivity, orthodoxy and openness, exclusivism and universalism, the reinterpretation of native ideas and the

[257] Ibid., Pg. 375
[258] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 74

Hinduization of Western ideas"[259] to a greater extent. Lastly, in Halbfass's etymological comparison of the western words 'philosophy' and 'religion' and the Sanskrit words *'darśana*' and '*dharma*', he is able to foreground some of the crucial differences that existed between the two terms and that in the wake of cross-cultural interactions of the last two centuries came to increasingly converge together.

Here, it must be noted that Halbfass relies primarily on the thinkers of the Advaita-Vedānta school and largely on Bengali thinkers. He is aware of this 'prejudice' and explains it by qualifying that these thinkers are the ones that have gained prominence and remained most accessible in the West. Additionally, Halbfass knew more Bengali than any other modern Indian languages. But the most important lesson from Halbfass analysis of the representatives of neo-Hindu Indian thought is, as Harvey Alper points out, that a simple-minded positive or negative evaluation of nineteenth and twentieth century Indian thought is untenable. To do it justice, one has to take into account the hermeneutical complexities through which it came to be articulated.

5.3. Appendices: Illustrations and reflections

The last section of Halbfass's book is somewhat repetitive and elaborates on certain aspects that were already highlighted in section II of the book. Nevertheless, the emphasizing of the concept of 'experience' in neo-Hinduism, the notions of 'inclusivism' and 'tolerance' and lastly, a discussion on the comparative method, serve to bring into focus some of the key concerns Halbfass has about contemporary Indian engagement. Again, on account of the strict exegetical focus of these chapters, it will suffice to bring out some key observations.

Among the primary concepts that have become conspicuous in the cross-cultural 'dialogue' between India and the West according to Halbfass is that of 'experience.' Yet among the plurality of the usages of the concept (both popular and academic), Halbfass attempts to delineate some aspects that, he argues, seem to be symptomatic of the questionable nature of the new forms of 'dialogue' between India and Europe. Halbfass

[259] Alper, "Review of Indien Und Europa, Perspektiven Ihrer Geistigen Begegnung by Wilhelm Halbfass."

again approaches the reformulations of the concept through the Bengali neo-Hindus[260] who were mostly adherents of Śaṇkara's Advaita Vedānta school of thought. Just as in the case of *darśana* and *dharma*, Halbfass charts the transformations of the correlates of experience in the Hindu tradition, concepts such as *anubhava*, *anubhūti*, and *sākṣākar*. Halbfass establishes that in Śaṇkara's works, the *brahman* and its modes are revealed by the Vedas, and are not understood as a documentation of subjective experience.[261] For Halbfass, the important historical and philosophical question therefore is not whether Śaṇkara privately valued a "subjective experience", but how and why he experienced the text of the Vedas as revealing an objective reality.[262] That said, Halbfass does bring out other contradictory readings and he cites instances (such as in the Vivekacūḍāmani, also written by Śaṇkara, the Bhakti poets of Maharashtra, and that of the Buddhists) in which there was an emphasis on personal experiences and first-person singular 'reports'. Nevertheless, in the works of the neo-Hindus, most notable Ram Mohan Roy and Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan, Halbfass (elaborating on Hacker's observation[263]) shows that the emphasis on spiritual experience, a commitment to self-evidence and personal authentication of the truths implicitly betrayed the presence of the West and an attempt to even counter its models of science and technology.

Closely related to this is Halbfass's discussion on the notions of 'inclusivism' and 'tolerance.' In the two chapters, "The Sanskrit Doxographies and the Structure of Hindu traditionalism" and "Inclusivism and Tolerance in the encounter between India and the West" Halbfass draws on Hacker's key insights yet disagrees with him in important ways. He charts out the development of the idea in Hacker's own work, at first, closely aligned to the notion of religious tolerance, and later, as his remarks grew more 'polemical', 'sweeping' and 'intransigent'[264], as something that was an necessary *alternative* to tolerance and exclusive to 'Indian cultural domain'. Though articulated in the 19th century, according to Hacker this has been the characteristic response of thinkers in India to 'outsiders' ever since post-Vedic times. Such arguments, in the current state of post-colonial debate are of course, highly problematic and Halbfass objects to the broad characterizations and downplaying of the instances of 'lived

