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Orientalist Constructions of India

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Opening Discussion

Now it is the interest of Spirit that *external* conditions should become *internal* ones; that the natural and the spiritual world should be recognized in the subjective aspect belonging to intelligence; by which process the unity of subjectivity and (positive) Being generally—or the Idealism of Existence—is established. This Idealism, then, is found in India, but only as an Idealism of imagination, without distinct conceptions;—one which does indeed free existence from Beginning and Matter (liberates it from temporal limitations and gross materiality), but changes everything into the merely Imaginative; for although the latter appears interwoven with definite conceptions and Thought presents itself as an occasional concomitant, this happens only through accidental combination. Since, however, it is the abstract and absolute Thought itself that enters into these dreams as their material, we may say that Absolute Being is presented here as in the ecstatic state of a dreaming condition (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 139).

THIS essay is critical of Indology and the related disciplines in the social sciences. Its aim is to establish a space for the production of a new knowledge of South Asia. The object of the critique is what I, following others, refer to as 'Orientalist discourse', and the accounts of India that it produced. It has emerged out of work that I have been doing for the past decade on Hindu states and rituals in 'early medieval' India. What I present here is to be seen as a provisional part of a larger study of Hinduism and kingship which I hope to complete soon. Although I write here from the standpoint of an Indologist, historian, and anthropologist of India, the problems with which I deal here are not confined to those disciplines. They are shared by scholars in the other human sciences as well.

My concern in the 'deconstruction' that follows is not to compare the 'theories' or 'explanations' of these accounts with the 'facts' of Indian history. On the contrary, I take the position that those facts themselves have been produced by an 'episteme' (a way of knowing that implies a particular view of existence) which I wish to criticize. The episteme at issue presupposes a representational view of knowledge. It assumes that

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true knowledge merely represents or mirrors a separate reality which the knower somehow transcends. Adherence to this position has allowed the scholar to claim that his (rarely her) knowledge is natural and objective and not a matter for political debate. It has also operated to produce a hierarchic relationship between knower and known, privileging the knowledge of the scientists and other experts and leaders who make up the former while subjugating the knowledges of the people who comprise the latter.

My own position relies on a reading of the works of thinkers as diverse as R. G. Collingwood (post-Hegelian), Antonio Gramsci (post-Marxian), and Michel Foucault (post-structuralist), and, indirectly, Jacques Derrida (deconstructionist). It has also benefited a great deal from the writings of Anthony Giddens in critical sociology on human agency, and of Roy Bhaskar on 'transcendental realism' in the philosophy of science. It is my assumption that reality transcends the knower. The knowledge of the knower is not a 'natural' representation of an external reality. It is an artifical construct but one which actively participates (especially when it comes to social knowledge) in producing and transforming the world.

Two of the assumptions built into the 'episteme' of Indology are that the real world (whether that is material and determinate or ideal and ineffable) consists of essences and that that world is unitary. Entailed in these two assumptions is a further assumption. It holds that there exists a 'human nature' which itself consists of a unitary essence. It is also supposed that, at a lower level, each culture or civilization embodies a similarly unitary essence. Since the unitary essence of human nature is assumed to be most fully realized in the 'West', a major difficulty (if not the fundamental one) that has confronted the scholar of non-Western Others has been how to reconcile the essence of the Other's civilization, with the Euro-American manifestation of human nature's unitary essence—rational, scientific thought and the institutions of liberal capitalism and democracy. Not infrequently this essence is substantialized and turned into an Agent (God, Reason, Western Man, the Market, the Welfare State, the Party) who is seen as using the people and institutions of the West as instruments and history is seen as teleological: a hypostatized Agent is moving humanity towards its natural and spiritual (essential) end.

Indological discourse, I argue, holds (or simply assumes) that the essence of Indian civilization is just the opposite of the West's. It is the irrational (but rationalizable) institution of 'caste' and the Indological religion that accompanies it, Hinduism. Human agency in India is

displaced by Indological discourse not onto a reified State or Market but onto a substantialized Caste. This has entailed several consequences for the Indological construction of India. It has necessitated the wholesale dismissal of Indian political institutions, and especially of kingship. To give this construct of India credibility, the depiction of Indian thought as inherently symbolic and mythical rather than rational and logical has also been required. Finally, it has been necessary for Brahmanism or Hinduism, the religion considered to be the justification of caste, to be characterized as essentially idealistic (i.e., apolitical).

Caste, conceived in this way as India's essential institution, has been both the cause and effect of India's low level of political and economic 'development' and of its repeated failure to prevent its conquest by outsiders. Given this, it was only 'natural' for European scholars, traders, and administrators to appropriate the power of Indians (not only the 'masses', but also the 'elite') to act for themselves. This they have done since the formation of Indological discourse made it possible. Despite India's acquisition of formal political independence, it has still not regained the power to know its own past and present apart from that discourse.

The fixation on caste as the essence of India has had still another effect. It has committed Indology, largely descended from British empiricism and utilitarianism, to a curious and contradictory mixture of societalism, in which Indian actions are attributed to social groups—caste, village, linguistic region, religion, and joint family—because there are no individuals in India, and individualism, in which Indians' acts are attributed to bad motives.

The purpose here is to produce a knowledge of India that helps restore that power, that focuses on the problematic of formulating and using a theory of human agency which avoids the pitfalls of the representational theory of knowledge. This will require that those of us in the discipline work free of the incoherent combination of societalism and individualism that prevails in the study of South Asia. It will also entail the abandonment of the substantialism and essentialism that have permitted the discipline of Indology and its affiliates in the social sciences to evade the issue of human agency.

The first part of this article is an argument about the ways in which Indological discourse has been constituted. After a brief contextual treatment of the usages for distinguishing different Europes and Asias, I discuss what I see as the three aspects of Indological accounts, the 'descriptive', the 'commentative' and the 'explanatory' and end by focusing on texts I refer to as 'hegemonic'. The middle part of the article

deals with the construction of India put forward by the scholars whose views are predominant in the study of South Asia, those whom I have labeled as utilitarian, empiricist, and positivist. The third part of the essay deals with alternate views. I begin with the construction of India produced by those scholars whom I refer to as romantics and idealists and then look at other dissenters. The essay ends with a brief look at South Asian 'area studies' since the second world war, followed by my own suggestions for a 'reconstruction' of scholarship on South Asia.

The Orients

Europeans and North Americans have produced many overlapping images of 'the Orient' (l'Orient, das Morgenland) or 'the East' as the Other. Terms like 'the Orient' or 'the East' are used very loosely nowadays, as in the past, to refer to Asia, but this is only one use to which these terms are put. The first of these terms (but not the second) is also employed at present to distinguish a 'Communist World', also known as 'the Second World', from 'the Free World'. The former, 'the East', dominated by the Soviet Union and including the nations of Eastern Europe and China, straddles both Europe and Asia. The latter, 'the West', assumed by its own leaders to be 'the First World', the part of the globe dominated by the United States and the countries of Western Europe, also includes (anomalously) an increasingly powerful nation of the East, Japan. The term 'the Orient' itself seems to have become something of a pejorative expression since the second world war, especially among scholars and government officials. It continues to appear, though, in tourist brochures where it is apparently meant to conjure up images of appropriately exotic opulence. This is the situation today. In the past, however, there was no reluctance on the part of European colonial administrators to use the term 'the Orient' and scholars spoke proudly of themselves as 'Orientalists'.

Although the expression 'the Orient' (or 'the East') was used to refer rather vaguely to Asia as a whole, it was also used to paint two rather different pictures. One picture of the Orient, the older of the two, crudely but sharply distinguished a Christian Europe from an Islamic Asia. Here Europeans used the term 'the Orient' primarily to designate the peoples and lands dominated by the Ottoman Turk. This Orient embraced not only the lands of Anatolia ('Asia Minor'), the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula in Asia, but also Egypt in Africa. Parts of 'Christian' Europe—Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece itself, the *fons et*

origo of European Civilization, were also included within this Orient. The other parts of Asia, particularly Safavid Persia and Mughal India, could be seen as vague extensions of this conception in so far as they were constituted as Islamic polities, even though they lay outside the Ottoman sphere of influence. This is the Orient that was known as 'the Near East' (le proche Orient). With the addition of Iran and even Pakistan and Afghanistan to the east and of those parts of Muslim-dominated North Africa (Algeria and Tunisia) that lay outside the Ottoman domains to the west, it has come to be known today as 'the Middle East' (le moyen Orient).

As Western Europe came more and more to dominate Asia and to know more and more about it, another picture of the Orient emerged. It saw the Semitic Near East and Aryan Persia as sharing a fundamentally monotheistic and individualist culture/values with Christian Europe (and America) and contrasted this world with a more distant East, that comprising India and China (along with Japan and Central and Southeast Asia). It is on this Orient, the Asia or East as reproduced by the sociologist, Max Weber, in *The Religion of India*[1] or the mythologist, Joseph Campbell, in the volume of his *The Masks of God*, entitled 'Oriental Mythology',[2] that I shall largely focus in this essay. Hegel makes this distinction in no uncertain terms:

> Asia separates itself into two parts—Hither [*hinter*] and Farther [*vorder*] Asia; which are essentially different from each other. While the Chinese and Hindoos—the two great nations of Farther Asia, already considered—belong to the strictly Asiatic, namely the Mongolian Race, and consequently possess a quite peculiar character, discrepant from ours; the nations of Hither Asia belong to the Caucasian, i.e., the European Stock. They are related to the West, while the Farther-asiatic peoples are perfectly isolated. The European who goes from Persia to India, observes, therefore, a prodigious contrast. Whereas in the former country he finds himself still somewhat at home, and meets with European dispositions, human virtues and human passions—as soon as he crosses the Indus (i.e., in the *latter* region), he encounters the most repellent

[1] Tr. by H. H. Gerth and D. Martindale (Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1958). This book has been crucial in setting the agenda for the sociological study of India (and especially of 'modernization' or 'Westernization') in the last twenty-five years. The last chapter, 'The General Character of Asiatic Religion,' p. 340, makes it quite clear that Asia excludes the Middle East.

[2] His global treatment is divided into three volumes. One is entitled 'Primitive Mythology'. The other two deal with 'civilization'. One is entitled 'Occidental Mythology'; the volume on the Orient does include a treatment of the ancient civilizations of the Near East, but takes great pains to show that, very early on, this part of Asia was culturally continuous with the West. It then turns to the true cultural Others of Asia, India and China. First published in 1962 (New York, Viking), it has been reprinted many times, most notably by Penguin.

characteristics, pervading every single feature of society (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 173).

This 'Farther Asia' is the Orient that has come to be known as 'the Far East' (l'extrême Orient), the Asia that is seen by Europeans and Americans as dominated by China (and since the second world war, by Japan). Although India is integral to this construct of the Orient, she is only ambiguously included in the more restrictive idea of the Far East. India and her neighbors have for long been said to form a 'subcontinent' unto themselves within the larger Asian continent. It is very common today in academic and official circles to speak of the Indian subcontinent as 'South Asia', thereby distinguishing it from an 'East Asia' consisting of China, Japan, and Korea.

Europeans have constructed these varied images of Asia out of many materials. They have not only used media such as the literary text and the painted canvas to fashion their constructs. They have, by their gaining of control of knowledge of the East, also used the very people and institutions of Asia itself to remake the civilizations of that continent. The constructs which I take up here are the pictures those fashioned in the medium of academic discourse. The term 'Orientalism' (generally replaced nowadays by the expression 'Asian studies') has been used to designate this discursive practice in its widest sense. There is, of course, no discipline that takes as its object the study of the whole of Asia. The disciplines which constitute the core of Orientalist discourse are the various branches of philology and textual study (often called 'language and area studies' since the second world war) known by various names such as Sinology, Indology, and Arabic or Islamic studies. Interestingly enough these are grouped in two major clusters that correspond rather closely to the two Orients outlined above. The one consists of the study of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages and has Islam as its unifying subject. This is the Orientalism about which we have heard so much since the publication of Edward Said's book of that name.

