

'At the point of confluence of sociology and Indology': Louis Dumont's postulate reconsidered

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In this article, I aim to show how Louis Dumont's famous claim that 'the condition for a sound development of Sociology of India is found in the establishment of the proper relation between it and classical Indology' has become obsolete and was from the beginning a problematic postulate. I first develop the historical background of the denigration of anthropological approaches in India against the rise of an idealising Indology as a philological discipline. Then I discuss the structural, methodological and ideological problems that made it difficult to follow Dumont's advice to search for the point of confluence of sociology and Indology. Finally, I place Dumont's holistic approach in relation to the holistic structure of academic disciplines that emerged in the 19th century on the basis of the nation-state model and argue that it is misleading and reductive to think that 'the construction of an Indian Sociology rests in part upon the existence of Indology'.

Keywords: Indology, anthropology, philology, caste, colonialism, transculturality

I

Introduction

In 1957, 63 years ago, Louis Dumont and David Pocock inaugurated the first issue of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* with a programmatic introduction in which they declared the cooperation between sociology (actually and explicitly understood as social anthropology) and Indology as a prerequisite for understanding Indian (or Hindu) society. Here is the famous quote from this seminal article:

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In our opinion, the first condition for a sound development of Sociology of India is found in the establishment of the proper relation between it and classical Indology. We wish to show how on one side the construction of an Indian Sociology rests in part upon the existence of Indology and how, on the other hand, far from its results being confined to its own domain, it can hope in its turn to widen and deepen the understanding of India, present and past, to which Indology is devoted.

It should be obvious, in principle, that a Sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of Sociology and Indology. (Dumont and Pocock 1957: 9)¹

Since then, this quotation has been often cited and discussed. Thirty years later, Stanley Tambiah added history to the two disciplines: ‘In due course I found that there was something lacking in this credo: a sociology of India (and of Southeast Asia) must establish a relation between three terms, the third being history’ (Tambiah 1987: 188). Tambiah even claimed that, ‘today virtually no South or Southeast Asian anthropologist can afford not to engage with Indology and history even if his or her work is focused on the study of contemporary phenomena’ (ibid.). However, the introductory sentences of Dumont and Pocock were mostly used when it came to the justification of disciplines or to a methodological approach based on them. But rarely was the theory on which the postulate was based included in disciplinary discussions. It is time to review both the call for the disciplinary cooperation and Dumont’s claim that the sociology of India is founded on its relation to classical Indology. This is the topic of my contribution to *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.²

There is another thing I should point out at the beginning. The disciplines of social anthropology and Indology have considerably changed since Dumont. They have become much more diverse and porous, and there are now many subdisciplines. The anthropology of personhood,

¹ Louis Dumont had already presented the ideas for this point of confluence in his inaugural address for the Chair of Sociology on 8 November 1955 in Paris (Dumont 1955). This is why I will speak in the following only of Dumont’s theory, leaving out the aspects that Pocock has contributed.

² I read parts of this article at the Religious Studies Conference in Groningen (11 May 2014).

identity, emotions and habitus, gender and subaltern studies, research on local and transnational commerce and trade, ethnohistory, visual and media anthropology, the anthropology of labour and class, urban studies, the politics of violence, the sociology of science, technology, environment or health and much more did not feature at all or were not prominent in Dumont's work but make up a great deal of today's seminars in anthropological and sociological departments (of India). Indology, too, is much more than the study of Sanskrit and Hinduism. It is inextricably connected to many other South Asian languages and religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and folk religions; it basically remains a philological discipline as it has to work on texts, but these texts are not just religious texts—as Sanskrit never was only a sacred language—and require the knowledge of and cooperation with many disciplines, such as anthropology, history, archaeology, literary studies, computer sciences etc. Correspondingly, the study of Indian society is much more heterogeneous and less focused on caste, hierarchy or the village than in Dumont's time. From this point of view, the image of the confluence of two (disciplinary) rivers becomes somewhat obsolete and the various flows that interest me lie beyond the disciplinary riverbeds.

II

Before the point of confluence

We cannot discuss the production of knowledge on India independent of the modernist discourses and colonial conditions under which it was first produced.³ Although this is not the place to deal with colonial history and theory, the question as to why an ethnographic engagement with India or the scientific exploration of the social and religious life of the Indians started so comparatively late in modern history is connected to the relationship between social anthropology and Indology that developed on the 'cultural, epistemological, and psychological battleground' (Appadurai 1986: 746) of colonialism.

One reason is that the production of knowledge of religions in India was in the hands of the three different groups, which David Chidester (2014: xx) has identified with regard to South Africa: (a) metropolitan academics and intellectuals—Chidester calls them 'imperial theorists,

³ Parts of the following are based on Michaels (2016: 14–18).

surrounded by texts, in the quiet of their studies’; (b) ‘colonial agents on the noisy frontlines of intercultural contacts’ (ibid.), that is, administrative or missionary people, traders and travellers; and (c) ‘indigenous people struggling under colonial dispossession, displacement, containment, and exploitation but also exploring new terms of engagement that included the term, *religion*’ (ibid.: xx), for example, informants, pandits and authors. Likewise says Thomas Trautmann (2004: 18), that the production of knowledge of India was made by ‘a wide variety of types such as Orientalists, missionaries, and administrators’ and thus in its initial stage entirely a programme designed at European desks. India did not look for an encounter with Europe and did not want to produce knowledge on Christianity or European society (a point to which I will come back at the end of this article). Thus, the desire for knowing and understanding the Other was itself a regional, or, in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s terms, a provincial agenda that went hand in hand with conquering and missionising claims: ‘Understanding itself has been (and needs to be) questioned: Is it something inherently European, and perhaps a secret ally of Eurocentric claims and attitudes?’, asks the Indologist Wilhelm Halbfass (1997: 23) and adds: ‘We have to live with this question, while listening to, and trying to understand, the other. There is no choice’.

