

Karl Baier / Philipp A. Maas / Karin Preisendanz (eds.)

Yoga in Transformation

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Chapter 9: Yoga within Viennese Occultism: Carl Kellner and Co.

In this chapter, I will investigate the role of yoga within Viennese occultism focusing on Carl Kellner and other protagonists of this milieu who had close ties with him. In the introductory section, the term “occultism” and the state of research on Viennese occultism will be discussed. To give an idea of the background of Kellner’s interest in yoga, I will be looking at his life and professional career and the fields of his occultist activities, namely his involvement in Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and High-degree Freemasonry. The next section introduces the reader to Franz Hartmann’s and Kellner’s occult philosophies of nature and their striking similarities to concepts articulated some years later by Vivekananda in his famous *Raja Yoga*. After that, I will try to reconstruct core issues in Kellner’s understanding of yoga. His encounter with South Asian yogis will be described, followed by an analysis of Kellner’s sketch on yoga and of his manuscript “Reincarnation”. Last but not least, the question of yoga and ritual sex within the so-called inner occult circle and the early Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) will be discussed. Addressing the role of yoga in his *Problems of Mysticism and its Symbolism*, the concluding part of the chapter will be an homage to Herbert Silberer, the most talented representative of second-generation Viennese occultism.

1. Occultism: A Neglected Dimension of Viennese Modernity

From the second half of the nineteenth century until the beginning of World War I, Vienna, then capital of the second-largest state in Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, underwent rapid change. Many factors altered the face of this vibrant city. An increase in population (partly due to the large number of immigrants, especially Czechs and Jews from Eastern Europe) was accompanied by a strong upswing in the construction sector. Technological innovations, such as the tramway system, were introduced. A steady growth of the economy, at least from the late nineteenth century onwards, went hand in hand with rising food

prices and rents. Social and economic tensions increased and cultural innovations created further frictions. Vienna became home to the cultural upper crust of the Empire. Much of the output of its cultural vanguard – from twelve-tone music to psychoanalysis – were to shape the culture of the twentieth century. The conservative authoritarian power cartel of the Habsburg dynasty, military leadership, and the Catholic Church that ruled the country was more or less hostile to the new cultural currents. Nevertheless, together with Paris, Berlin, London, and New York, Vienna became one of the centres of a cultural revolution later called “classical modernism”.

It is striking that outstanding scholarly works such as the studies of Carl E. Schorske and Jacques Le Rider, as well as popular narratives of Viennese modernism, often neglect its religious innovations. Of course, city guides praise Otto Wagner’s Kirche am Steinhof as a pivotal sacred building of the Viennese fin de siècle. The role of the Jews is discussed, and Herzl’s Zionism is treated as part of Viennese modernity, as well as the anti-Semitic offspring of Viennese occultism represented by Guido von List and Lanz von Liebenfels – mainly because of their political relevance. Some studies interpret the mystical attitude of certain artists and writers as a symptom of the modern crisis of the individual. These exceptions aside, most of the literature at least implicitly seems to follow the rather outdated “modernisation equals secularisation” paradigm by presupposing that the Viennese modernist projects around 1900 did not comprise new forms of religion.

To compensate for this one-sidedness Robert W. Whalen goes so far as to claim that Viennese modernity was at once a basically religious phenomenon and the nucleus of classic modernism in general. “Classic modernism is the product of Viennese dreams. And these Viennese dreams were sacred dreams.”¹ Although holding this (exaggerated) view, much like other explorers of fin-de-siècle Vienna, he is not interested in religious movements and writings per se, but focuses on the function of religious topics within the work of artists that belong to the codified list of proponents of Viennese modernity (Mahler, Schoenberg, Kokoschka, Klimt, Schnitzler, etc.). Whereas the religious strivings of some of the avant-garde artists are at least taken seriously, the numerous alternative religious movements of the time are only mentioned in passing as a sign of decadence.² Whalen is unable to see the importance of non-Christian or fringe Christian religious currents that, although excluded from the canon of Viennese modernism, were characterised by typically modern forms of religious experimentation and creativity.

1 Whalen 2007: 3.

2 Whalen 2007: 135–136.

In his seminal work *The Occult Establishment* (1976) James Webb already described the religious dimension of Viennese modernist culture in a less biased way.³ He portrayed the circle of occultists around the fascinating polymath Friedrich Eckstein (1861–1939). The son of a Jewish paper manufacturer, a Freemason, writer, and private secretary to the composer Anton Bruckner, Eckstein was interested in Spiritism and came into contact with Theosophy through Franz Hartmann. In 1886 he met Mdm. Blavatsky in Ostende and consequently founded a theosophical lodge in Vienna. Additionally, he was involved in the neo-Rosicrucian circle of Alois Mailänder. Eckstein was a regular guest at the Café Imperial where he met his friends from the literary scene and from the occult milieu.

It was again Webb who disclosed links between Eckstein's circle and the Freudians, and for the first time described the connection of this group with occultist activities in Prague. Ten years later, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke coined the term "modern occult revival in Vienna" for what was happening within this social stratum.⁴ Very much like Webb, his article focuses on Eckstein's circle and adds some supplementary details about its history, members, and related groups. Incidentally, the term "occult revival" that Webb also uses was taken from Christopher McIntosh's famous study on Eliphas Lévi and the so-called French occult revival.⁵ It is misleading insofar as it connotes the reappearance of an occultism that existed in earlier times or even since time immemorial.⁶

What emerged in Vienna and other capitals of modernity was not so much the comeback of an ancient phenomenon but the transformation and spread of relatively new forms of unchurched religiosity among the cultural and social elites of the city, and, at times, as was the case with Spiritism, within all kinds of social strata. These currents integrated elements from early-modern movements and new ideas from physics, psychology, the emerging parapsychology, and other sciences. Last but not least, due to Theosophy, there was growing interest in

3 Webb 1976: 41–47.

4 Goodrick-Clarke 1986.

5 McIntosh 1974. McIntosh triggered a kind of fashion among historians to discover "occult revivals". The "occult revival" in France was followed by a British, Russian, American, German, and – since Goodrick-Clarke – also a Viennese revival. The valuable study by Eugen Semrau on the influences of esoteric thought on Viennese modernity (Semrau 2012) takes into account the methodological improvements of recent esotericism research. Instead of postulating an occult revival he analyses "the diffusion of esoteric knowledge" around 1900 (Semrau 2012: 115–138). Semrau adds interesting information on Freemasonry to our picture of Viennese occultism. Concerning the topic of this chapter, he does not present significant new material.

6 McIntosh conceived of occultism as a kind of eternal underground of human culture. See McIntosh 1974: 11: "Occult movements and secret cults have always played a significant part in society. Like a subterranean current they have moved beneath the ground of history, occasionally bursting forth to flow for a spell in the light of day, revealing some strange and exotic fish in the process."

adding South Asian ingredients (especially yoga) to this melting pot of belief systems, symbols, and practices.

In the following, the term “occultism” is not used in an essentialist way, as by McIntosh, but as a historiographical category that designates this particular phenomenon of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In Vienna, the most important movements within this field were Theosophy, Spiritism, psychical research, modern magic, Guido von List’s Theosophy (which influenced racist Ariosophy), High-degree Freemasonry, and Rosicrucianism.

Viennese occultism was, of course, not isolated but – as Webb already saw – participated in an internationally connected middle-European network that besides Vienna had its centres in German-speaking Prague, Munich, and Budapest. Moreover, several participants in this field were affiliated to occult groups and networks of almost worldwide range. They contributed to the emergence of Vienna as a global cultural metropolis.

For the remainder of this chapter I would like to focus on one of the most interesting representatives of Viennese occultism: Carl Kellner. He was an important node in the network that constituted the relatively small but nevertheless influential and highly creative milieu of central European occultists interested in yoga.

2. Kellner’s Bourgeois Secular World

Carl Kellner (1851–1905), a typical self-made-man of the Gründerzeit, was brought up in modest circumstances and eventually became an electrochemist, inventor, and industrial magnate, one of the richest industrialists of the Habsburg Monarchy.⁷ His wealth was based more on his inventiveness than on his qualities as a businessman:

Dr. Kellner [...] was undoubtedly a genius but in no sense a business man and from the business point of view a most trying and difficult man to work with. After working on a new idea a short time he would lose interest and come with something entirely new.⁸

As early as 1873, he accidentally discovered a cost-saving method for producing paper-pulp that revolutionised cellulose production and paper-manufacture. At that time he worked for Baron Eugen Hector von Ritter-Záhony at his paper mills

⁷ Some authors date Kellner’s birth in 1850. According to *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon*, he was born in 1851. Sources for Kellner’s biography are: *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950* (ÖBL), vol. 3, Verlag Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 1965, p. 290; Möller & Howe 1986; Weirauch 1998; Kaczynski 2012: 67–92.

⁸ H. W. Davis, *The Kellner-Partington Paper Pulp Company Ltd*. Salzburg: n.p., 1930, quoted in Möller & Howe 1986: 86.

in Görz (Ital. Gorizia) who supported the development of the new technique. In 1882, it was patented as the Ritter-Kellner Process.

In 1885, Carl married Marie Antoinette Delorme, the daughter of a well-known hotelier in Trieste in whose hotel Kellner lived while he was working in nearby Görz. He had four children with her, three girls and a boy. All available sources describe him as a kind and loving father who was admired by all family members. Several witnesses who participated in Kellner's private sphere affirmed that he was a charming and helpful person.

Every now and then, the Kellners displayed signs of imposture, e.g., when Carl occasionally used the doctoral degree without having finished any University study or when Marie called herself "Marion de Kellner" as if they were aristocrats.

In 1889 Kellner started one of the largest pulp manufacturing companies of the world, the Kellner-Partington Paper Pulp Company, in collaboration with the British industrial magnate and freemason Edward Partington. The headquarters of the company were in Vienna. Several factories were founded in different areas of the world, among them one in Hallein near Salzburg where the Kellner family lived in a villa.

In the early 1890s, Kellner's professional and his occultist life merged in the form of a co-operation with the Theosophist Franz Hartmann. Hartmann had developed a treatment for curing tuberculosis and other respiratory ailments using lignosulphite, a by-product of the cellulose manufacture in Kellner's factories. With the financial and technical support of Kellner, they finally opened an "inhalatorium" in Hallein in 1894 with Hartmann as director.

In the same year, Kellner patented a process that cheapened the production of alkalis and other chemical substances by using a mercury cathode cell. One year later, the Castner-Kellner Alkali Company was founded. The American co-founder Hamilton Young Castner had independently developed and patented a very similar cell. "Castner-Kellner cells were soon operating in England, Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, and Russia."⁹

Kellner owned a large industrial laboratory in Vienna where he worked with academically trained chemists.¹⁰ With his team he developed a large number of inventions and came up with new products like spun fibres, light bulbs, and synthetic gem-stones, many of which became registered patents. Moreover, Kellner was engaged in fundamental chemical research. In 1901, he deposited a sealed letter at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in which he advanced the

9 Kaczynski 2012: 70.

10 Weirauch 1998: 205.

argument that the chemical elements are transformable into each other. He also proposed experimental procedures to prove his theory.¹¹

The work within Kellner's laboratory was apparently quite dangerous. One of his assistants died there for reasons that have remained unclear. After an accident in the laboratory in 1904, Kellner was hospitalised for a longer period of time. To complete his recovery he and his wife spent some time in Egypt. All seemed to work out well, but one month after their return to Vienna Kellner had a heart attack and died on the 7th of June 1905. He was only 54 years old. According to the medical report the cause of his death was "paralysis of the heart caused by chronic blood poisoning, due to purulence."¹² Soon after, legends arose that were structured around two myths: that of the magician who is unable to master the powers that he had evoked, and that of the magician who is cursed by another magician. Thus, commentators connected Kellner's disease and early death with his occult activities.¹³

3. Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and High-degree Freemasonry: Kellner's Bourgeois Occult World

For the fin-de-siècle culture of Europe, North America, and South Asia, occultism was a serious religious option for the members of the upper and middle classes. With the exception of some shady characters who tried to make their fortune in the new religious market, the upstart millionaire Kellner was in good company within his wealthy occult circles.

Viennese occultism was deeply linked with the broader process of cultural transformations that encompassed innovations within the fine arts, music, literature, architecture, psychology, and other sciences. The journal *Wiener Rundschau* illustrates the close interrelatedness of these fields. The periodical for culture and arts with a focus on literature was published fortnightly between 1896 and 1901. It had a broad readership among the cultural elite of Vienna. The *Wiener Rundschau* published translations of Oscar Wilde, Walt Whitman, Leo Tolstoi, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Stéphane Mallarmé as well as the German poetry of Rainer Maria

11 See Kellner 1896b. The letter was opened by the archivists of the Austrian Academy of Science and made publicly available in the early 1980s.

12 Josef Dvorak in Weirauch 1998: 205: "Herzlähmung in Folge chronischer Eitervergiftung des Blutes."

13 Maybe his death was in a less magical way connected with his occult interests. In search for the elixir of life, Kellner very probably performed alchemical experiments in his laboratory (see below, p. 398). As mercury is of crucial importance in alchemy, he may have died from mercury poisoning. I thank Suzanne Newcombe for raising this point and for other helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

Rilke, Stefan George, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Very similar to French Symbolism and English Decadence, all those poets represented a new understanding of poetry and literature in opposition to the naturalistic style in literature and fine arts. Their contributions were interwoven with articles from occultists, whereas the official state religion, Catholicism, was almost totally absent.¹⁴ Thus, the *Wiener Rundschau* became the most important public platform for the interaction between fin-de-siècle alternative religion and other areas of modernist culture in Vienna. Through their regular contributions in the *Rundschau*, the occultists positioned themselves as part of the cultural avant-garde, especially as explorers of the “cutting edge” of human knowledge where, from their point of view, ancient wisdom and the latest scientific achievements began to merge.