The other cluster of disciplines consists of the study of 'classical' Chinese (and of Japanese and other central and east Asian languages) and of Sanskrit, India's 'classical' language, along with other 'regional' languages of the subcontinent. It is unified only verly loosely by the religion of Buddhism. The first of these clusters has as its professional organ in the United States, the Middle Eastern Studies Association. Scholars of the second cluster congregate annually under the rubric of the Association for Asian Studies. The name of this organization implies

what the corresponding construct of the Orient says—that it represents the 'real' Asia, the truly other East.

Each of these linguistic disciplines and its area or areas is also connected through these and other organizations with the disciplines in the social sciences, with anthropology, history, sociology, political science, economics, and psychology. Despite this seeming diversity, however, it is possible to speak of a distinctly Orientalist discourse and to single it out from among other overlapping discourses. First, it is about the 'civilized' rather than about the 'primitive'. This distinguishes it from anthroplogy which distinctively concerns itself with the latter rather than the former. Second, it speaks of Asian Others in ways that contrast rather sharply with the way in which it speaks of itself. Third, it continually distinguishes the parts of Asia by reference to the same differentiating features.

Hegel (1770–1831) was, of course, not the first European to construct a picture of Asia or the Orient as the Other in the medium of academic discourse. Amplifying on his predecessor, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), he and his contemporaries, particularly Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), were the first, so far as I know, who made sharp and essential distinctions between the different parts of Asia.[3] They not only distinguished the Near or Middle East from the Far East, they also made important distinctions within these rather amorphous constructs. I am not concerned, in what I argue below, with an analysis of Hegel's thought as such. I am concerned with the Orientalist discourse that he established, and with its reproduction in academic institutions. I rely purposely on the admittedly bad English translation of Sibree (completed in 1857) because it is highly likely that the Indologist who has read Hegel on India has read this and not the German original. The distinctions that he made are still reproduced in the discourse of scholars today. It is for this reason that I began with a quotation from that philosopher.[4] That passage, which characterizes Indian thought as

[3] G. W F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, tr. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956).

[4] Cast into outer darkness by Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), the logical positivists, and Karl Popper (b. 1902), Hegel, a rationalist and idealist, has had a very bad reputation among the mostly empiricist and realist scholars of Britain and the U.S. in this century. It is, therefore, not implausible to suggest that most Indologists in those countries have probably not read his seminal *Philosophy of History*. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New York: Grove), p. 487, mentions Hegel only in connection with the part his reading of Indian texts may have had in the development of his 'monism'. He does not, however, refer to him in his discussion of Indology (pp. 4–8). For a brief review of Hegel's views and his treatment earlier in this century, see John Cottingham, *Rationalism* (London: Granada, 1984), pp. 91–108. More extensive is the 'reading' of Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975),

imagination shorn of 'distinct conceptions', that is, of rational ordering, and likens it to the working of the mind asleep, provides an appropriate introduction to Orientalist discourse on India, for thought as dream has been a dominant metaphor in the study of that subcontinent. Indeed, the title of this paper could well be, 'India, Civilization of Dreams.'

Orientalist Discourse

The discourse of the Orientalist, we have recently been told, presents itself as a form of knowledge that is both different from, and superior to, the knowledge that the Orientals have of themselves. Backed by government funds, disseminated by universities, supported by the ACLS[5] and the SSRC,[6] endowed by the Ford Foundation, and given more than equal time by the New York Review of Books, the knowledge of the Orientalist, known nowadays as an 'area studies' specialist, appears as rational, logical, scientific, realistic, and objective. The knowledge of the Orientals, by contrast, often seems irrational, illogical, unscientific, unrealistic, and subjective. The knowledge of the Orientalist is, therefore, privileged in relation to that of the Orientals and it invariably places itself in a relationship of intellectual dominance over that of the easterners. It has appropriated the power to represent the Oriental, to translate and explain his (and her) thoughts and acts not only to Europeans and Americans but also to the Orientals themselves. But that is not all. Once his special knowledge enabled the Orientalist and his countrymen to gain trade concessions, conquer, colonize, rule, and punish in the East. Now it authorizes the area studies specialist and his colleagues in government and business to aid and advise, develop and modernize, arm and stabilize the countries of the so-called Third World. In many respects the intellectual activities of the Orientalist have even produced in India the very Orient which it constructed in its discourse. I doubt very much, for example, if Gandhi's concept of non-violence would have played the central part it did in Indian nationalism had it not been singled out long ago as a defining trait of the Hindu character.

A genuine critique of Orientalism does *not* resolve around the question

especially pp. 389–427. On Hegel and Indian philosophy, consult Wilhelm Halbfass, *Indien und Europa: Perspektiven ihrer geistigen Begegnung* (Basel: Schwabe, 1981), pp. 104–21.

[5] American Council of Learned Societies; in Britain one would also want to mention the University Grants Committee.

[6] Social Sciences Research Council; its British counterpart is the recently renamed Economic and Social Science Research Council.

of prejudice or bias, of the like or dislike of the peoples and cultures of Asia, or of a lack either of objectivity or empathy. Emotions, attitudes, and values are, to be sure, an important part of Orientalist discourse, but they are not coterminous with the structure of ideas that constitutes Orientalism or with the relationship of dominance embedded in that structure. A contemptuous *philosophe*, James Mill (1773–1836) and an avowedly sympathetic Sanskritist, A. L. Basham, can valorize elements of Indian culture quite differently. Take, for example, the topic of non-violence.

Mill, writing of that practice, says:

> I have not enumerated the religion of the Hindus as one among the causes of gentleness which has been remarked in their deportment. This religion has produced a practice which has strongly engaged the curiosity of Europeans; a superstitious care of the life of the inferior animals. A Hindu lives in perpetual terror of killing even an insect; and hardly any crime can equal that of being unintentionally the cause of death to any animal of the more sacred species. This feeble circumstance, however, is counteracted by so many gloomy and malignant principles, that their religion, instead of humanizing the character, must have had no inconsiderable effect in fostering that disposition to revenge, that insensibility to the suffering of others, and often that active cruelty which lurks under the smiling exterior of the Hindu (Mill, *History of India*, I, 325–6).

If the curious non-violence of the Hindus was accompanied by divisiveness, it also entailed outright cowardice:

> Notwithstanding the degree to which the furious passions enter into the character of the Hindu, all witnesses agree in representing him as a timid being with more apparent capacity of supporting pain than any other race of men; and on many occasions, a superiority to the fear of death, which cannot be surpassed, this people run away from danger with more trepidation and eagerness than has been almost ever witnessed in any other part of the globe (Mill, *History of India*, I, 329).

These 'mental habits' of the Hindus are, in turn, implicated in India's inherent political incapacity:

> Of all the results of civilization, that of forming a combination of different states, and directing their power to one common object, seems to be one of the least consistent with the mental habits and attainments of the Hindus (Mill, *History of India*, II, 141).

Writing some 150 years later, Basham places a positive value on non-violence and its associated practices, which he evokes when he stresses the 'humanity' of Indian civilization, claiming against those earlier scholars who viewed India as a land of 'lethargic gloom' that:

> India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and

slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindliness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity.[7]

At the same time, however, he also points to Hindu militarism (also dubbed humane) as one of the 'factors' that prevented the political unification of the subcontinent.[8]

It was the non-violence which Europeans had construed as a social practice connected with cowardice or 'humanity' and political division that Gandhi undertook to transform into a highly charged political act indexical of courage and productive of unity and to use as a weapon against India's British rulers.[9]

As we can see from this one example, scholars whose attitudes seem at polar opposites do not disagree here in any major way about the 'facts' of Indian history, facts that constitute India as a veritable glass house of vulnerability forever destined for conquest by outsiders. Any serious criticism of Orientalist discourse in the many variant forms it has taken spatially and temporally must not be content simply to rectify 'attitudes' toward the Other. It must also penetrate the emotional mine field surrounding scholarship on Others. And it must directly confront the central question of knowledge and its multiple relations to power in Orientalist representations of Asians.

Such, in brief, is the bold message of Edward Said's *Orientalism*,[10] with the difference that I have made India rather than the Middle East the primary referent in my summary of his portrayal. To a large extent I agree with Said's critique and so, too, perhaps do many other scholars of Asia. My intention here is not to interpret Said's book, to defend it against its detractors or to attack them.[11] What I would like to do is to continue with a more detailed discussion of the Indological or South Asian branch of Orientalist discourse. I would like to point to the peculiar form in which Indologists and, for that matter, sociologists, historians, political scientists, anthropologists, and historians of religion have presented their knowledge of alien cultures.

Descriptive and Commentative Accounts

Fundamental to the form of Indological discourse is a distinction between what I shall refer to as the 'descriptive' and 'commentative'

[7] Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, p. 9. [8] *Ibid.*, pp. 122–8.

[9] Jawaharlal Nehru's comments on this topic in his, *The Discovery of India* (London: Meridian Books, 1951), pp. 59, 89–90, 428–9, are most interesting.

[10] New York: Pantheon, 1978.

[11] Informative from a Marxian perspective is the review by Robert Irwin, 'Writing about Islam and the Arabs,' *Ideology and Consciousness*, 9 (Winter, 1981/82), 103–12.

aspects of its texts. The descriptive aspect of an Indological account is that which *presents* the thoughts and acts of Indians to the reader. The commentative aspect of an account is its frame, often isolable in distinct passages. It *represents* those same thoughts and actions by characterizing them, by indicating their general nature or essence. Since even the most narrowly descriptive work of scholarship on South Asia usually contains (or at least presupposes) a framing commentary, I shall refer to the Indological accounts that stop with commentary and do not go further to give explanations (which I shall turn to next) as 'commentative accounts'.

Now, it is my contention that the Indological text (or its affiliate in the social sciences) places its strange and seemingly inexplicable descriptive content in surrounding comments that have the effect of representing it as a distorted portrayal of reality. That is, it functions to depict the thoughts and institutions of Indians as distortions of normal and natural (that is, Western) thoughts and institutions. It represents them as manifestations of an 'alien' mentality. Here, for example, is a passage from an account of Vedic religion by Louis Renou (1896–1966), one of this century's leading Sanskritists.[12] The first two sentences comment:

> The Vedic rites are made to conform to a systematic arrangement; mythology may be lacking in system, but ritual is overburdened with it. It appears that originally separate rites were grouped together in vast systems in response to new demands that had arisen in the course of time, and under the influence of an advancing scholasticism.

The rest of the paragraph 'simply' describes:

> There is a distinction between the great public rites, called Śrauta, and the domestic rites, called Gṛhya. The former are carried out by professional officiants, and need three fires; the formulary is taken from the Saṃhitā. The domestic rites take place on the family hearth, and are performed by the householder, using a formulary taken from a special collection. The two series are entirely different in character, in spite of the resemblances that arise from borrowings. The Indians, with their taste for classification, divide the solemn rites into seven *saṃsthās* or ordinary celebrations, with vegetable and animal offerings, and seven others, based on the *soma* oblations. But the *soma* sacrifices necessitate ordinary vegetable and animal oblations, and the Sautrāmaṇī involves milk, *surā* and a sacrificial victim. The tendency to build up complex structures from simpler elements is illustrated by the fact that some sacrifices, all using a common *tantra*, are variations of a single archetype. Some festivals, such as the *sattras* or 'sessions', are too complicated to be actually carried out, and are intended rather as intellectual exercises. It is clear that the texts contain a

[12] Louis Renou, *Religions of Ancient India* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968). For a brief biography and a bibliography of his works, see *Mélanges d'Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louis Renou* (Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1968), pp. ix–xxix, 1–5.

proportion of such exercises; we must not regard them as consisting entirely of accounts of actual religious practice.

The beginning of the next paragraph shifts back to the commentative:

> I do not intend to engage in a theoretical consideration of the nature of the ritual. Ritual has a strong attraction for the Indian mind, which tends to see everything in terms of the formulae and methods of procedure, even when such adjuncts no longer seem really necessary for its religious experience (Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, pp. 29–30).

Renou illustrates this and then returns to description, laying out the parts of the Vedic ritual.