From the beginning of the encounter, that is, the 17th and 18th centuries, the tenor was depreciating. The missionaries, though focusing on ‘educational and linguistic pursuits’ (Dirks 2001: 2), wrote an early ethnography but in a more or less an explicit disguise of primitive religions with their strange customs and habits. Especially influential was Abbé Jean Antoine Dubois (1766–1848), the first to elaborate extensively on *Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies*⁴ and to present an overview of the society in India, particularly of the caste system and the festivals and rituals of the Hindus. Abbé Dubois describes these manners, customs and rituals generally as horrific and immoral practices and regarded Indians as

⁴ Only from 1899 onwards Abbé Dubois’s book had this title. In the original (English) edition (1816), it was called *Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India, and of Their Institutions, Religious and Civil*. The French translation by Dubois himself appeared 1824 with the title *Moeurs, institutions et cérémonies des peuples de l’Inde*. As it was shown Sylvie Murr (1987), it was widely a copy or plagiarism of Père Gaston-Laurent Cœurdox’s *Mœurs et coutumes des Indiens* (1777), a manuscript now lost (cf. de Smet 1990).

not convertible—an assessment that indirectly contributed to the British policy of non-interference in religions and customs:

It is in the nature of the Hindus to cling to their civil and religious institutions, to their old customs and habits.... Let us leave them their cherished laws and prejudices, since no human effort will persuade them to give them up, even in their own interest, and let us not risk making the gentlest and most submissive people in the world furious and indomitable by thwarting them. Let us take care lest we bring about, by some hasty or imprudent course of action, catastrophes which would reduce the country to a state of anarchy, desolation, and ultimate ruin, for, in my humble opinion, the day when the Government attempts to interfere with any of the more important religious and civil usages of the Hindus will be the last of its existence as a political power. (Dubois 1906: 97)

The idea of an exaggerated ritualistic life of the Hindus not worth being studied was also proposed by the historian James Mill whose *The History of India* (3 vols., 1817) became a canonical text for the East India Company. It was based on Utilitarian principles and a challenge to Orientalists such as Charles Wilkins (1749–1836) and William Jones (1746–94), who were instrumental in establishing Indological research in India, the latter, for instance, by founding the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. His discovery of the language similarities of Indo-European languages made him the founder of comparative philology, which became especially strong in 19th-century Germany.

At the end of the 18th century, these British metropolitan philologists felt superior to the people in the field, that is, administrators, traders and travellers. They were supported by Brahmins who themselves developed a theory of (their) superiority: the caste or class (*varṇa*) system based on purity–impurity categories, which is at the centre of Dumont's theory. Thus, both the metropolitan academics and many of their Brahmanical assistants did not take interest in the ordinary life of Indians or, if so, often only to denigrate them. The frontier zone was an alliance of Victorian British and purist Indian armchair scholars reducing practised religious life often to idolatry, juggernaut, sexualised yoni–lingam worship, child marriage and widow burning while at the same time transmitting and praising insights that could be gained from philosophical and religious

texts in Sanskrit. All this found expression in institutions like universities, Oriental societies and their journals, museums or world exhibitions—serving the panoptic knowledge formation of the superior white man.

However, as Thomas Trautmann argued, this literary British Indomania ‘did not die of natural causes; it was killed off’ (Trautmann 2004: 99) by Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism (cf. McGetchin 2009: 33). Mill, for example, argued that there is no merit in India’s past and therefore even the study of Indian languages such as Sanskrit would not be necessary. His main idea was that supposedly uncivilised rituals, which, in the end, only favour the Brahmins, regulate the whole life of the Hindus (Mill 1817: 50f.). To be sure, Mill’s knowledge of Hinduism was not built on observation but on reading Manu’s Law Book (*Manusmṛiti*), a Sanskrit text that since William Jones’ translation has ‘taken on a general anthropological significance it could never have had before, with enormous consequences for the refashioning of basic assumptions about religion and society’ (Dirks 2001: 34). Mill even claimed that observation and reading indigenous texts blended a proper knowledge of India. In his view, the mere observation of life in India remained at the level of sense impressions, which had to be overcome by higher-level mental functions such as intellect and reading (cf. Trautmann 2004: 119):

Whatever is worth seeing or hearing in India, can be expressed in writing. As soon as every thing of importance is expressed in writing, a man who is duly qualified may attain more knowledge of India in one year in his closet in England, than he could obtain during the course of the longest life, by the use of his eyes and ears in India. (Mill 1817: xv)

Mill also cites with some pleasure ‘Observations’ by Lord William Bentinck, the then governor of Fort St. George and president of the Council at Madras, that are also printed as advertisement prefixed to Abbé J.A. Dubois’s *Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India* (1816):

The result of my own observation, during my residence in India, is that the Europeans generally know little or nothing of the customs and manners of the Hindoos. We are all acquainted with some prominent marks and facts, which all who run may read: but their manner of thinking; their domestic habits and ceremonies; in which circumstances

a knowledge of the people consist, is I fear in great part wanting to us. . . . We do not, we cannot associate with the natives. We cannot see them in their houses, and with their families. We are necessarily very much confined to our houses by the heat. . . . and we are, in fact, strangers in the land. (Mill 1818: xxi)

This widely shared depreciation of observation also endangered British Indologists working in India and the Orientalist educational programme. For as a consequence of the disguise of India's customs and manners, Evangelical and Utilitarian academics from the metropolises as well as some colonialists such as Thomas Macaulay (1800–1859) tried to liberate India from her past and to transform Indians to dark-skinned educated Britons who should learn English rather than any Indian language. In his famous *Minute Upon Education* (2 February 1835), supported by William Cavendish Bentinck, he claimed,

English is better worth knowing than Sanskrit or Arabic; that the natives are desirous to be taught English, and are not desirous to be taught Sanskrit or Arabic; that neither as the languages of law, nor as the languages of religion, have the Sanskrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our engagement; that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed. (Macaulay 1835: [no. 33])

This strong movement against the usefulness of learning Indian languages led to the decline of British Indology. Fort William College in Calcutta, built in 1800 to teach Indian languages to East India Company officials, deteriorated from 1830 onwards and was officially closed on 24 January 1854.

In the mid-19th century, this asymmetrical situation changed, especially through Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), one of the most prominent armchair academics who never went to India and who in 1868 became Oxford's first Professor of Comparative Philology. This scholar, by today's standards an academic star, did not fall into the Indophobia of Mill or Macaulay. On the contrary, he set out to discover the soul of Indian civilisation in the unspoiled Vedic age. Based on the previous discovery of Sanskrit as the root language for all 'Aryans', he created not only the 'Aryan love story as a family reunion' (Trautmann 2004: 15) between

Europe and India, but also an Indomania that, in the end and, until today, idealises and spiritualises India. In an address delivered at the opening of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists held in London, 1892, he proclaimed: ‘Indians ceased to be mere idolaters or niggers, they have been recognised as our brothers in language and thought’ (Trautmann 2004: 15).