One of the occultist writers who regularly contributed to the journal was the physician Franz Hartmann (1838–1912), already mentioned above as collaborator of Kellner who introduced Friedrich Eckstein to Theosophy. He was a former close associate of Helena Blavatsky and had served as chairman of the Board of Control of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, Chennai. Hartmann was one of the most important theosophical writers of his time. He published many books and the monthly journals *Lotusblüthen* (1893–1900) and *Neue Lotusblüten* (1908–1913). Hartmann not only edited these journals but also wrote most of the articles himself or translated them from English. His articles on yoga were important for the popularisation of this topic within Germany and Austria.¹⁵ In “Die Bhagavad-Gita der Indier” from 1899 he defines yoga for the readers of the *Wiener Rundschau*:

“Yoga” is derived from Yog = to join and means the union of the human soul with God. It therefore would be an equivalent to the term “religion” if this word had not been misused like many similar ones and had not been identified with churchdom, so that it has almost lost its true meaning. Yoga is the art of self-control through the divine spirit that awakes to consciousness within us. [...] Every religious practice, insofar as it is performed selflessly and without hidden agenda, is a Yoga exercise.¹⁶

14 Several occultists who wrote for the *Wiener Rundschau* were members of the “Psychologische Gesellschaft” in Munich, a society concerned with psychic research, mysticism, hypnosis, etc. Its founder, the occultist philosopher and famous spiritualist Carl Du Prel, influenced the content orientation of the Viennese journal. He regularly published articles in the *Rundschau* and was in contact with poets like Rilke, Maeterlinck, and George who also wrote for the journal. Du Prel thus functioned as a kind of mentor for the emerging Viennese “occulture” that was represented by the *Rundschau*.

15 After Hartmann’s death in August 1902, the 1903 issue of *Neue Lotusblüten* was published by Paul Harald Grävell von Jostenode, who also contributed several articles to the *Wiener Rundschau*.

16 Hartmann 1899: 353: “‘Yoga’ kommt von Yog = verbinden, und bedeutet die Verbindung der menschlichen Seele mit Gott. Es würde dem Worte ‘Religion’ entsprechen, wenn dieses Wort nicht, wie so viele andere ähnliche Worte, sooft missbraucht und mit ‘Kirchentum’ verwechselt worden wäre, dass es beinahe seine wahre Bedeutung verloren hat. Yoga ist die

Hartmann introduces the term as a traditional South Asian concept but at the same time uses it as a category for all kinds of religious practices that support the experience of mystical union with ultimate reality and thereby lead to the core of all religion. This view of yoga fit with the religious agenda of the *Wiener Rundschau*. Many of its writers combined a negative attitude towards the hegemonic religion (“churchdom”), on the one hand, with criticism of materialism and naturalistic art, on the other. The approval of symbolist art based on visionary experiences went hand in hand with a mystical attitude that linked the autonomy of the individual (“self-control”) with the discovery of the divine spirit within oneself. As we will see, Kellner also shared the religious attitude that Hartmann associated with yoga.

Although one of the important players of Viennese upper-class occultism, Kellner did not fit into the sociological circle-structure of Viennese modernity. It is difficult to relate him to a specific group. Being a friend of Eckstein and Hartmann, Kellner was, of course, connected to Theosophy and Eckstein’s circle. According to Franz Hartmann, he joined the Theosophical Society in 1887.¹⁷

It is unknown in which theosophical group he took part; most likely it was Eckstein’s Viennese theosophical lodge. His theosophical connections are important for our topic, since the Theosophical Society was the main source of information on yoga and also provided translations of yoga scriptures.

Vienna was not Kellner’s permanent residence until 1896, when the Kellner family moved from Hallein to the capital. Additionally, due to his business obligations Kellner spent a lot of time abroad. In this respect he resembled Hartmann, who also knew Eckstein and time and again would stay with him in Vienna. But as someone without permanent residence he was not fully integrated in any Viennese circle. He travelled a lot giving talks in Austria, Hungary, Germany, and Switzerland. As director of the lignosulphite inhalatorium he was based in Hallein. Time and again, Hartmann spent longer periods of time in Italy, a country that he appreciated very much and where he bought a villa in 1899.¹⁸ Therefore, Viennese occultism consisted not only of stationary groups (with Eckstein’s circle as an important upper-class institution and other, less explored groups), but also of mobile, internationally connected key players.

Kunst, durch den in uns zum Bewusstsein erwachten göttlichen Geist sich selbst zu beherrschen [...]. Jede praktische Ausübung der Religion, wenn sie selbstlos und ohne Hintergedanken erfolgt, ist eine Yoga-Übung.” All translations from the original German in this chapter are by the author.

17 It is very likely that Kellner and Blavatsky met. According to Karl-Erwin Lichtenecker (interview with the author, 11 February 2014), he at least possessed a photo of Blavatsky with her autograph. Blavatsky used to give autographs to visitors.

18 Lechler 2013: 150.



Figure 1: Carl Kellner (middle) with the Theosophists Gustav Gebhard (left) and Friedrich Eckstein (right) (photograph courtesy of Josef Dvorak).

It seems that Kellner's involvement with occultism did not start with Theosophy. Already the young Carl's decision to work in the field of chemistry most probably had occult roots. According to Paul Köthner (1902: 21) and John Yarker (1905) he inherited Rosicrucian manuscripts from his grandfather who was allegedly a Rosicrucian, manuscripts that brought him to alchemical experiments as well as to chemistry.¹⁹ Köthner and Yarker independently claim that Kellner himself informed them about his early encounter with alchemy. Both authors had their own occult agendas and therefore one can suspect that they were interested in "occulticising" Kellner's biography.²⁰ Their statements have to be treated with

¹⁹ See also Kaczynski 2012: 67.

²⁰ John Yarker (1833–1913) was an influential English high-degree freemason and theosophist who published books on Freemasonry, the mysteries of antiquity, and Modern Rosicrucianism. Paul Köthner (1870–1932) was not only a chemist who worked at the universities of Halle and Berlin, but also a freemason and occultist. After World War I, he turned away from Freemasonry and published writings in which he mixed an anti-Semitic, extreme right-wing attitude with alchemy, astrology, hermetism, etc.

caution. Nevertheless, apart from this general suspicion, in this case we do not have any reason to assume that they were spreading falsehoods.

Kellner's chemical experiments that aimed at the transmutation of chemical elements into each other can easily be understood as an attempt to use modern technology and especially high voltage electricity to pursue the old alchemical goal. Kellner himself "loved to speak of these kind of experiments as 'alchemistic'"²¹ and his fellow occultists also conceived of them as such. Hartmann reports that Kellner had a special backroom for his alchemical experiments in his Viennese laboratory.²²

In an interview with the author Karl-Erwin Lichtenecker (1929–2014), a grandchild of Carl Kellner, confirmed that according to the oral family tradition that was passed on to him by his mother Eglantine, the oldest child of the Kellners, Kellner tried to find the elixir of life, a substance (not necessarily a liquid) that would be capable of prolonging human life immensely if not produce immortality.²³

Hartmann was the first to state that the elixir of life was the aim of Kellner's alchemical experiments. He emphasised that alchemy had been Kellner's passion:

He was a born mystic, a 'genius' by intuition; he occupied himself with studies of occult science all his life, and his great 'hobby,' if it may be called such, was the practice of Alchemy.²⁴

He connects Kellner's interest in yoga with his alchemical aspirations. Kellner would have looked for yoga practices, he says, to attain the occult powers necessary for successful alchemical work. According to Hartmann, he was first taught by Bheema Sena Pratapa and later by Sri Agamya Guru Paramahansa (we will come back to these two men below) both staying for weeks and months in his house.²⁵ Kellner seemed to be very happy with the yoga he learnt from Agamya that, as Hartmann enigmatically says, was comprised of "breathing exercises and other things".²⁶ Hartmann quotes a passage from a letter of Kellner, stating that through Agamya's teachings, he finally found what he had been striving for all his life. One of the results would have been intensified alchemical work:

21 Dr. Carl Kellner [obituary] 1905: 2.

22 Hartmann 1923–1924: 308.

23 Lichtenecker 2014. With regard to Rosicrucian alchemy it is interesting to note that Kellner's name as a Freemason was Br. Renatus. "Renatus" means "the reborn" and may also refer to the first alchemical treatise of the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross that was published by the founder of the Order, Samuel Richter, under the pseudonym Sincerus Renatus in 1710.

24 Hartmann 1906: 133–134.

25 Hartmann 1906: 133 and 1923–1924: 307–308.

26 Hartmann 1906: 133.

He continued his alchemical experiments with renewed vigour, and it appears from his correspondence that his experiments in making the *Elixir of Life*, during the first stages of the process, were successful, as the material employed went through the changes described in the old books of alchemy and in the *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Century*.²⁷

But, according to Hartmann, the alchemical work ultimately spun out of control. In the same article, published in 1906, he quotes two other letters from Kellner. Both deal with alchemical experiments and describe them as a fight with dark occult powers:

(April 26, 1904): 'I am progressing favourably with my experiments. At the same time I have to contend continually with a very gruesome crowd of ... for the preparation of the Elixir. However, I begin to get accustomed to that fight, as a trainer of wild animals gets familiar with ferocious beasts. At first it seemed as if the blood would freeze in my veins; but ...'

Again he writes in answer to my objections: –

'I agree with you, that these arts as such are perhaps objectionable; but they are at least a new field of knowledge, and in so far they must be of some use. However, the dwellers of the threshold are to be dreaded; there are hosts of them guarding the door.'²⁸

An extended version of Hartmann's article from 1906 published in German several years later again contains the two quotations from Kellner's letters, but the cited texts differ significantly.²⁹

Both letters (and especially the English version) allude to a passage of Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni* that explains why the elixir of life is a deadly poison for all those who are not ready to face the effects it has on those who take it.³⁰ The elixir would sharpen the senses so that the creatures that dwell within the medium sphere between the earthly and the spiritual realm become visible and audible. Among them there would be cruel beings full of hatred called guardians or dwellers of the threshold because they prevent the unprepared from entering the spiritual realm. The dwellers are able to cause a literally killing horror within all those who have not abandoned all earthly desires by ascetic practice. It may well be that Kellner, who was familiar with Bulwer-Lytton's novel, interpreted the emotional problems that occurred along with his alchemical work by referring to *Zanoni*. But it is just as possible that Hartmann introduced the encounter with the dwellers of the threshold as a frame to interpret Kellner's early death. Obviously, he was not very interested in precise citations. He used Kellner's early death to give a theo-

27 Hartmann 1906: 134 [Hartmann's emphases].

28 Ibid.

29 Hartmann 1923–1924: 308.

30 Cf. Bulwer-Lytton 1842: 214–217.

sophical moral lesson, warning that occult experiments and yogic exercises motivated by egoistic purposes in the end would destroy the practitioner's life.

Hartmann's view that Kellner's main interest in yoga was connected to his ambition to produce the elixir of life may be exaggerated. But it is plausible that Kellner saw a strong relation between his spiritual improvements through yoga practice and his alchemical advancements, as the belief in the interconnectedness of the alchemist's state of mind and the results of alchemical laboratory work was common within his occultist milieu.

The alchemical practice that for the chemist Kellner was a valued link between his secular and occult life was in no way his individual peculiarity. Together with other German, Viennese, and Prague occultists (Gustav Gebhard and his wife, Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden, Hartmann, Eckstein, Graf zu Leiningen-Billigheim, and Gustav Meyrink) he participated for several years in the Rosicrucian "Bund der Verheissung" of Alois Mailänder (1844–1905).³¹ Among the followers of Mailänder, alchemical thought and to a certain extent also practice was common. According to Sven Eek, Hartmann obtained from the Mailänder circle a at that time rare copy of the famous Rosicrucian work *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert* that contains several alchemical texts and illustrations.³² As a matter of fact, he published the first English translation of this book with his theosophical commentaries in 1888 as *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*.³³ A member of Mailänder's group, a carpenter and itinerant Rosicrucian and alchemist named Prestel was Mailänder's spiritual teacher. He possessed a bottle of grey salt about which he said it would be the "unfinished" elixir of life. Hartmann published an interesting explanation for Pretel's inability to reach the highest goal of alchemy. It shows that gender issues and sexuality were connected to alchemy within the Mailänder circle:

Now, this man was not a full-fledged Alchemist, and could not make gold and the *Elixir of Life*, because, as he said, he could not find a woman sufficiently *pure*, and at the same time willing, to assist him in his labours; for, as it is known to all Alchemists, it requires the co-operation of the *male* and the *female* element to accomplish the highest process.³⁴

31 The weaver Alois Mailänder lived in Kempten where he was the leader of a small Christian fringe group of factory workers and their wives. He was discovered by occult high society thanks to the leading German theosophist Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden at the end of 1884. From 1890 onwards he lived and taught in Dreieichenhain, a small village south of Frankfurt.

32 See Eek 1978: 609. Unfortunately, Eek does not quote any source that substantiates this claim. In his *Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*, Hartmann does not mention from whom he got his copy.