What does the Indological text accomplish with this double presentation of Vedic religion? It transforms the thoughts and actions of ancient Indians into a distortion of reality. Renou might have shown that the apparently irrational minds and disconnected acts of Vedic priests were parts of a coherent and irrational whole, that they participated in a real world, but that the real world of the Vedic Indian was based on metaphysical presuppositions differing from those of nineteenth-century European thought. Renou, however, does not do so, for he, like many Indologists, holds certain presuppositions about the relationship of knowledge to reality that preclude this. It is worth saying immediately that these presuppositions have all been attacked in the philosophy of science.[13] He assumes that there is a single, determinate, external reality 'out there' which human knowledge merely 'copies', 'represents', or 'mirrors'. Western science, claiming to be empiricist (or rationalist) in its epistemology and realist in its ontology, has privileged access to that reality. Vedic thought, characterized as mystical and idealist, does not.

The question of what assumptions one makes about the relationship of knowledge to reality is a crucial one for Indology and for Orientalism as a whole, as well as for the affiliated human sciences, and I shall return to it in my conclusion. But I am not yet finished with my analysis of the commentative text in Indology. It is, I believe, necessary to become more consciously explicit about the specific operations that we Indologists have implicitly attributed to Indian thought and conduct.

Freud argued that the report a person gives of his dreams is, in fact, a distorted representation of reality. It is a distorted representation both of the external world of the dreamer and of his internal emotional world. The report of a dream, the 'manifest content' of a dream text, is a

[13] I refer here to the 'crisis' precipitated by the historical enquiries of Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend, among others, into how scientists actually worked. See Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–17, 65–74.

distorted representation of reality because, said Freud, the conscious reasoning which during waking hours represents the outer world to itself has, during sleep, ceased to do this. It has, at the same time, also lessened its grip on the unconscious emotions. The rational or intellectual operations of the mind are, as a result, pushed this way and that by its own irrational wishes.[14] Although Freud formulated this idea of a reasoning faculty dominated by desires in relation to dreams, he later extended it to cover not only the waking representations of neurotics but of the prescientific religious (or animistic) mind in general. It is here, of course, that the subject matter of Freud and the Orientalist overlap. Many Indologists would no doubt reject the more extravagant claims that Freud made about myth and religion but that should not obscure the similarities in their discourses. I am not making use of Freud's theory of dream interpretation here because I think his theory is the correct one either for the interpretation of dreams or of Indian texts. Indeed, some of the features that make it difficult to accept Freud's theory are also, at the level of major presuppositions, the very features of Indological discourse itself that I wish to criticize.

What is the precise nature of the distortions attributed to Indian thought in Indological accounts? According to Freud, the distortions of a dream-text are the product of two primary sorts of mental activity, 'condensation' and 'displacement', and a secondary mental operation called, appropriately, 'secondary revision'. The first of these, condensation, causes each element in the manifest content of a dream to represent several elements in the latent content, the 'real' thoughts of the dream. At the same time, it also causes each thought in the latent content to be represented in several of the elements of the manifest content. The elements of the dream are, said Freud, 'overdetermined': the same part appears again and again. The second mental activity, displacement, the shifting of psychic intensity from the ideas to which it properly belongs, causes less important parts of the latent content to appear as more important than they really are in the manifest content and, conversely, makes the more important thoughts in the latent content seem almost inconsequential in the manifest dream text. Parts appear as wholes (synecdoche), associated elements appear as the entities with which they are associated (metonymy), and ideas are expressed not in their own form but in analogical form (metaphor).[15]

[14] Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*, tr. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1952), pp. 93–6.

[15] Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*, pp. 40–59; his *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. J. Strachey (New York: Avon, 1965), pp. 312–44.

Let me return now to our Indological example. The Indian classification of rituals, as Renou construes it, is not a scientific, rational one. The product of a mind that leaps between the extremes of an occult mysticism and a finicky scholasticism, it is characterized by both of the forms of distortion described by Freud. All of the rites are but variations, one recalls, of a single archetype. The elements of one type of rite appear again and again in other types. The classification scheme is, in other words, overdetermined, uneconomical and incoherent in its organization.

The whole scheme also suffers from the other major form of distortion, displacement. Ritual texts, one assumes, contain the procedures for acts meant to be performed in order to obtain some religious objective. But not in Vedic India. There, the priestly mind makes up rituals which are not meant to be enacted while the priestly hand performs rituals that have no religious rationale. Thoughts that should have acts as their objects are displaced from those objects and turned back onto themselves and ritual acts that should have goals are displaced from those goals and turned back onto the rites themselves. Where thoughts ought to be there are rites and where rites ought to be there are thoughts.

Explanatory or Interpretive Accounts

Freud also distinguished a third type of distortion which he labeled 'secondary revision'. Operating after the condensation and displacement have done their work, this process, known also as 'secondary elaboration', provides the confused dream text with an orderly façade.[16] Many Indological texts do not go beyond the commentative. Many others, however, go on to include 'explanations' or 'interpretations' which closely resemble Freud's secondary revisions. Just as passages of comment frame those of description in an Indological account, so those of secondary revision frame, in turn, the commentative aspects of these texts. The condensation and displacement which the Indologist attributes to the Indian mind in the characterizing passages of his text make the thoughts and practices of the ancient Indian seem alien and stress his difference from the man of the West. Secondary revision in an account of South Asia goes just the other way. It makes the strange and incoherent seem rational or normal. It is, however, not attributed to the Indian mind. The Indologist himself takes credit for providing the orderly façade for Indian practices. Here the scientific theorist—the physical

[16] Freud, *On Dreams*, pp. 73–82; his *Interpretation*, pp. 526–46.

anthropologist, the racial historian, historical materialist, comparative mythologist, social psychologist, historian of religion, structural-functional anthropologist, Parsonian sociologist, or development economist—truly comes into his own. One might also add the theories of the psychoanalyst to this list, for does he not also do the same thing? The difference, of course, is that he claims *his* ordering of the patient's material to be rational and not merely a rationalization.

Nearly all of these secondary revisions tend to be monistic, to concentrate on one sort of 'cause' or 'factor' to the exclusion of others. Which is to say that they are also almost invariably reductionist. Philosophical thought is reduced to the mythical, religion to psychology, the social or political to the economic, the cultural to the biological. The most important of these rationalizations for Indological discourse entail what I refer to as 'naturalist' assumptions. Evolutionism and functionalism, utilitarianism and a modern variant of that, behaviorism, are some of the strains of naturalism that have held sway in British and American studies of India.

These explanatory texts, which presuppose the existence of a single, fixed, external reality, analogize a society, nation, or civilization to an organism and see its particular configuration of thoughts and institutions as the outgrowth of adaptations to a given environment or as the development or unfolding of an essence consisting of fixed, defining attributes. People, in this view, take an active role in shaping their society only insofar as they or, more exactly, their leaders, have scientific knowledge of the physical and biological world and its analogue, the social world. Modern science has acquired privileged knowledge of the natural world. It has made a 'copy' of that external reality unprecedented in its accuracy. The institutions of the West have therefore come most closely to conform to what is, in this discourse, 'natural'. Traditional and non-Western societies have, because of their weak or defective knowledge, because of their inaccurate or false copies of external reality, made relatively ineffective adaptations to their environments. They have not evolved as fast or as far as the modern West. The societies they have fashioned, more or less blindly, are, hence, weak, defective, or even degenerate versions of the modern, natural societies of the West.

We have already had a look inside James Mill's, *The History of British India.* Completed in 1817, this book is a model explanatory text of utilitarianism and of pre-Darwinian evolutionism as well.[17] It is also the

[17] Consult, regarding the utilitarians, Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 47–80. On Mill's evolutionism, see J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 27–9, 42–9.

harsh ancestor of the dominant voice in Indological discourse, the oldest hegemonic account produced by that discourse, even though Mill himself can hardly be considered the founder of Indology.

Before turning to the topic of a hegemonic account in Indological discourse, let me summarize what I have said about the work of that discourse. The result of the discursive work within Indology and the affiliated human sciences is first to present the reader in a descriptive passage with some 'facts' on the Other. The account then (or concurrently) represents the Other in commentative terms as radically different from the Self. It is a gross distortion of Self or the opposite of Self. But this is itself disturbing, given the premise in Orientalist (and social scientific) discourse of a unity of human nature, one that is exemplified or realized in Euro-American Man. But these threatening differences are not allowed to remain. The Indological text also goes on to provide (or evoke) an explanation for the differences. These explanations or interpretations are almost always naturalistic. That is, they lie beyond, behind, or outside the consciousness and activity of the Others involved. It is necessary for the Other to be the way he/she is because of its environment, its racial composition, or its (inferior) place on the evolutionary scale. Once the reader comes to know the natural reason for the Other's otherness, the threat of it is neutralized. The Explanation is, thus, one which restores the unity of mankind, with Western Man as its perfect embodiment. It does this by hierarchizing the Others of the world, by placing them in a spatial, biological, or temporal scale of forms, one which always culminates in Homo Euro-Americanus.

The Hegemonic Account

Sir William Jones (1746–94) is usually the man who is credited with first suggesting that Persian and the European languages were related to one another and not descended from Hebrew. He was also the person largely responsible for founding, in 1784, the first Indological institution, the Asiatick Society of Bengal. If any one person can be named as the founder of Indology, it is certainly he.[18] Because he advocated the importance of studying Eastern languages and texts in India, he and some of his colleagues were dubbed 'Orientalists'. They were opposed by

[18] On Jones and the establishment of the Society, see the excellent study of S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 80–90.

certain utilitarians, who came to be known as 'Anglicists' because they argued that Western knowledge in English should displace the Eastern. The most notable of these opponents was James Mill, whose *History of India* was, in large part, written as a refutation of some of Jones's ideas. The victory which Mill and his colleagues gained over the 'Orientalists' in shaping the policies of the East India Company had the effect (hardly surprising given the convergence of utilitarian thought with commercial and colonial objectives) of securing dominance for the utilitarian or positivist view both in government practice and in the fledgling discipline of Indology.

Every discipline has, within its particular historic formations, texts or accounts which can be dubbed 'hegemonic'. The idea of a text as 'hegemonic' that I use here is taken in large part from Gramsci, particularly in the sense that such a text is not concerned with narrow and internalist issues of the discipline itself but with the broader questions of India's place in the world and in history, issues in which those outside of the discipline, the active subjects of the world—business and government leaders—and the more passive subjects of the world's history, the populace at large, are interested. It is, furthermore, an account that is seen, during the period of its predominance, to exercise leadership in a field actively and positively and not one that is merely imposed on it. A hegemonic text is also totalizing—it provides an account of every aspect of Indian life. It accounts for all the elements that the relevant knowing public wants to know about.[19]

Certain accounts within the discipline of Indology or South Asian studies can be considered as exercising hegemony therein under various circumstances. Because hegemonic accounts have had to be comprehensive not only in their intended content but also in the audience they actually reach, they have tended to be accounts that are strong in all three of the aspects I have outlined above. They have been commentative as well as descriptive and explanatory or interpretive as well as commentative. Jones, in addition to being grouped with the losing Orientalists, failed to produce a single, comprehensive account of India. So his essays, well-written and rhetorically persuasive as many of them were, hardly constituted a hegemonic text. Here, too, Jones can be seen as losing out to Mill, for the latter's *History* was indeed a hegemonic account.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Mill's *History* remained the

[19] Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci,' in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. C. Mouffe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 168–204, esp. pp. 193–4.

hegemonic textbook of Indian history. Later Indologists have either (wittingly or unwittingly) reiterated his construct of India or they have (directly or indirectly) written their accounts as responses to it. To see both reiteration and response together in the same book, one has only to pick up a later edition of this work, the fifth, edited by the Sanskritist and Orientalist, Horace Hayman Wilson (1789–1860).[20] He attempted in his long qualifying notes, to 'claw back' this formative text to a more 'scholarly', removed position. Mill's text was not confined, however, to the studies of scholarly gentlemen. It was 'required reading' at Haileybury College, where, until 1855, civil servants of the East India Company were trained. It held sway within Indology, fending off the challenge posed to it by Mountstuart Elphinstone's unfinished *History of British Power in the East*, until 1904. That was the year in which Vincent Smith (1848–1920) published his *Early History of India* (Oxford University Press). Smith's book became the hegemonic secondary revision of 'ancient' and 'early medieval' history of India for the next fifty years. But Mill's work was not completely set aside even then. Smith himself included selections from it in his more comprehensive *Oxford History of India* in 1919.[21]

The utilitarians considered conduct that was 'reverential, ceremonial, status-ordered, as distinct from practical, calculating, "useful",' as 'non-rational'.[22] So Mill, unlike Renou, is quite blunt in his characterization of Hindu ceremonies. The rationalization for Hindu 'excess' woven into his text consists of Mill's placement of Hindu civilization at an earlier time and lower 'stage' of evolution, the 'barbaric', than some (e.g., Jones) thought:

> To the rude mind, no other rule suggests itself for paying court to the Divine, than that for paying court to the Human Majesty; and as among a barbarous people, the forms of address, of respect, and compliment, are generally multiplied into a great variety of grotesque and frivolous ceremonies, so it happens with regard to their religious service. An endless succession of observances, in compliment to the god, is supposed to afford him the most exquisite delight; while the common discharge of the beneficient duties of life is regarded as an object of comparative indifference. It is unnecessary to cite instances in support of a representation, of which the whole history of the religion of most nations is a continual proof (pp. 276–7).