This said, it must also be noted that Müller’s proclaimed brotherhood was not through face-to-face encounters and exchange but through a language relationship. In 1859, he wrote:

It would have been next to impossible to discover any traces of relationship between the swarthy natives of India and their conquerors.... And yet there is not an English jury now-a-days, which, after examining the hoary documents of language, would reject the claim of a common descent and a spiritual relationship between Hindu, Greek, and Teuton. Many words still live in India and in England that have witnessed the first separation of the northern and southern Aryans, and these are witnesses not to be shaken by any cross-examination. We challenge the seeming stranger; and whether he answer with the lips of a Greek, a German, or an Indian, we recognise him as one of ourselves. (Müller 1867: 63)

Thus, Müller’s alleged brotherhood was only based on language. In a speech at the opening of the School for Modern Oriental Studies in England, 1890, he proposed that,

stronger than the affinity of mere blood is the affinity of language and thought which makes Englishmen and Hindoos brothers indeed. ... The young men whom England sends to India should greet the Aryan inhabitants not as conquerors meet the conquered, but as brothers meet brothers, as friends meet friends. It is generally said that India has been conquered by England. But the true conquest of India, it seems to me, is still to come. The true conquerors of India, of the heart of India, will be those very men whom our new School of Oriental Languages means to fit for their arduous work. (Cheers). (quoted from McGetchin 2009: 184f.)

The new conquest Müller spoke about had religious undertones and his ‘imperialism originated in the missionary dogma of his Protestant religion’

(McGetchin 2009: 185), as the Boden Professorship at Oxford in Sanskrit was also established in 1832 to assist in the conversion of the people of British India to Christianity.

For Müller, the social and religious practice to be observed in India was still a decadent development and deviation from the erstwhile religious brotherhood and a decline from the golden Vedic age. Accordingly, reading about rituals in old Sanskrit texts was still esteemed higher than observing and studying performed rituals, although Müller praised Abbé Dubois for his field reports that allow us

to be able to enter into the views of the natives, to understand their manners and customs, and to make allowance for many of their superstitious opinions and practices, as mere corruptions of an originally far more rational and intelligent form of religion and philosophy. Few men who were real scholars have hitherto undertaken to tell us what they saw of India and its inhabitants during a lifelong residence in the country, and in spite of the great opportunities that India offers to intelligent and observant travellers, we know far less of the actual life of India than of that of Greece and Rome. (Preface by Max Müller to Abbé Dubois, *Hindu Manners*, 3rd ed., p. vii)

Contrary to this view of one of the foremost metropolitan academics, the administrators on the ground discovered increasingly that India could only be ruled with more anthropological knowledge of its people. This led to the classification and photographic documentation of India's people, castes and tribes published in many gazetteers and manuals, 'in which the local castes and tribes were listed and described, with more detail reserved for certain caste and tribe groups specific to the area, under the heading of "manners and customs"' (Dirks 2001: 46). It also led to the decennial Census reports starting from 1872. This quest for anthropological knowledge not only provided facts of the peoples of India but was also instrumental 'in installing caste as the fundamental unit of India's social structure' (ibid.: 49).

This was the situation at the end of the 19th century: on the one hand, knowledge about life in India, which was on the whole degraded; on the other hand, Indological knowledge that served to edify or emphasise the linguistic and intellectual kinship between India and Europe. Most notably, there were almost no points of contact between the two disciplines because

anthropology did not yet exist as an academic discipline and because Indology—often being in a state of orientalist ‘timelessness’ but not ‘in time’—preferred religious and philosophical ideas to practised religion. This mutual scepticism survives until today. Anthropologists often still believe that Indologists are primarily concerned with diacritics, and Indologists often still believe that the study of contemporary phenomena are popularisations and vulgarisations, deviations and corruptions of the ancient traditions that do not matter (cf. Tambiah 1987: 188).

III

Near the point of confluence

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, both perspectives—the ‘book view and the field view’ or the ‘field and the desk’ as Madan (2011: chapter 2) or Nicholas Allen (2000) phrased it so felicitously—came closer through the fact that both were based on an indigenous figure as the key interlocutor, gatekeeper and broker of local knowledge: the learned Brahmin or the pandit. Sometimes educated in English, these pandits were the helpers of Indological and anthropological scholars but also of the missionaries and administrators who prepared the vast tracts of knowledge on tribes and castes and their manners, customs and rituals.

However, in the European metropolises, where the knowledge reached and was collected, exhibited and digested, the dominance of Indological knowledge of the social and religious life in India remained widely unaffected by the growing knowledge from this kind of ‘fieldwork’. Indologists kept up their romanticising or evolutionist claim and often regarded the present in India only as a decadence against an unclouded Vedic past—a story they had taken from the pandits and priests. The Sanskrit texts were regarded ‘petrified survivals of a long-vanished life’ as the Indologist Alfred Hillebrandt (1897) wrote in his book *Ritual-Literatur. Vedische Opfer und Zauber*:

Just as the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras are not inventions of speculative jurists, but essentially codify old customary law and old customs, so the priestly ritual of the Brahman religion is nothing else than its systematic summary of popular religious customs, which have been made by the Brahmins the basis or at least the essential

components of their ritual practice.... In detail, we can often no longer recognize the conditions under which the traditional customs developed, which often stand before us like petrified survivors of a long-vanished life. In order to understand some and to come to the ethnological layer from which they originated, it will be necessary to treat them in a comparative way and to explain their origin not only through the invocation of Aryan customs, but also of primitive peoples inside and outside India, i.e. with the help of anthropology. (Hillebrandt 1897: 2; my translation)

In order to maintain the idea of an evolution from ritual to religion and spirituality, many Indologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries discovered and misused comparative anthropology:

The young science of ethnology leads to primitive forms of the religious that are far beyond the Indo-European conditions. From it we learn, as we know, that certain roughest types of religious ideas and customs are found everywhere among peoples of correspondingly deep cultural levels in seemingly wonderful but unquestionable agreement. Religious research here almost takes on the appearance of natural science; what it reports does not sound much different from a chapter on the life of animals. (Oldenberg 1906: 11; my translation)

All this was very much in line with the evolutionist ideas of Müller and other philologists. 'Savages' had no religion; they had ritual, especially magic ritual—seen as a primitive state that precedes religion. 'The great divide between civilization and savagery' (Chidester 2014: xi) was also kept up in (relation to) India but the frontier zone was different to the situation in African studies because metropolitan philologists played a much more important role in the process of historicising what allegedly belonged to each other. This not only led to the separation of the 'social' disciplines of sociology and anthropology, on the one side, and Religious Studies, on the other side. It also meant the separation of Indology, social anthropology and Religious Studies—a separation Louis Dumont wanted to overcome.