33 See Kaczynski 2012: 65.

34 Hartmann 1888: 235, footnote [Hartmann's emphases].

At least one other member of the group besides Prestel and Kellner, Gustav Meyrink, known for never shrinking from any form of occult practice, performed alchemical experiments.³⁵

As far as I can see, from the closure of the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross in 1787 until the end of the nineteenth century there were no larger organisations around to promote Rosicrucianism and alchemy in Central Europe. Elements of them have survived within high-degree masonic orders. Moreover, they flourished in small non-masonic groups like Mailänder's circle. Additionally, they were developed and passed on to these small groups by individuals like Prestel.³⁶

Among our occultists Mailänder was famous for teaching a certain meditation technique that was considered to be of Rosicrucian origin. It can be traced back to the opera tenor, singing teacher, and Freemason Johann Baptist Krebs (1774–1851), also known by his pen name, J. B. Kerning. The occultist students of the Kerning–Mailänder tradition who were interested in South Asian wisdom, namely Kellner, Hübbe-Schleiden, Meyrink, Karl Weinfurter, and Hartmann thought it was a kind of Christian and German yoga and they appreciated it primarily because of the yoga not because of its Christian inspiration. “It is strange that Kerning already knew the yoga postures and other Indian practices,” remarked Weinfurter, continuing: “At his time no translations of Indian books into European languages existed. One can only explain this through the power of clairvoyance which he acquired.”³⁷ And Kellner writes in his sketch of yoga:

Finally, I have to mention, that among the Christian mystics, Jakob Boehme in his discourse between the master and his disciple and J. Krebs who published on this topic in the 1850s under the pen name Kerning [...] represent the best that has ever been written in German about yoga practices, albeit in a form that might not be to everyone's taste.³⁸

35 Binder 2009: 199–204.

36 The first important Neo-Rosicrucian organisation was the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia founded in 1865 by English Freemasons. It spread within the English-speaking countries but was not active in the Habsburg monarchy. Some ten years later a second wave of organised Neo-Rosicrucianism emerged in the USA triggered by the occult orders founded by Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875). In 1888, the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix was founded in France followed by the Order of the Martinists in 1891. In fin-de-siècle Central Europe, several interested individuals got in contact with these organisations but seemingly no successful institutionalisation took place.

37 Weinfurter 1930: 120.

38 Kellner 1896a: 6: “Erwähnen muss ich nur noch, dass unter den christlichen Mystikern Jakob Boehme in seinem Gespräch des Meisters mit dem Schüler, und der unter dem Pseudonym: Kerning in den fünfziger Jahren auf diesem Gebiete literarisch tätig gewesene J. Krebs [...] das Beste über Yogaübungen in deutscher Sprache geschrieben haben, allerdings in einer Form, die nicht nach jedermanns Geschmack ist.”

The practice that reminded the occultists of yoga comprised the murmuring or silent repetition of short sentences and words with Christian background and of certain letters originally used in masonic rituals, conscious breathing, symbolic gestures, postures, and movements. The core of these exercises was concentration on different parts of the body from the feet upwards and especially on certain mystical centres. The practitioners imagined writing or saying the letters or words within these parts of the body. The meditation aimed at the awakening of the divine “inner word” to enable it to permeate and transform the human body and reconnect the human being with the universe.³⁹

Like vocal coach and drama teacher François Delsarte (1811–1871), Kerning and Mailänder combined a new appreciation of the human body and physical exercises with alternative religious concepts. Thereby they laid the foundation for the occultist reception of modern physical culture and of body-centred yoga practices. The teachings of Kerning and Mailänder seemingly triggered a positive attitude towards Haṭha Yoga within Viennese and Prague occultism. As Meyrink clearly saw, the practices taught by Kerning and Mailänder contradict the theosophical concept of astral projection that aimed at separation from the physical body as the highest aim of spiritual development. The anti-ecstatic principle of “remaining in one’s body” and deepening daily life consciousness enabled Meyrink to criticise astral projection as the “worst kind of schizophrenia”.⁴⁰ His thanks for this insight go to Mailänder: “If the only thing I had learnt from this man was that the body must be included in the transformation of the person through yoga, he would have earned my lifelong gratitude for that insight alone.”⁴¹ Weinfurter understood the teachings of Kerning and Mailänder in the very same way:

Master Kerning ceaselessly points to the fact that God is present *within the whole human body*. [...] Ninety-nine per cent of the occultists and Theosophists believe that human mystical development starts *within the soul*. *This view is one of the greatest mistakes of modern occult literature*. [...] Exactly the opposite is *true*. Mystical blossoming first happens *within the body*, taking place in the form of body sensations that nobody knows who has not experienced them and who did not enter the mystical path.⁴²

39 The practices of Kerning and Mailänder and their reception within Viennese and Prague occultism are described in Binder 2009: 131–136, 195–198.

40 Meyrink 2010: 141.

41 Meyrink 2010: 138.

42 Weinfurter 1930: 222: “Meister Kerning weist unaufhörlich auf die Tatsache hin, daß Gott *im ganzen Körper* des Menschen gegenwärtig ist. [...] Neunundneunzig Prozent der Okkultisten und auch der Theosophen vermeint, dass die mystische Entwicklung beim Menschen in *der Seele* beginne! *Diese Ansicht ist einer der größten Irrtümer der modernen okkulten Literatur*. [...] Gerade das Umgekehrte ist das *Richtige*. Die mystische Entfaltung geschieht zu Anfang *im Körper*, vollzieht sich in körperlichen Empfindungen, die aber solcher Art und solchen

The Kerning-inspired exercises obviously influenced the image of yoga within Viennese occultism. Yoga was primarily understood as a practice that uses breathing exercises and postures to create certain bodily sensations that transform the whole human being and lead to a liberating experience of ultimate reality and immortality.

This concept of yoga found its way into the oeuvre of Sigmund Freud. It is Kellner's friend Eckstein whom Freud refers to when he writes in the first chapter of his *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930):⁴³

Another friend of mine, whose insatiable craving for knowledge has led him to make the most unusual experiments and has ended by giving him encyclopaedic knowledge, has assured me that through the practices of Yoga, by withdrawing from the world, by fixing the attention on bodily functions and by peculiar methods of breathing, one can in fact evolve new sensations and coenaesthesias in oneself, which he regards as regressions to primordial states of mind which have long ago been overlaid. He sees in them a physiological basis, as it were, of much of the wisdom of mysticism. It would not be hard to find connections here with a number of obscure modifications of mental life, such as trances and ecstasies.⁴⁴

What Freud learned from Eckstein about yoga mirrors the views of the Viennese occultists. His rendering of Eckstein's understanding of yoga emphasises *prāṇāyāma*, physiological functions, and bodily sensations. But instead of references to hypnotism and somnambulism that were still common within occultism, a new and typical psychoanalytic element is added: the interpretation of yogic states as regression. Interestingly, in the quoted passage, Freud ascribes this theory to Eckstein without making mention of the psychoanalyst Franz Alexander who, as far as we know, first published it in 1922. Eckstein wrote several contributions to psychoanalysis and was able to explain yoga to Freud in a terminology that the famous psychologist could accept, although he ultimately remained sceptical about the relevance of these strange yogic states of body and mind.

Charakters sind, daß niemand sie kennt, der sie nicht erlebte, der den Weg der Mystik nicht angetreten hat." [Weinfurter's emphases].

43 According to Mulot-Déri 1988: 302, Anna Freud confirmed that Freud refers here to Eckstein. The description of his friend as a man with encyclopaedic knowledge also fits well with the reputation Eckstein had for being a polymath.

44 Freud 1962: 19–20. Cf. the original German text in Freud 1999: 430–431: "Ein anderer meiner Freunde, den ein unstillbarer Wissensdrang zu den ungewöhnlichsten Experimenten getrieben und endlich zum Allwissender gemacht hat, versicherte mir, daß man in den Yoga-Praktiken durch Abwendung von der Außenwelt, durch Bindung der Aufmerksamkeit an körperliche Funktionen, durch besondere Weisen der Atmung tatsächlich neue Empfindungen und Allgemeingefühle in sich erwecken kann, die er als Regressionen zu uralten, längst überlagerten Zuständen des Seelenlebens auffassen will. Er sieht in ihnen eine sozusagen physiologische Begründung vieler Weisheiten der Mystik. Beziehungen zu manchen dunklen Modifikationen des Seelenlebens, wie Trance und Ekstase, lägen hier nahe."

In an occultist context, Eckstein used a different language to describe the body experiences connected to spiritual development. In this regard, Jules Sauerwein is an important witness.⁴⁵ “Eckstein gave me certain illuminating teachings in regard to the inner life”, he writes in 1929,

which are just as precious to me now as they were twenty three years ago. It was he, who taught me, for example, that before the etheric body can be brought into a state of true equilibrium, one must reach the point, where consciousness of the various parts of the etheric body can be extended to the corresponding regions of the physical body. Under ordinary conditions we think in our head, sense our emotions and impulses in the region of the heart and sympathetic system, while in the rest of the body we are merely aware of sensory or motor stimuli. I learned from Eckstein something I had not discovered in Theosophy, namely, that before a man can be conscious of the principle higher than the physical body – the etheric body – he must learn to think in every part of his being – in other words, he must bring his visible and invisible organs into conscious spiritual activity by means of the currents circulating in the etheric body.⁴⁶

Eckstein told Sauerwein that he had learnt this knowledge from a student of Kerning, a certain “W...” who lived in Stuttgart. This implies that he did not only practise Kerning exercises under the guidance of Mailänder, but had a second teacher. The only one to be able to fulfil this function could have been the Stuttgart-based building surveyor Weiß, the last direct student of Kerning, who died in 1916 at the age of 96. Eckstein seemingly is another representative of the blending of Kerning’s occult body techniques and yoga that is so typical for Viennese and Prague fin-de-siècle occultism.

The last important element of Kellner’s occultism is Freemasonry. In 1873 he was initiated at the masonic lodge Humanitas in Neudörfl and in the same year was awarded the fellow craft degree.⁴⁷ In 1875, Kellner was expelled from Humanitas because he did not fulfil his masonic duties.⁴⁸ One of the reasons for this may have been that travelling to Neudörfl was quite difficult and may have taken too much time for a busy entrepreneur and inventor.

Additionally, Blue Lodge Freemasonry (consisting of the three basic masonic degrees of entered apprentice, fellow craft, and master mason) did not fulfil Kellner’s expectations. In his obituary for Kellner, Hartmann wrote about his further career within Freemasonry: “He soon turned to high-degree Freemasonry

45 Jules Sauerwein (1880–1967) was a famous French journalist who came to Vienna as a young man in 1904 and got into contact with Viennese occultism. Besides his journalistic work he translated many writings of Rudolf Steiner whom he met during his stay in Vienna. I would like to thank Rolf Speckner for providing Sauerwein’s text.

46 Sauerwein 1929: 414.

47 Neudörfl was a so-called border-lodge (“Grenzloge”) in Hungary close to the Austrian border. These lodges were established because at that time Freemasonry was illegal in Austria.

48 Lechler 2013: 145.

and on his long and frequent journeys he gained the highest grades and greatest honours that a mason is able to achieve.”⁴⁹ In his later years, Kellner openly criticised Blue Lodge Freemasonry for having lost its secret and for only pursuing humanitarian aspirations.⁵⁰ On the other hand, he conceived of the high-degree systems as keepers of the secret of true Freemasonry. It is unknown into which systems and where Kellner was initiated between 1873 and 1895. According to Theodor Reuss, Kellner also came into contact with the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light that was founded in 1895 in Boston. In the latter year, he discussed his ambitious idea to establish an *Academia Masonica*, a kind of academy of High-degree Freemasonry with Reuss, a project that, if Reuss is telling the truth, was inspired by his encounter with the Brotherhood of Light. The idea of such an academy was not new:

The Grand Orient de France operated a Grand College of Rites which had jurisdiction over all high degrees within France, and Scotland had its Supreme Council of Rites. [...] What was new was that this had not been attempted before in Germany. Many high-degree rites had not found their way to Germany, and Kellner hoped to fill this void by creating a German-language College of Rites that could administer as many of these rites as possible.⁵¹

It took some years until this vision became a reality. Kellner in the end collaborated with Reuss, the busy and quite dubious inventor and manager of occult organisations, and some other people from Germany’s masonic milieu including Hartmann. In order to kick off this kind of organisation, it was of vital importance to collect authorisations for high-degree rites. In 1902 Kellner and his masonic collaborators managed to make a deal with Yarker who was Sovereign Grand Master of the united rites of Memphis and Misraim and of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Yarker signed a charter for “The Sovereign Sanctuary 33°–95° etc., in and for the Empire of Germany” that authorised them to administer both rites.⁵² Kellner became patron and Honorary Grand Master General of the new Sovereign Sanctuary. The “acting members” carried out the organisational work. It does not seem that Kellner as “patron” took part in it. The sanctuary was located in Berlin, where Reuss as Grand Master General ran the whole masonic order.

It also does not look as if Kellner participated in continuous masonic ritual work. Volker Lechler and Wolfgang Kistemann write about him, Reuss and Hartmann as the three leaders of the order:

49 Emanuel 1905: 2.

50 “One is just as little a true freemason if one only visits the lodges and spends money for widows as one is a true Christian if one only goes to church and gives alms” (Kellner 1903: 15).

51 Kaczynski 2012: 185.

52 Kaczynski 2012: 196.

The three could only have sporadic contacts because they lived scattered throughout Europe. From a steady and ordered corporate work as high-degree freemasons they were literally miles away.⁵³

To become “Honorary Grand Master General” may have satisfied Kellner’s ambition to occupy a leading position within the elite of occultism and to gain a kind of priestly authority. It is, however, questionable how intense his involvement really was. Nevertheless, during the last few years of Kellner’s life, High-degree Freemasonry provided a kind of institutional and ritual frame for his religious practice and the social structure within which he developed and taught his worldview and occult practices, including what he and his fellow occultists conceived of as yogic exercises.

4. Occult Philosophy of Nature: Hartmann, Vivekananda, and Kellner on Ether and Life Force, *Ākāśa* and *Prāṇa*

During the first half of the 1890s, when Hartmann and Kellner collaborated to develop their lignosulphite treatment, Hartmann interpreted alchemy, Paracelsian medicine, and modern physics in light of theosophical theories that were influenced by South Asian concepts. The philosophy of nature he outlined postulates that the whole universe consists of a primary matter that modern science calls “ether” and that would be known in Indian philosophy as *ākāśa*. Ether (*ākāśa*) manifests itself in different states of vibration:

*the difference between these vibrations is the foundation of all formations and expressions of power, be it in the realm of visible matter, on a higher plane that is invisible to us, or in the realm of intelligence. Above all these appearances is the cause that originates everything, wisdom itself (self-awareness).*⁵⁴

The vibrations are caused by a living and organising force:

This principle of life, which the Indians called “*prana*,” could also be called a function of the general primary matter or “ether”. It constitutes the life force of each organism.⁵⁵

53 Lechler 2013: 150: “Die drei konnten nur sporadisch Kontakt haben, weil sie über Europa verstreut lebten. Von einer regelmäßigen und geordneten gemeinsamen Ordensarbeit als Hochgradfreimaurer waren sie, im wahrsten Sinn des Wortes, kilometerweit entfernt.”