[260] Halbfass's omission of some lesser-known thinkers outside the Bengali canon will be dealt with briefly in the next section.
[261] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 389
[262] Ibid., Pg. 390
[263] Hacker cites W. James's "The varieties of religious experience" as the book that influenced the neo-Hindus the most
[264] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. 404

tolerance' as well as the 'creation of spiritual presuppositions of tolerance' (ironically, through inclusivistic thought and philosophies). At the same time, he argues, there is not enough self-reflection and understanding of the clearly inclusivistic practices found in Europe itself. He cites examples of classical antiquity (subordination to Isis and Zeus), the notion of 'unknown God' in the New Testament, and most 'monumentally', in Hegel's system of universal historical inclusion. Though Halbfass does not use the term, he is critiquing what (in post-colonial argot) is referred to as an essentialization. Subsequently he draws out the parallels between Hacker's 'inclusivism' and Hegel's 'substantiality' and how they continue to remain influential yet highly insufficient ways into the Indian traditions.

Thus, while attempting to provide these key historical and hermeneutical clarifications, Halbfass is aware that these clarifications can merely serve as a preface to a more rigorous cross-cultural engagement of ideas, "what is at stake in the East-West dialogue [is] its unfulfilled potential, its deeper, though still hidden aspirations."[265]

The last aspect of this continuing engagement that Halbfass critiques is that of the comparative method. He argues that comparative philosophy has been the primary means of understanding and interpreting the Indian tradition in contemporary philosophy departments that teach in the English language. In the late nineteenth century India, the notion of comparative philosophy emerged with the work of Brajendranath Seal (1864-1938) who wrote the '*Comparative Studies in Vaishnavism and Christianity*' in which he explicitly wrote against the Hegel's subordination of 'Oriental' traditions. In many ways, this method of the neo-Hindus, which often involved apologetics in its self-presentation, Halbfass argues has been carried forward to contemporary philosophy departments in India. Similarly, 'Western partners' of the 'dialogue' are insufficiently aware of their long-standing biases and their attempts to provide a neutral, objective, and purely theoretical account are conditioned by an "idiosyncratic manner of understanding reality". [266] Rather than offering a comparison of 'information' between two traditions, it has to attempt to provide a deeper self-understanding. "It has to be ready to bring its own standpoint, and the conditions and

[265] Ibid., Pg. 401
[266] Ibid., Pg. 432

the horizon of comparison itself, into the process of comparison which thus assumes the reflexive, self-referring dimension which constitutes philosophy."[267]

5.3.1. In Lieu of a Summary and Conclusion, Europe, India and the "Europeanization of the Earth."

In the last chapter of the book, Halbfass provides an extended discussion of what Husserl and Heidegger referred to as the "Europeanization of the Earth." The points regarding the historical lack of sufficient xenological understanding is reiterated. It is noted that only in the nineteenth century, around the time of the establishment of the Indology, that the Indians, surprised by the superior technology of the West, started actively engaging with European thought, demarcating themselves against the West and more importantly, reinterpreting their own traditions without sufficient hermeneutical awareness. On the colonial encounter, Halbfass writes,

"It was an encounter between tradition and modernity, i.e., an exposure to new forms of organization and administration, to unprecedented claims of universality and globalization, to the ideas of history and progress and human mastery of the earth, to rationalization, technology and a comprehensive objectification of the world. It also meant the advent of a new type of objectification of the Indian tradition itself, an unprecedented exposure to theoretical curiosity and historical "understanding," and to the interests of research and intellectual mastery."[268]

In conclusion to his vast historical survey, Halbfass quotes J.L. Mehta, to whom *India and Europe* is dedicated, "[...] there is no other way open, to us in the East, but to go along with this Europeanization and to go through it. Only through this voyage into the foreign and the strange can we win back our own self-hood; here as elsewhere, the way to what is closest to us is the longest way back."

[267] Ibid., Pg. 432
[268] Ibid., Pg. 439

6 Criticisms of *'India and Europe'*

After a close reading of India and Europe it is useful to bring together some relevant criticisms of the book. As has been briefly discussed in the section on methodology, one of the major difficulties encountered in historical surveys of this scope is that of writing comprehensively and with sufficient unity about a vast number of pluralities. The problem of defining both India and Europe must be raised once again. Sergei D. Serebriany makes this point most forcefully, "Given the analytical nature of the book as a whole and, specifically, the attention accorded to the analysis of words as indicators of cultural interactions, it is all the more strange that in *India and Europe* there have remained utterly unexamined the two title words and notions, that is, "India" and "Europe."[269]

