

**HARMLESS OR DANGEROUS?
THE ERANOS CONFERENCES IN THE 1930s
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE
OF NATIONAL SOCIALIST GERMANY**

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In a handwritten memorandum from June 1936, to be found in the files of the German Reich Ministry of Science and Education, it was suggested that all German applicants should be disallowed participation in the Eranos conference in the following August. Since the objective of the Eranos movement would be totally alien to the German mind, any permission for German scholars to join the convention in Switzerland should be refused. The author of the note continued that

“The Eranos movement intends to infiltrate our Christian life in the West with oriental and occult ideas claiming to enhance it that way. I think we had enough to quarrel in the last 1936 years with these influences and should no longer tolerate them.”¹

Although the name of this functionary of the Berlin ministry is unknown and although he refers in a general sense to “our Christian life,” it becomes evident from his arguing that he had a certain affinity to Pagan ideas. Another statement from January 1937, obviously originating from the Secret Service of the SS, was equally negative about the Eranos conferences. The whole undertaking appeared here as a clever camouflage

¹ “Ich schlage vor, sämtlichen Antragstellern den Besuch der Eranostagungen in Ascona m. [mit] Rücksicht auf die völlig abzulehnenden Ziele der Eranosbewegung zu untersagen. [...] Die Eranosbewegung will unser ‘westliches’ Christenleben mit orientalischen okkulten Gedanken durchsetzen m.d. [mit der] Behauptung, es dadurch zu bereichern. Ich denke, wir haben mit den fremden Einflüssen aus den letzten 1936 Jahren genug zu kämpfen und sollten uns für weiteren Zuwachs bedanken.” Memorandum from June 29, 1936, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 24. (This and all other English translations in this article are mine.)

ferences. The whole undertaking appeared here as a clever camouflage of hidden aims comparable to the activities of the Freemasons. The unnamed writer of the SD memo criticized especially the high degree of Jewish elements among the participants. He also mentioned the clash which Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881-1962), the leader of the German Faith Movement, had had with Martin Buber (1878-1965) two and a half years earlier during the Eranos meeting in August 1934.²

Hauer himself was a collaborator of the SD and reported about his encounter with Buber – whereas in rather positive terms. The Tübingen Indologist and historian of religions described Buber as a Zionist who might help achieve an ‘organic’ solution to the “Jewish Question” in Germany. Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) figured in Hauer’s description as a pro-German foreigner with sympathies for Nazi Germany.³ In his book *Bollingen an adventure in collecting the past*, William McGuire tells the story about the incident between Hauer and Buber in Ascona from another perspective:

“In the event, Olga Froebe aimed to proscribe politics at Eranos, either in the lectures or in the ensuing discussions. At the 1934 conference, the rule was broken by J. W. Hauer, the professor of Indology at Tübingen, who lectured on the self in Indo-Aryan mysticism. During an informal exchange with the audience he embarked on an apologia for the political scene in Germany. Martin Buber, who had lectured on an aspect of Judaism, saved the situation by turning it into a discussion of Meister Eckhart. Hauer was not invited again.”⁴

Besides the simple fact that Hauer was again invited to the next Eranos conference but refused to come to Ascona in 1935, it will become clear in the following that things are more complicated than McGuire’s assessment indicates. A proper interpretation of the political setting of the Eranos movement deserves a better substantiated and more differentiated account. In my judgment McGuire exaggerates the intrinsic antagonism between the ideology of National Socialism and the so-called spirit of

² Memorandum from January 30, 1937, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 112-114.

³ Hauer’s judgement is not transmitted. But it was summarized by a member of the SD staff – probably by Hauer’s former secretary Paul Zapp (1904-1999) – on September 21, 1934, Federal Archives Berlin, Dahlwitz Hoppegarten, ZB I 858, fol. 226f. Cf. Horst JUNGINGER, *Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft. Das Fach Religionswissenschaft an der Universität Tübingen von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des Dritten Reiches*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999, p. 137f.

⁴ William MCGUIRE, *Bollingen an adventure in collecting the past*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 26.

Eranos considerably. The claimed a-policy and the statement of Olga Froebe-Kapteyn quoted by McGuire that Eranos has to be understood as a “counterforce to nazism”⁵ is contradictory in itself and does not correspond to the complexity of the situation. But also the judgments of Hauer, the SD, and certain members of the Reich Ministry of Science and Education cannot be taken as a neutral historical source. These utterances were anything but unbiased and have to be critically analyzed in the light of their contextual interests.