54 Hartmann 1893a: 415–416: “[D]ie Verschiedenartigkeit dieser Schwingungen ist die Grundlage aller Formenbildungen und Kraftäusserungen [...]; über allen diesen Erscheinungen steht die Ursache, der alle Dinge ihre Entstehung ursprünglich verdanken, die Weisheit selbst (das Selbstbewusstsein)” [Hartmann’s emphases].

55 Hartmann 1893b: 27: “Dieses Lebensprinzip, von den Indiern ‘*Prana*’ genannt, könnte auch als eine Funktion oder Eigenschaft der allgemeinen Urmaterie oder des ‘Aethers’ bezeichnet werden, und sie konstituiert die Lebenskraft eines jeden Organismus” [Hartmann’s emphasis].

For Hartmann, matter and force, *ākāśa* and *prāṇa*, are an inseparable unity. Force is matter in motion and matter is bound or incarnated energy.⁵⁶ The dual union of *ākāśa* and *prāṇa* is caused by divine will and consciousness, and constitutes a kind of *anima mundi* that enlivens the evolving cosmos as a whole and at the same time every individual being.

On the basis of these principles, Hartmann explains the possibility of the alchemical transmutation of elements into each other:

The key to the entering of chemistry into the field of alchemy lies in a correct understanding of the qualities of “ether”, or, to be more accurate, of the *ākāśa* [sic] and its modifications, and we have good reason to believe that in this respect we are on the eve of great discoveries.⁵⁷

Additionally, this philosophy serves him as a theoretical foundation of alternative forms of healing which he interprets as influencing the finer vibrations of ether that make up the invisible aura of the human organism. The changes within the aura cause healing effects within the gross body that conventional medicine is unable to explain.

These thoughts anticipate the emanationist cosmology developed by Swami Vivekananda in his famous *Rāja Yoga* (1896).⁵⁸ Vivekananda also conceives of the universe as “an ocean of ether, consisting of layer after layer of varying degrees of vibration under the action of *Prāna*.”⁵⁹ Like Hartmann, he uses this concept to develop a model of health and disease that sustains the effectiveness of alternative healing methods:

In this country there are Mindhealers, Faith-healers, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Hypnotists, etc., and if we analyse these different groups we shall find that the background of each is this control of the *Prāna*, whether they know it or not.⁶⁰

Most likely, the convergence between Hartmann’s and Vivekananda’s cosmology is due to their use of the same theosophical sources as Blavatsky already speaks of *ākāśa* and *prāṇa* in the same sense although in a much less systematic way. It needs further investigation that cannot be undertaken here. The difference between Vivekananda and Hartmann or Kellner lies only in the fact that for Vivekananda *ākāśa* and *prāṇa* are correlated but basically independent principles, whereas the other two emphasise their unity.

56 Cf. Hartmann 1893a: 444.

57 Hartmann 1893a: 438: “Der Schlüssel zum Eindringen der Chemie in das Gebiet der Alchemie liegt daher einem Verständnisse der Eigenschaften des ‘Äthers’ und dessen Schwingungen, oder besser gesagt: des *Akāśa* [sic] und seinen [sic] Modifikationen und wir haben Grund anzunehmen, dass wir in dieser Beziehung am Vorabende grosser Entdeckungen stehen.”

58 For Vivekananda’s cosmology see De Michelis 2004: 153–168.

59 Vivekananda 1992: 158.

60 Vivekananda 1992: 149–150.

Kellner, who surely knew Hartmann's articles on alchemy and the lignosulphite treatment and may have discussed these matters with him, underlines the primacy of energy whereas Hartmann at times tends to highlight ether as the primary substance. In his manuscript "Experimenteller Beweis über die Verwandbarkeit der sogenannten Grundstoffe", Kellner surmises that the most basic reality is energy. Matter and its different manifestations, the chemical elements and other substances, are only solidified energy.⁶¹

According to Köthner (1902), Kellner told him in a letter concerning his alchemical experiments that he was still not totally sure about their theoretical foundation, but that he intended to use Ostwald's theory of energy ("Energetik") to explain them. Furthermore, Köthner reports that Kellner mentioned in this letter that the alchemical writings of his grandfather gave him his first glimpses of a monistic worldview. The category "monism" was used in those days for the occultist project of a unified scientific explanation of sensory and extrasensory phenomena.⁶² It was also used within mainstream science and philosophy for theories that reduce all phenomena to one single principle. The chemist and philosopher Wilhelm Ostwald was one of the most prominent monistic philosophers of his time. His philosophy aimed at overcoming the dualism of matter and mind by reducing matter to a complex of energies coordinated in space. In a further step, he applied the concept of energy to psychic phenomena and thus the notion of energy became the one and only principle underlying every phenomenon in the world.⁶³

Kellner added a mystical twist to this kind of energetic monism and used it as theoretical foundation of his masonic order:

The rite of our order is based on the insight that the general energy of the world (which we know in its lower forms as electricity, magnetism, light, warmth, etc.) manifests itself in its higher forms as love, consciousness, life, progress, etc.; that the particular part of this energy that dwells within us and constitutes our personality is as well indestructible as are all the other lower forms of energy (responsibility of all rational beings) [...]; that through the practical application of the symbols used within the rite, the forms of energy which determine our being can be further awakened and developed so that within the "higher grades" we are finally able to find our better immortal 'self' (the 'lost word') already in the present life.⁶⁴

61 Cf. Kellner 1896b: 1.

62 For example, the German theosophical journal *Sphinx* (1886–1896) was subtitled "monthly magazine for the historical and experimental foundation of a transcendental worldview on a monistic basis".

63 Cf. Ostwald 1902.

64 Kellner 1903: 15: "Der Ritus unseres Ordens ist aufgebaut auf das Wissen: daß die allgemeine Welt=Energie (die wir in ihren niederen Formen als Elektrizität, Magnetismus, Licht, Wärme, u.s.w. kennen) sich in ihren höheren Formen als Liebe, Bewußtsein, Leben, Fortschritt u.s.w. offenbart; daß derjenige Teil dieser einen Energie, der in uns wohnt und der unsere wahre

Hartmann's attempts to connect energetic monism with South Asian concepts may have confirmed Kellner's interests in South Asian occultism as an ancient worldview that corresponds to modern science and philosophy.

5. Kellner's Encounter with South Asian Yogis and His Essay on Yoga

Being a member of the Theosophical Society and friend of Hartmann, Kellner shared the theosophical knowledge about South Asian religion, and especially yoga. He had access to theosophical articles on this topic and to translations of primary sources edited and/or translated by theosophists.

As already mentioned above, at the beginning of the twentieth century Kellner became an enthusiastic student of the Western-educated Brahmin Sri Agamya Guru Paramahansa from Kashmir.⁶⁵ Agamya, a barrister by profession, claimed that after retiring from the High Court he stayed for several years in the Himalayas to meditate and master yoga. In public performances he demonstrated his yogic powers by stopping his pulse on command. We saw already that, according to Hartmann, Kellner learnt breathing techniques and other exercises from him and was very convinced about the results. No details about what he taught Kellner have been handed down. Several sources testify that Agamya stressed the importance of breath control to calm down the mind in his public talks in the USA and England. The descriptions of yogic exercises in his books that include, for example, the tantric concept of the rising of *kundalini* through the *cakra*-s are too vague for a certain practice to be derived from them.

Within Kellner's occult milieu and among the general public, the guru was widely renowned as a fraudster. Hartmann was not the only one who complained that Kellner was all too trusting with regard to this dubious man. Agamya first visited Europe in 1900. It is unknown if Kellner already met him then. In 1903, during his second journey to Europe, he stayed for a while in Hallein and on this occasion, Kellner's apprenticeship ended abruptly. The "Tiger Mahatma", as was his nickname, was famous for his ferocious temper and outbursts of rage. According to oral family tradition, as passed on by Marie Kellner after the death of

Persönlichkeit ausmacht, ebenso unzerstörbar ist, wie jede andere niedrigere Energieform; daß für die höheren Energieformen ähnliche Gesetze Geltung haben wie die, welche die niederen beherrschen (Verantwortlichkeit aller vernünftigen Wesen); daß durch die *praktische* Anwendung der im Ritus gegebenen Symbole die unser Sein bedingenden Energieformen weiter erweckt und entwickelt werden können, so daß wir endlich in den 'höheren Graden' unser besseres und unsterbliches 'Selbst' (das 'verlorene Wort') schon in diesem Leben finden."

65 Cf. Kaczynski 2012: 83–86.

her husband, Agamya and Kellner had a quarrel and in the end, Agamya cursed him solemnly, probably because he had given away his secret teachings to other persons. For Kellner's widow this curse could well have been the cause of his disease and death.⁶⁶

In 1907, Agamya visited England coming from New York. Among his students was Aleister Crowley, who attended a retreat with him that included meditation practice. Soon after, they parted in disagreement. In 1908, Agamya was finally imprisoned in England because he groped two of his female students.⁶⁷

Several years before he met Sri Agamya Guru Paramahansa, Kellner already became acquainted with another South Asian who visited the Western World to convince the interested public of the occult powers that yogis possess: Bheema Sena Pratapa.⁶⁸ Pratapa is said to have been a student of the University of Lahore and a member of England's Royal Asiatic Society. He led an ascetic lifestyle and at the age of twenty-nine travelled to Europe where he gave several demonstrations of what he called "yoga sleep", a state of mind in which he lost contact with the world around him, became insensitive to pain and could not be awakened unless certain movements of the hand were carried out close to his body. Pratapa claimed that during his sleep he would be in a state of bliss and union with the divine spirit. Along with Gopal Krishna, another yogi, he was an attraction for the visitors of the Millennial Exposition in Budapest in 1896, where he publicly demonstrated yoga sleep for an entire week while scientists measured his body temperature, pulse, and respiration. A scandal arose when Pratapa was accused of coming out of his yoga sleep at night in order to eat and drink, to have a smoke and to play cards with his fellow yogi. It finally turned out that most, if not all of the accusations, were baseless and that Pratapa had become the victim of a conflict between two impresarios.⁶⁹

The public controversy about the young yogi made its way into the Austrian press and perhaps this was what made Kellner and Hartmann aware of him. In any case, they invited him to Hallein where together with the Munich theosophist Ludwig Deinhard they examined his yogic powers. For Kellner it was clear that Pratapa and his fellow yogi Gopal Krishna set themselves in the state of *nirvikalpasamādhi* during their performances.⁷⁰

In August 1896, Kellner, Hartmann, and Deinhard accompanied Pratapa to the Third International Congress for Psychology in Munich to exhibit his yoga

66 Cf. Weirauch 1998: 201.

67 For Agamya's teaching in the USA and England, see Kaczynski 2012: 84–86.

68 For Pratapa and his encounter with Kellner, see Kaczynski 2012: 77–79.

69 Cf. the newspaper articles in *Abendblatt des Pester Lloyd*, 11 July 1896, no. 158, 1 ("Der Streit um die Fakire") and *Grazer Tagblatt*, 31 July 1896, 2 ("Eine Ehrenrettung").

70 Cf. Kellner 1896a: 19.

sleep before the scientists and to re-establish his reputation as yogi.⁷¹ He went into yoga sleep throughout all three days of the conference from 10am to 6pm. The demonstration was not part of the official programme, but many members of the congress came to see the yogi and tried to interrupt his otherworldly state or searched for its pathological causes, both without success.



Figure 2: Carl Kellner and Bheema Sena Pratapa (photograph courtesy of Josef Dvorak).

Kellner's booklet *Yoga: Eine Skizze über den psycho-physiologischen Teil der alten indischen Yogalehre* that he dedicated to the Third International Congress for Psychology was distributed at this event. For a long time, this small 21-page treatise seemed to be lost and forgotten, but in 1989 the text was reprinted in Josef Dvorak's popular book on Satanism.⁷² Another copy of Kellner's sketch is kept in

71 Kaczynski 2012: 78.

72 Dvorak 1993: 431–446. Dvorak found Kellner's sketch in the estate of the ethnologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche that is kept in the collection of the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin (email message from Josef Dvorak to the author, 13 May 2016). He wrote seminal articles on

Oscar R. Schlag's famous esoteric library that today belongs to the Zentralbibliothek Zürich. Most of the psychologists remained sceptical about the young yogi, but Kellner's essay and also an article of Hartmann's on the yoga sleep were quoted in several newspaper articles on Pratapa's performances in Munich. The journalists now reported with much more respect about the yogi. Hartmann and Kellner definitely succeeded in restoring his reputation.

Later, Kellner's text was mentioned positively in a footnote of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. James called Kellner a "European witness" who "after carefully comparing the results of Yoga with those of the hypnotic or dreamy states artificially producible by us" had come to the conclusion that yoga "makes of its disciples good, healthy, and happy men".⁷³ This, indeed, is one of the results of Kellner's sketch and it fits well with James' pragmatist test of religion's value by its fruits, as well as with his New-Thought inspired concept of a "religion of healthy-mindedness". James was a member of the organizing committee of the Munich congress but did not participate in it. An unidentified person who knew about James' interest in yoga must have handed Kellner's booklet to him after the congress. The essay consists of a short foreword followed by a chapter on "What is Yoga?"⁷⁴ The main part deals with "Practices to Induce and Attain Yoga".⁷⁵ The text ends with a concluding "Résumé" ("Rückblick").⁷⁶

In the foreword Kellner writes that for several years he intended to publish the insights and experiences that he had achieved through a long and careful study of yoga. But work overload would have kept him from writing. Additionally, he hesitated to present a topic to the public that very likely would share the destiny of mesmerism (i. e., scientific and public rejection).⁷⁷ Notwithstanding these reservations, he would have decided to use the favourable moment of the presence of Bheema Sena Pratapa, and his willingness to demonstrate the scientifically testable teachings of yoga, to say what he had wanted to for a long time.