As discussed at the start of this essay, Halbfass uses the terms in a self-evident and self-explanatory way and without a discussion on their 'loaded-ness' in the book. His own (retrospective) defence against this criticism is that his use of the terms, while having an implicit element of geographic boundedness, and while being largely concerned with the self-presentation of the historical actors who themselves used the terms, remains largely conventional. Acknowledging the necessary incompleteness of any such project[270], it would have been in keeping with the approach of the book to discuss the usage more explicitly. Halbfass's use of 'Europe' is limited to Western Christian Europe, and has the highest representation of German thinkers. British and French thinkers and non-German literary figures are treated with considerably less 'density'.[271] This leaves out the broader geographic Europe, and as Serebriany argues, it excludes the rich dialogue that took place, for eg., between Russia and India.[272]

Likewise, the term 'India' being more recent, is perhaps more problematic. Serebriany correctly points out that the equation of 'India' with 'Hindu' is fraught with political

[269] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 76
[270] "I am fully aware that my presentation is neither balanced nor in any way complete. I have dealt, above all, with philosophical or at least theoretical and conceptualized interpretations. I have, within the limits of my expertise, preferred some languages and literatures over others. But the attempt had to be made.", Ibid., Pg. 156
[271] Alper, "Review of Indien Und Europa, Perspektiven Ihrer Geistigen Begegnung by Wilhelm Halbfass."
[272] Serebriany discusses the 15h century Russian merchant Afanasy Nikitin's "The Journey Beyond Three Seas", among other key aspects of the Indian-European encounter that remains excluded.

issues especially in the light of Hindu nationalistic readings of history.[273] However, Serebriany's preference for the 'ideology-free' term of 'South Asia' has its own share of problems, and as Halbfass points out would be more exclusionary of the political entities that associate with South Asia, namely that of Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka among others. When Halbfass writes about India, he is referring to the Hindu tradition, the people who resided in what they referred to as bhārata, and the people in the sub-continent that sought to understand and reinterpret the texts of the Sanskrit tradition. "Whether we like it or not," he writes, "the Muslims were never fully included in this dynamic, far-reaching and otherwise very flexible tradition of self-understanding and self-definition."[274] This brings us to the next important shortcoming of the book, which Halbfass himself acknowledges a dissatisfaction with in a later essay, namely his treatment of Islam.

As discussed earlier, the only substantive discussion on Islam in *India and Europe* takes place in the first section of the book that deals with European approaches to India. Halbfass's justification for this follows from his equating of the Indian tradition to the Hindu tradition. He argues that while Islam could have been discussed in the second section of the book, Islamic traditions remained far removed from Sanskrit texts when compared to other traditions of Buddhism and Jainism. On his selective understanding of Hindu India, Halbfass writes, "But I want to emphasize once again that *India and Europe* is neither a book on the "overall cultural inheritance" of South Asia, nor on modern Indian politics; above all, it is not meant to be a contribution to "area studies.""[275] Muslims remained outsiders to the traditions Halbfass uses to represent India. Here, the question of whether Halbfass's own hermeneutic situation allows him to downplay the politically charged questions which would we unavoidable from within the Indian *present* may be raised. Moreover, Serbriany argues Halbfass's inadequate treatment of Islam is also seen in the diminished role assigned to Islamic dimensions of Ram Mohan Roy's works. His Islamic upbringing receives only a summary treatment in Halbfass's account. Bengal had been ruled by Muslims since the 13th century and Persian had been the dominant language of administration and literary culture. He convincingly argues that a complete description of Ram Mohan's 'hermeneutic

[273] See V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (New Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Sadan, 2003)., Romila Thapar, *The Past as Present* (Aleph Book Company PVT Ltd, 2014).N. Bhattacharya, "Predicaments of Secular Histories," Public Culture 20, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): Pg. 57–73, for the issues of Hindu and secular historiography
[274] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 153
[275] Ibid., Pg. 158

situation' cannot possibly neglect this 'Islamic horizon.' His allegiance to monism should also be understood in the context of his readings of the Islamic thought and not solely Christian thought.