[20] (London: J. Madden; Piper, Stephenson and Spence, 1858).

[21] A. L. Basham, 'James Mill, Mountstuart Elphinstone and the History of India,' in *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), ed., C. H. Philips, pp. 217–29; and his, 'Modern Historians of Ancient India,' in the same volume, pp. 266–74.

[22] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, p. 2.

As I have already indicated, not every Indologist has explicitly included secondary revisions in his account. Renou himself, although fully prepared to present the theories of others, remained rather skeptical of most such efforts, largely because he considered them too reductionist.[23] On the whole, he preferred to leave his reader face to face with his representation of the disorderly Indian mind and its products unrationalized. Renou's refusal to theorize does not mean, however, that he avoided the naturalist assumptions of these reductionist theories. Renou, like Mill, consistently depicted Hinduism as a religion that has been unable to transcend the false knowledge and inferior practices of 'primitivism'.[24] Furthermore, the very fact that he did not provide his own secondary revisions or challenge those of others had the effect of permitting the theories of others to hold sway in the discipline. The point that Lorenzen makes about the Orientalists who come after Mill applies also to Renou. He says that their works

> are characterized by a meticulous concern for accuracy, an exhaustive collection of all available facts, and an almost obsessive avoidance of systematic generalization and evaluation.

The difficulty with this profusion of positivist scholarship on the part of Indologists was, as Lorenzen correctly indicates, that

> Virtually none of them even tried to mount an effective counterattack against more popular imperialist interpretations of ancient Indian history and society.[25]

The result is that the curious reader has had to turn elsewhere, to the work of Mill, Smith, and others, to find those full 'interpretations', those texts which I refer to as secondary revisions. But this is, perhaps, beside the point, for the following reason. Renou, we have seen, attributed the same dreaming irrationality to the Indian mind that Mill and Hegel did. It is difficult, therefore, to see how a comprehensive interpretation written by Renou would have differed in its major presuppositions from the regnant views of the Indian Other.

The question I would pose, even at this juncture, is: whose thought is it that is dream-like in these commentative and explanatory texts, the Indians', to whom it is attributed, or the Indologists' themselves? It could well be that careful, empirical study of Indian texts and practices

[23] Renou, *Religions*, pp. 19–20, 47–8.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 52–3, 109.
[25] D. Lorenzen, 'Imperialism and the Historiography of Ancient India,' in *India—History and Thought: Essays in Honour of A. L. Basham*, ed. S. N. Mukherjee (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1982), p. 86.

has indeed disclosed to us a culture whose bearers are lost in an irrational dream state. This is a difficult proposition to defend, however, because Europeans took dreaming irrationality as a distinctive trait of Indian thought *before* the field of Indological research was even established. I am not just referring to Hegel, with whose characterization I prefaced this paper. The portrayal of India as a land of fabulous wealth, of miracles, of wishes fulfilled, a Paradise of sensual pleasures and exotic philosophers, apparently constituted a reiterated theme in medieval thought. As Jacques Le Goff puts it, 'A poor and limited world formed for itself an extravagant combinatoric dream of disquieting juxtapositions and concatenations.'[26] I am claiming that it is wrong to see Indian thought as essentially dreamlike and to view Indian civilization as inherently irrational. So it would be equally wrong to suggest that dreams of India as an exotic land are an essential feature of an hypostatized West. The dream or image of the medieval European differed from that of the nineteenth-century scholar and imperialist. He did not see India as an *inferior* land of the *past*, but as a *superior* land of the *future*, a paradisiac kingdom ruled by a priest-king, Prester John, who might, it was hoped, come to save Christendom.[27] Even so, this prehistory of Indology should make one skeptical of any argument that Indology has only represented Indian thought to the European and American 'as it really is.'

Let me conclude this section with some comments on the relationship of Freud to Indology. The major reason for using Freud's theory of dream interpretation here is that his theory makes quite explicit the discursive principles that have, for the most part, remained implicit in the discipline of Indology. What makes this possible is the fact that both share the same presuppositions about the relationship of knowledge to reality. Both presuppose a duality of knower and known. Both assume that the discourse of the knower, that of the scientist, is a privileged discourse in relation to the knowledges of the known, the Other of the human scientist. For Freud that Other is an Other internal to the West, the neurotic person who is his 'patient'. The Other of the Indologist is an externalized Other, the civilization of India. For both the analyst and the philologist, however, the knowledges of those whom they studied

[26] Jacques Le Goff, 'The Medieval West and the Indian Ocean: An Oneiric Horizon,' in his *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, tr. A. Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 197.

[27] Heimo Rau, 'The Image of India in European Antiquity and the Middle Ages,' *India and the West: Proceedings of a Seminar Dedicated to the Memory of Hermann Goetz*, ed. Joachim Deppert (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp. 205–6.

were what Foucault refers to as 'subjugated knowledges'. These comprised, according to him:

> a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.[28]

Freud privileged Western scientific rationality in the form of psychoanalysis (or the interpretation of dreams) in much the same way that the Indologist (Renou) privileged his variant of that rationality, philology. The knowing subject, the analyst or Sanskritist is rational, the persons who are the subjects of inquiry are, in relation to him, irrational. The knowledges of the latter are distorted representations of their own reality. They are knowledges that must be subjugated. They are knowledges that must be introduced, annotated, catalogued, broken up and analyzed in 'data bases', apportioned out in monographs, reports, gazetteers, anthologies, readers, and course syllabi. I shall return to this question of the dualism of knower and known in the Conclusion. Let me now, however, turn to a brief examination of the construction of India that appears in the hegemonic texts of Indological discourse.

Oriental Despotism and the Asiatic Mode of Production

The 'political economy' of Asia has a prominence in Orientalist discourse second only to that given to the knowledges of the Orientals themselves. This was not simply a matter of curiosity. Knowledge of the Asian states and economies was essential to the project of the discourse—the removal of human agency from the autonomous Others of the East and placing it in the hands of the scholars and leaders of the West. This task was accomplished through the deployment of two concepts, 'Oriental despotism' and the 'Asiatic mode of production', the very names of which seem to say that a place automatically gives rise to a distinctive type of state and economy. One need hardly say that the concept of the Asian state as a despotic empire receives its first full formulation in Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, published in 1748.[29] To Marx, reproducing much of Hegel's view of the Orient, we of course owe

[28] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 82.

[29] I have consulted the English translation of Thomas Nugent, *The Spirit of the Laws* (New York: Haffner, 1949).

the concept of the 'Asiatic mode of production'.[30] There is a vast literature on these two related ideas.[31] For present purposes, I wish only to direct the reader to the excellent critique of the Asiatic mode by Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst.[32] Especially noteworthy is their critique (pp. 203–6) of the Hegelian—and essentialist—aspects of the theory.[33]

The writings on these two troublesome concepts are, in my analysis, both commentative and explanatory texts. They represent the peoples of Asia (and North Africa) as irrational and defective versions of their Western equivalents. Their major political and economic institutions all suffer from condensation and displacement. At the same time, however, these accounts also rationalize or explain the practices of the East by resorting to naturalist or organicist arguments: Asiatic institutions are the outcome of racial admixtures and adaptations to the environment peculiar to Asia. A more recent variant of these etiologies is functionalism. Strange political and economic practices are not so strange when one 'discovers' that they perform 'useful functions,' filling a wide variety of psychological and social 'needs'.

Here, in much abbreviated form, is a summary of the commentative and explanatory text of Orientalist disourse relating to eastern despotism.

Characterized by a salubrious mixture of topographic zones and a temperate climate, Western Europe is inhabited by temperate peoples of wide-ranging skills and organized into nations of a moderate to small size. Asia, with vast river valleys juxtaposed to its uplands and a climate either hot or cold, is inhabited by peoples of extreme temperament and organized into large empires. Because of these inherent differences, the political and economic institutions of Europe and Asia, and their accompanying religions, are also bound to be correspondingly and inherently different. A constitutional monarchy or republic is the characteristic political institution of the moderate or small nations of

[30] For a collection of Marx's writings on the subject, see *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, ed. Shlomo Avineri (New York: Doubleday, 1968), but beware the misleading introduction.

[31] The most accessible introduction to both ideas is to be found, with references, in Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1979; 1st published in 1974), pp. 462–549. On India itself, see the rather disappointing essays in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, IX (Dec., 1966), by Daniel Thorner, 'Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production,' pp. 33–66, and Louis Dumont, 'The "Village Community" From Munro to Maine,' pp. 67–89.

[32] *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 178–220.

[33] Well worthwhile (and a complement to Said) is the critique, following Hindess and Hirst, of the Asiatic mode in relation to Islam and developmental sociology of Bryan S. Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978).

Europe and the capitalist mode of production its characteristic economic institution. Despotism, the arbitrary or capricious rule by fear of an all-powerful autocrat over a docile and servile populace, is the normal and distinctive political institution of the East.[34] That elusive mode of production whereby the peasantry of the immense Asian plains, distributed over innumerable, self-sufficient villages, engages in a mixture of low-grade agriculture and handicrafts, makes over to the despot the surplus of what it produces in the form of a tax, subsisting on the remainder is, as its name Asiatic, proclaims, the distinctive economic (and social) institution of the East.

If it makes sense for people to think and act in this apparently irrational manner because, so runs our secondary revision, they are in a different place, Asia, it also makes sense because they also belong to an earlier time, a prior stage on the human developmental or evolutionary scale. Oriental despotism and the Asiatic mode of production were, when they first appeared among the peoples of the Nile, the Fertile Crescent, the Levant, and Persia, at the forefront of the evolution of human civilization. They were the *Lux ex Oriente* that is emblazoned on the old Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. After Alexander the Great's conquest of Asia, however, that Hegelian light passed to the West itself. Europe continued to develop and change while Asia remained, with the exception of a few dangerous outbursts on the part of Huns, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols, more or less static. Changes there were, we read, repetitive, and not, as in the West, cumulative or directional.

In a recent book, Johannes Fabian argues that the 'denial of coevalness' has been a major device of anthropological discourse to define the otherness of the peoples or cultures at the very time that they are increasingly being brought into relation with the European states.[35] Here we have, in the 'primordialization' of an entire continent, Asia, the most spectacular instance of this temporal distancing. Note, however, that a temporal distinction is also made with respect to the two major divisions of civilized Asia, the Middle East or Hither Asia and the Far East or Farther Asia. We have seen Hegel make this distinction. He made it by way of his introduction to a discussion of Persia. Note how, as

[34] Talal Asad, 'Two European Images of Non-European Rule,' in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, edited by him (London: Ithaca Press, 1973), pp. 103–18, shows how colonialist images of the Islamic states (which they did not rule) emphasized repression, while those of the 'tribal' African states (over which they did rule) emphasized consent as the essence of those states.

[35] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other—How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 31.

he launches into his account of that region, he distinguishes the two in temporal terms:

> With the Persian Empire we first enter on continuous History. The Persians are the first Historical People; Persia was the first Empire that passed away. While China and India remain stationary, and perpetuate a natural vegetative existence even to the present time, this land has been subject to those developments and revolutions, which alone manifest a historical condition (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 173).