In the second half of the 19th century, Indology as a philological discipline further consolidated at European universities. While Indology declined in England, it blossomed in France and Germany. At the beginning of the 19th century, Paris was not only the stage of industrialisation, consumerism and modern life, it also became the place to be in order to

study Sanskrit (cf. McGetchin 2009). It was here where the first European Orientalist Society was founded, the Société Asiatique in 1822, a year before the British Royal Asiatic Society and 23 years before the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (German Oriental Society). It was in Paris where, in 1815, the first chair of Sanskrit was established with Antoine Léonard de Chézy (1773–1832) as the chairholder. It did not take long for several European Orientalists to come to Paris to learn Sanskrit or to study Sanskrit manuscripts. Among them were the German poet, philosopher and philologist Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and his brother August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1845), who, in 1818, was then appointed the first German chairholder of Indology in Bonn, Franz Bopp (1791–1867), who gained appointment to the chair of Sanskrit and comparative grammar at Berlin in 1821, Friedrich Max Müller or Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824), the first European Sanskrit teacher who taught Sanskrit to Friedrich Schlegel in Paris. In the mid-19th century, Indology in France declined due to internal quarrels and other factors (cf. McGetchin 2009: 41–54), whereas it grew in Germany where you could find in 1850 already eight Indological chairs.

Thus, European Indology at this time was predominantly philological, focusing on the languages and their grammars, editions and translations of texts mainly in Sanskrit. Only a few Indologists went to India, and if so, they continued to study texts with Indian pandits. More than anything else, it was the written texts and the written word that attracted attention in the European academic study of cultures because for centuries, book religions were recognised as superior. New text-based disciplines such as Indology often could better justify themselves in the canon of academic fields and institutions, especially the faculties, by pursuing the arduous philological work.

Similarly, Malinowski and other early anthropologists tried to establish participatory observation as a scientific methodology joining the battle for power of interpretation regarding data and status in the hierarchy of academic knowledge production. Sociology and social anthropology increasingly gained ground and recognition at European and—with some delay—Indian universities⁵: Social Anthropology started in 1919

⁵ For overviews of history of the anthropology of India and in India see, for instance, Patel (2010), Rai (1986), Sundar, Deshpande and Uberoi (2000) and Uberoi, Sundar and Deshpande (2007).

in Mumbai, 1921 in Kolkata, 1947 in Delhi and 1950 in Lucknow. One could argue that a kind of division of labour developed between sociology and anthropology, on the one side, and Indology, on the other side. While sociology concentrated on predominantly European, complex and 'modern', industrialised societies, anthropology focused on foreign, 'traditional' or 'primitive' cultures and small societies, village studies and ethnic groups. The most favoured method for anthropology is participant observation, for sociology survey research. The dilemma for the anthropology of India has been brought to the point by Andre B eteille (1979: 11): 'what anthropology is to an American will be sociology to an Indian, and what sociology is to an American will be anthropology to an Indian'. The misleading distinction between sociology and social anthropology has been rightly criticised many times. If the occupation with one's own 'Western' society is sociology and with another society is anthropology, then there can be no Indian anthropologists, at least if they write about India. If the method of field research and participatory observation is the distinguishing feature, then mixed categories such as ethnohistory cannot be considered anthropological. Even while Dumont spoke of 'sociology', he wanted it to be understood explicitly as social anthropology. Therefore, a precise differentiation between sociology and (social) anthropology is difficult to find in India (cf. Srinivas 1972: ch. 5; Uberoi 1995: 195), though in more recent times, the trend in Indian sociology seems to move towards survey research rather than ethnographic fieldwork.

Until the mid-20th century, Indology remained the dominant representative of Indian cultures and societies. But after the Second World War, at the latest, this relationship was reversed. In 1950, only three universities in India (Mumbai, Kolkata and Lucknow) had chairs for sociology combined with social anthropology whilst at the end of the 1970s, these disciplines were taught in more than 50 universities. By the year 2000, there were already around 10,000 teachers in sociology (Patel 2010: 280) employed at around 100 universities. Today, the interest for and enrolments in social sciences at Indian universities certainly outweigh by far those for Sanskrit studies or Indology.

From the beginning of its establishment, the anthropology of India took hardly any notice of Indological publications. One exception was translations of some key religious texts of Hinduism and less of Buddhism, predominantly the *Manusmṛti* and other Dharmas astra texts related to

social structures, the *Arthaśāstra* or Purāṇas, sometimes also philosophical texts such as the Upanishads, *Bhagavadgītā* or Vedānta texts. Indological problems have rarely been perceived and reflected within the disciplinary realm. The anthropology of India seemingly and simply did not need Indology.

Dumont and Pocock (1957), too, hardly refer to any work by Indologists. Instead, they relate most of all to Marcel Mauss, who was able to read Sanskrit, but who, in 1902, first became a Chair as a Professor of Primitive Religion and then taught Sociology at the Collège de France from 1931 to 1940. Other scholars mentioned, such as Henri Hubert, Célestine Bouglé, Paul Mus, George Dumézil, A.M. Hocart or M.N. Srinivas, were social anthropologists. Indian Indologists were virtually ignored; only P.V. Kane is mentioned in a footnote. Similarly, Dumont mentions in the bibliography of his *Homo Hierarchicus* comprising approximately 400 entries only 11 Indologists⁶ and refers only to the *Manusmṛti* and the *Arthaśāstra*. He himself definitely remained far away from the ‘point of confluence’.