In any case, a discussion on his treatment on Islam was warranted. And in a later essay he does acknowledge, "Nonetheless, I want to emphasize that I am by no means satisfied with my treatment of Islam in *India and Europe.* [...] But for the sake of balance, I might have done well to include another chapter in the Indian part. To some extent, their presence prepared the Hindu encounter with Europe. All this deserves a separate presentation and analysis."[276]

At the same time, the problems of Halbfass's India being a largely a non-Buddhist India have been raised. As has been pointed out, Halbfass writes on "Kumārila, Śaṅkara, Bhartṛhari, Jayanta and even Mallavādin, but only marginally on Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga or Dharmakirti."[277]

S.K. Balagangadharan in his review of *India and Europe* notes, the writing of such epoch-spanning histories is always a risky enterprise. According to him, to criticise the book for its incompleteness is "to completely miss both the project of the author as well as the work's pioneering character."[278] That said however, the emphasis and de-emphasis of certain specific historical actors does give a sense of cohesion to the book.[279] Outside the neo-Hindu philosophers, Halbfass doesn't look into modernist literary figures in India. While he does mention Tagore occasionally, in his discussion, he leaves out those who shunned the rhetoric and didn't choose the either-or binary of embracing traditionalism in a convoluted way or rejecting it outright (such as the Marxists, who also don't figure in Halbfass's account). David Shulman points to the works of lesser known figures such as Gurajada Apparao, Viswanatha Satyanarayana, Tiricirapuram Minatcicuntaram Pillai among others, who he refers to as the 'real modernists' of Asia.[280] At the same time, pointing to pre-colonial South India and Calcutta, he talks about the need to give voices, and focus on the "indigenous

[276] Ibid., Pg. 159
[277] Halbfass, *India and Europe an Essay in Understanding*., Pg. XVI
[278] "Understanding and Imagination: A Critical Notice of Halbfass and Inden—S.N.Balagangadhara | All Roads Lead to Jerusalem!".
[279] India here is to be understood as an abbreviation for 'philosophies of the Hindu tradition' and Europe for 'philosophies of the Western European tradtion.'
[280] Shulman, "The Revenge of the East?"

modernities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and away from the impoverished colonial modernities and their obsession with social reform."[281]

While these criticisms are important, they nevertheless do not take away from the promise that Gadamer's concepts of interpretive dialogue hold as a relevant tool to shift the debate from problems of *representation* to problems of *understanding* in cross-cultural studies. In the next section we shall briefly deal with Halbfass's own criticisms of the 'present climate of debate', before ending with some broad concluding remarks.

7. Halbfass and the Critique of Orientalism

In his essay *'Research and reflection: Beyond Orientalism?'* Halbfass poses the following questions: "Was it possible that I was myself part of the scenario described by Said? Was it possible that my own and anybody else's effort of understanding Asian traditions were contributing to the formation and stabilization of a discourse of domination? Was "understanding" itself or the quest for it, just another manifestation of Orientalism? [...] How does it affect the minds of scholars and the nature of their work? How pervasive is it in Western thought? Is it an exclusively western phenomenon? What are its symptoms? What is the cure?"[282]

Halbfass's critique of Said is based largely on Gadamer's idea of inescapable fore-meanings and prejudices. For Halbfass, Said inadequately recognizes how he is very much included in the processes and procedures which he radically denounces. He points to the Marxist underpinnings of Said's project— its attempt to bring to bear the utopian project of being free from representation, its emphasis on the role of a dehumanizing ideology, its need to liberate itself from exploitative discourse and the false consciousness purveyed by the knowledge created— all are manifestations of a particular kind of thought already within 'Occidental' horizons. As mentioned earlier, he points to an article by Anouar Abdel-Malik titled '*Orientalism in Crises*' which he considers to be a forerunner of the orientalism debate and whose critique Halbfass prefers on account of it being 'less sweeping and rhetorical' and 'more practical'.[283] Another crucial thrust of Halbfass's critique is of Said's denial of the occurrence of

[281] Ibid., pg 2
[282] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 3
[283] Ibid, Pg. 6

'understanding'. In its counter-essentailizing framework, it fails to see that distortions, by themselves, are how human groups have always dealt with 'Otherness'.