Kellner in which he, among other sources, used the stories told about Kellner in the oral tradition of the Kellner family. Cf. Weirauch 1998.

73 James 1902: 401.

74 Kellner 1896a: 5–8.

75 Kellner 1896a: 8–20.

76 Kellner 1896a: 20–21.

77 The reference to mesmerism here owes itself to the fact that Kellner's view of yoga is part of a long chain of nineteenth-century interpretations that postulated a deep similarity or even identity between yoga and mesmeric techniques and the specific states of mind they produce. He writes in his sketch: "Like hypnotism and artificial somnambulism yoga differentiates between different states, namely *dharana*, *dhiana* [sic] and *samadhi*, that correspond [...] almost precisely to the stages of somnambulism known to us, whereas the state of *pratyahara* resembles the phenomena that we produce within hypnotized people by influencing their sensory perception" (7). Basu's introduction to the *Sivasamhitā*, Kellner's most important source, points out several convergences between yoga and mesmerism.

Kellner begins his investigation with a broad definition of yoga, very much in line with the one Hartmann gave in the *Wiener Rundschau*. Yoga, he says, comprises the practical side of each religious system. Therefore, one can find it in every holy book and also within the traditions and symbols of secret societies.⁷⁸ It consists of “certain exercises and a life style governed by certain rules that aim at dissolving the illusionary ego-consciousness (Ahankara) and reaching a union with the general world-consciousness (Atma)”.⁷⁹ Insofar as this is a union with a sublime and holy object it is connected with a sense of ineffable bliss.⁸⁰ Kellner thus defines yoga as transcultural practical mysticism that represents the core of every religious system. The terms he uses for the description of mystical union are reminiscent of (neo-)vedantic thought.

Kellner states that he does not want to go further into the philosophical side of yoga because he is more interested in looking at it from a psycho-physiological perspective. For this purpose, he draws on the theory of Ambroise Liébeault, the founder of the school of Nancy, which in the 1890s had become famous as a leading school of hypnosis.⁸¹ Liébeault’s theory about the significance of the flow of attention for the generation of hypnotic states was especially innovative and Kellner applied it to yoga.

Starting from Rājendralāla Mitra’s translation of *Yogasūtra* 1.2, “Yoga is the suppression of the functions of the thinking principle”,⁸² he suggests replacing *citta*, “the thinking principle”, with “attention” in the sense of Liébeault. Suppression of the changes in attention would be

the most beautiful explanation of the induction of the state of “autosuggestion” or better “autohypnosis”. [...] From a European point of view, we can say the following: Yoga is the ability to produce all phenomena of somnambulism arbitrarily through one’s own free will by steady practice and a suitable way of life.⁸³

78 Kellner 1896a: 6.

79 Kellner 1896a: 5. In other passages Kellner speaks of “the union of jiva and atma” (10), “the direct union of manas (literally translated ‘the soul’) with atma, in other words of the individual soul with the cosmic consciousness” (11) or “union of jivatma and paramatma” (19). He thereby mixes the definitions of yoga that he found in his sources, especially in the introductions of Basu and Tookaram Tatyā to the *Śivasamhitā* and the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.

80 Kellner 1896a: 11.

81 For the theories of Liébeault, see Liébeault 1889, Gauld 1995: 319–362, and Carrer 2000.

82 Mitra 1883: 4. Kellner (1896a: 7) translates: “Yoga ist die Unterdrückung der Veränderungen des Denkprinzipes.”

83 Kellner 1896a: 7–8: “Entkleiden wir daher diesen Fundamentalsatz Patanjali’s seines indischen Charakters und setzen wir statt seinem ‘Chitta’ (Denkprinzip) das Wort; [sic] ‘Aufmerksamkeit’ im Sinne der Liébeaultschen [sic] Anschauung, so haben wir die schönste Erklärung zur Herbeiführung des Zustandes der ‘Autosuggestion’ oder besser gesagt der ‘Autohypnose’ [...]. Wir können daher auf ‘abendländisch’ sagen: Yoga ist die durch andauernde Übung und geeignete Lebensweise erlangte Befähigung zur willkürlichen Selbsthervorrufung aller Erscheinungen des Somnambulismus” [Kellner’s emphases]. Kellner’s

The practitioner creates a state of steady flow of attention towards a suggested object that leads to a somnambulant state in which identification with the object can take place.

Kellner's opting for this approach is not surprising insofar as theories of hypnosis and autosuggestion were among the most promising scientific approaches that offered explanations for yogic experiences and powers at the end of the nineteenth century. As we saw, Kellner knew about the criticism of mesmerism and that it could threaten the reputation of yoga. He obviously did not want to fall into this trap, but tried to connect to a more recent, less academically controversial theory, even though among occultists mesmeric theories were still highly regarded. Liébeault's place within the history of psychology is somewhere halfway between mesmerism and the new psychologies of hypnotism and suggestion.

Kellner's definition of yoga fit well with the programme of the congress. Many papers on psycho-physiological topics as well as on hypnotism, somnambulism and suggestion were presented. Ambroise Liébeault himself spoke on "Communication des pensées par suggestion mentale".⁸⁴ One entire section dealt with the "Psychology of sleep, dream, hypnotic and related phenomena".⁸⁵ As no speaker at the conference addressed phenomena and concepts from outside the Euro-American world, Kellner's sketch and Pratapa's performance were very avant-garde.

More surprising than his recourse to Liébeault is the fact that Kellner's view of yoga includes a clear plea for Haṭha Yoga. At the end of the nineteenth century the four hegemonic schools concerning the interpretation of yoga, namely Theosophy, Neo-hinduism, academic orientalism, and psychology, were still clinging to a predominantly negative image of Haṭha Yoga, whereas already in the early years of Theosophy, certain elements of it were evaluated positively and popularised. From the second half of the 1880s onwards, South Asian theosophists and Sanskrit scholars started to translate, edit, and comment select major works of this form of yoga. They developed less prejudiced views and sometimes even recommended certain Haṭha practices. Kellner adopted this new trend. Haṭha Yoga, he writes, is the most interesting type of yoga "from a pure physiological point of view".⁸⁶ And not only that, according to him, the psycho-physiological dimension ensures its superiority among the different yogas. Haṭha Yoga practices "possess the most formidable hypnogenetic means" and therefore

study of the *Yogasūtra* is also documented by a manuscript that contains his translation of the first sixteen *sūtra*-s of the third *pāda*.

84 Cf. *Dritter Internationaler Congress für Psychologie in München 1897*: 427.

85 *Dritter Internationaler Congress für Psychologie in München 1897*: 348–382.

86 Kellner 1896a: 12.

they are able to create the yogic state in the simplest possible matter and faster than other yoga techniques.⁸⁷

The yoga texts he refers to in his essay are Rājendralāla Mitra's translation of the *Yogasūtra* and three translations of Haṭha Yoga texts: Srischandra Basu's translation of the *Śivasamhitā* from 1887 and translations of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and the *Gheraṇḍasamhitā*. He does not correctly quote the last two, but in all likelihood he used the translations of T. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (1893) and again Srischandra Basu (this time called Vasu, 1895). All three translations were published by theosophical publishing houses and represent the positive attitude of the elite of Indian theosophists towards Tantrism and Haṭha Yoga.

Basu's introduction to his translation of the *Śivasamhitā* is the source that Kellner explicitly and implicitly quotes or paraphrases most often. Basu repeats the negative attitude of Theosophy towards Haṭha yogis while, at the same time, affirming the value of their breathing techniques. *Prāṇāyāma*, he says,

facilitates the liberation of the spirit. There are different modes of bringing about this result but the one proposed by the Yogi through the regulation of the breath, is the easiest, and safest, and what is its greatest recommendation, requires no external accessories. Fumigation, dancing, music &c., have been employed by various mystics to bring about trance, but all these mean the help of external adjuncts.⁸⁸

In the same vein, the theosophist Tookaram Tatya who wrote the introduction to Srinivasa Iyengar's English translation of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* identified breath-control with Haṭha Yoga:

The regulation of breath for the purpose of checking the fluctuations of the thinking principle is called Hatha-yoga [...]. Raja-yoga begins where Hatha-yoga, properly followed, ends. It would therefore be unwise to consider the Hatha-yoga as nothing more than a dangerous gymnastic feat, for a moderate practice of it has been found by experience to be both conducive to health and longevity.⁸⁹

Basu's and Tatya's views of Haṭha Yoga and the experiences that he had with body-centred meditation à la Kerning-Mailänder may have inspired Kellner to become one of the earliest (if not the first) proponents of Haṭha Yoga in Europe. Following the two South Asian commentators, for Kellner the core discipline of this yoga is a "systematized regulation of breath".⁹⁰ Thanks to the use of the psychological and physiological effects of controlled breath, "the Haṭha Yoga practices have the best hypnogenetic means. Therefore they are the easiest practices leading to the yogic state and the fastest reaching that goal".⁹¹

87 Kellner 1896a: 9.

88 Basu 1887: 17.

89 Tatya 1893: xii.

90 Kellner 1896a: 8.

91 Kellner 1896a: 9.

Kellner exemplifies the polysemy of yoga terms and instructions by explaining the different layers of meaning of the term Haṭha Yoga.⁹² He first mentions the interpretation that *ha* means moon and *ṭha* the sun. He adds that the union of sun and moon could be related to a certain breathing technique that unites the breathing through the left and the right nostril in the area in-between the eye-brows in order to attain salvation. *Haṭha*, the union of sun and moon could also refer to the union of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, the downward and upward moving breath (*vāyu*) within the navel region. On a philosophical level, it would mean the union of *jīva* (moon) with the *ātman* (sun).

It is worth mentioning that a symbolism of heavenly opposites and their union was well known to Kellner from his occult background. The rooftop of Kellner's villa in Vienna was decorated with a large figure holding in one hand the sun and in the other one the earth. Josef Dvorak interpreted this figure as a representation of Baphomet (a popular symbol of the union of polarities in occultism). But it actually depicts the title vignette of the first volume of Carl von Eckartshausen's *Aufschlüsse zur Magie* from 1788. The vignette shows the eternal oneness as divine creator of the cosmos holding in his hands the primordial duality of sun and earth from which the manifold phenomena of the created world emerge. Two chains connect sun and earth with a four-stringed lyre that represents the tetrachord as symbol of cosmic harmony.

In alchemy the union of sun (sulphur) and moon (mercury) has a prominent place within the production of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. It was often depicted as a hierogamy between a king and a queen.

Within the context of his argument in favour of Haṭha Yoga, Kellner mentions other forms of yoga (Mantra Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Laja [sic] Yoga, etc.) in passing without detailed description. Only Rāja Yoga stands out being characterised as "crown of yoga".⁹³ Following Tookaram Tatya, he does not identify it with the *Yogasūtra* but with the highest, redeeming state of mind that is the general aim of yoga.

He then uses Patañjali's eightfold path as a system of subdivisions that he believed to be accepted in all forms of yoga. He interprets *yama* as religious regulations which do not only have a moral purpose but also a psychological one, because they create the state of inner calm that is necessary for yoga. *Niyama* is defined as a purification of the outer and inner man. More attention is given to *āsana*. Kellner proposes explaining the yogic poses as mimetic enactment of states of the mind:

92 Ahead of the Indology of his time, today Kellner's understanding of Haṭha Yoga is anachronistic. Cf. Birch 2011.

93 Kellner 1896a: 11.



Figure 3: The villa Hochwart of the Kellner family in Vienna (photograph courtesy of Josef Dvorak).

It is clear that if we want to develop inner concentration we have to adopt a pose that harmonises with the inner processes. The actor who has to represent a hero will walk in a different way than when he has to perform a bon vivant. It is also well known that we change our body posture as soon as our emotions change. Well, the yogi attempts to influence the inner through the outer by adopting a pose from the start that fits to the state of mind he wishes to put himself in.⁹⁴

During the 1880s, a significant cultural change concerning attitudes towards the human body took place. Modern physical culture had come to Vienna from England and the USA. In keeping with the times, Kellner became a passionate sportsman. His trainer Georg Jagendorfer, then “the strongest man in town”, was the owner of a gymnasium in the centre of Vienna where he taught his speciality,

94 Kellner 1896a: 13: “Es ist klar, dass wir eine Stellung einnehmen müssen, die mit unseren inneren Vorgängen in Einklang steht, wenn wir eine innere Konzentration vornehmen wollen. Der Schauspieler, der einen Helden vorzustellen hat, wird auch anders einherschreiten als wenn er einen leichtsinnigen Lebemann gibt. Ebenso ist ja der Wechsel der Körperstellungen bei Gemütsbewegungen bekannt. Der Yogi sucht nun von aussen nach innen zu wirken und passt gleich seine Stellung demjenigen Zustand im Vorhinein an, in den er sein Gemüte versetzen will.”

Indian club swinging, as well as rhythmic gymnastics, wrestling, and boxing. Jagendorfer also worked as private trainer of Kellner's children in Hallein.⁹⁵

In line with modern physical culture, Kellner highlights that a yogi should live according to the principle of *mens sana in corpore sano*: "The Yogi needs a strong and in all of its parts totally healthy body. He has to possess perfect body control."⁹⁶ Nevertheless, he did not recommend the *āsana*-s described in the Haṭha Yoga scriptures for the purpose of physical training, because he thought they would be too difficult for Westerners. Referring to the thirty-two *āsana*-s of the *Gheraṇḍasamhitā* he refuses to publish them in his sketch "because they can only be performed by the so-called contortionists of our circuses and vaudevilles".⁹⁷ In this context he quotes *Yogasūtra* 2.46 to underline that the yogic postures should be firm and comfortable.⁹⁸ Their main purpose should be to support inner concentration and in the West, e.g., one should not use *padmāsana*, etc., but easier sitting poses to promote attention and inner calm.