However, as a provider of translations and understanding of mainly Hinduism, Indology had its substantial impact on anthropology. M.N. Srinivas’s relationship of religion and society and his theory of Sanskritisation, that is, the spread of Hinduism and social mobility, were only possible by combining textual work with fieldwork. The same holds true for the long and many discussions on tradition and modernity or on so-called Great and Little traditions. Indology was always good enough for adding ‘the spice’ of historical and/or religious perspectives to social theories. Indology, one might even say, was essentially a tool for highlighting an ‘Indianness’ that was anchored in concepts retrieved from Sanskrit texts and terms. G.S. Ghurye, N.K. Bose, M.N. Srinivas, L. Dumont, M. Marriott, G.G. Raheja and many more deliberately used Sanskrit terms and concepts to make their sociologies specifically ‘Indian’ or to underpin the ‘Indian’ or ‘Hindu’ background, to explore the link between the alleged oppositions of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, or to make it holistic to the extent that the mainstream ‘Hindu world view’ was epistemologically privileged—at the cost of other models.

Thus, the anthropology of India and Indology never fully exploited the potential of such a cooperation. What could this have looked like? What

⁶L. Alsdorf, R.G. Bhandarkar, M. Biardeau, N. Brown, J. Heesterman, J. Jolly, P.V. Kane, R. Lingat, H. Oldenberg, L. Renou and Muir’s translation of classical texts.

could be a more substantial way of confluence? With regard to Indology and referring to what I call 'Ethno-Indology',⁷ I should first mention the anthropology of texts, that is, the context and locality of the texts, its agents (brahmins, mendicants, storytellers, scholars, pandits), patrons, users, readers etc., the social structures that generate texts, the application of texts, for instance, in rituals, or the performance and reception of texts. Such an extended notion of 'text' would include oral literature, grey literature, Internet sources of various religious communities, texts communicated by mass media such as journals, comics, television and video recordings etc.; visual sources such as paintings, posters, photographs or films, material objects of cultural practice, maps and much more. Indology could also learn from anthropology how texts have been produced by particular interests and conflicts, how texts are shared and distributed by practice, by gaps, by ignorance, also by the Brahmins, who perhaps know the text by heart: This dealing with texts always requires an adaptation or a re-contextualisation of texts. This would direct the focus away from the high-culture approach to the cultural, social, political, gender and subaltern perspectives and bring out the importance of everyday life. It would stress the importance of regional studies, fieldwork and vernacular languages. Texts are certainly not only a written, passive repository of information but serve to generate power and to circulate or monopolise influence, honour or prestige.

In short, Indologists could learn from anthropologists to look closely for hidden or in-between meanings. The Indologist Sylvain Lévi, for example, did pioneering work on Nepal considering the anthropological aspects of texts to such an extent that the anthropologist András Höfer wrote an article on him with the significant subtitle 'What we anthropologists owe to Sylvain Lévi', in which he aptly remarked:

Lévi is generally considered as an indologist. In reality, he saw himself as an historian. Although a philologist by training and acquainted with an amazing number of languages (cf. Renou 1936: 57), the documents

⁷ With humble appreciation, I cite Sheldon Pollock's appraisal: '(W)e encounter thinking about traditional disciplinary methods in new and highly transdisciplinary ways, and here the very idea of "ethno-Indology" deserves to be singled out as exemplary' (Pollock 2014: 19). For the ethno-Indological programme, see Michaels (2004b) and the Introduction to the series *Ethno-Indology. Heidelberg Studies in South Asian Rituals*, edited from 2005 onwards.

of the past were, for him, not ends in themselves, but sources of information to be decoded with the suspicion of the historian. As Renou (1936: 8–9) aptly states, Lévi developed a particular sensitivity for meanings hidden “beneath the words” (*un sens profond des réalités sous les mots*). In fact, Lévi extended his quest for meaning into the realms of what we now call ideology, ethnotheory and contextual analysis. ... he kept a close watch on the social functions of his sources. What fascinated him was the intricate relationship between the author and the public, rather than the mere literary value of a source, the process which produced a source, rather than the product, the source itself. (Höfer 1979: 176)

It is evident, and in fact often practised, in Indology or Indian Studies⁸ that the combination of fieldwork with textual studies, that is, Ethno-Indology, is fruitful. Anthropology of India indeed helps ‘to widen and deepen the understanding of India, present and past, to which Indology is devoted’ (Dumont and Pocock 1957: 9). Examples for this are Vedic and post-Vedic literature evident in still-practised sacrifices, rites of passage and other rituals; performative rituals such as dance, theatre and musical performances which are partly based on a rich Sanskrit literature, for example, theoretical texts on the aesthetics of performances. This material has been increasingly studied and compiled by a number of scholars.

Another aspect Indology can learn from anthropology is theory. If I am not mistaken, Indology has rarely initiated theoretical debates on social or cultural problems. Instead, mostly anthropologists and historians raised important issues on the basis of material from South Asia, such as H. Hubert and M. Mauss on sacrifice and the gift, P. Dumézil on myth, L. Dumont on hierarchy and purity, M. Weber on asceticism, B. Stein on little kingdoms, R. Schechner on performance and C. Humphrey and J. Laidlaw (1994) on ritual. But I can only think of a few debates in the past decades which were initiated by Indologists, for example, the meaninglessness-of-rituals debate by F. Staal (1979) and—with less influence—the theory of inclusivism by P. Hacker (1983). To be sure, Indologists have contributed to many other interdisciplinary debates—for example, the origin of script, the

⁸ To mention only a few examples, Gonda (1980), Staal (1983), Tachikawa (1983), Einoo (1993), Witzel (1986, 1987) on Vedic rituals or Bühnemann (1988), Einoo (1996) and Tachikawa, Hino and Deodhar (2001) on *pūjā*. Gutschow and Michaels (2005, 2008, 2012).

myth-and-ritual debate, the authority of the canon, the Sanskrit cosmopolis, as well as discussions on orientalism and colonialism etc. Some specific debates were dominated by Indological material, for example, the origin and development of Indo-European languages, the Indo-Aryan invasion debate, the date of the Buddha, even Sheldon Pollock's 'Future Philology' (2009), but all these debates had only little impact beyond the limited circle of Indological specialists.