At the request of Matthias Heinrich Göring (1879-1945), cousin of the Nazi potentate Hermann Göring (1893-1946) and head of both the German section of the International German Medical Society for Psychotherapy and the German Institute for Psychological Research and Psychiatry (“Deutsches Institut für Psychologische Forschung und Psychiatrie”), Olga Froebe-Kapteyn (1881-1962) was received by the Berlin Ministry of Science and Education on December 8, 1936. Froebe-Kapteyn wanted to discuss some problems concerning the participation of German scholars in the Eranos conferences she was organizing since 1933. Because the Berlin ministry had no clear idea of what was behind the Eranos movement it hesitated to allow German university teachers under its jurisdiction to join the convention in Ascona. Being described as very pro-German by the ministry, Froebe-Kapteyn used the chance of a personal encounter to explain the real intentions of the Eranos movement from her perspective.⁶ In particular she wanted to clear the case of the Hamburg Ethnologist and head of a department at the anthropological museum there, Theodor Wilhelm Danzel (1886-1954). His participation raised objections when the ministry found out that one of his grandparents was of non-Aryan origin. Irrespective of that fact Danzel got the permission to attend the Eranos conference in 1937 although he had lost his lectureship and the right to keep the title of a professor four years earlier. Froebe-Kapteyn’s intervention and a positive statement of the rector of the University of Hamburg Adolf Rein (1885-1979) had obviously turned out to be successful.⁷

⁵ W. MCGUIRE, *Bollingen an adventure in collecting the past*, p. 24.

⁶ Undated and unnamed assessment in early 1937 about the visit of Olga Froebe-Kapteyn, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 34. The author was probably a subordinate of Theodor Vahlen (1869-1945), the chief of the department (“Amtschef Wissenschaft”), whom she met. Cf. also Froebe-Kapteyn’s letters to Vahlen on December 27, 1936 and February 24, 1937, *ibid.*, fol. 31f.

⁷ Rein’s statement dated April 4, 1937, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 41; the permission of the ministry for Danzel’s participation on May 21, 1937, *ibid.*, fol. 42; inquiries of Froebe-Kapteyn concerning Danzel on May 20 and May 30, 1937, *ibid.*, fol. 46f. Cf. also the lecture of Danzel published under the title

At the beginning of 1938, Olga Froebe-Kapteyn went again to Berlin to present her matter. According to a memo written by Heinrich Harmjanz (1904-1994), a high rank of the ministry being in charge of the humanities between 1937 and 1943, Froebe-Kapteyn declared that she would be very eager to gather German scholars. The international meeting in Ascona would be a good chance to testify against those reproaches that academic freedom would be oppressed in Germany.⁸ Having sent a preliminary program to the ministry before, Olga Froebe-Kapteyn traveled to Berlin at the end of January or at the beginning of February 1938.⁹ Now she wanted to talk about the involvement of Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), Erwin Rousselle (1890-1949), and Heinrich Zimmer (1890-1943) which had become a subject of disputation. In the case of the Ethnologist Frobenius the problem settled by itself because he was only a honorary professor and had no official position at the University of Frankfurt. Furthermore he died on August 9, 1938. His contacts with the former German emperor Wilhelm II (1888-1918), who lived as a refugee in Doorn in the Netherlands since 1918, aroused the ministry's suspicion that Frobenius was a reactionary with animosities towards National Socialism. However, in February 1938 Harmjanz had written in his memo that Frobenius would go to Ascona, with or without a permission.¹⁰ Concerning the head

“Zur Psychologie der altmexikanischen Symbolik,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 5 (1937), pp. 210-239.

⁸ The undated note bears February 18, 1938 as date stamp, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 54. The shorthand symbol on it indicates Heinrich Harmjanz as author. For biographical information on Harmjanz, see Michael GRÜTTNER, *Biographisches Lexikon zur nationalsozialistische Wissenschaftspolitik*, Heidelberg: Synchron, 2004, p. 70 and Paul KLEE, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich*, Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2003, p. 226. Together with Walther Wüst (1901-1993) Harmjanz edited the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* under the patronage of the SS from 1939 on. Cf. Horst JUNGINGER, “From Buddha to Adolf Hitler: Walther Wüst and the Aryan Tradition,” in ID., (ed.), *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, Leiden: Brill, 2008, p. 156 and ID., “Archiv für Religionswissenschaft,” in Ingo HAAR and Michael FAHLBUSCH (eds.), *Handbuch völkischer Wissenschaften*, München: Saur, 2008, pp. 54-58 as well as ID. “Walther Wüst,” *ibid.*, pp. 776-783.

⁹ Cf. the letters of Olga Froebe-Kapteyn to the Reich Ministry of Science and Education on January 22, January 25, and March 13, 1938, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 52f. and fol. 55. The aforementioned note of Harmjanz was a reaction to that visit.