Although most of the earlier Orientalists believed that Chinese and Indian civilizations had arisen at about the same time as the Near Eastern, they also held, with Hegel, that only the civilizations of the Near East had a major contribution to make to world, that is, Western civilization. The civilizations of China and India, despite their contributions of paper, printing, and gunpowder or of the zero and chess, lay to a large extent outside of this evolutionary scheme. The Ottoman was a potentially dangerous Alter Ego of the European. His religion, Islam, was a false, fanatical cousin of Christianity and he continued to rule over parts of eastern Europe. But the Chinaman and Hindoo were the true Others. Both China and India were, thus, the opposites of the West. The traditions of each of these civilizations were, compared to those of the West, irrational malformations. Yet China and India were also opposites in relation to one another, for the one was never truly conquered and dominated by another civilization, while the other was overrun again and again.

Conquest and the Unmaking of India

China, say the Sinologists, reached its fundamental shape under the early Han in the third century B.C. and continued to unfold, ever so slowly, until Sung times in the thirteenth century. Then came the failed attempt of the Mongols to govern China after conquering her. Subsequently, her civilization remained static, or even declined, falling way 'behind' the West.[36] Compare this with the pattern into which India's history has been cast by Indologists. India's history begins with the arrival there of the Aryans. No sooner, however, had India reached its full flower under the Mauryas in the fourth century B.C., as an Oriental Despotism, than she began her decline. This downward turn was exacerbated (if not actually caused) by the invasions of the Hellenes,

[36] Consult, for example, the multi-authored, 'China, History of,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., IV, 297–358.

Scythians, and Turks. Although there was a renascence under the Guptas in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., the decline which set in after the intrusions of the Huns was never reversed. China was, in other words, the Oriental Despotism that mostly fended off conquest and succeeded, India was the Oriental Despotism that succumbed to conquest and failed.

It is worth pausing over this feature of conquest. James Mill states quite categorically:

> Of all the results of civilization, that of forming a combination of different states, and directing their powers to one common object, seems to be one of the least consistent with the mental habits and attainments of the Hindus. It is the want of this power of combination which has rendered India so easy a conquest to all invaders; and enables us to retain, so easily, that dominion over it which we have acquired. Where is there any vestige in India of that deliberative assembly of princes, which in Germany was known by the name of the Diet (*History of India*, II, 141)?

Hegel says pretty much the same thing, but he elevates it into the essence of India's civilization. Notice how he accounts in his argument for what might otherwise have proved embarrassing, the recent discovery that Sanskrit and the European languages are related. This he does by making India's essential conquerability the *cause* of the arrival of the speakers of that language and not the *effect* of their presence:

> Externally, India sustains manifold relations to the History of the World. In recent times the discovery has been made, that the Sanscrit lies at the foundation of all those further developments which form the languages of Europe; e.g., the Greek, Latin, German. India, moreover, was the centre of emigration for all the western world; but this external historical relation is to be regarded rather as a merely physical diffusion of peoples from this point. . . . The spread of Indian culture is prehistorical, for History is limited to that which makes an essential epoch in the development of Spirit. On the whole, the diffusion of Indian culture is only a dumb, deedless expansion; that is, it presents no political action. The people of India have achieved no foreign conquests, but have been on every occasion vanquished themselves. And as in this silent way, Northern India has been a centre of emigration, productive of merely physical diffusion, India as a *Land of Desire* forms an essential element in General History (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 141–2).

It immediately becomes clear that the desire to which Hegel referred is the desire of outsiders to possess the wealth and wisdom of India:

> From the most ancient times downwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the Earth presents; treasures of Nature—pearls, diamonds, perfumes, rose-essences, elephants, lions, etc.—as also treasures of wisdom. The

way by which these treasures have passed to the West, has at all times been a matter of World-historical importance, bound up with the fate of nations. Those wishes have been realized; this Land of Desire has been attained; there is scarcely any great nation of the East, nor of the Modern European West, that has not gained for itself a smaller or larger portion of it (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 142).

Hegel concludes this line of thought with this:

The English, or rather the East India Company, are the lords of the land; for it is the necessary fate of Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans; and China will, some day or other, be obliged to submit to this fate (*Philosophy of History*, pp. 142–3).

Conquerability is, it would seem, the feature that has distinguished India from China in Orientalist discourse, but that is not quite the whole of it. The Arab conquest of the Levant, north Africa, and Persia had virtually overwhelmed and destroyed the previously existing cultures of those places. But India was remarkable, for the repeated conquests of that subcontinent did not bring an end to her civilization or even, for that matter, produce any fundamental change in it. Mill, introducing his account of the Muhammadan invasions of India, asserts that Muslim rule in India, 'had introduced new forms into some of the principal departments of state,' but that 'it had not greatly altered the texture of native society.' He then reiterates the crucial fact about India: 'it appears that the people of Hindustan have at all times been subject to incursions and conquest, by the nations contiguous to them on the north-west.'[37] Similar statements are repeated many times over. Jawaharlal Nehru, writing more than 125 years later, cites with approval this statement of the Sanskritist, Arthur Anthony Macdonell (1854–1930):

And in spite of successive waves of invasion and conquest by Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Muhammadans, the national development of the life and literature of the Indo-Aryan race remained practically unchecked and unmodified from without down to the era of British occupation. No other branch of the Indo-European stock has experienced an isolated evolution like this.[38]

What differentiated India, then, from China and the Near East was this paradoxical fact: Outsiders had conquered India again and again but her ancient civilization had survived into the present more or less unchanged.

[37] Mill, *History of India*, II, 165.
[38] Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 71.

State and Society in India

What in the nature of this civilization could possibly explain this seeming paradox? Hegel himself gave the answer in his terse account of the Hindu state:

> A State is a realization of Spirit, such that in it the self-conscious being of Spirit—the freedom of the Will—is realized as law. Such an institution then, necessarily presupposes the consciousness of free will. In the Chinese State the moral will of the Emperor is the law: but so that subjective inward freedom is thereby repressed, and the Law of Freedom governs individuals only as from without. In India the primary aspect of subjectivity—viz., that of the imagination—presents a union of the Natural and Spiritual, in which Nature on the one hand, does not present itself as a world embodying Reason, nor the Spiritual on the other hand, as a consciousness in contrast with Nature. Here the antithesis in the (above-stated) principle is wanting. Freedom both as *abstract* will and as *subjective* freedom is absent. The proper basis of the State, the principle of freedom is altogether absent: there cannot therefore be any State in the true sense of the term. This is the first point to be observed: if China may be regarded as nothing else but a State, Hindoo political existence presents us with a people, but no State (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 160–1).

Let me restate in plain English the proposition that Hegel has presented here, for it is fundamental not only to Indology but also to Sinology. Western civilization is a rational formation: it sustains a healthy dialectic between the state and civil society, between what Hegel calls the principles of Unity and Difference. Our native informant says:

> An organic life requires in the first place One Soul, and in the second place, a divergence into differences, which become organic members, and in their several offices develop themselves to a complete system; in such a way, however, that their activity reconstitutes that one soul (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 144).

Indian and Chinese civilizations are both in this fundamental regard irrational malformations. India is represented as a distorted civilization because in it civil society (Difference) has engulfed the state (Unity). China, too, is represented as a misshapen civilization, but for almost precisely the reverse reason—there, the state (Unity) has swallowed up civil society (Difference).

The irrational form of civil society that engulfs the state in India is, of course, none other than *caste*, India's 'unique institution', and its supporting or constituting religion, Hinduism. Continuing his account of India's malformation, Hegel says that in India,

. . . independent members ramify from the unity of despotic power. Yet the distinctions which these imply are referred to Nature. Instead of stimulating the activity of a soul as their centre of union, and spontaneously realizing that soul—as is the case in organic life—they petrify and become rigid, and by their stereotyped character condemn the Indian people to the most degrading spiritual serfdom. The distinctions in question are the *castes* (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 144).

The representations of India as a civilization dominated by caste, as a theocracy in which Brahmans, priests and ascetics, a principle of purity or hierarchy, take precedence over kings, the state, the principle of secular power, are legion. Commentative texts that portray caste as suffering from the distortions of condensation and displacement abound, never mind the secondary revisions or explanatory accounts which claim to reveal the origin of caste.[39] Castes themselves are overdetermined social groups, proliferating by the hundred and thousand for no good reason, while at the same time becoming more rigid and impermeable. Caste is, furthermore, displaced in this discourse, onto every area of Indian life; it is associated with race and occupation, religion and status, land control, and psychic security, with birth and death, marriage and education. Yet at the same time thought and action are separated from each other. The ideal, Brahmanical scheme of four *varṇas* or classes is ever at odds, empirically and historically, with the multiplicity of *jatis*, castes and subcastes, and there are always discrepancies between caste rules and actual behavior.

Caste, then, is assumed to be the 'essence' of Indian civilization. People in India are not even partially autonomous agents. They do not shape and reshape their world. Rather they are the patients of that which makes them Indians—the social, material reality of caste. The people of India are not the makers of their own history. A hidden, substantialized Agent, Caste, is the maker of it.[40]

There is no need to rehearse these products of Indological discourse in any detail here. The reader who wishes more may consult the work of J. H. Hutton, the anthropologist who directed the 1931 Census of India. His *Caste In India: Its Nature, Function and Origins* (1963) is the summa of the British colonial period on caste. I cannot resist, however, presenting

[39] The latest and most sophisticated is that of Morton Klass, *Caste: The Emergence of the South Asian Social System* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980).

[40] On the important idea of substantialized agency (to be distinguished from the notion of 'code and substance' in my own earlier work), see R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 34, 42–5, 47–8, 81–5. On essentialism in Southeast Asian studies, see Mark Hobart, 'The Art of Measuring Mirages, or Is There Kinship in Bali?' in *Cognation and Social Organization in Southeast Asia*, ed. by F. Huesken and J. Kemp (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1984), in press.

two classic examples of commentative text on this subject. Their author is Percival Spear, last of the magisterial historians of British India. He opens his discussion of Hinduism and its castes with this:

> Hinduism has been likened to a vast sponge, which absorbs all that enters it without ceasing to be itself. The simile is not quite exact, because Hinduism has shown a remarkable power of assimilating as well as absorbing; the water becomes part of the sponge. Like a sponge it has no very clear outline on its borders and no apparent core at its centre. An approach to Hinduism provides a first lesson in the 'otherness' of Hindu ideas from those of Europe. The Western love of definition and neat pigeon-holing receives its first shock, and also its first experience of definition by means of negatives. For while it is not at all clear what Hinduism is, it is clear that it is not many things with which it may be superficially compared.

The learned historian concludes his intitiation of the reader into his arcane subject with:

> We have, then, a body of ideas, beliefs and values, which together make up the mysterious amorphous entity which is called Hinduism. Each is present in some one part of Hinduism and few in every part. Any one can be dispensed with in any one section without forfeiting the title of Hinduism, and no item is absolutely essential. But some of each class must always be there. You can have all of the items in some of the parts or some of the items in all of the parts, but not none of the items in any of the parts. If one likens Hinduism to a ship, one can compare the castes with its watertight compartments, the essential ideas with the steel framework, and special fixtures such as the engines, the bridge, the steering gear with those things which are present in some, but not all sections of Hinduism. It is an intimate mixture of all the component parts whose loss would involve the sinking of the ship, and so it is with Hinduism.[41]

Societalism, the reduction of political, religious, and economic practices to the social, that is, caste, is deeply embedded in Indological discourse. The multiple effects that this societalism, with its implicit doctrine of essences or substance, has had on the study of Indian politics, religion, and history is the major focus of the book (of which this article is the 'trailer') that I am presently working on. I will not, therefore, elaborate on it here. Let me turn instead in this more general survey to the cluster of views in Indological discourse over which the positivists have exercised their hegemony.