There is a widespread and reifying argument that Indology should be a discipline based solely on philological and text-critical methods,⁹ even if this method has sometimes come into disrepute,¹⁰ and even if there are shared views on the extent and appropriateness of critical editions.¹¹ Such an argument, which basically denies the necessity or usefulness of a close cooperation of anthropology and Indology, sometimes comes with the claim to superiority or absoluteness of philology. Walter Slaje (2013), for instance, maintains that a discipline should follow 'inner necessities' as they result directly from 'the momentum of research' (p. 4). Slaje speaks out against what he calls a 'tendency towards the uncritical adoption of central ideas guided by the *Zeitgeist*', that is, anthropological theories. Instead, he propagates the 'idea of a "logos of India"' and the 'peculiarity and strangeness of India in its originality' (p. 9) to which Indology has to dedicate itself. This *logos* is 'an autochthonous Indian in the original sense' (p. 9), one that had only been fundamentally changed by Europeanisation and colonisation, but was preceded by 'a very specific, unmistakable characteristic' (p. 16). Slaje also speaks of a 'cultural idiosyncrasy' (p. 12), 'traditional patterns of thought' and an 'autochthonous Indian self-reflection' as well as an 'autonomous Indian logos', which Indology has to recognise, describe and analyse in order to 'create expert knowledge ready for the handbook on the basis of reliably edited sources' and to 'be able to design a general synopsis with its help' (p. 13).

With such a rather orientalist approach, Slaje becomes a mediator of 'contained' cultures who:

⁹ See Lariviere (1994) and Slaje (2003).

¹⁰ See the exaggerated criticism of Adluri and Bagchee (2014) and the reaction of Hanneder (2012).

¹¹ For example, in connection with the question of whether there is an 'original Skandapurāṇa' (cf. Bailey 1999; Bakker 1989; Franco 2007).

[Frees] himself from the inherited categories of thought of the Europeans through methodically accompanied self-reflection ... in order to penetrate into the foreign way of thinking of (old) Indian minds, understand their spiritual world, analyse it and finally translate it into the understanding horizon of Europe. (p. 18)

This is probably what Ronald Inden (1990: 87) criticised with his assertion that Indologists often see themselves as ‘jungle officers of the Indian mind’. And the unfortunate ‘Swadeshi Indology’, initiated by Rajiv Malhotra in his *Battle for Sanskrit* (2016) where he criticises the ‘hijacking of Sanskrit and Sanskriti’ by ‘outsiders’ and advocates that only insiders respect the sacredness of Sanskrit, lurks around the corner arguing that, in the end, only ‘traditional Indian expert’ can really understand (old) Indian minds.

To sum up, it appears that anthropology and Indology never really flowed together. They came close to each other, but all in all they remained in their respective riverbeds. Both disciplines learnt from each other, but due to their aversions and distinctions inherited from different colonial histories (Section II), and due to their disciplinary limitations (Section III), the sociology of India never reached ‘the point of confluence’. However, the (hi)story of the disciplinary approximation has not yet come to an end. There is more to it, but that lies beyond the point of confluence.

IV

Beyond the point of confluence

The most challenging aspect of Dumont’s invitation for the concerned disciplines to come closer is his holistic idea of India, which, as he said, should be worked out with the help of Indology and which he opposed to other forms of societies, especially the ‘Western’ one. In the following, I will concentrate on this crucial aspect not repeating in detail the criticism of Dumont’s work that has been extensively and variously made.¹² I believe it is by now the *opinio communis* that Dumont’s theory is, despite its great merits, wrong or misleading because he

¹² See the special issues ‘The Contributions of Louis Dumont.’ *Journal of Asian Studies* 35 (1976) and *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 5 (1971); Khare (2006), Kolenda (2006) and Berger (2012) with further references.

- overestimates the role of the Brahmin in Indian society (Berreman 1971);
- neglects the complexity and diversity of the caste systems and regards caste as a countable thing (Cohn 1968; Dirks 2001) proposing that understanding caste means understanding India;
- focuses too much on the village as a well-structured entity (Cohn 1955; Gough 1955; Marriott 1955);
- essentialises and substantialises the thinking that caste is grounded on a religious or social consensus system, disregarding forms of transaction and transfer that place varying castes in the centre or on the top of the society (Raheja 1990), and neglecting other important factors such as landownership, labour and capitalism as well as power, agency, status or honour;
- privileges philology and focuses too much on Sanskrit sources, leaving out sources from the vernaculars and non-sacred texts (van der Veer 1989), and thus does not understand that most Sanskrit texts are normative but not descriptions of reality (cp. Burghart 1990); and
- does not consider that 'the Hindu contrast of pure and impure may itself be derivative from other philosophies of nature and other principles of interaction that transcend or cross-cut caste' (Appadurai 1986: 758).

I will not further extend this incomplete list. But for an understanding of Dumont's sandwiched situation between sociology and classical Indology and the genesis of his theory, it might be useful to look at his career. Dumont studied European ethnology, joined classes of Marcel Mauss, attended the Collège de Sociologie in Paris, became a prisoner of war near Hamburg in Germany where he studied Sanskrit with the Jain specialist Walter Schubring. After the Second World War, 1945, he finished his master's degree in humanities after studying Tamil and Hindi at the École des Langues Orientales. He, thus, was on his way to become an Indologist. But his life went into another direction. Thanks to the Indologist Louis Renou, Dumont received a scholarship to South India where he studied, between 1949 and 1951, the Pramalai Kallar caste and wrote his dissertation 'Une sous-caste de l'Inde du Sud. Organisation sociale et religieuse de Pramalai kallar', which he submitted in 1954 as his *thèse d'Etat* (Dumont 1964a). After his return, he succeeded the Indian anthropologist M.N. Srinivas

(1916–1999) as lecturer in Sociology at Oxford University from 1951 to 1955. Also, in 1954, he published his second book dedicated to the Dravidian kinship system, *Hiérarchie et alliance, notes comparatives sur la parenté en Inde du sud* (Dumont 1957). In 1957–58, he went again for fieldwork, this time in North India, in the village of Rampur (Uttar Pradesh).

It seems that his turn to anthropology prevented him from joining ‘the closed world of French Indology’ (Lardinois 2013: 336). He had to realise that his work was not welcomed by the Institut de civilisation indienne due to objections by Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, although Dumont understood himself as a student of the sociologist Marcel Mauss and the Indologist Sylvain Lévi. It was mainly the cooperation with the young Indologist Madeleine Biardeau (1922–2010) that encouraged him to develop his ideas on the confluence of sociology and Indology.