¹⁰ Memo of H. Harmjanz, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, verso fol. 54. Concerning the relationship of Frobenius (and Walter F. Otto) with Wilhelm II, see Helmut HEIBER, *Universität unterm Hakenkreuz*, part 1: *Der Professor im Dritten Reich. Bilder aus der akademischen Provinz*, München: Saur, 1991, p. 248.

of the Frankfurt China Institute Rouselle Harmjanž stated “everything O.K.,” “Rouselle alles in Ordnung.”¹¹ Seemingly he had no knowledge about Rouselle’s membership in a Freemasonry Lodge before 1933. When the ministry was informed about that fact, it withdrew his lectureship and forbade him to give public lectures in 1939. Already in 1936 it had renounced Rouselle’s application to participate in the fourth Eranos conference in 1937.¹² Due to his political unreliability the interference of Olga Froebe-Kapteyn failed to change the decision of the ministry.

What provoked a vigorous discussion in 1938 was the case of the Indologist Heinrich Zimmer. Zimmer had given lectures at the first two Eranos conferences in 1933 and 1934 but was rejected in 1936 together with Rouselle.¹³ Unfortunately the ministry figured out that Zimmer was married to a Jewish wife, a daughter of the Austrian poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1924). Hence it withdrew his lectureship at the University of Heidelberg on February 24, 1938.¹⁴ Zimmer then went to Great Britain and eventually emigrated to the United States. In the light of his “jüdische Versippung,” as National Socialist nomenclature called his ‘crime’ committed eight years before the enactment of the Nuremberg laws, it comes as a great surprise that Zimmer was allowed to attend the

¹¹ Memo of H. Harmjanž, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, verso fol. 54. Cf. also the statement of Zimmer’s son-in-law Walter Haug in Elisabetta BARONE *et al.* (eds.), *Pioniere, Poeten, Profeten. Eranos und der Monte Verità in der Zivilisationsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Königshausen & Neumann, 2004, pp. 210-212 and Hans Thomas HAKL, *Der verborgene Geist von Eranos. Unbekannte Begegnungen von Wissenschaft und Esoterik*, Bretten: scientia nova, 2001, p. 106.

¹² Cf. the request of Rouselle on June 24, 1936 and the rejection of the ministry on July 9, 1936, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 22 and fol. 26. Rouselle was a regular lecturer in all of the first three Eranos conferences between 1933 and 1936. Cf. his articles “Seelische Führung im lebendigen Taoismus,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 1 (1933), pp. 95-134, “Drache und Stute. Gestalten der mystischen Welt chinesischer Urzeit,” *ibid.* 2 (1934), pp. 11-33, and “Lau-Dsis Gang durch Seele, Geschichte und Welt,” *ibid.* 3 (1935), pp. 179-205.

¹³ Request of Zimmer on April, 16, 1936 and the rejection of the ministry on July 9, 1936, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 11 and fol. 26. Cf. Heinrich ZIMMER, “Zur Bedeutung des indischen Tantra-Yoga,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 1 (1933), pp. 9-94 and *Id.*, “Indische Mythen als Symbole,” *ibid.* 2 (1934), pp. 97-151.

¹⁴ Memo of H. Harmjanž, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, verso fol. 54. For biographical information about Zimmer, see Valentina STACHE-ROSEN, *German Indologists. Biographies of scholars in Indian studies writing in German, with a summary on Indology in German speaking countries*, 2nd rev. ed., New Delhi: Max Mueller Bhavan, 1990, pp. 216-218 and H. Th. HAKL, *Der verborgene Geist von Eranos*, 2001, pp. 102-105 and p. 131.

congress in Ascona in August 1938. Besides his partaking in World War I,¹⁵ the intervention of Froebe-Kapteyn seems to have been the determining factor for the positive decision of the ministry. On April 28, 1938, the Baden Ministry of Culture and Education in Karlsruhe wrote a letter to Berlin asking how to proceed with Zimmer after his dismissal four days earlier and because Zimmer was allowed to go to Ascona on March, 29, 1939. This letter includes a handwritten message for “Prof. Harmjanz” saying that Olga Froebe-Kapteyn was already given the assurance of Zimmer’s participation and that he therefore should be allowed to join the Eranos meeting.¹⁶ Zimmer contributed two important articles to the Eranos yearbooks six and seven.¹⁷

The case of Zimmer forced the Ministry of Science and Education in Berlin to pay closer attention to the Eranos movement. Furthermore it had received a critical letter of the Foreign Office of the NSDAP in Mai 1938 whose cultural office was irritated because the Eranos conferences had got, from their angle, on dangerous ground. Relying on their own informants, the “Kulturamt” came to the conclusion that the Eranos movement might probably use research in religion as cover for its political agenda:

“I would like to point to the fact that the Eranos society more and more stumbled into political altercations in the last time taking place under the guise of research in religion. Harmless researchers have to cover the whole thing with their lectures. In the lecture courses a relative high percentage of Jews has been detected. The whole matter appears rather mysterious, in particular because uninitiated people are not allowed to participate in the events. Speakers often do appear neither on the invitations nor in the press. Please inform us if something positive is known about the Eranos society. Otherwise a participation of German professors must arouse suspicion.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Zimmer was a highly decorated soldier of World War I. Hakl presumes that he had been engaged in activities of the secret service utilizing his expertise as an Indologist. H. Th. HAKL, *Der verborgene Geist von Eranos*, p. 103.