Kellner is therefore a good example of the type of modern man whose interest in self-cultivation is at the same time open to the latest techniques in Western physical culture as well as yoga exercises from South Asia. Not least because of his knowledge about the practices of Kerning-Mailänder, he appreciates the importance of the body for meditation. If the modern forms of *āsana* practice had existed in his time, he surely would have integrated them into his practice.

The fourth constituent of the eightfold path, *prāṇāyāma*, is treated in the most detailed fashion. Here is the point where Kellner brings in the Haṭha Yoga practices that interested him most. He mentions several of the breathing exercises from the Haṭha Yoga scriptures. Furthermore he introduces the system of the ten *vāyu*-s, lists fourteen *nāḍī*-s, and outlines the role of both within yogic practice:

The yogi shifts his consciousness, condenses his attention on one of the *vayus* and on a *nadi* and connects this imagination in a certain *asana* with the breath. This kind of combination is called *mudra*. Altogether there are 25 *mudras* (among them some very strange ones)!⁹⁹

The practice of *mudrā*, then, would bring about the higher limbs of yoga. Through the practice of *mudrā*-s and the other yogic disciplines, the yogi de-

95 For Kellner's relation to Viennese fin-de-siècle physical culture, see the remarks of Josef Dvorak in Weirauch 1998: 193.

96 Kellner 1896a: 12–13.

97 Kellner 1896a: 14.

98 On *Yogasūtra* 2.46, see the chapter by Philipp Maas in the present volume.

99 Kellner 1896a: 17–18: "Der Yogi versetzt sein Bewusstsein, verdichtet seine Aufmerksamkeit auf einen der genannten *Vayus* und auf ein [sic] *Nadi*, und verbindet diese Vorstellung in einer [sic] gewissen *Asana* mit dem Atem. Eine solche Kombination nennt man ein *Mudra* und so gibt es 25 *Mudras* (worunter einige sehr sonderbare)!"

velops *pratyāhāra*, the ability to suppress his sensory perceptions and to deliberately replace them with arbitrary imaginations. Kellner compares this state of mind with the state of a hypnotised person. He briefly describes the practice of *saṁyama* as fixation of the *citta* to one spot (*dhāraṇā*), followed by a steady stream of attention towards this spot (*dhyāna*) culminating in a union of the seer with the seen (*samādhi*). This process leads to the development of *siddhi*-s, paranormal powers, and finally to redemption through union of *jīvātmā* and *paramātmā*. Kellner connects a defence of Pratapa and his fellow yogi to the introduction of the topic of the *siddhi*-s.

In the “Résumé” of his article, Kellner once again addresses the psychologists that attended the Munich conference. He tries to convince them that the ancient yoga teachings are deserving of careful study. The practice of yoga is summed up as “a kind of pursued autosuggestion and autohypnosis” that could be used to produce positive physiological and psychological changes.¹⁰⁰

It is worth mentioning that throughout his whole sketch, Kellner does not deny what he calls the philosophical aspects of yoga. Nevertheless, he develops a secularised psychosomatic model of yoga and, in the end, opts for the use of yoga as a therapeutic tool without any religious or philosophical frame. This is a new strategy within the occultist advocacy of yoga. He does not want to confront mainstream science as Blavatsky did, but tries to defend yoga with arguments that were able to draw scientific approval.

As several researchers have observed, Kellner’s sketch contains spelling mistakes and errors. He was evidently in a hurry while writing the piece. One of his mistakes has an important history of reception. In his list of the ten *vāyu*-s Kellner mentions a “Nāpa” and correlates it with the “function of insemination”.¹⁰¹ This *vāyu* is not mentioned in Kellner’s primary source concerning the *vāyu*-s, which is the *Gheraṇḍasaṁhitā*. It was probably only a spelling error: he wrote “Nāpa” instead of the correct *nāga*.¹⁰² But this does not explain Kellner’s view about the function of this *vāyu*. *Nāga* is traditionally associated with burping and vomiting and not with insemination.

Years later, in the legendary jubilee edition of the *Oriflamme* published in September 1912, Kellner’s dubious “Nāpa” *vāyu* was used by Reuss to substantiate a tradition of ritual sex in the O.T.O. dating back to Kellner whom he called “the spiritual father of the O.T.O.”¹⁰³ I will return to this matter in the next section.

100 Kellner 1896a: 20.

101 Kellner 1896a: 17.

102 Cf. Möller & Howe 1986: 139–140; Weirauch 1998: 194–196.

103 Reuss 1912: 3.

There is no allusion to sacred sexual intercourse in Kellner's yoga booklet. Except for the "Nāpa" *vāyu*, only one passage in his sketch refers to sexuality. "Asanas", Kellner writes, "are supposed to influence the circulation within the lower extremities and the sexual drive and to be training for willpower".¹⁰⁴ The only practice that he describes in more detail is a *prāṇāyāma* called *sahita* and a Sufi breathing technique without any sexual connotations, both taken from Basu's introduction.

Although sexual practices are not directly mentioned, it is not difficult to derive a yoga technique of dealing with "the function of insemination" from Kellner's description of *mudrā* and from the "Nāpa" *vāyu* he introduced. The yogi takes a convenient position that facilitates the influence on the sexual drive. Then he focuses his attention on "Nāpa" *vāyu* and a *nāḍī* using a certain breathing technique to calm the mind and create a steady flow (of blood according to Basu, quoted by Kellner) towards the brain and thus sublimates the sexual drive. Maybe Kellner's acquaintance with a practice like this made him erroneously project the function of insemination into the system of the *vāyu*-s.

With regard to ritual sex, it is important to note that Kellner's general concept of yoga is based on a kind of asceticism. For him *vairāgya*, renunciation, is one of the master keys to yoga. Only somebody who refrains from earthly wishes and desires can attain the inner peace that is necessary to attain the higher stages of yoga: "Through the mastering of his thoughts and his body, the yogi becomes a virtuous man. As he subjugates his drives and inclinations to his original will and because he focuses this will towards the good, he becomes an 'authentic personality'."¹⁰⁵

Again, Kellner's interpretation of yogic renunciation probably integrated a concept from Basu's commented translation of the *Śivasamhitā*. In keeping with his Sanskrit source, Basu emphasises that celibacy is not necessary for success in yoga. Furthermore, referring to the Sikh guru Arjun he prefers the state of the householder yogi who lives a married life and moderates his sexual desires to that of the completely abstinent ascetic.¹⁰⁶ Kellner could read in Basu's translation of the *Śivasamhitā* and the other Hatha yoga texts that through the preservation of semen during sexual intercourse (or by drawing it up again through the penis after ejaculation together with the woman's generative fluid) the householder can become a fully liberated yogi.¹⁰⁷ The following section deals with a closer ex-

104 Kellner 1896a: 14.

105 Kellner 1896a: 21: "Durch die erlangte Herrschaft über seinen [sic] Gedanken und seinen Körper, wird der Yogi ein 'Charaktermensch'; und dadurch, dass er seine Triebe und Neigungen seinem eigentlichen Willen unterwirft und letzteres auf das Gute gerichtet sein lässt, eine 'Persönlichkeit' [...]."

106 Basu 1887: xx; see also pp. iv and xxx.

107 Basu 1887: 33–35. Cf. James Mallinson's chapter on *vajrolīmudrā* in the present volume. The

amination of the question whether Kellner – motivated by what he found in yoga scriptures or other sources – experimented with sexual practices.

6. Yoga and Ritual Sex within the Inner Occult Circle and the Early O.T.O.

Kellner considered his Sovereign Sanctuary to be a superior alternative to the Christian churches because of its methods to achieve union with the eternal, divine source of the universe:

Naturally, churchdom is occupied with solving the question of “the lost word”, i. e., “the lost eternal life”, but it always refers the searcher to the path of grace and always sets it up as a gift, not as something that one can attain or has attained by oneself. Our order gives every searcher the opportunity to unite with the cosmic consciousness, the primordial creativity already within this life in a conscious and deliberate way through practical means.¹⁰⁸

The “practical application of the symbols” of high-degree masonic rituals was meant to trigger the awakening and development of the energies from which all human life emerges – a process intended to culminate in the discovery of the practitioner’s immortal self.¹⁰⁹ The Sovereign Sanctuary promised verbal instructions concerning these practices to all members who have reached the necessary stage of spiritual development. The available texts about the order that were published while Kellner was still alive do not explain what kinds of “practical means” were offered and what the “practical application of the symbols” in this context would mean. But it is clear that the masonic rituals and initiations were supplemented by special teachings dealing with practical occultism.

In fact, it seems that there existed a small “Inner Occult Circle” within the order that focused on occult practices. The “Inner Triangle” that is sometimes

positive attitude towards sexuality presented in Basu’s edition of the *Śivasamhitā* according to Ida Craddock even inspired Vivekananda. See Schmidt 2010: 126: “While Vivekananda had consistently proclaimed celibacy as a spiritual ideal to his American audiences, Craddock heard that he had offered a select few a glimpse of ‘the higher truth’. ‘I have been shown a book,’ she noted in 1900, ‘which he was said to have circulated among his more advanced disciples in Chicago. [...] It is called *The Esoteric Science and Philosophy of the Tantras. Shiva Samhita.*”

108 Kellner & Reuss 1903: 50: “Das Kirchentum beschäftigt sich naturgemäß auch mit der Frage ‘vom verlorenen Wort’, i. e. ‘dem verlorenen ewigen Leben’, sie verweist den Suchenden aber immer auf den Weg der Gnade und stellt es stets als ein Geschenk und nicht als etwas Selbstzuerwerbendes oder Erworbenes hin. Unser Orden stellt es jedoch in die Möglichkeit eines jeden einzelnen Suchenden, mittelst praktischer Mittel sich mit dem Weltbewußtsein, der Ur-Schöpferkraft, bewußt und selbst gewollt schon in diesem Leben zu vereinen.”

109 Kellner 1903: 15.

mentioned in connection with this circle points to a leadership team (Kellner, Reuss, and Hartmann, if I were to hazard a guess) with Kellner as the leading authority because of his experience in occult practice. The aim of this circle was to offer a training course based exclusively on oral instructions for the higher grades of the order. The whole project is reminiscent of the “Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society” (later called the “Eastern” or “Esoteric School of Theosophy”) and its “Inner Group”, both working independently from the Theosophical Society except for the fact that only (high-ranking) theosophists were admitted into it.

There is not much known about the practices that were taught in this group. Its philosophical and religious concepts as well as its occult practices were still in the making when Kellner died. One year after his death, Max Dotzler provided some indications – and referred to yoga:

The inner occult circle of the order was established within the frame of the order, because the practices of the occult circle were introduced and transmitted absolutely independently from the ritual and the doctrines of the order. The first stages of the practices are of Templar (Rosicrucian-gnostic) origin, the higher practices or stages with breathing exercises and yogi [sic] from which I have received a sample, are yogism, pure yoga exercises [...].¹¹⁰

This looks like a mixture of exercises from the Kerning–Mailänder tradition and practices that were considered to be yogic *stricto sensu*, i. e., exercises originating in South Asia. Within these techniques obviously breathing played a prominent role.

A letter of Reuss to Franz Held in 1903 indicates that Kellner was the authority for meditation within the Sovereign Sanctuary. Held, who may have been a candidate for the Inner Occult Circle, complained about headaches caused by the exercise of sitting. Reuss answered: “I cannot help you. But you are free to report this result to Br. Kellner himself and seek his advice. If one does not tolerate water, one cannot learn to swim.”¹¹¹ The announcement of Carl Kellner’s serious illness, published by The Inner Triangle in the *Oriflamme* in 1904, affirms the regular practice of meditation within the Inner Occult Circle. The brothers of the circle were asked to unite themselves with the Inner Triangle “in their daily

110 Dotzler 1906: 62: “Der innere okkulte Kreis des Ordens wurde im äußeren Rahmen des Ordens gebildet, denn die Übungen des okkulten Kreises wurden absolut unabhängig von dem Ritual und der Ordenslehre eingeführt und gegeben. Die ersten Stufen der Übungen sind templerischen (rosenkreuzerisch-gnostischen) Ursprungs, die höheren Übungen bezw. Stufen mit Atemübungen und Yogi [sic], von denen ich eine Probe bekam, sind Yogismus, reine Yogaübungen [...].”

111 Reuss 1906: 109.

meditations” by including the wish that “our leader” should remain on the earthly plane.¹¹²

The practice of meditation was one thing, but the real hot spot of the Inner Occult Circle was the integration of sexual magic into High-degree Freemasonry in theory and practice.

1. Theoretically it was integrated through the interpretation of the masonic symbols and rituals from the perspective of phallicism or what Reuss more precisely called the Lingam–Yoni cult: the worship of the male and female sexual organs and sexual intercourse as primary symbols of Divine creativity and the insight that this worship is the source of all religion.¹¹³ As Dotzler asserted in 1906, neither the Scottish, nor the Memphis or the Misraim rite per se comprised an interpretation of their rites in the sense of the Lingam–Yoni cult. But what the Sovereign Sanctuary claimed was “that all masonic rites from the purest Blue Lodge Masonry to the Memphis rite with its 95° possess the symbols, mystical signs and words of sexual magic, the Lingam–Yoni cult, etc.! The members of the rites have *lost* the interpretation of the symbols, signs and words!”¹¹⁴ The secret instructions within the Inner Occult Circle aimed at restoring this lost knowledge.

2. The Lingam–Yoni cult implied the concept of sexual intercourse as something holy. Reuss wrote in 1906:

Finally, the act of communion in love has to become a religious act again as it has been in ancient times and as it still is, unknown to the crowd, within certain ceremonies and feasts of the Catholic church. The act of procreation was at all times a divine act of creation, a divine action and formed the hidden foundation of every higher religious cult.¹¹⁵

Moreover, Dotzler equates the exercises that were based on this insight with certain yogic exercises of the Haṭha Yoga scriptures quoted by Kellner in his sketch on yoga, practices in which the organs of reproduction play a role “for the attainment of certain yogic states”.¹¹⁶ Seemingly, exercises were taught that used

112 Das innere Dreieck 1904.

113 Cf. Pendragon 1906.

114 Dotzler 1906: 60: “Wohl aber besitzen alle freimaurerischen Riten von der reinsten Johannismaurerei der ersten drei symbolischen Grade bis zum Memphisritus mit 95° die Symbole und die mystischen Zeichen und Worte der Sexualmagie, des Lingam-Yoni Kultes etc.! Die Mitglieder der Riten haben die Deutung der Symbole, Zeichen und Worte *verloren!*” [Dotzler’s emphasis].