Despite his objections, Halbfass considers the debate to be a necessary one. He writes,

"Regardless of the questions and misgivings one may have about Said's *Orientalism*, there can be no doubt that the book addresses highly significant problems. Time and again, we may find the "Orientalism debate" exasperating; nonetheless, we should be grateful that it has been initiated. Even in its excesses and distortions, it is better than no debate at all. There are different ways of reading the book, of responding to its claims and suggestions, of learning from its exaggerations and distortions, and of facing questions which it leaves unanswered."[284]

Besides Said, Halbfass engages with two other important thinkers engaged in oriental critique in the field of Indology, particularly Sheldon Pollock and Ronald Inden. Sheldon Pollock in his essay titled '*Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power Beyond the Raj*' discusses colonialist Orientalism and its structural links to National Socialist discourse. At the same time, he also points to the kinds of Brahmanical domination that existed in traditional India.[285] While Halbfass is appreciative of the identifying of these distortions across cultures, he considers conclusions such as the "legitimation of genocide being the ultimate 'orientalist' project" as "iconoclastic" and a deviation from the "quiet and patient pursuit of understanding."[286]

Similarly, Inden's book '*Imagining India*' calls for a radical reform in Indian studies in which he hopes to replace the metaphysic of orientalist knowledge with the alternative metaphysic that foregrounds 'human agency.' Repeatedly, Halbfass points to the excessive jargon and rhetoric that pervades Inden's book.[287] He argues that the problems identified with Said, seem far from resolved and that "some of them may have become more virulent."[288] Among other things, Halbfass points to an 'essentialization' of Indologists, a retaining of classificatory categories (such as empiricists, structuralists,

[284] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 12
[285] Sheldon Pollock, "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj," in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, 1993, 76–133.
[286] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 18
[287] Halbfass writes "The world of Indian studies, as depicted by Inden, is dominated by "hegemonic agents" producing "imperial knowledges" on behalf of the "Anglo-French" and later on the "US-Soviet imperial formation" (p. 36), and various "intellectual architects" (p. 96) who are guided and inspired by such "masterminds" as Hegel (p. 129). Indologists serve as "jungle officers of the Indian mind" (p. 87) or "male managers" of a "female jungle" (p. 85ff.) [...]." Ibid., Pg. 19
[288] Ibid, Pg. 19

idealists, etc.) while critiquing classification, ignoring the extensive systems of classifications that existed in traditional India, ignoring the distortions present in the representations of the traditional Indian texts, etc.

However, above all what seems most disagreeable to Halbfass is perhaps the project of wanting to 'liberate'. He argues that the attempt to liberate the Indians from the 'hegemonic discourses' is fundamentally a 'continuation and extrapolation' of Eurocentric practices. "The claim to be able to grant sovereignty and "agency" to the Indians and to restore their genuine selfhood is no less presumptuous than the attempt to take it away."[289]

All in all, Halbfass argues that for better or for worse, the 'Orientalism debate' has acquired such an enormous significance that disregarding it would also count as a statement. In its debates, there is a pervasive element of hyperbole and rhetoric, but its definition continues to remain elusive. While discussing on the possibilities of going beyond orientalism, he writes:

"Certainly, we want to be "beyond" European and Eurocentric claims to higher or absolute authority; we want to be "beyond" the "epistemic subjugation" of non-Western traditions and avoid false essentializations and reifications. We also want to be "beyond" the meaningless proliferation of "objective" information which is one of the ingredients of the "Europeanization of the earth." But do we want to be "beyond" the quiet and patient pursuit of understanding, which has also been part of the history of Indian and "Oriental" studies? And do we want to be "beyond" legitimate generalizations, which are inherent in the process of understanding itself?"[290]

[289] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 21
[290] Ibid., Pg. 23

8 Concluding Remarks

In many ways, as Sheldon Pollock, has noted, both Orientalist *dis*orientation and post-colonial *re*orientation were, at least in part, historically determined.[291] The post-colonialist 'writing back' since the 1950s is not only related to anti-imperialism but also to the uncertainties generated in the new global system.[292] Said, for example, James Clifford notes, writes as an orientalist, as a radical critic of a major component of the Western cultural tradition, as someone who derives most of his standards from that tradition, and yet writes to dissolve the category of the 'oriental'.[293] "The point in saying this is to suggest something of the situation in which books such as *Orientalism* must inevitably be written."[294] This is one of the post-oriental blind-spots that Gadamer's hermeneutical method sheds light on. It makes explicit the many ways in which we remain inscribed to our distinct hermeneutical situations. The attempt, as Gadamer writes, is to give the element of tradition its full value, to recognize the ways in which it is internalized and constantly affirmed.[295]

Similarly, the critique of representations in the form of many 'post'-ologies is nearing exhaustion. The attempt to rebalance the right to represent has overtaken the attempt to engage with the original sources of thought, i.e. as Pollock argues in the context of Sanskrit studies: there is a conversion of a disciplinary vice (the erosion of our knowledge of historical languages) into a theoretical virtue (the unwillingness to deal with the tradition by dismissing it as an 'constructed' outcome of Orientalism). The issues of representational inadequacies will stay with us, and the explicit acknowledgement of one's prejudice seems to be the only response. Prejudice, a function of one's finitude, is to be understood not merely as a predicament, but as something that plays a constitutive role in the act of understanding. In any case, the aim of this reflexive, self-referring dimension is also to allow for openness, for a suspicion of all 'final vocabulary', for the possibility of misunderstanding and more importantly, for the possibility of dialogue.