¹⁶ Letter of the Ministry of Culture and Education in Karlsruhe to the Reich Ministry in Berlin on April 28, 1938., Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 59.

¹⁷ Heinrich ZIMMER, “Die indische Weltmutter,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 6 (1938), pp. 175-220 and “Tod und Wiedergeburt im indischen Licht,” *ibid.* 7 (1939), pp. 251-289. The latter article already appeared with the addendum “Heinrich Zimmer, Oxford.”

¹⁸ “Ich möchte darauf hinweisen, dass die Eranos Gesellschaft in der letzten Zeit immer mehr in das Fahrwasser politischer Auseinandersetzungen geraten ist, die unter dem Deckmantel religiöser Forschung ausgetragen werden. Harmlose Forscher müssen als Referenten das ganze decken. Bei den Vortragskursen wurde eine relativ hohe Beteiligung von Juden festgestellt. Die ganze Angelegenheit

Without having a clear understanding of what was going on in Ascona, the “Kulturamt” considered the whole Eranos venture rather mysterious and pleaded for a disallowance of German scholars to become entangled. Thereupon the Berlin ministry approached Matthias Göring asking him what he knew about the Eranos movement.¹⁹ Göring answered three days later that he could not say very much but that had entrusted Olga Freiin von König-Fachsenfeld with the task to write a report about the next Eranos conference.²⁰ Dr. König-Fachsenfeld, a member of the NSDAP and pupil of C. G. Jung, emphasized in her account the a-political nature of the symposium.²¹ Accordingly, she had not heard any negative word about the Third Reich in Ascona. Jews would have remained in the background:

“Among the speakers was – probably with respect for the German participants – no single Jew. In spite of that a number of Jews were visible among the listeners. But I cannot say something conspicuous about them.”²²

In 1939 additional state and party agencies became involved in the Eranos problem, among them the Foreign Ministry, the SS, the Office of the Deputy of the “Führer,” and the Rosenberg Office. The consulate general in Zurich expressed its opinion that German scholars should be refused to go to Ascona without a guarantee of their political reliability.²³

erscheint reichlich mysteriös, insbesondere dadurch, dass Uneingeweihte an den Veranstaltungen niemals teilnehmen können und auch die Redner häufig weder in den Einladungen noch in der Presse genannt werden. Ich bitte um Mitteilung, ob dort etwas Positives über die Eranos Gesellschaft bekannt ist, weil andererseits die Beteiligung deutscher Professoren an einer solchen Tagung verdächtig erscheinen müsste.” Letter of the Foreign Office of the NSDAP to the Ministry of Science and Education in Berlin on May 5, 1938, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 60.

¹⁹ Letter of the Reich Ministry of Science and Education (draft) to Prof. Göring on July 2, 1938, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 61.

²⁰ Letter of Matthias Göring to the Reich Ministry of Science and Education on July 5, 1938, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 65.

²¹ Assessment of Olga von König-Fachsenfeld on August 23, 1938, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 73. The report was sent by Göring to the ministry on August 29, 1938, *ibid.* fol. 72. Cf. also Olga von KÖNIG FACHSENFELD, *Wandlungen des Traumproblems von der Romantik bis zu Gegenwart*, Stuttgart: Enke, 1935, with a foreword written by C. G. Jung.

²² *Ibid.*, fol. 73.

²³ Letter of the “Deutsches Generalkonsulat” to the “Deutsche Gesandtschaft” in Bern on December 11, 1939. The consulate general stated that it had pleaded already in January to take better care of the political side of the problem. The

Prior to that it had asked the head of the local Lugano and Locarno branch of the NSDAP, Dr. Julius Ammer (1880-1946) – a German architect who lived in Ascona since October 1927 – , what he would think about the Eranos movement. Answering the request, Ammer wrote a rather positive statement which showed him well informed about both the Eranos movement and the differing German vistas of it.²⁴ Though Ammer underlined a theosophical orientation of many Eranos members, he excluded any covert plans behind it. He also disagreed with the negative SD assessment from January 30, 1937. Beyond that, Ammer mentioned that the German speakers usually stayed in the hotel Monte Verità being in the possession of the pro-German Baron Eduard von der Heydt (1882-1864). Since Ammer's own property adjoined the hotel, he had particular reason to complain that except of Danzel and Rousselle no German had thought it necessary to pay him as representative of the German NSDAP a courtesy or information visit.²⁵ In December 1939 the "Ortsgruppenleiter" Ammer wrote a second evaluation in which he again emphasized the positive effect it would have if German university teachers would defend their homeland in the public against false allegations. A participation of them would be desirable on the condition of their political loyalty and, secondly, if it would be clear that Jews and emigrants would be barred.²⁶ Stressing the political usefulness of the Eranos conferences, the consulate in Lugano acknowledged Ammer's judgment. The opportunity for a discussion with scholars from neutral countries should be used to clear up rumors and lies originating from the propaganda of the enemies.²⁷