115 Nothung 1906: 18–19: “Endlich muss aber der Vereinigungsakt der Liebe wieder eine Religionshandlung werden, wie er es in alten Zeiten war und wie er es, der Menge unbewusst, in der katholischen Kirche gewesen ist und in gewissen Zeremonien und Festen derselben gefeiert wird. Der Zeugungsakt war zu allen Zeiten ein göttlicher Schöpfungsakt, eine göttliche Handlung und bildete die verborgene Basis jedes höheren Religionskultus.”

116 Dotzler 1906: 63.

sexual excitement and/or sexual intercourse within a ritual frame to attain certain occult goals and altered states of consciousness. Reuss and Dotzler called this kind of practice “sexual magic”, a common term within occultist circles.

If one follows the oral tradition of the Kellner family, then at least Kellner practised ritual sex. Karl-Erwin Lichtenecker narrated that his mother Eglantine told him about a room in the Villa Hochwart which Carl and Marie Kellner retired to time and again. No other family member was allowed to enter it.¹¹⁷ According to Lichtenecker, Eglantine became curious and asked her parents what they were doing within this room. She finally got the answer that they were performing a ritual that aimed at “intimacy pushed to the utmost limit” (*auf’s Äußerste gesteigerte Innigkeit*) in order to break through to things that usually are unknown. The talks that he had with his mother about this issue left no doubt for Lichtenecker that both performed a sex ritual that aimed at an experience of transcendence.

If we accept this as true, open questions still remain. Lichtenecker did not receive any detailed information about the ritual and so we do not know from this source what they were actually doing. At this point of our investigation, two things have to be considered.

Reuss asserts that the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light (HB of Light) was the source of the Rosicrucian esoteric teachings taught within the Inner Occult Circle.¹¹⁸ This small brotherhood was an offshoot of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (HBL). John Patrick Deveney explored the HB of Light and was able to identify some of its members. According to him, they departed from the HBL because of differing views about ritual sex. The practice within the HB of Light was to arouse, preserve, and control the sexual energy without ejaculation, whereas the sex magic of the HBL in the tradition of Paschal Beverly Randolph advocated focusing on these goals at the moment of the simultaneous orgasm of both partners.¹¹⁹ If Kellner was instructed how to perform sex magic within the HB of Light, he learnt the non-orgasmic version of it.

Several statements of Reuss and Dotzler support the assertion that the Sovereign Sanctuary followed the save-the-semen school (Deveney’s term) of ritual sex. Dotzler admitted in 1906 that the secret practices of the order had already been

117 Lichtenecker 2014. A similar “occult room” existed in the villa of the rich German theosophist Gustav Gebhard in Elberfeld. In this case the room was reserved for the meeting of the closest friends from Gebhard’s theosophical circle. The existence of this room was known within Viennese occultist circles. Cf. Hevesi 1901: 49–50. Perhaps it inspired Kellner to create this kind of space within his Viennese villa for his special purposes. He could have also read in Basu that householders and family men should create special rooms for yoga practice in their homes (Basu 1887: xvi–xvii).

118 Reuss 1912: 15–16.

119 Email message from John Patrick Deveney to the author, 28 April 2016.

popularised in the writings of Harry W. Bondegger, Ramacharaka, and other authors.¹²⁰ He claims originality only with regard to the date, not with regard to the content of the occult teachings of the Inner Circle: “All these popular writings have been published after Kellner and Reuss decided to pass on certain practices.”¹²¹ Bondegger and William Walker Atkinson, who used the pseudonym Yogi Ramacharaka for his writings on yoga, were New Thought authors. Both supported methods to preserve the semen and to sublimate sexual arousal into higher energies that were widespread within the New Thought movement.

In his *The Hindu Yogi Science of Breath* (1904) Ramacharaka (i. e., Atkinson) described a practice called “the transmutation of the reproductive energy”.¹²² While breathing rhythmically one should imagine drawing “etheric pranic energy” upwards from the sexual organs to the solar plexus or to the brain with each inhalation. The transmuted sexual energy would be stored in the solar plexus or the brain and could be used for different purposes. Ramacharaka emphasises that this yoga exercise “is specially recommended when one feels the instinct most strongly, at which time the reproductive energy is manifesting and may be most easily transmuted”.¹²³ At the beginning of the twentieth century more and more translations of New Thought texts that recommended this kind of sexual practice became available on the German book market. The first German edition of *The Hindu Yogi Science of Breath* was published in 1909 with the title *Die Kunst des Atmens der Hindu-Yogi*.

In 1901 Bondegger translated Hiram E. Butler’s *Practical Methods to Insure Success* into German.¹²⁴ Butler’s ideas about a chaste association of the sexes are one of the topics of this book that influenced, according to Deveney, the sexual practices of the HB of Light. Among the books Bondegger edited for the German New Thought book series “Talisman-Bücherei” is also one on “Love and Marriage” written by a Mahatma Arkaja Brahma (most probably a pseudonym of Bondegger). Referring to Butler, the Mahatma praises the advantages of total sexual abstinence, especially for those who aspire full adepthood in yoga. Married people should practice moderation and the transmutation of sexual energies by concentrating on the finer vibrations that permeate the body.¹²⁵

Furthermore, the save-the-semen practice fits very well with Kellner’s understanding of yoga as an ascetic practice based on self-control and restraint of

120 Dotzler 1906: 63.

121 Ibid.

122 Ramacharaka 1904: 78–80.

123 Ramacharaka 1904: 79.

124 Cf. Butler 1901. (*Praktische Methoden den Erfolg zu sichern. Die Geheimnisse des Geschlechtslebens*). There were eight editions between 1901 and 1930, also in the Talisman-Bücherei (no. 43) published by the Rudolph’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung in Dresden.

125 Mahatma Arkaja Brahma c 1911: 45–48.

earthly desires. The sexual reform that Reuss propagated connects the rediscovery of the holiness of sexual union with the ethical duty of men to take the responsibility for the results of the act of reproduction. The combination of these two points also becomes very reasonable in light of the practice of restrained ejaculation within ritual sex.

In the legendary jubilee edition of the *Oriflamme* published in September 1912 Reuss exposes sexual magic as the secret of the O.T.O. and of all religion.¹²⁶ He does this mostly by repeating what Kellner, Dotzler, and he published already between 1896 and 1906 about the practice of the Inner Occult Circle and the Lingam–Yoni cult. Additionally, he reveals “a certain yoga practice” called “the transmutation of the energy of reproduction” to inform the “true seekers” about the kind of sexual exercises they can expect when they join the order.¹²⁷ He starts the description of this practice with a reference to Kellner’s sketch of yoga. Reuss quotes Kellner’s list of *vāyu*-s and points out that sexual magic deals with the sixth *vāyu* called “Nāpa” located in the organs of reproduction. What follows is an accurate paraphrasing of the exercise of the transmutation of sexual energy from Ramacharaka’s *The Hindu Science of Breath*.

Thus it seems that the early O.T.O. practised the same New Thought techniques of controlling and directing sexual arousal without orgasm that were already known within Kellner’s Inner Occult Circle. Reuss was only innovative in that he integrated sexual magic into the higher grades instead of restricting its practice to a circle that worked independently of the rites of the order although recruiting its members from there.

The above argument tried to show on the basis of the material available that the occult practices of the Inner Occult Circle of the Sovereign Sanctuary and the early O.T.O. were very probably predominantly body-centred practices from the Kerning–Mailänder tradition and New Thought save-the-semen exercises that were partly identified with ideas found in translations of Haṭha Yoga scriptures. Some elements from South Asian teachers might have also played a role (e.g., certain *prāṇāyāma*-s or teachings about the *cakra*-s, *vāyu*-s, *mudrā*-s and the ascent of the *kuṇḍalīnī*). At the current stage of research this is purely hypothetical, as we do not have any valid information about the yoga teachings Kellner and others might have received from there. Within the early O.T.O. the Kerning–Mailänder exercises may have lost their importance or vanished completely, whereas sexual rituals and the sexual interpretation of religious symbolisms gained priority. Later, new sexual practices that Kellner and Reuss would never have thought of were introduced by Aleister Crowley.

126 Reuss 1912: 21–23.

127 Reuss 1912: 22.

7. A Mystical Ascension within the Pleasure Gardens: The Manuscript “Reincarnation”

The only original testimony of Kellner’s own yoga practice is a small note, undated and handwritten, with the title “Reincarnation”. I conclude this chapter by taking a look at this document that was provided to the author by Kellner’s great-granddaughter Sigrid Plutzar. It seems that Kellner, at a later point, changed the manuscript by altering its title to “3 Reincarnationen” and adding very short notes at the left bottom edge about two other reincarnations. Here, only the elaborate text is given, translated, and commented on.

Reincarnation [sic]

Asana ist stetig, die Athem des Lebens sind unter den
Zügeln des Geistes – die azurne Flamme erscheint –
das Ich begiebt sich in die Flamme – und schaut
zurück – weit zurück – halt – – da seh ich uns
Beide – eine Stadt – glatte Häuser – Thürme –
viereckig – ich trage eine nach vorne gebogene Mütze
einen gelben Mantel – Du – oh wie schön! –
weiche glitzernde Seidenstoffe verhüllen nur
wenig die schlanken und üppigen Formen Deines
Körpers – ja das bist Du – aus diesem Auge
leuchtet die gleiche liebe Seele – – Nacht –
– die Sterne glitzern und funkeln – – es ist
eine der grossartigen Sternen Nächte auf den
Ebenen Chaldäas – –
– und das ist das alte grosse Babylon –
und ich bin ein Priester – ein Diener der – Schamaja –
und ich steige auf den Feuerthurm und opfere
Opfere der Gottheit – das Feuer, denn das Feuer
ist das Licht, und das Licht glänzt aus
den Sternen, und aus der Sonne – –

Die Sonne aber ist das grosse Licht und
alles Leben kommt von diesem Licht – .

Alles Licht aber ist ein Licht – denn man
kann nicht sagen, es sei dieses oder jenes!

Licht ist Licht – . Und darum ist das
Licht meines Opferfeuers – dasselbe Licht, wie
das der Sterne, wie das der Sonne – und
mein Leben dasselbe Leben wie das
meiner Menschen Brüder und Schwestern –

Und mein Feuer brennt und ich spreche den
alten Segen in aramäischer Sprache –

Der Opferthurm steht aber in den Lustgärten des

Fürsten – und die Brunnen plätschern der Spring-
 quell steigt – die Blumen duften – die Vögel aber
 schweigen – denn sie warten auf das Licht des Tages
 – und während des Wartens – – schlafen sie. –

Asana is steady, the breaths of life are under the
 reigns of the mind – the azure flame appears –
 the ego puts itself into the flame – and looks
 back – far back – stop – – there I see both of
 us – a town – smooth buildings – towers –
 rectangular – I wear a cap folded forward
 a yellow robe – You – oh how beautiful! –
 soft glittering silk fabrics barely veil
 the slim and opulent forms of your
 body – yes this is you – out of these eyes
 shines the same dear soul – – night –
 the stars glitter and sparkle – it's one
 of these amazing starry nights on the
 Chaldean plains – –
 – and this is the grand old Babylon –
 and I am a priest – a servant of – Schamaja –
 and I climb the fire-tower and I am sacrificing
 Sacrificing the deity – the fire, because the fire
 is the light, and the light shines out
 of the stars and out of the sun – –

The sun, however, is the great light, and
 all life comes from this light – .
 Every light is but one light – because one
 cannot say that it is this or that!

Light is Light –. And therefore the
 light of my sacrificial fire is – the same light as
 that of the stars, as that of the sun – and
 my life the same life as that
 of my human brothers and sisters –
 And my fire burns and I pronounce the
 old blessing in Aramaic language –

The sacrificial tower stands within in the pleasure gardens of
 the ruler – and the fountains ripple the gusher
 rises – the fragrance of flowers is in the air – but the birds
 keep silent – because they are awaiting the light of day
 – and while they are waiting – – they sleep. –

The beginning of the text refers to yoga practice. The yoga term *āsana* is mentioned and also the mastering of the *vāyu-s* (the “breaths of life” in Kellner’s diction). The result of this practice is a visionary state of mind in which the practitioner develops one of the *siddhi-s*, the power to recall previous lives.

To come into contact with his past lives Kellner uses a certain technique. After an azure flame appeared before his inner eye, he immerses himself into the flame and looks back. The motive of the blue light may be influenced by a passage of Basu's introduction to the *Śivasamhitā* in which he comments on the removal of obscuration of the light as result of *prāṇāyāma* (*Yogasūtra* 2.52):

The light here alluded to is the pure *sattavic* light which the Yogi sees in his heart when in deep contemplation. It is the same light which the mesmerised subjects of Baron Reichenbach saw issuing from the poles of magnet, &c. When mesmerising, we have invariably found that the first thing that the mesmerised person sees, is utter darkness, as black as night. Slowly in this darkness, as soon as his eyes are closed, there are seen flashes of blue light which growing stronger, the subject begins to see a blue atmosphere surrounding him. This is the chidakas of the Vedantins, the region of imagination. This light gives way to a pure white electric light, very brilliant, and described as more pleasant, clear and luminous than that of the sun.¹²⁸

The transition from the realm of imagination symbolised by the blue light to a region of formless pure white light is also part of Kellner's vision. The imaginary journey into the past ends when two persons appear before Kellner's inner eye, which he identifies as "us". The sequence that follows describes an ascent from individual earthly appearances to the universal heavenly Divine light, followed by a renewed attention to and blessing of the multitude of individual things.

