



The Nay Science: A History of German Indology

By Vishwa Adluri, Joydeep Bagchee

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The Nay Science offers a new perspective on the problem of scientific method in the human sciences. Taking German Indological scholarship on the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavadgita* as their example, Adluri and Bagchee develop a critique of the modern valorization of method over truth in the humanities.

The authors show how, from its origins in eighteenth-century Neo-Protestantism onwards, the critical method was used as a way of making theological claims against rival philosophical and/or religious traditions. Via discussions of German Romanticism, the pantheism controversy, scientific positivism, and empiricism, they show how theological concerns dominated German scholarship on the Indian texts. Indology functions as a test case for wider concerns: the rise of historicism, the displacement of philosophical concerns from thinking, and the belief in the ability of a technical method to produce truth.

Based on the historical evidence of the first part of the book, Adluri and Bagchee make a case in the second part for going beyond both the critical pretensions of modern academic scholarship and the objections of its post-structuralist or post-Orientalist critics. By contrasting German Indology with Plato's concern for virtue and Gandhi's focus on praxis, the authors argue for a conception of the humanities as a dialogue between the ancients and moderns and between eastern and western cultures.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The Nay Science is an important work of hermeneutic analysis "--*Religion Compass*

"An extraordinary work [and] brilliant in-depth investigation If ever there is a fine specimen of how to do the in-depth history of ideas as it pertains to an academic discipline, this study by Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee ranks very, very highly This is a monumental piece of work, and scholars wanting to think through their own presuppositions and conditionings will ignore it at their peril All hail to two veritable Indian masters of both German and English."--*History of Religions*

"*The Nay Science* is arguably one of most comprehensive historiographies of Indology, assessing the field's philosophical roots and the implications it has had on both academic and practical discourses about Hinduism and other Indian classical traditions....*The Nay Science* (a clever play on nescience, or ignorance) speaks to the institutional antagonism of 19th and early 20th century German Indologists towards ancient Indian scriptures, subsequently shaping a paradigm from which many Indologists continue to draw. Their assertion, backed by correspondences between Indologists and their own published works, is not so much a critique of Orientalism as it is a surgical evisceration of the scholarly field that has developed over nearly two centuries."--*OPEN Magazine*

"*The Nay Science* concludes with some exciting and discomfoting questions: How should we navigate and negotiate apparent antitheses: 'modern' and 'traditional,' 'reason' and 'faith'? What pragmatic concerns and consequences should inform our scholarship, such that the humanities can truly humanize us? These questions are key to a critical reorientation, toward thinking about India 'after Indology.'"--*American Historical Review*

"Adluri and Bagchee eschew the shooting-fish-in-a-barrel exercise of excoriating nineteenth-century European scholars for their sins and instead conclude by drawing some lessons from Gadamer and Gandhi on the benefits of an alternative philosophical philology. The points the authors make are relevant to historians of religion no matter what discipline they study."--*Religious Studies Review*

"[*The Nay Science*] adds significantly to the many recent studies of Orientalism...Highly recommended."--*CHOICE*

"This book begins at a point where Edward Said left off. Rather than replicate the 'Orientalist' critique as so many have done, Adluri and Bagchee offer a diagnosis of German Indology as a form of 'Occidentalism': rather than accomplishing its stated goal of defining the other (which would be 'Orientalism'), it represents the other so as to define itself. *The Nay Science* challenges scholars to recognize that the 'Brahmanic hypothesis' was not and probably no longer can be an innocuous thesis. The 'corrupting' impact of Brahmanical 'priestcraft' served German Indology as a cover by which to talk about Catholics, Jews, and other 'Semites.'" -- Alf Hiltebeitel, Professor of Religion and Human Sciences, George Washington University

"*The Nay Science* is more than a history of German Indology. Besides offering a highly nuanced critique of scientific positivism and historicism, it makes important interventions in broader debates on the development of the social and human sciences in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany, and has much to say regarding the role of race and religion in the formation of German national identity. Last but not least, *The Nay Science* contributes greatly to our understanding of the origins, nature, and consequences of German orientalism. While the non specialist reader might find this ambitious work daunting in its depth, breadth, and complexity, the authors have produced a remarkable work of scholarship." --*Central European History*

About the Author

Vishwa Adluri has a PhD in Philosophy from the New School and a PhD in Indology from Philipps-Universität Marburg. He is Adjunct Associate Professor of Religion at Hunter College.

Joydeep Bagchee has a PhD in Philosophy from the New School and is Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter at Freie Universität Berlin.

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