In this riven situation, Dumont refused ‘the largely illusory character of Indian diversity’ to replace it by his credo that ‘India is one’ and that ‘this unity is found here above all in ideas and values’ (Dumont and Pocock 1957: 10).¹³ This cultural unity was largely maintained due to the ‘existence of Sanskrit as a civilising language, [and] the Brahmans as a superior class and their values as absolute values’ (Dumont 1964b: 64).¹⁴ Thus, the combination of the hierarchical caste system, based on Brahmanical categories of purity and impurity and the heredity of certain professions as well as ideas and values expressed in Sanskrit texts build the core of his theory. One of the central statements in Dumont’s work is: ‘The Brahmans, being in principle priests, occupy the supreme rank with respect to the whole set of castes’ (Dumont 1980: 47). This was very much in line with many studies of Hinduism, such as, Heesterman’s (1964: 1) view: ‘In Hindu society, the Brahmans are in the highest position.’

As is well known, for Dumont, the socio-religious leadership of the Brahmans lies in the distinction between temporary and permanent impurity. While organic pollutions such as birth, death excretions etc. strike ordinary men and women only temporarily, some castes, especially Brahmans and Untouchables, deal with it permanently. However, according to Dumont, purity and impurity are not only complementary opposites but the pure also encompasses the impure. This hierarchic but encompassing

¹³ The following is partly based on Michaels (2004a).

¹⁴ According to Lardinois (2013: 343 fn. 35), Dumont borrowed this formulation verbatim from Marcel Mauss.

relationship guarantees in its totality social cohesion. Dumont keeps emphasising that the West, with its egalitarian and individualistic thinking, can hardly see or accept such a holistic concept of encompassing the opposites.

As a consequence, Dumont (cf. 1980: 245), following Durkheim, for whom religion is the idealisation of society (collective conscience), takes the overarching norms of religion for the presence of transcendence in social life: Accordingly, the Brahmans have the highest status because they embody the society's highest value. This implies a clear separation of power and authority (Dumont 1980: 66 et seq. and Appendix B) so that for Dumont the kings are subordinate to the Brahmans in terms of religious status.

However, detailed studies of villages and Indian society have shown that the Brahman is not always at the top of the social scale,¹⁵ that his influence is weaker when he is in the minority, that there are considerable conflicts (Quigley 1993: 44f.) and competitions for the highest positions, that not every priest is a Brahman nor is every Brahman a priest; some were, for instance, soldiers and kings, and there are thus various traditional professions and activities of the Brahmans such as priest, religious and secular teacher (*ācārya, guru, paṇḍita, śāstrī*), ascetic (*saṃnyāsin, sādhu, yogin, svāmin, muni*), astrologer (*jyotiṣa etc.*) or even death priests (*mahābrāhmaṇa*).¹⁶ In this series of professions and functions, increase of contact clearly reduces rank. A temple priest has a lot of contact with pilgrims and therefore the teacher-Brahmans are seen as higher ranking. The priest also takes away impurity when he accepts gifts. Dumont (1980: 58) calls him a special kind of Untouchable. And the one who rejects any gift, the ascetic, is considered the purest Brahman. In the catalogue of the transfer of things, alms (*bhikṣā*) do not count as gifts (*dāna*).

Unlike Heesterman (1985), for whom the ideal Brahman is the ascetic because he keeps out of everything and thus forms an opposition to secular life, Dumont unites the Brahman as priest (in the world) and the Brahman as ascetic (outside the world) into a kind of 'transcendent' Brahman who

¹⁵ van der Veer (1993) and Michaels (2004a: 187–200); for further references, Heesterman (1964: 27), Parry (1979, 1980), Fuller (1979: 462; 1984: 49–71), Raheja (1988), van der Veer (1989) and Quigley (1993: 54ff.).

¹⁶ For Brahmanical classifications of Brahmans, see Kane (1968–74/II.1: 130–32).

encompasses the whole, which is inside every Hindu and with which the individual commits himself to the whole order:

[In India], separation and hierarchy of castes have meaning only because everyone knows tacitly that society is supported by the *mutual dependence* of the castes and consequently individual people in an order that constitutes the real meaning of human life. This is the core of the Hindu religion, while belief in spiritual beings and worship of the gods are basically only a secondary aspect. (Dumont 1991: 59)

But not all Hindus in fact know of the usefulness of this mutual dependency. And there is not only *one* order. In fact, economically dominant castes in the village are usually not Brahmans but castes who are generally served by other castes and who take impurity (barbers and launderers) or give religious service (Brahmans) (Kolenda 1985: 82; Marriott 1968b; Raheja 1988). According to Marriott's (1968) interaction theory, those who serve least, hence the landowners or the aristocracy, are on the top. But since almost every caste has other castes who remove impurity and serve them, a star-shaped model in which every caste can occupy the centre once illustrates social dependencies better than a single linear, hierarchical model.¹⁷

In view of these objections, what remains of the idea of superiority of the Brahmans and of Dumont's theory? The Brahman is not always at the top of the hierarchy, the evidence for that is convincing, and the Brahmanical texts are largely speaking for the Brahmanical ideology. But the dominance of textual scholarship in the history of religion is often misleading. For the social position of the Brahmans is different from their religious status and the values behind it. Brahmin-hood and the Brahmin are not the same.¹⁸ Notions of equality in the 'West' often have a Christian origin (or at least have roots in Christianity), but not every claim to equality is therefore Christian. For the sociology of India, the Veda is as little required as the Bible for the sociology of the 'West'.

Dumont's Brahmanico-centric view of (Hindu) India is concerned not only with ideology before empiricism, religion before politics, but also

¹⁷ See the model of Raheja (1988: 243).