To prepare the Eranos conference in 1939, Olga Froebe-Kapteyn approached the Berlin ministry once more in advance, now petitioning in favor of Walter F. Otto (1847-1958), Richard Thurnwald (1869-1954),

legation in Bern fully consented on December 18, 1939 and on December 29, 1939, the Foreign Ministry sent that statement to the Ministry of Science and Education in Berlin. Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 77f.

²⁴ Ammer's report is undated but must have been written after the Eranos conference in August 1938 and before January 25, 1939 when the consulate general sent it to the Bern legation. Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 95, the report itself fol. 96f.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Statement of Ammer from December 7, 1939, sent by the Zurich consulate general to the legation in Bern on January 25, 1939, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 79 and fol. 95.

²⁷ "Die sich dadurch bietende Gelegenheit einer Aussprache mit Gelehrten aus neutralen Ländern kann auch dazu benutzt werden, manches aufzuklären, was durch die feindliche Propaganda in falschem Licht verbreitet worden ist." *Ibid.*, fol. 80.

and Hans Heinrich Schaeder (1896-1957).²⁸ She still was very eager to invite academics of repute from Germany and her efforts again met a favorable reaction on the German side. In a letter to the rector of his university Willy Hoppe (1884-1960), the Berlin ethnologist Thurnwald underlined Olga Froebe-Kapteyn's explicit assurance that no Jews would be invited.²⁹ He specifically pointed to the fact "that Ms F.K. had assured me explicitly that Jews would not be allowed to join the conference, the more so because one was interested in a participation of the Germans." As a proof of her cooperation Olga Froebe-Kapteyn would have promised to inform the ministry in advance about the program and the speakers.³⁰

The specialist in Middle Eastern and oriental studies at the University of Berlin Hans Heinrich Schaeder reacted already the next day to the request of his rector.³¹ He communicated to Hoppe that Froebe-Kapteyn had visited him in January 1939 in order to ask for his participation and, having achieved that, to go to the ministry and arrange everything. "Subject to the permission of the minister" Schaeder declared that he would be ready to give three talks at the Eranos conference in August on Death and resurrection in the old Iranian religion and in the mysteries of Mithra, but "only on the explicit warranty that no Jews and emigrants would be invited."³² For unknown reasons, Schaeder's lectures were not published in the Eranos yearbook.³³ Subsequent to the conference,

²⁸ Letter of Olga Froebe-Kapteyn to the Reich Ministry of Science and Education on December 20, 1938, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 31. Further letters of her followed on March 2, March 20, and March 30, 1939, *ibid.*, fol. 99-101.

²⁹ Letter of Richard Thurnwald to the rector of the University of Berlin on April 23, 1939, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 121. He answered a request of the rector whom the ministry had asked for a statement.

³⁰ "Hervorgehoben muss werden, dass Frau F.K. mir ausdrücklich versicherte, dass Juden nicht zur Tagung herangezogen werden, zumal man auf die Teilnahme der Deutschen grossen Wert legt.", *ibid.* verso fol. 121. Thurnwald's lecture appeared as "Primitive Initiations- und Wiedergeburtstagen," *Eranos-Jahrbuch 7* (1939), pp. 321-398.

³¹ Letter of Hans Heinrich Schaeder to the rector of the University of Berlin on April 23, 1939, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 120.

³² "Ich habe, vorbehaltlich der Genehmigung des Herrn Ministers und auf die ausdrückliche Zusicherung hin, daß keine Juden und keine deutschen Emigranten zu Vorträgen eingeladen würden, mich grundsätzlich zur Uebernahme von drei Vorträgen über 'Tod und Auferstehung in der altiranischen Religion und im Mithraskult' (das ist die endgültige Titelfassung) bereit erklärt." *Ibid.*, verso fol. 120. The permission of the ministry on May 17, 1939, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 124f.

³³ Instead of Schaeder's contribution an article of Hans Leisegang appeared. See the remark in the *Eranos-Jahrbuch 7* (1939), p. 151.