Romantic India: The Loyal Opposition

So far I have concentrated in this critique of Indology on the scholarly

[41] T. G. Percival Spear, *India, Pakistan and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 57, 59–60.

view that dominates in the discipline, that which might loosely be labeled positivist or empiricist in its epistemological assumptions and realist or materialist in its ontological assumptions. Given the English presence, it is also often utilitarian or behaviorist in outlook. Sometimes a rationalist epistemology also comes into play. Quite often the presuppositions of a work shift from one of these epistemologies to the other in different contexts. Nonetheless, there is a definite position here. It is one which Roy Bhaskar refers to in the social sciences as 'empirical realism'.[42]

There has, however, always been a seemingly opposed view within the discipline. This alternative view of India is one that can be referred to as romantic, spiritualistic, or idealistic. I say that the romantic view is 'seemingly opposed' because its adherents do not, by and large, disagree with the positivists over the content of the construction itself. They, too, agree that India is Europe's opposite. Where the romantics do differ is in the evaluation placed upon India's civilization by the adherents of the rationalist, secularist, and positivist view. The romantics take those very features of Indian civilization which the utilitarian-minded criticize and see as worthless and find them worthy of study and perhaps even of praise. The very ascetic practices, philosophies, cosmologies, customs, visual art forms, and myths which the utilitarian or materialist finds wasteful, deluded, or even repulsive, the romantic idealist takes up with great fascination.

The romantic image of India is no latecomer to Indology. On the contrary, it is there at the very creation of it. Sir William Jones, the founder of the discipline of Indology and chief of the 'Orientalists', was not himself a romantic, as the critical discussion of S. N. Mukherjee shows.[43] Peter Marshall likewise distinguishes Jones and his eighteenth-century colleagues from the romantics when he says:

> As Europeans have always tended to do, they created Hinduism in their own image. Their study of Hinduism confirmed their beliefs, and Hindus emerged from their work as adhering to something akin to undogmatic Protestantism. Later generations of Europeans, interested themselves in mysticism, were able to portray the Hindus as mystics.[44]

Jones can, nonetheless, be seen (perhaps ironically) as the founder of the minority view within his own discipline.

The first full-fledged romantics among the Indologists are to be found

[42] Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979), p. 25.

[43] Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones*, pp. 42–4.

[44] Peter Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 43–4.

not in England, but in Germany, where interest in pantheism on the part of post-Kantian idealists and in the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) in the philosophy of history converged with the knowledge of the Indian ancients that the early Sanskritists thought they had discovered.[45] Foremost among these was Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), with whose work Hegel was, of course, well acquainted.[46] Of equal importance was the work of Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858), which first appeared in 1810. It presents us with the image of 'archaic civilizations', of which India was a leading example, as expressing their religious knowledge in 'symbolic' and 'mythic' rather than rational and discursive forms. He and some of his contemporaries saw this as opening up a valuable part of the human experience of 'the divine'.[47] Hegel changed this. Just as the Sanskritist, H. H. Wilson, 'clawed back' the more extreme statements of Mill, so Hegel moved the views of these earlier Romantics back to a more central (that is, rationalist) position. This he did in his *Aesthetic*. He accepted the notion of archaic civilizations as symbolic, but instead of viewing them as complementary to modern forms, he hierarchized them with respect to succeeding 'classical' (Greek) and modern (Romantic) art.[48]

The importance of the romantic theory of a symbol (both in its earlier romantic form and its later rationalist or Hegelian appropriation) can hardly be overstated. It is deployed for the study of Others not only in Indian art history and, more widely, in Indology, but in the history of religions and anthropology as well. Johannes Fabian, for example, argues that this theory displaces the problem of understanding an Other from the Western knowing subject onto the Other itself.[49] This is, however, not the place to explore this topic further.[50]

[45] On the earlier French scholars, whom I have neglected here, see Raymond Schwab (1884–1956), *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, tr. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984; 1st pub., 1950). More recent is Jean Bies, *Littérature française et pensée hindoue dès origines à 1950* (Strasbourg: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1973). For a (philosophically) critical review of the various American, mostly idealist, appropriations of Indian philosophy, see Dale Riepe, *The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought* (Springfield, Il.: Charles C. Thomas, 1970).

[46] Consult, for Herder and the early German romantics, Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker* (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler, 1960), pp. 14–32; and Wilhelm Halbfass, *Indien und Europa*, pp. 86–103 and references.

[47] Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 202–207. The title of Creuzer's work is, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Voelker*.

[48] *Mitter, Much Maligned*, pp. 208–20.

[49] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, pp. 123–31.

[50] For Creuzer's treatment of myth and religion, see Fritz Kramer, *Verkehrte Welten. Zur imaginaeren Ethnographie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Syndikat, 1977), pp. 15–38.

The German Sanskritist whose views on India were most often heard by an English-speaking public in the latter half of the nineteenth century was probably Friedrich Max Mueller (1823–1900), editor of the voluminous *Sacred Books of the East* and Professor of Comparative Philosophy at Oxford. Despite his great interest in religion, however, Max Mueller was as much a positivist as he was an idealist.[51] Certainly the most important of the romantic and idealist writings from 1875 to Independence are those not of Western scholars but of many of the Indian nationalists, including Gandhi and Nehru. Since the rulers of India by and large held views that converged with the positivist interpretation of Mill and Smith, it is no surprise to find that the nationalists found themselves keeping company with the members of the loyal opposition within intellectual circles. This is in itself a vast topic about which I can say no more here.

Romantic India: Ideal Essences

Returning to the confines of the academic community, among the idealist views of India that have been prominent in the recent past are to be counted those of certain art historians, to wit, Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947),[52] and Stella Kramrisch[53] and of many historians of religion, most notably, Mircea Eliade.

The most important of the romantic views, though, are probably those of the associates or followers of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1971) (who was well-acquainted with the work of Creuzer)[54] and German Weberians (who also reproduce post-Rankean elements in their work). Those I would name among the Jungians are Heinrich Zimmer (1890–1943) and his disciple, Joseph Campbell (born, 1904), whose work has been generously supported by the Bollingen Foundation, set up to assist

On his relationship to the other romantic theorists of the symbol, see Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, tr. C. Porter (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), especially pp. 216–18.

[51] Halbfass, *Indien und Europa*, pp. 151–3.

[52] Consult Roger Lipsey's *Coomaraswamy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), III ('His Life and Work'). A good example of his views is 'The Philosophy of Mediaeval and Oriental Art,' (reprinted in *Coomaraswamy*, I, 43–70), where he opposes 'traditional' to 'modern' instead of 'Oriental' to 'Christian'.

[53] Barbara Stoler Miller's biographical essay in the book edited by her, *Exploring India's Sacred Art: Selected Writings of Stella Kramrisch* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1983), pp. 3–29.

[54] Vincent Brome, *Jung: Man and Myth* (London: Granada, 1980; first published by Macmillan in 1978), pp. 120 and 290 on Creuzer, and for other useful details.

Jungian projects.[55] Hermann Goetz (1898–1976) and his pupil, Hermann Kulke, of the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg, I would consider the foremost among the latter.[56]

The romantic typically takes the stance not of a supporter of Western values and institutions, but of a critic of them. Yet the romantic does not necessarily (or usually) accept those of the East as ready-made substitutes. Nor, as I have indicated, does he usually disagree with the positivist about what those are. Rather, he situates himself between or outside of *either*, considering both as somehow embodying the antimonies of 'human nature,' the extremes to which men have gone. Here is a passage from Joseph Campbell on his favourite topic, myth. It rather elegantly exemplifies this position:

> Two completely opposed mythologies of the destiny and virtue of man, therefore, have come together in the modern world. And they are contributing in discord to whatever new society may be in the process of formation. For, of the tree that grows in the garden where God walks in the cool of the day, the wise men westward of Iran have partaken of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, whereas those on the other side of that cultural divide, in India and the Far East, have relished only the fruit of eternal life. However, the two limbs, we are informed [in a study of Jewish legends], come together in the center of the garden, where they form a single tree at the base, branching out when they reach a certain height. Likewise, the two mythologies spring from one base in the Near East. And if man should taste of both fruits he would become, we have been told, as God himself (Genesis 3: 22)—which is the boon that the meeting of East and West today is offering to us all (Campbell, *Oriental Mythology*, p. 9).

Now, it must be stated that the romantic view, like that of the positivist or rationalist, also holds that there is a single reality, a single human nature. That is why Campbell uses the metaphor of human mythology as a single tree and is at pains to assert that it has a single origin in the Near East. Where it differs is in arguing that neither the West nor the East exemplifies it to the exclusion of the other. The features that constitute human nature are, for the romantic, distributive and not, as they are for the empricist and rationalist, cumulative in Western Man. It would seem, therefore, that no society as such could

[55] Crome, *Jung*, p. 236. For an excellent brief discussion of Campbell, see Riepe, *The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought*, pp. 227–8. Riepe criticizes him for only talking about the naturalist, realist, and materialist traditions of India.

[56] For some of the connections of Jung and of Goetz, Zimmer, and Eliade with Coomaraswamy, see Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy*, III, 203–4, 210–13. A brief account of Goetz's career by Kulke, is to be found in *India and the West: Proceedings of a Seminar Dedicated to the Memory of Hermann Goetz*, edited by Joachim Deppert (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp. 13–23. For the work of Kulke and his associates, see *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, edited by A. Eschmann, H. Kulke, and G. C. Tripathi (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978).

embody the whole of human nature, unless all its members had first become transformed by understanding of the Eastern or Western Other. The romantic is, however, a subjectivist. So, within a society any man or woman who puts into practice the teachings of the appropriate romantic master can come to partake of human totality and acquire a balanced personality. No major changes in his social circumstances are required. A person can somehow look into himself and step mentally outside his social world (while at the same time appearing to conform to its strictures) in order to create for himself a new person.

One might think that the romantic view of India would be less substantialistic with respect to human agency than that of the positivist, but this is not so. The romantic disagrees with the positivist or materialist in seeing human life as shaped in the last instance by a reality that is *external* to it. He argues instead that it is shaped by a reality that is *internal*. Since, however, the internal reality, human nature, the human spirit, psyche, or mind is unitary, is everywhere and always the same, the positions of the two are not so different. Whereas there is a strong tendency for the positivist to look to external *natural* factors as decisive in the development of East and West, so there is a decided propensity on the part of the idealist to see internal *spiritual* factors as decisive. Thus, while the positivist student of India, committed to societalism, would see the external, the empirical institution of caste, as the substantialized agent that has shaped persons in India, the idealist would consider the internal, the substantialized idea of caste in the form of orthodox Hinduism, as the agent. Campbell, on caste:

> There is therefore in Hinduism an essential affirmation of the cosmic order as divine. And since society is conceived to be a part of the cosmic order, there is an affirmation, equally, of the orthodox Indian social order as divine. Furthermore, as the order of nature is eternal, so also is this of the orthodox society. There is no tolerance of human freedom or invention in the social field; for society is not conceived to be an order evolved by human beings, subject to intelligence and change, as it was in advanced Greece and Rome and as it is in the modern West. Its laws are of nature, not to be voted on, improved upon, or devised. Precisely as the sun, moon, plants and animals follow laws inherent in their natures, so therefore must the individual the nature of his birth, whether as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, or Pariah. Each is conceived to be a species. And as a mouse cannot become a lion, or even desire to be a lion, no Shudra can be a Brahmin; and desiring to be one would be insane. Hence the Indian word 'virtue, duty, law,' *dharma*, has a deep, a very deep reach. 'Better one's duty ill performed,' we read, 'than that of another, to perfection.' The Greek or Renaissance idea of the great individual simply does not exist within the pale of the system. One is to be, rather, a *dividuum*, divided man, a man who represents one limb or function of the great man (*puruṣa*), which is society itself:

the Brahmin, priestly caste, being its head; the Kshatriya, governing caste, its arms; the Vaishya, financial caste, the belly and torso; while the Shudras, workers, are its legs and feet. The Pariahs, outcastes, meanwhile, are of another natural order entirely, and in connection with the human community can perform only inhuman, beastly chores (Campbell, *Oriental Mythology*, pp. 339–40).