¹⁸ See, for instance, the story of Satyakāma Jābāla in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (4.4.1 ff.) who does not know his origin but is accepted to study the Veda because of his truthfulness.

with the holistic Brahmanical doctrine before empiricism and society. In fact, based on Brahmanical texts and fieldwork seen through (Hindu) ideas and values expressed in these texts, his main aim is to affirm that 'India is one.' His holistic approach is full of binary concepts and explicitly rooted in a critique of Western individualism and its egalitarian society. It is also based on conceptions of social coherence, stability and unity of clearly defined social groups as well as the stability of the social structure as a whole, which is so deeply rooted in 'Western' thought. As Appadurai rightly said:

Dumont also composed an elegy and a deeply Western trope for a whole way of thinking about India, in which it represents the extremes of the human capability to fetishize inequality. Though Dumont regarded his work as an effort to capture the radical differentness of caste, and thus of India, it is also subject to the Orientalist tendency to make one place or society grist for the conceptual mill of another. (Appadurai 1986: 745)

Thus, Dumont sees the Indian society as a clearly demarcated cultural entity, which can only be defined as such in contrast to another cultural entity, that is, the 'West', and which thus generates Othering. Walter Slaje (2003)¹⁹ takes a similar position in that he defines Indology due to its history, systematics and methodology as a purely European science, 'since in the exercise of its research it is anchored entirely in the context of European thought and also methodically committed to it' (p. 6). Said had described Orientalism as 'Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient' (p. 95). Despite all the correct criticism of Said's theses and especially by Inden,²⁰ it remains a legitimate question whether there is a specifically Indian (Hindu) or Western or European way of thinking, as Martin Heidegger, for example, assumed (Halbfass 1997: 13). However, no matter if this question is answered within and beyond postcolonial theories, Europe exists only in relation to non-Europe, and only in this juxtaposition does a specifically Indian way of thinking emerge. At the same time, Indian culture is denied the ability to think independently and yet 'scientifically' or in a rational mode in the sense of Europe. The

¹⁹ On this article, see also Michaels (forthcoming).

²⁰ See Lariviere (1995) and Halbfass (1997).

often-used term ‘native science’ expresses exactly this inability.²¹ Veena Das has eloquently described the dilemma that Indian scholars face in such juxtapositions:

The educated Hindu cannot speak about caste and religion with authentic voices, because he is condemned to view the institutions of his society ‘from the standpoint of the West’. But if he takes a perspective that could be described as ‘Indian’, ‘Hindu’ or ‘Islamic’, he will be accused of being backward-looking... The only attitude that the modern Indian can adopt towards his own traditions is to put them in the past... The spatial distance is replaced by the temporal distance, so that the Indian anthropologist sees his own past as the other. (Das 1993: 2–3; my translation)

Dumont’s sociology of India relied on Brahmanical or Hindu texts. But contrary to what sometimes is suggested, it was not a simple monolithic Hindu Sociology or Anthropology as had been attempted by Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887–1949) in his nationalistic book *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology* (1914 and 1921). On the contrary, Dumont located his sociology in the field of what he saw as the only valid scientific sociology:

A Hindu sociology is a contradiction in terms ... Sociology is one in its principle ... There never will be two sociologies, let alone a sociology of solipsism ... I have no doubt that the caste system as an important type of social experience has lessons in store for sociology as a science, but this is subject to its translation into the universal language of sociology... Progressive Indians should be particularly alert against the dangers of a fake or ‘Hindu’ sociology developing as a weapon of obscurantism and reaction. (Dumont 1966 quoted from Lardinois 2013: 345–6)

The holistic view of India and the argument that ‘only’ Indians can understand India as it is now and then propagated by Hindutva adherents certainly cannot call Dumont as a witness.

Pared to the bone, Dumont uses Indology (or what he regards as Indology) to take a particular and certainly often dominant religious

²¹ See Michaels and Wulf (2020).

(Brahmanical) world view for the whole culture. But this is a striking example for a reductive reading of Indological literature because any cultural product is guided by interests and cultures cannot be recognised, construed and defined as clearly defined or stand-alone entities. Cultures are by definition or by default mode better regarded and analysed as transcultural, that is, hybrid, entangled, syncretic and with many references to other cultures (cf. Michaels 2019). The metaphor of 'confluence' is therefore highly misleading because it presupposes two compartmentalised entities (cultures, religions and disciplines) that are themselves interrelated and intertwined with other entities. The other, for instance, is irrevocably intertwined with one's own.

In my transcultural approach, therefore, the dominance of the scientific power of the 'West', which continues to exist, should be 'decolonised' through self-reflection and, where possible, in cooperation with the 'other' members of cultures. And this also holds true for the design and scope of academic disciplines, which should not be differentiated by the regional or methodological Procrustean beds designed in the 19th century along the nation-state model describing the world in fixed categories of cultural, social or political borders but by research questions and linguistic or methodological competencies. India, then, is as much in Europe as Europe is in India; in fact, the two are continuously intermixed, and similarly is anthropology as much in Indology as vice versa. 'India' can, then, not only be seen as a special case with its own way of thinking. Rather, it is a starting point for more or less far-reaching social and cultural interactions, the recording of which is by no means limited to the region of India and the academic subject of Indology or anthropology. Both Indology and anthropology then become themselves such transcultural interactions and critical area studies open for the vagueness and flows of social contexts and historical processes as well as for the hermeneutic ambiguities and ambivalences in texts.

Seen like this, India is not one but two and many more. Moreover, and in my eyes most importantly, it is exactly the ability to be more than one and to live, through an identificatory habitus (cf. Michaels 2004), with 'opposites', in two or more religions or life-worlds that characterises a great deal of Indian ideas, practices and experiences. It is much more rewarding then to look through the transcultural lens for these various interrelations rather than reducing India to holism and seeing her just 'through Hindu categories' (Marriott 1990). Correspondingly, the disciplines necessary to understand

Indian society and culture must be selected according to research problems and are therefore also more than just one or two. The sociology of India is not at the point of the confluence of anthropology and classical Indology but at the point of confluence of many aspects and various disciplines.

Are we back to diversity? Yes,²² but it is transcultural, transregional and transnational diversity that matters. Everything else—whether it comes from the ‘West’ or (Swadeshi) India—bears the danger of reductionism and essentialism and veils more than it helps to discover the richness of human life-worlds. Thus, instead of knowledge on India or, better, on South Asia, we should include South Asian knowledge from South Asia(ns)

that disrupt what would otherwise seem to be the iron laws of Western knowledge – real topoi that give utopians, which all of us today must be to some degree, reason to hope. They provide us with new questions, sometimes very disruptive questions; they show us the world was different, and can be different. (Pollock 2014: 21)

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²² Similarly, Berger (2012: 350) in his conclusion: ‘This outline has shown that theoretical perspectives involved in the anthropology of India have been as diverse as the social and cultural phenomena being studied.’

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