Schaeder submitted a detailed report about his impressions in Ascona to the ministry explicitly praising the organizers for having excluded emigrants and non-Aryans. Only one week after German troops had invaded Poland, he had no scruples to criticize a “chimerical fear” of a German military aggression prevailing particularly among citizens from Switzerland and the Netherlands. Schaeder claimed that his unmitigated support of National Socialist politics would have been a strong counterbalance against the enemy propaganda. Beyond that he would have been able to destroy the false impression as if the representatives of the cultural and scientific life in Germany would stay in opposition to their government:

“Using every possibility I got, I have tried to destroy this idea as far as possible. I believe to have brought a number of men to reconsider their opinion who followed thus far a fable convenue [widespread myth, H.J.]”³⁴

Schaeder proudly announced the success of his apologetic conduct although political debates had been prohibited *ex cathedra* at the beginning of the conference. Lauding his efforts to enlighten the absurdity of all attempts to drive a wedge between the political leadership and the German people, he underlined the right of the Third Reich to overcome the system of Versailles.³⁵ Writing only a few days after Germany had

³⁴ “In beiden Fällen traf die nervöse Angst vor eingebildeten deutschen Angriffsabsichten zusammen mit dem gelegentlich fast unwilligen Erstaunen darüber, daß ein deutscher ‘Intellektueller’ sich unbedingt und offen als Nationalsozialist bekannte und sich mit der nationalsozialistischen Neuordnung Deutschlands rückhaltslos identifizierte. Die Emigrantenpropaganda, die ja in beiden Ländern die widerwärtigsten Vertreter hat, und die neutrale Presse desgleichen haben auch bei gebildeten und um ein selbständiges Urteil bemühten Schweizern und Holländern bisher die Vorstellung am Leben erhalten können, als stünden die Vertreter des kulturellen Lebens und der Wissenschaft in Deutschland, soweit sie nicht selber von Anfang an Nationalsozialisten gewesen sind, im Gegensatz zum Nationalsozialismus oder mindestens in kritisch prüfender Reserve. Diese Vorstellung zu zerstören habe ich mir, sobald ich irgend die Möglichkeit dazu ergab, alle Mühe gegeben und glaube dadurch mindestens eine Reihe von Männern, die hier bisher einer fable convenue folgten, zum Nachdenken bewogen zu haben.” Congress report of Schaeder from September 7, 1939, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, verso fol. 129 and recte fol. 130.

³⁵ “Die ganze Propaganda unserer Feinde ist wieder darauf gerichtet, einerseits in Deutschland einen Keil zwischen Führung und Volk zu treiben. In dieser Lage kann ein Deutscher, der in wenn auch beschränkten Kreisen von Gebildeten in den neutralen Ländern die Sinnlosigkeit dieser Propaganda und die wirklichen Ziele des deutschen Endkampfes um die Befreiung von Versailles klarstellt, unmittelbaren Nutzen stiften.” *Ibid.*, recte and verso fol. 130.

launched World War II – and only nine months before German troops invaded the Netherlands – such a statement of the Berlin Orientalist was nothing but blatant propaganda.

The response of Walter F. Otto to his rector at the University of Königsberg was less sympathetic in political regard. In a short and formal letter he just stated on April 20, 1939 that he had got an invitation to the Eranos conference which he would accept if the ministry would allow it. Contrary to the others, Otto omitted all political references as well as the obligatory “Heil Hitler” at the end.³⁶ This disrespect must have been considered an affront especially on the birthday of the “Führer.” Despite of his lacking commitment to National Socialism he was allowed to attend the Eranos conference due to the advocacy of Olga Froebe-Kapteyn.

If we compare her backstage negotiations with the official historiography of the Eranos movement, a significant divergence in the arguing becomes apparent. Even on the basis of a strong empathy with the worldview aims of Eranos it is hardly possible to overlook the political implications of her bargaining with the Berlin Reich Ministry of Science and Education. To arrange a sort of ideological joint venture with National Socialist authorities on the basis of a commonly agreed exclusion of Jews and political opponents from the Ascona conferences does not conform to the claim that the *Casa Eranos* had been a center of intellectual resistance against fascism. Inviting pro-Nazi scholars instead and providing them with the opportunity to bear witness of the positive nature of National Socialist politics opposes not only the claimed a-policy but the assertion of having been a “counterforce to Nazism” as well.

Eduard von der Heydt, the owner of the Hotel Monte Verità where the Eranos guests used to reside during their stay in Ascona, is another example for a questionable relationship between the realm of spirit and politics. The prominent banker and arts collector von der Heydt not only supported the Eranos movement but worked also for the German intelligence and ran various bank accounts on behalf of the infamous Reich Security Main Office in Switzerland. Many new facts have come to light in the recent past bearing clear evidence of von der Heydt’s en-