The views of the romantics and their affiliates differ less sharply than one might first suppose from those of the positivists or utilitarians with whom they disagree. As Hacking says of the split between verificationists and falsificationists in the philosophy of science: 'whenever we find two philosophers who line up exactly opposite on a series of half a dozen points, we know that in fact they agree about almost everything.'[57] Both of the views in Indology agree that there is a single, absolute reality and both displace human agency onto it. The only major difference is that the dominant view, that of the positivist, displaces it onto an external social or material nature which he tends to think of as determinate (fully knowable by human reason) while the idealist displaces it onto an internal, spiritual nature which he wants to see as ineffable (or at least elusive and captured only in the human imagination). The former sees human acts as shaped by external material institutions over which ordinary humans have little control. The latter sees human acts as the product of a partly unconscious Agency that lies embedded deep in Man's soul.

The distinction I tried to outline here between positivist and romantic strains in Indological discourse is not confined to the discipline of Indology. Bhaskar, as I have already indicated, refers to the former position as one of 'empirical realism', and calls it the dominant view in the social sciences. This stance has, according to Bhaskar, been opposed, with varying degrees of success, by a view virtually identical with the one I have called romantic or idealist, but to which he attaches the label of 'sociological individualism'.[58] This latter view attempts to carve out a space for the emotional and imaginative, the moral and religious aspects of Man. It does not, for the most part, reject the claims of science. Indeed, its adherents often adduce scientific evidence for their position or claim to use the methods of science in their studies. What the members of the loyal opposition do reject is the notion that human subjectivity can be reduced to the phenomena of nature. Within Indology, adherents of this strain see India as the space where an Other has somehow managed to preserve these human qualities. It is a kind of

[57] Hacking, *Representing and Intervening*, p. 5.
[58] Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, pp. 25–6.

living museum (and keen marketplace) of religious humanism, of far-out psychic phenomena, yogic health practices, and ultimate experiences.

Dissent and Change

Now, it would be a distortion on my part to insist that all texts produced by Indologists have conformed precisely to the positivist or idealist modes of discourse I have sketched above. There have always been dissenting voices. One of these was that of the anthropologist, A. M. Hocart (1883–1939). Although he was more of a rationalist than an empiricist, and an evolutionist rather than a functionalist, he was a critic firmly planted in the realist camp. Where Hocart departs from other Orientalists is in his refusal to subscribe to the metaphysics which constructs a West and an East that are polar opposites. He argued that castes should be seen as a hierarchy of ritual offices centered on a king (or local lord) and having as their purpose the performance of the royal ritual for the benefit of the entire community. His evolutionism causes fewer difficulties than one would expect precisely because he emphasizes the *similarities* of Western, Eastern, and 'primitive' cultures without reducing them all to variants of 'Western rational Man'. Castes, according to Hocart, were not a peculiar, irrational social institution confined to India; nor had they at their very point of origin swallowed up kingship; on the contrary, they were themselves offices of the state.[59]

Hocart was quite conscious of the ways in which Indological discourse belittled Indians as it represented them and seems to have taken delight in exposing Western institutions to the same treatment. Regarding the ensemble of four *varnas*, he says:

> This, we are constantly told, bears no resemblance to reality. The reality is to be found in Indian censuses, in the dictionaries of castes and tribes, and in the daily experience of Indian civil servants. What do we find there? Not four castes, but an infinitude, with an endless variety of customs, of mutual relations, and even of racial types. Therefore the four-caste system is a pure figment, the invention of priests for their own glorification (Hocart, *Caste*, pp. 23–4).

[59] Arthur Maurice Hocart, *Caste: A Comparative Study* (London: Methuen, 1950), pp. 17–19. J. H. Hutton in his hegemonic work, *Caste in India* (pp. 176–7), reduces Hocart's views to one theory of 'origin' to be mentioned among the many and then passed over. Louis Dumont and David Pocock wrongly, in my view, reject Hocart's focus on the king in their detailed review, 'A. M. Hocart on Caste,' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Number 2 (1958), 45–63. The thoughtful discussion of Hocart's views by Rodney Needham in his new edition of Hocart's *Kings and Councillors: An Essay in the Comparative Anatomy of Human Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) effectively 'rehabilitates' his work.

He then shows how the analogous idea of estates in Britain could be accorded similar treatment:

> Before we apply an argument to a people whose ways are remote and little known (for, in spite of all the books about it, India remains an unknown country), before we take such risks it is well to test the argument on our own society which we do know. Our constitution divides the people into lords and commons. When, however, we examine the reality we find that the lords are a collection of families of different ranks—dukes, marquesses, and so on. We can also distinguish among them different sets which have little to do with one another. We can even distinguish different racial types, notably the Jewish. Among the commons the variety is even greater: it ranges from baronets, who come near to being peers, down to horny-handed navvies. Do we on that account reject the classification into lords and commons as a figment of our constitutional theorists? Why, we can see them any day sitting in separate houses with different procedures and privileges. It is a theory, but it is a theory translated into practice. Such is any social organization (Hocart, *Caste*, pp. 23–4).

Hocart ends this parry with Western scientific reason with one final thrust:

> Why then should an Indian classification of the people into four be unreal because it gathers together into one group such heterogeneous elements as barbers, mat-makers, and sometimes even aborigines? Why should not such a classification be just as important in the state as ours? As a matter of fact, it is much more important since it runs through the daily life of the masses (Hocart, *Caste*, p. 24).

It is also important to point out, as Said does, that certain shifts in the Orientalist paradigm have occurred since the Second War.[60] Nearly all of the peoples previously incorporated into European imperial formations are now constituted as legally and formally independent and sovereign nations. At the same time, the United States has replaced Britain as the dominant Western power. These changes have been accompanied in academic circles by the rise of 'area studies'. A survey completed in the US as this reached its crest in the late 'sixties, reported that there were more than 1,000 specialists offering nearly 650 courses with over 14,000 undergraduate and almost 4,000 graduate enrollments.[61] The study of Indian civilization has also been boosted in the Soviet Union, the archenemy of the United States.[62]

[60] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 284–328.

[61] Richard D. Lambert, *Language and Area Studies Review* (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1973), Table 9.3.

[62] For a general survey of Russian Indology, see G. Bongard-Levin and A. Vigasin, *The Image of India: The Study of Ancient Indian Civilization in the USSR* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984).

Along with these shifts has arisen an atomistic (and, in my view, specious) doctrine of cultural relativism. Mirroring the notions of the 'individual' and of national sovereignty, it claims to accord equal respect to all cultures and minority or ethnic 'heritages' while largely ignoring the relations of domination that have existed and still do exist among them. It is no longer possible to speak openly of cultural, never mind racial, inferiority and superiority in an international forum. The strong, confident language of the nineteenth century has given way to the euphemistic language of United Nations reports and Asian Civilization Course syllabi.[63]

It would, however, be rash to say that the representation of the 'other' as irrational and that naturalism (in the form of evolutionism and functionalism) no longer dominate Indological discourse. The oppositions of East and West, Traditional and Modern, Civilized and Primitive have been transformed and have reappeared as the idea of the 'three worlds'. As Carl Pletsch has convincingly shown, naturalist assumptions are integral to this post-war cosmology. Nations of the First World are the most 'developed' or 'advanced' because they are shaped in accord with scientific knowledge of nature; those of the Second World are, although developed, held back by their distorting Socialist ideology; the Third World, where religion and superstition still run rife, are 'underdeveloped' or 'developing'.[64]

If anyone thinks that the public has been properly educated about the realities of India and the other countries of the 'third world', he or she has only to see the widely shown Hollywood film, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. One analysis of this film argues that, although it is set in the past, it projects current US foreign policy. It comments on old Europe's colonialism:

> The colonial mission which really ended with the Second World War—the mission to civilise and Christianise (to make good Frenchmen of those Vietnamese, good Englishmen of those Hindus)—is portrayed in the film in a jaundiced fashion through the impotence of British imperialist bureaucrats and military officers. The new leadership of the West has now decided that that mission was never possible, that such a purpose was naive and fantastic.

The new policy, which Indiana Jones embodies, is this:

> In the practical world of the present, western ideologues and governmental

[63] Crucial for this shift with respect to India is *The United States and India and Pakistan*, authored by the doyen of American Indologists, W. Norman Brown (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953) and successively updated.

[64] Carl Pletsch, 'The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social Scientific Labor, circa 1950–1975,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XXIII. 4 (Oct. 1981), 565–90.

leaders realise that the peoples of the non-western world are going to remain poor, primitive and simple-minded; subject for the foreseeable future to the perverse enthusiasms and ecstasies of nationalism, revolutionary liberationist ideologies, and communism. In such a human universe, one's first duty is to one's own: to defend the western 'centre' from the fanaticism of the hordes.[65]

To return to scholarly discourse, India is still regarded as a civilization in which a distorted form of civil society long ago engulfed the economy and state. Barrington Moore, Jr., could still write of caste in 1966 in his widely read book:[66]

In pre-British Indian society, and still today in much of the countryside, the fact of being born in a particular caste determined for the individual the entire span of existence, quite literally from before conception until after death. It gave the range of choice for a marital partner in the case of parents, the type of upbringing the offspring would have and their choice of mate in marriage, the work he or she could legitimately undertake, the appropriate religious ceremonies, food, dress, rules of evacuation (which are very important), down to most details of daily living, all organized around a conception of disgust (Moore, pp. 337–8).

Confident in his knowledge, the professor continues, as Hegel had almost 140 years previously, to describe India as a place where:

Government above the village was an excrescence generally imposed by an outsider. . . . The structural contrast with China is quite striking. There the imperial bureaucracy gave cohesion to the society. . . . At the local level such an arrangement was unnecessary in India. Caste regulations took its place (Moore, p. 339).

Barrington Moore can perhaps be criticized because he is not an 'expert' on things Indian, but one can hardly offer that as an excuse for A. L. Basham. His *The Wonder That Was India* became the hegemonic cultural history after its appearance in 1954, replacing Vincent Smith's *Early History of India.* Predictably, it softens its language, referring to *varna* as 'class' rather than 'caste'. Nonetheless, it still rehearses unambiguously the old Hegelian proposition that caste, here 'society,' ever had the upper hand in its dealings with the state:

Society, the age-old divinely ordained way of Indian life, transcended the state and was independent of it. The king's function was the protection of society, and the state was merely an extension of the king for the furtherance of that end (Basham, *Wonder*, p. 88).

[65] Cedric Robinson, '*Indiana Jones*, The Third World and American Foreign policy: a review article,' *Race and Class*, XXVI. 2 (Autumn 1984), 87.

[66] Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon, 1967).

Finally, the major post-War sociological statement on caste itself, Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* presses the same point about civil society and the state very hard, for it is integral to his theory. What distinguishes Indian (that is, Hindu) society form that of the West, according to this Durkheimian and structuralist reformulation, is that in the former, 'purity' (caste hierarchy) encompasses 'power' (kingship).[67] I myself in earlier research was lured by the siren of caste. This is not the place to review or criticize recent work on caste as such. Some of it no doubt represents a partial break with the old Indological paradigm. Yet it must be said that the very importance given to caste has in itself tended to have the effect of reproducing the Indological axiom regarding caste and the state. Marriott and Inden state, for example, that,

> It is the moral duty of the ruler (properly a Kṣatriya) to use force (*daṇḍa*) so as to establish the moral order, especially in order to maintain the rank and separation of the castes, so that their internal self-government and their proper exchanges may continue.[68]

I now reject the idea that makes caste rather than kingship or a state the constitutive institution of Indian civilization from its very inception down into the present. This author's own research on the history of caste and clan formations in Bengal is in large part and, perhaps ironically, responsible for this rejection. There I showed that it was the collapse of Hindu kingship which led to the formation of 'castes' in something resembling their modern form. That is, the distinctive institution of Indian civilization does not appear until the thirteenth or fourteenth century, at the earliest; and castes are not the *cause* of the weakness and collapse of Hindu kingship, but the *effect* of it.[69]

Conclusion

The privileged voice within Indological discourse has been that of the scholars I have referred to as 'positivist' or 'empirical realist'. That voice denies to Indians the power to represent themselves and appropriates that power for itself. It does this by hierarchizing the knowledges which the Indians have of themselves, by turning them into subjugated

[67] Louis Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus: Le système des castes et ses implications*, first published in 1966. See the revised English translation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 33–49, 65–72, 152–8, and especially, 287–313.

[68] McKim Marriott and Ronald Inden, 'Caste Systems,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., III, 989.