As Halbfass argues, this commitment to understanding, though not uncritical, is incompatible with radically iconoclastic attitudes. Understanding requires the quiet and

[291] *Sheldon Pollock at CSDS, Golden Jubilee Lecture, Part 1*.
[292] Gyan Prakash, "Orientalism Now," *History and Theory* 34, no. 3 (October 1995): 199
[293] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*.
[294] Ibid., Pg. 225
[295] Gadamer, *Truth and Method (Continuum Impacts)*., Pg. 282

patient recognition of the 'significance' of even problematic interpretations, such as that of Hegel, or the Christian missionaries, or the neo-Hindus, among others. In all this, he writes, "we have to be ready for a certain amount of "*Gelassenheit*.""[296]

At the same time, the commitment to one's standpoint also points to the Halbfassian expectation to bring out the cultural and temporal differences that exist rather than attempt its erasure. The emphasis on differences is a fundamental recognition of his own historicity, and (as was seen in Halbfass's discussion on Weber, Heidegger, and even Said) a response to the need to transcend the narrowly European or Western identity. There is a sense of disenchantment with its contemporary pervasiveness along with an underlying need for an 'otherness' that can *teach* and alter the self in significant ways. At present, most post-colonial self-understandings are mediated, knowingly or unknowingly, by the West and without adequate hermeneutic awareness come to replicate it. While these ideas have been articulated as early as in K.C. Bhattacharya's essay '*Swaraj in Ideas*'[297], S.N. Balagangadhara, sums up the contemporary situation neatly:

"We know the West the way the west looks at itself. We study the East the way the West studies the East. We look at the world the way the west looks at it. *We do not even know whether the world would look different, if we look at it our way*. Today, we are not in a position to make sense of the above statement. When Asian anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists do their anthropology, psychology and sociology, the West is really talking to itself."[298]

This 'recovery of the self', however, will not occur by the self-criticism within the Western tradition, or by the 'granting' of epistemic sovereignty but only through the dynamic of Indian self-assertion and self-critique. Halbfass's work, close to his own characterization of Hacker's, addresses and challenges modern Indian thinkers and intellectuals; in its disagreement and critique, it does not try to please or accommodate them.[299]

[296] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 304
[297] Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya and Sisirkumar Ghose, *Four Indian Critical Essays* (Jijnasa, 1977).
[298] S. N. Balagangadhara, "The Future of the Present Thinking through Orientalism," *Cultural Dynamics* 10, no. 2 (July 1, 1998), Pg. 101–21
[299] "An Uncommon Orientalist: Paul Hacker's Passage to India" in Halbfass and Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation*.

At this point, it may be important to note that while this essay attempted to outline a great deal that is to be learnt from Halbfass's use and advocacy of the hermeneutical method, there are aspects of his methodology (such as the intensely personal, thoughtful and sometimes idiosyncratic questions) that might not be very easily replicable by other scholars. Moreover, there is an element of genius in the various voices of the philosopher, philologist and historian that comes across in *India and Europe*. While the uniqueness of Halbfass's approach is not to be understated, it also assures Halbfass's profound relevance for current cross-cultural scholarship.

Lastly, with regards to the contemporary situation, Halbfass has noted that while the information about others has increased exponentially, the nature and extent of the dialogue has become all the more questionable. More than ever, there is a need to sift through rhetoric, to retrieve new philosophical voices, to deal with the underlying political issues with a sense of self-reflection, to listen and engage with the ancient texts as well as the modern representatives of the many traditions, to pay attention to their many distinct presents that generate their own distinct pasts, its related anxieties and its related possibilities. "For the time being," as Halbfass writes, "the pursuit of understanding has not become obsolete."[300]

[300] Franco, and Preisendanz, *Beyond Orientalism*., Pg. 23

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