³⁶ Letter of Walter F. Otto to the rector of the University of Königsberg on April 20, 1939, Federal Archives Berlin, R 4901, 2797, fol. 106. The permission of the ministry on May 13, 1939, *ibid.* fol. 107f. Cf. Walter F. OTTO, “Der Sinn der eleusinischen Mysterien,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 7 (1939), pp. 83-112. Like Frobenius Otto belonged to a working committee around Wilhelm II called “Doorner Arbeitskreis.” The submissive manner of Otto’s congratulation to the former emperor on his birthday on January 27, 1938 met displeasure on the side of the German authorities. Cf. H. HEIBER, *Universität unterm Hakenkreuz*, p. 248.

gagement for the Third Reich from which both sides derived their profit.³⁷ His generosity regarding the Eranos guests in his hotel appears in another light considering the source of his wealth. In the early twenties von der Heydt made a lot of money as banker of Wilhelm II which allowed him to buy the Monte Verità in 1926. At the same time he broke the relationship with his Jewish father-in-law Paul von Schwabach (1867-1938), the famous banker and owner of the Bleichröder banking company who had opened him the door to the riches of the German emperor. While the fact of von der Heydt's pro-Nazi involvement can hardly be denied today, his turning from conservative elitism towards National Socialism still remains unclear and awaits further research.³⁸

If we want to assess the political background of the Eranos movement in the 1930s appropriately, it is essential to consider the position of its *spiritus rector* and intellectual leader Carl Gustav Jung. Literature on Jung and his liaison with fascist ideas after the rise of the Third Reich abounds. Certainly he had hoped to establish his own brand of depth psychology as leading discipline in the field of psychological and therapeutic scholarship in Germany at the beginning. In the first issue of the politically aligned *Zentralblatt für Psychotherapie* Jung made far-reaching concessions to the new zeitgeist underscoring the racial otherness of the Jewish soul. The *Zentralblatt* was the journal of the International Medical Society for Psychotherapy headed by Jung since June 1933. As president of its German section functioned Matthias Göring with whom Jung maintained a close cooperation. In addition to Jung's statement the same issue of the *Zentralblatt* contained an infamous appeal of Matthias Göring that the members of the Medical Society for Psychotherapy ought to read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and acknowledge it as ideological guidelines. Though different in the degree of their ideological partiality, the intention of Göring and Jung went in the same direction of a non- or even anti-Jewish psychoanalysis which would better fit to the racial shape of the German soul.

In Jung's comprehension of that time, the unconscious mind of the Jews was inferior to that of the Aryans. Because religion played a

³⁷ Von der Heydt's compromising behavior resulted in heated debates how to assess his later arts patronage. For instance, his East Asian art collection served as basis for the famous Rietberg Museum in Zurich that opened in 1952. In 1961 the municipal arts museum in Wuppertal was named after Eduard von der Heydt.

³⁸ In light of his article "Zum Zweiten Nordischen Thing" (*Europäische Revue* 10 [1934], no. 2, pp. 464-468) it would seem that von der Heydt's sympathies for the Nordic idea functioned as connecting link. Maybe he considered his own role in a way similar to that of Ludwig Roselius (1874-1943), the Maecenas of the Böttcherstraße culture in Bremen. Von der Heydt participated in both Nordic Things in 1933 and 1934.

decisive role in generating and structuring the archetypes of a collective mentality, Jung's theory met great sympathy on the side of the Tübingen Indologist and scholar of religion Jakob Wilhelm Hauer. On these grounds both entered into a close intellectual cooperation. In my opinion the overlapping features between Jung's and Hauer's reasoning ought to be seen as the starting point and theoretical core of the Eranos movement. Olga Froebe-Kapteyn's capacities apparently have been limited to a large degree to the organizational and financial aspects of the venture. Many documents to be found in the literal remains of Hauer provide evidence of his close alliance with Jung in these years. It would be fallacious to remove Hauer from the Jungian legacy and the history of the Eranos conferences. Already in November 1932 Froebe-Kapteyn visited Hauer in Tübingen to talk to him about her project and to win him for participation. While his numerous activities for the German Faith Movement prevented Hauer from attending the first conference in Ascona, he gave two central lectures on the Aryan self during the second gathering in August 1934.³⁹ That he was entrusted with the closing speech is also a strong indication of his reputation and relevance. A part of the audience had already become known with the Tübingen scholar in the course of Hauer's Kundalini seminar held at the Psychological Club in Zurich in October 1932. His deliberations in the Jung Festschrift as well as in the second Eranos yearbook continued the line of arguing brought forth in Zurich in 1932. The picture painted by Sonu Shamdasani, who partly published the papers of this Zurich workshop in 1996, does not fully mirror Hauer's and Jung's arguing.⁴⁰

The close association of Hauer and Jung was based on a similar understanding of the psychological structure of religious experiences and on a comparable appreciation of the importance of religion as such. Both sought and found ample evidence for their view in the great many of

³⁹ Jakob Wilhelm HAUER, "Symbole und Erfahrung des Selbstes in der indoarischen Mystik," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 2 (1934), pp. 35-96. The Aryan self was also the subject of Hauer's article for the Jung Festschrift in 1935. See ID., "Die indoarische Lehre vom Selbst im Verleich mit Kants Lehre vom intelligiblen Subjekt," *Die kulturelle Bedeutung der komplexen Psychologie. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von C. G. Jung*, ed. by the Psychological Club Zurich, Berlin: Springer, 1935, pp. 220-236.