[69] Ronald Inden, *Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture: A History of Caste and Clan in Middle Period Bengal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 73–82.

knowledges. Indological discourse has this effect because it not only presents Indian thoughts and acts in what I have referred to as descriptive language, it also represents them in commentative language. The commentative aspect of an account represents Indian knowledges of the world as irrational (and largely false) copies of a reality that the Indologist assumes to be unitary, determinate and objective. The thoughts and acts of Indians are depicted as distortions of reality, as modes of behavior suffering from 'condensation' and 'displacement'.

Some accounts go further and indulge in theorizing, explanation, or interpretation, which I have compared to 'secondary revision'. Especially important here are those accounts which I have termed 'hegemonic'. This aspect of an account provides a rationalization of the irrationality of the Indians by pointing to a natural cause. Indian civilization is conceived of on the analogy of an organism. The product of racial mixing, it adapted 'in the beginning' to its unique Asian environment. This miraculous birth gave rise to the seemingly bizarre institutions and beliefs supposedly characteristic of Indian civilization. These institutions—village community, joint family, and especially caste—and their supporting or 'legitimating' religion—Hinduism—have since their origin performed a number of interrelated survival 'functions'. India has thereby survived repeated conquests, albeit at a rather low level of political and technological 'development'.

Indian civilization is, thus, unlike the West, fundamentally a product of its environment, and a defective product at that. European civilization is the product of rational human action. Especially since the so-called Enlightenment the West has been guided by scientific reason in shaping its institutions and beliefs. It has, by virtue of its scientific knowledge, obtained better and better 'copies' of reality and has thus been able to reform and even revolutionize itself so that it might better conform to Nature's laws and make more efficient use of Her resources. She has been able to realize the nature or essence that underlies all humanity in her institutions. India, alas, was doomed from the start by racial and environmental 'factors' to make false copies, distorted symbolic representations, of this supposed reality. She was from her very origin pre-conquered by caste and Hinduism and pre-condemned after an early history typical of an Asian empire, to centuries of decline and stagnation. Her people, including their leaders, have, thus, not been the true agents of their own actions, the makers of their history (insofar as the Orientalist would allow them that). The societalism of Indology, the view that reduces religion, politics, and economics to the social, has made caste into the true agent of the actions of India's people. Caste, the

peculiar institution that underlies Indian civilization, that defines or constitutes its very existence, has been treated as a substantialized agent. It is only since India's incorporation into the 'world system', first under the British and now as an independent nation, that the scientific knowledge of the West has begun to 'modernize' and 'develop' the nations of the subcontinent.

The minority view within Indological discourse that has been seen as countering the Enlightenment or positivist view has been that of the romantic idealists. Its proponents emphasize subjectivity and place high value on the myths and symbolic forms which the positivists denigrate or ignore. Where the positivists tend to be absolutists with respect to the rationality of the nature of the world and of the human mind, they tend to be judgemental or cultural relativists, verging on irrationalism. Although these two views appear to be strongly opposed, they often combine together. Both have a similar interest in sustaining the Otherness of India. The holders of the dominant view, best exemplified in the past in imperial administrative discourse (and today probably by that of 'development economics'), would place a traditional, superstition-ridden India in a position of perpetual tutelage to a modern, rational West. The adherents of the romantic view, best exemplified academically in the discourses of Christian liberalism and analytic psychology, concede this realm of the public and the impersonal to the positivist. Taking their succor not from governments and big business, but from a plethora of religious foundations and self-help institutes, and from allies in the 'consciousness industry,' not to mention the important industry of tourism, the romantics insist that India embodies a private realm of the imagination and the religious which modern, western man lacks but needs. They, therefore, like the positivists, but for just the opposite reason, have a vested interest in seeing that the Orientalist view of India as 'spiritual,' 'mysterious,' and 'exotic' is perpetuated. That is why I have referred to the romantics or humanists as a kind of 'loyal opposition' within the discipline.

This complementation is a reduplication within Indology of the reconciliation within the world at large of the subjectivist's tendency to moral or judgemental relativism and of the empiricist's inclination toward epistemic absolutism. Each person is accorded his/her own opinion, morality, and life-style, and each religion, ethnic group, nationality, or culture is permitted its own self-contained (atomized) beliefs or 'heritage' in deference to the relativist position. This can occur, however, only within a framework which delivers over the public realm

of technology, business, and administration to the absolutist view of the objective world constructed by the empiricist and rationalist.

This complementarity is not arbitrary. It is made possible by several crucial assumptions shared (often unconsciously) by the advocates of either position. One could, thus, argue, following Bhaskar, that the two views, far from canceling or negating each other, complement and reinforce one another. Together they make up, in Foucault's terms, a total 'episteme'. The very fact that it incorporates two seemingly opposite views has, one could argue, made it that much more powerful.

Let me now turn to a necessarily brief inspection of these major presuppositions. The first of these has to do with the question of the relationship between knower and known. The scholar, whether positivist and rationalist or a romantic subjectivist, presupposes that his knowledge uses the highest form of reason. This, when identified, is usually referred to as 'theoretical,' 'scientific,' or 'philosophical' reason. The scholar uses this faculty to represent the reality of the Other. The known is deprived of this capacity. He/she is capable of using practical reason in a more or less conscious form and is even, in Hegel's construct, permitted the use of philosophical reason, albeit unconsciously and, therefore, uncritically and unreflectively. The scholar as knower is, therefore, privileged in relation to the Other as the known. He alone uses philosophical reason in a conscious, critical, and reflective form. He is, hence, singularly capable of representing or mirroring the reality of the Other as it truly is.

The dualism of knowledge and reality that predominates in Indology and in the other human sciences rests on the assumption that the Other exists as a reality apart from any knowledge we have of it. Different scholars may have different 'perceptions' of it (as may the people making up the Other themselves), but that is only because they have not freed themselves from their own biases or prejudices. The purpose of the scientist is to represent the reality of the Other and not to intervene in it. He is supposed to make his representation as accurate a one as he can. The idea here is that his knowledge is supposed to mirror a reality that is independent of the scholar. Implicit here, as Michael Ryan points out,[70] is the assumption that intellectual effort is separate from physical or manual effort in an ongoing social world. The knowing subject somehow transcends reality rather than being situated in it. One might also add that this dualism repeats the dualism of the subjective idealist and the empirical realist.

[70] *Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 13, 132–58.

The effect of this dualism again and again has been to displace the power to know and act of the Other (not only the externalized Indian Other, but also, it must be remembered, the internalized Others—women, the unemployed, ethnic minorities, office and factory workers, *et al.*) onto the Self. In the nineteenth century, the Self was the Orientalist and the European colonial administrator and trader. Now, of course, the Self (including many South Asians themselves) is the social scientist and his alter egos, the multinational corporation, the agencies of the welfare state, and political parties.

This brings us to the second presupposition that I wish to query. The positivistic and rationalistic epistemology enshrined in Indological discourse and its sister sciences continues to be accompanied by a presupposition of ontological unity. It assumes that the world consists of a single, determinate, reality. Human beings as the objects of knowledge are part of that reality. There is (or must be), therefore, a single human nature. Since there is only one reality, it follows that the knowledge which represents it must also be unitary. The human scientist assumes that modern natural science is privileged in its capacity to make accurate copies and that our own society is built in accord with natural principles. Hence, the human sciences must model themselves after the natural sciences. Human nature must be uncoverable by naturalistic methods. It is to this assumption that we owe the naturalism, the evolutionism and functionalism, that pervade so much of social science and history.[71] Paradoxically, it is the very epistemic absolutism of the positivist position that begets its opposite number, the romantic subjectivist who denies that all human activity can be accounted for by reducing them to physical phenomena.

So long as we continue to make the assumption of a single, uniform human nature, however loosely, we shall continue, like Hegel and his descendants in the human sciences (whether they recognize his paternity or not), to represent the thoughts and acts of the peoples of other times and places as irrational and false versions of our own. And we shall have to resort to rationalizations that 'explain' their ideas and institutions as everything but what their authors claim them to be.

I reject the duality of knower and known presupposed by this episteme. It is my position that knowledge both participates in the

[71] A critique of evolutionism is Robert A. Nisbet's *Social Change and History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). On the anti-democratic implications of evolutionism, see Paul Q. Hirst, *Social Evolution and Sociological Categories* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976). For a critique of functionalism see Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 96–129. A concise treatment of behaviorism is available in Edmund Ions, *Against Behaviouralism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977).

construction of reality and is itself not simply natural (in the sense of necessary or given), but, in large part, constructed. This would appear as a tenable position nowadays in the physical sciences.[72] How much more so, then, must it be the case in the social sciences, where knowledges are integral to those who constitute the known and not just confined to the knowing subjects themselves! One consequence of this position is that if I and others wish to produce a world that is more egalitarian and multi-centred, we must also at the same time transform our intellectual practices so as to make *them* more egalitarian and multi-centered. The capacity to have true knowledge and to act have to be, as it were, returned to the many Others from whom Western practices have taken it. We cannot claim to accord independence of action to a sovereign, independent India while still adhering (whether intentionally or not) to presuppositions that deny the very possibility of it.

If we are to transform our knowledge of India in this direction, a 'deconstruction' of the discourse into which we who are the students of India have been inducted is a necessary first step. Unless we become more aware of the nature of that discourse and of its implications we cannot hope to think our way out of it. To name but one glaring example, the encysting of Hegel's text on Asia in the verbal membrane of the 'biased' and the 'out of date' has permitted most Indologists to get on with their work without reading it. Their ignorance of its effects in actually producing the civilizations of Asia has enabled scholars to go on unwittingly reproducing (with endless minor variations) the major features of its constructs.

I do not believe, however, that it is fair simply to end with a deconstruction. So let me suggest what a Western scholar might do. Let me also say before I do so that Indians are, for perhaps the first time since colonization, showing sustained signs of reappropriating the capacity to represent themselves, and in many ways that converge with the suggestions I am about to make.[73] It is also worth restating that such a task will not be easy to accomplish, for we are confronted here not merely with the need to change our 'attitudes'. The problem is, as Foucault and others have been saying, deeper than that.[74] It is a question, first, of our concept of knowledge and of the power over India that it creates. Second, it is a question of the actualization and

[72] See the discussion of Hacking, *Representing and Intervening*, Part B, especially pp. 220–32.

[73] *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), especially Guha's Introduction, pp. 1–8.

[74] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), pp. 78–108.

reproduction of that knowledge in the overlapping and mutually reinforcing disciplines of the human sciences and in 'lay' agencies such as the United Nations and the Social Science Research Council.

To begin with, a scholar would want to make a conscious break with the assumption (made for the most part unconsciously) that the world is constituted as a determinate, single external reality and with its corollary, a unitary human nature. This latter usually involves the presupposition that there is a definite substance, an underlying essence, that everywhere constitutes Man. Different civilizations or cultures are accordingly assumed to have their own defining substances which are nothing but distributary adaptations or transformations of that unitary essence. The scholar of a particular 'cultural area' (i.e., South Asia) would, thus, want to break with the notion that the actions of a particular civilization are but the accidents of a substantialized agent (to wit, caste or orthodox Hinduism), the particular essence that underlies and defines that civilization. He or she would assume instead that all humans are constrained by the same *indeterminate* reality and must take that into account in any body of knowledge they produce. The scholar would also assume that the societies of the world are not more or less 'correct' images of a *single* reality but are themselves differing realities, constructed again and again in relation to those around them, by human thought and action. Making these assumptions it becomes genuinely possible to present ancient India as the product of its own thoughts and acts and to do so without lapsing into the atomistic moral relativism of the subjective idealist.

The scholar would then be able to stop representing Indian thoughts and acts as distortions of reality. He or she would begin to present Indian ideas and institutions as human products every bit as rational (or irrational) as those of the modern West. The problematic will then have shifted. It will no longer be a question of relating weakly connected thoughts and ineffectual acts produced by a substantialized society (caste), to an external environment or ineffable interiority, known by the scholar independently of subjugated, 'native' knowledges. Human thoughts (both conscious and unconscious) and human acts (their results as well as their authors' intentions) will themselves become the real center of attention, for they will be seen as producing and transforming their own world and not simply as adapting to it.