The images that appear in this part of Kellner's vision are not directly referring to yoga or Hindu symbols (except the widespread symbolisms of the sun and light that one can also find in South Asia). Rather, they reflect the high esteem of Chaldea, the home of the famous Chaldean oracles and their theurgy within Rosicrucianism and Theosophy. As already Josef Dvorak has pointed out, Kellner's notion of being a priest and servant of the Schamaja most probably refers to Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni*, where "the starry truths which shone on the great Shemaia of the Chaldean Lore" are mentioned.¹²⁹ In the first chapter of the first volume of *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky quotes this passage and uses "Shemaia" as a synonym for the old Oriental or universal Kabbala, the highest possible wisdom on this earth whose few adepts live "on the shores of the sacred Ganges", as well as in Thebes or Luxor.¹³⁰ In Kellner's Theosophical ambience the truths of the Chaldean lore were identical with the wisdom religion that has been almost forgotten in the West but is still alive in South Asian traditions like yoga.

Kellner finds himself and a woman, most probably his wife, in a town that turns out to be antique Babylon. He is wearing a robe and a ceremonial cap and recognises himself as a priest of the Schamaja. His female companion is almost

128 Basu 1887: xlxii [Basu's emphasis].

129 See Bulwer-Lytton 1842: 123.

130 See Blavatsky 1877: I/17.

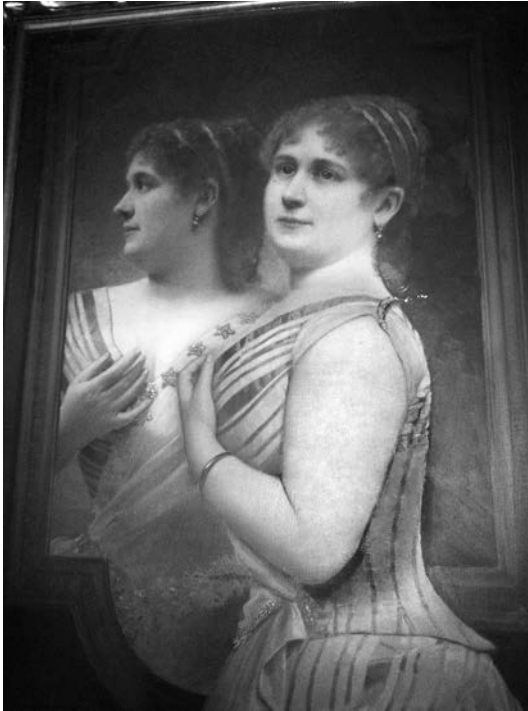


Figure 4: Carl Kellner's wife Marie Antoinette. Painting in possession of the family of Karl-Erwin Lichtenecker (photograph: Karl Baier).

naked and he praises the beauty of her body and her shining eyes within the starry night. This erotic episode of the vision is followed by a scene in which Kellner as priest is climbing up a fire tower to perform a fire sacrifice. The erotic atmosphere and love for his companion is the beginning of a mystical ascent. Kellner climbs up the tower to sacrifice the fire. The one Divine light and life is evoked as present in everything, thereby connecting and unifying everything including Kellner and his human brothers and sisters. What started as sexual attraction and love for his wife ends in a universal communion with the cosmos and especially all human beings. Kellner's monistic cosmology of the one energy emanating from divine consciousness and leading cosmic evolution to higher forms of love is presented in a poetic and visionary way. In his "Introduction into the Esotericism of our Order"¹³¹ Kellner derived an ethic of responsibility from this monism. His vision articulates the emotional and energetic side of this responsibility: the union of all human brothers and sisters. Kellner's description of his yoga experience contains no explicit sexual rite, but nevertheless follows

131 See Kellner 1903.

the same logic as the above-mentioned New Thought techniques of transmutation of sexual energy – and may also be influenced by a New Thought inspired reading of *Haṭha Yoga* sources.

After the climax of the whole vision, the experience of mystical union, Kellner returns to the individual realities. He sees the sacrificial fire and himself pronouncing a blessing in Aramaic. The surroundings of the fire tower become present, picturesque pleasure gardens with fountains, flowers and sleeping birds that still await morning, whereas Kellner has already touched eternal light.

8. Coda: Herbert Silberer's Theory of Mysticism

Herbert Silberer (1882–1923) was the flashiest second-generation representative of Viennese fin-de-siècle occultism. His outstanding oeuvre and his tragic suicide aptly mark the end of this period and the emergence of a new level of occultist theory.

Silberer's father Victor was a self-made man very much in the style of Kellner – successful in business, Austrian politics, and sports. Kellner and Victor Silberer were friends and Kellner's daughter Eglantine was engaged to Herbert Silberer for a while.¹³² Herbert, a passionate balloonist like Victor, worked as journalist, psychoanalyst, and private scholar but never succeeded in becoming financially independent from his father.¹³³

In 1909 he applied for a charter at the Martinist order in Paris. His in-depth study of Rosicrucianism and alchemy is probably connected with his affiliation to Martinism.¹³⁴ For members of his generation interested in these topics it was an obvious step to join one of the new Rosicrucian organisations.

In 1910 he became a member of the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society, the most important psychoanalytic association of the time that met on Wednesdays at Freud's flat. He irregularly participated in it until the end of his life. Silberer remained an outsider within this group but nonetheless presented his ideas during lectures at the Wednesday meetings and also published ground-breaking psychoanalytical contributions to the interpretation of dreams and symbols and to the comparative psychology of mysticism.¹³⁵ He was the first scholar who investigated the connections between alchemy and the psychology of the un-

132 Cf. Weirauch 1998: 193. The relationship between his mother and Silberer was affirmed by Karl-Erwin Lichteneker in his interview with the author.

133 Nitzschke (1997: 11–15) points out the problematic relationship between Herbert Silberer and his father.

134 Kodek 2009: 326.

135 For Silberer's role within psychoanalysis, see Nitzschke 1988: 10–18.

conscious, as C. G. Jung, the champion of this field, thankfully acknowledged.¹³⁶ His distinction between the psychoanalytical and anagogical sense of symbols, dreams, and imaginations that was also adopted by Jung, aimed at reconciling the psychoanalytical approach with a hermetic-theosophical (in the premodern sense of the term “theosophical”) interpretation. An English version of his opus magnum *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* (1914) was published in New York in 1917 and had considerable success in the United States.¹³⁷

Rather late in his short life, in 1919, Silberer was initiated into the masonic lodge Sokrates in Vienna.¹³⁸ In two talks at the Grand Lodge of Vienna he applied his theory of symbolic thinking to masonic work.

Many essential matters of Viennese fin-de-siècle occultism including yoga are present in his writings. The psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel, with whom Silberer collaborated (although Stekel had fallen out with Freud), sums up his occult interests and practices:

He scrutinized astrology, tried to check the long-distance effects of the stars on individuals and conducted profound studies in alchemy. [...] He experimented a lot with sexual magic and finally also engaged himself with the practices of Raja-Joga [sic]. Through them he successfully immersed himself into deep meditation that at its climax looked like a state of apparent death.¹³⁹

The starting point and centre of *Problems of Mysticism and its Symbolism* is an analysis of the different layers of meaning of “Parabola”, a text from *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert*. Silberer maintains a deep affinity between Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism and alchemy based on a common language of signs and symbols that dates back to the ancient European World.¹⁴⁰ He derives the basic structure of the mystical path from this system of symbols and illustrates its universality by pointing to parallels within Christian mysticism, Sufism, and above all yoga.

Silberer defines mysticism as “that religious state which struggles by the shortest way towards the accomplishment of the end of religion, the union with the divinity; or as an intensive cultivation of oneself in order to experience this union”.¹⁴¹ Whereas this definition is very close to Hartmann’s definition of yoga in the *Wiener Rundschau*, his description of the different steps on the mystical

136 Jung 1971: 336.

137 Silberer 1917.

138 Kodek 2009: 327.

139 Stekel 1924: 412: “Er studierte Astrologie, versuchte die Fernwirkung der Gestirne auf das Einzelindividuum nachzuprüfen, machte tiefgründige Studien über Alchemie. [...] Er machte viele sexual-magische Experimente und kam auch zu den Raja-Joga-Übungen [sic], bei denen ihm eine innere Versenkung bis zum Bilde des Scheintodes gelang.”

140 In this regard he follows the historian of Freemasonry Ludwig Keller (1849–1918).

141 Silberer 1917: 254–255.

path includes many elements from psychoanalysis.¹⁴² For Silberer, mysticism is a process of introversion (a psychological terminus technicus coined by Jung) that starts by entering into the underworld of the unconscious and then leads to a fight with demons and dragons, the infantile and crude desires and drives. This confrontation can fail and one can lose oneself by becoming a sorcerer who tries to satisfy his egocentric desires through magical means, or by becoming a schizophrenic, desperate, or suicidal person. If it ends well, one is reborn through the control of the unconscious impulses and is capable of experiencing union with the divine. The key to this transformation of the human being is sublimation:

This Freudian term and concept is found in an exactly similar significance in the Hermetic writers. In the receptacle where the mystical work of education is performed, i. e., in man, substances are sublimated; in psychological terms this means that impulses are to be refined and brought from their baseness to a higher level. Freud makes it clear that the libido, particularly the unsocial sexual libido, is in favourable circumstances sublimated, i. e., changed into a socially available impelling power.¹⁴³

According to Silberer, the mutability of sexual desire is known in the mystical traditions as well as in Freud's psychology:

I observe that the mystical manuals show that the most active power for spiritual education is the sexual libido, which for that reason is partially or entirely withdrawn from its original use. (Rules of chastity.) "Vigor is obtained on the confirmation of continence." (Patañjali, Yoga-Sutra, II, 38.) These instruction books have recognized the great transmutability of the sexual libido. (Cf. ability of sublimation in the alchemical, as well as in the Freudian terminology.)¹⁴⁴

Another important dimension of the mystical ascension is the unification of dualities. Like Kellner before him, Silberer mentions the union of sun and moon as the symbolic meaning of Haṭha Yoga and he addresses the similarity to European alchemy that Kellner also must have recognised but did not refer to in his sketch on yoga (maybe out of respect for his audience at the Psychological Congress in Munich):

It is probably worthy of notice that the Yoga-Mystics, like the alchemists, are acquainted with the idea of the union of the sun and the moon. Two breath- or life currents are to be united, one of which corresponds to the sun, the other to the moon. The expression Hathayoga (where hatha = mighty effort. Cf. Garbe, Samkhya and Yoga, p. 43) will also be interpreted so that Ha = sun, tha = moon, their union = the yoga leading to salvation. (Cf. Hatha-Yoga-Prad., p. I.)¹⁴⁵

142 Freud, Jung, Stekel, and others.

143 Silberer 1917: 256.

144 Silberer 1917: 303.

145 Silberer 1917: 360.

In line with the alchemical symbolism that uses the sexual union of king and queen as an equivalent to the union of sun and moon, Silberer stresses that not only the union of the two stars, but also the mystic marriage (*hieros gamos*) between man and woman is a widespread symbol for the mystical transcending of dualities, be it the duality of the seer and the seen in general or of the soul and God at the peak of mystical experience. He is convinced that the sexual symbolism is dangerous because it easily could be taken literally. The use of the unconcealed sexual act as a symbol would lead to a degeneration of religion.¹⁴⁶ If Stekel is right and Silberer experimented with sex magic, and if his practice was coherent with the ideas developed in his major work, it is hard to imagine that his ritual sex was not based on the principle of sublimation of the sexual drive.

Several signs in Silberer's work announce a new era. His writings are more systematic and academic than those of the older generation of Viennese occultists. Hartmann's and Kellner's writings on yoga are not mentioned at all. He prefers to quote academic works like Richard Garbe's *Sāṃkhya und Yoga* (1896), the writings of Paul Deussen, or Leopold von Schroeder's translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Only if no other translation of a yoga text was available did he use theosophical editions. Silberer evaluates Hartmann's English edition of *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert* as a "poor translation of the German original".¹⁴⁷

Silberer was very negative about Theosophy in general. In *Durch Tod zum Leben* ("Through Death towards New Life"), an extended study from 1915 written under the sway of the beginning of World War I, he radically dissociates from the theosophical movement using the name "Theosophisticism" to distinguish Blavatsky's modern Theosophy from the old Theosophy that in his view is the only one worthy of this name. He recommends an unbiased study of ethnology and psychoanalysis to the "Theosophisticists". Following Hans Freimark, he also attacks the tendency of Theosophy and Rudolf Steiner to reify the human mind.¹⁴⁸

In a friendlier, but nonetheless critical way, he connects his own project to Kerning's Freemasonry.

To-day, too, there is a royal art. Freemasonry bears this name. Not only the name, but its ethical ideal connects it with the spirit of the old alchemy. This statement will probably be contradicted and meet the same denial as did once the ideas of Kerning [sic] (J. Krebs), although I think I am on different ground from that of this poetic but, in my eyes, all too uncritical author.¹⁴⁹

146 Cf. Silberer 1917: 204–205.

147 Silberer 1917: 436.

148 Cf. Silberer 1997: 310.

149 Silberer 1917: 378.

The fin-de-siècle occultists of the Habsburgian Empire used a pseudo-scientific language that had no chance of being taken seriously by mainstream science, or they articulated themselves in two quite different languages depending on whether they addressed an occult or a scientific audience. Silberer succeeded in connecting his occult thought with psychoanalytical theory in a way that enriched both. Psychoanalysis was a disputed discipline but it was, at least, accepted as a problematic but nonetheless interesting scientific alternative with a certain lobby inside academia. The way in which the Viennese psychoanalytical occultist interprets yoga and other religious practices and topics already breathes the spirit of the Eranos conferences. Historically, Silberer's work functions as a link between the religionist form of academic research represented by the Eranos circle and fin-de-siècle occultism.

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