⁴⁰ Sonu SHAMDASANI (ed.) *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, German translation Zürich: Walter, 1998. The original manuscripts of that seminar in my custody suggest a different interpretation. Together with Prof. Annette Wilke, one of the leading experts in Tantra Yoga, I hope to publish them in the future. In 2008 we had the unique opportunity to hold a seminar at the *Casa Eranos* on that issue with a group of students from the University of Münster.

mythological narratives and symbolic representations the history of religion is filled with. The most important link between Hauer and Jung was probably their common dislike of orthodox Christianity and the established churches whom they considered incapable of fulfilling the inner needs of modern man satisfactorily. Without bringing all valuable religious traditions, particularly those from East and West, in a new productive connection, it would be impossible to overcome the deep crisis in which Europe got entangled in the aftermath of World War I. Their common belief was that a way out of the mess would require a new spirituality on the basis of a scientific understanding of both religion and psyche.

Jung invited Hauer again in March 1938 to come to Zurich where Hauer gave a talk on his life theme that is on the origin of human faith and its realization in the world with the title "Der Quellgrund des Glaubens und die religiöse Gestaltwerdung."⁴¹ These lectures marked the end of the relationship between Hauer and Jung. Hauer's politicized race theory and his overt identification with Third Reich's politics was not acceptable to Jung, a Swiss citizen who had started to develop closer bonds with pupils and supporters in the U.S. Yet Hauer's gradual alienation from Eranos began earlier. Being criticized by German Christians and die-hard pagans of the Ludendorff wing, Hauer was forced to clear his attachment to the Eranos movement in the mid-thirties. To preserve his charisma as "Führer" of the German Faith Movement, it was indispensable to him to reject arising accusations of his presumed attachment to the religious world of India with strange rites and elements of an occult and theosophical worldview. Notably he had to explain his international contacts inclusive of Jews such as Martin Buber whom he met in Ascona in 1934.⁴²

In a letter to Emma von Pelet Hauer later rationalized his estrangement from Jung and Eranos by calling it the natural result of his fruitless attempts to convince the Eranos disciples of the positive nature of the German breakup with its emphasis on blood and soil.⁴³ At the beginning, as Hauer argued, he had hoped that Jung might become a genuine "Praeceptor Germaniae," a teacher of the Germans who would help them back to their inner self buried by many layers of an alien Christian

⁴¹ Cf. Margarete DIERKS, *Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, 1881-1962*, Heidelberg: Schneider, 1986, pp. 296-299.

⁴² Cf. his article "Wilhelm Hauer rechnet ab! Wider das undeutsche Wesen der Lüge und Verleumdung" [Wilhelm Hauer gets even! Against un-German defamation and slander], *Durchbruch. Kampfblatt für deutschen Glauben, Rasse und Volkstum*, July 31, 1935.

⁴³ Letter of Hauer to Emma von Pelet on February, 10, 1941, to be found in Hauer's literal remains, Federal Archives, Koblenz, vol. 136, fol. 54. Cf. M. DIERKS, *Jakob Wilhelm Hauer*, p. 298.

religion. To his disappointment Jung would have reacted less affirmative than expected. Disrespect for the religious awakening that took place in the shape of German paganism would be even more virulent among other Eranos members. Hauer criticized the Eranos movement now for a lacking religious deep structure. Instead he found a superficial spirituality that followed the latest fashions of Ascona and avoided any concrete action or change of life. All too many would adhere to an artificial aestheticism inimical to the real life and the spiritual requirements of ordinary people.⁴⁴ In accordance with the arguments of the Reich Ministry of Science and Education, Hauer blamed Eranos to be a stronghold of bourgeois elitism and speculative thoughts being at variance with National Socialist key concepts like race and folk.

It is easily understandable that Hauer's paganism together with his narrow-minded racial interpretation of religion did not harmonize with most of the other Eranos speakers, even those from Germany such as Walter F. Otto, Erwin Rouselle, and Heinrich Zimmer. Their disregard of the voelkish and racial principles now reigning in Germany was the main point of critique expressed by the German authorities. According to their estimation, Eranos conveyed the impression of a reactionary movement that might easily shift to the level of ideological enmity. This statement is not unfounded regarding the political antagonism between the spirit of Eranos and the spirit of National Socialism. But to stress this difference should not misguide us to overlook the similarities characterizing the worldview orientation of Jung, Hauer, and Eranos on the whole.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*