

# The Birth of Individual Life Concepts: The Influences of Arthur Schopenhauer's Buddhism on Eduard von der Heydt's Collection of Buddhist Art

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**Abstract:** The paper traces the influence of Buddhist religion and philosophy mitigated through Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) on nineteenth and early twentieth century alternative thinking and new life concepts in Europe. Many German scholars were inspired through Schopenhauer to study Indian philosophy and literature, incorporating Buddhist concepts into Western thinking and translating the first Indian Buddhist texts into German, like those by Paul Deussen, Georg Grimm or Karl, Eigen Neumann.

Schopenhauer and these early German Buddhologists had also a considerable impact on the collector and banker Eduard von der Heydt (1882–1964). Like many other intellectuals, artists or members of the bourgeoisie and upper middle classes, he was searching for a new and modern way of life.

Taking Eduard von der Heydt as a case study, the paper will show how during the early twentieth century, Buddhist thinking initialized by Schopenhauer took root in Germany. It will also demonstrate

how various life-reform movements and alternative ways of life superseded the conventional and restricted life-style of the nineteenth century and inspired von der Heydt to set up his life and art at his private Buddhist paradise on the Monte Verita in Switzerland.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century numerous members of the middle-classes and intellectuals realized the impact of the industrial revolution, the destruction of nature and of traditional social contexts, as well as the impact on human life and health. They were searching for a different and alternative concept, where life could be led in harmony with nature and one's own physical needs; a life which would give more freedom to the individual and would supply satisfying answers to the eternal questions: life's meaning, the human self, death and suffering. As an alternative to Christianity, Asian religions provided new answers. Especially the early Hindu/Buddhist philosophical thinking introduced through the enthusiastic acceptance of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) appeared to many as very appealing. Thus the many life-reform movements initiated at that time were partly inspired by Asian philosophy. How these ideas were adapted to individual life designs shall be observed in the outstanding case of the banker and collector of world art Eduard von der Heydt. He also was one of the most important collectors of Chinese Buddhist sculpture in Europe and the reasons behind his collecting show the prevalent influence of Schopenhauer's Buddhist thinking.

In the first half of the twentieth century the German-Swiss banker Eduard von der Heydt (1882–1964) was one of the first to collect art on a global scale. Buying not only modern European art but as well non-European, African and Asian art, he was fascinated by the exotic and unusual.<sup>1</sup> One of his reasons for buying art was of course to uphold and to enhance his status in society as a wealthy banker moving in the best circles.<sup>2</sup> However, it seems that he not only was the clever banker

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<sup>1</sup> Karl With could induce him to buy a larger group of Swiss carnival masks e.g. Illner, *Eduard*, 169.

<sup>2</sup> Illner, *Eduard*, especially Ising-Alms, 91–135.

making profitable investments or enhancing his social status, his collection was very much part of his whole life concept. Eduard von der Heydt installed his art works at his various homes and opened them to the interested public. At his later, life-long home at the Monte Verita near Ascona he used especially the East Asian Buddhist art works to create an aesthetic, but also spiritual and metaphysical atmosphere of peace and freedom as an alternative to the prevalent life-concepts.

### I. Arthur Schopenhauer's Buddhist concepts and his influence on Eduard von der Heydt

Schopenhauer can be named as one of the foremost Western thinkers who transmitted Buddhist ideas into the Western mind of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, and paved the way for a reception of Buddhist thoughts. Eduard von der Heydt as a youth had read Arthur Schopenhauer too.

The following will therefore highlight Schopenhauer's Buddhist sources, show which of his ideas were influenced by Buddhism, and examine how these ideas were transmitted.

Arthur Schopenhauer's Buddhist ideas and sources have been widely discussed in Buddhological and Schopenhauerian research. Copies of texts used by Schopenhauer, and especially the commentaries he wrote in them, are particularly enlightening in terms of which Buddhist sources influenced him before he wrote his main opus *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation) before 1818/19. Consulting Arthur Hübscher's and Urs App's research will be the most important in this respect.

Schopenhauer saw himself and his thinking so close to Buddhist philosophy that he claimed to be a 'Buddhaist' himself. Already in his early work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* he mentions that one of the inspirations of his thinking are the Vedas, Upanishads and the 'age-old Indian wisdom'.<sup>3</sup> For many later Indologists or early Buddhologists, as well as the interested lay-person, it seems that those

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<sup>3</sup> Hübscher, 'Schopenhauer', 1–16.

concepts propagated by Schopenhauer paved the way for the Hindu-Buddhist religions and their study, especially in Germany.

The earliest 'Buddhist' sources for Schopenhauer are the nine volumes of the magazine *Asiatick Researches* with articles from 1788 and 1807, containing the early researches on Indian texts and philosophy. He had borrowed them in 1815 to 1816 from the Frankfurt University library and made 45 pages of excerpts and notes, which are still preserved.<sup>4</sup> Through the reading of these sources, Schopenhauer found the idea of 'nirvana' amongst other concepts especially interesting and he equated it with his concept of 'Willensverneinung' (annihilation of will) and used the translation of 'Nichts' (nothing) for it. This was a new and sometimes hard to accept thought for the Western world, often seen as too negative.

Other sources on Buddhism followed. Hübscher relates that one of his early Asian influences came through the studies of Friedrich Majer (1772–1818), a private scholar from Jena, who studied the religious and philosophical texts of Indian literature and published his main opus: 'Brahma oder die Religion der Indier als Brahmaismus' in 1818.<sup>5</sup> Schopenhauer might have read some articles by Majer on this topic which were published in the *Asiatische Magazin*, edited by the Sinologist and Orientalist Heinrich Julius Klaproth (1783–1835) in Weimar. Schopenhauer borrowed some volumes of the *Asiatische Magazin* in 1813/14 from the university library when he visited Frankfurt for the second time. According to Hübscher, both Majer and, later on, Joseph Görres (1776–1848), a university professor, natural philosopher and publicist, saw the early translation of the Upanishads, namely, the so called 'Oupnek'hat', as one of the most important examples of Indian philosophical thoughts that should enlighten the Western world. Above all other reading on Eastern philosophy, this early translation of the Upanishads, the *Oupnek'hat* became Schopenhauer's most important book, which influenced his thinking at the beginning till the end of his life (Figure 1, Figure 2).

The *Oupnek'hat*, which was so much cherished by Schopenhauer

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<sup>4</sup> App, *Arthur Schopenhauer and China*, 13 and 14.

<sup>5</sup> Hübscher, 'Schopenhauer', 3.

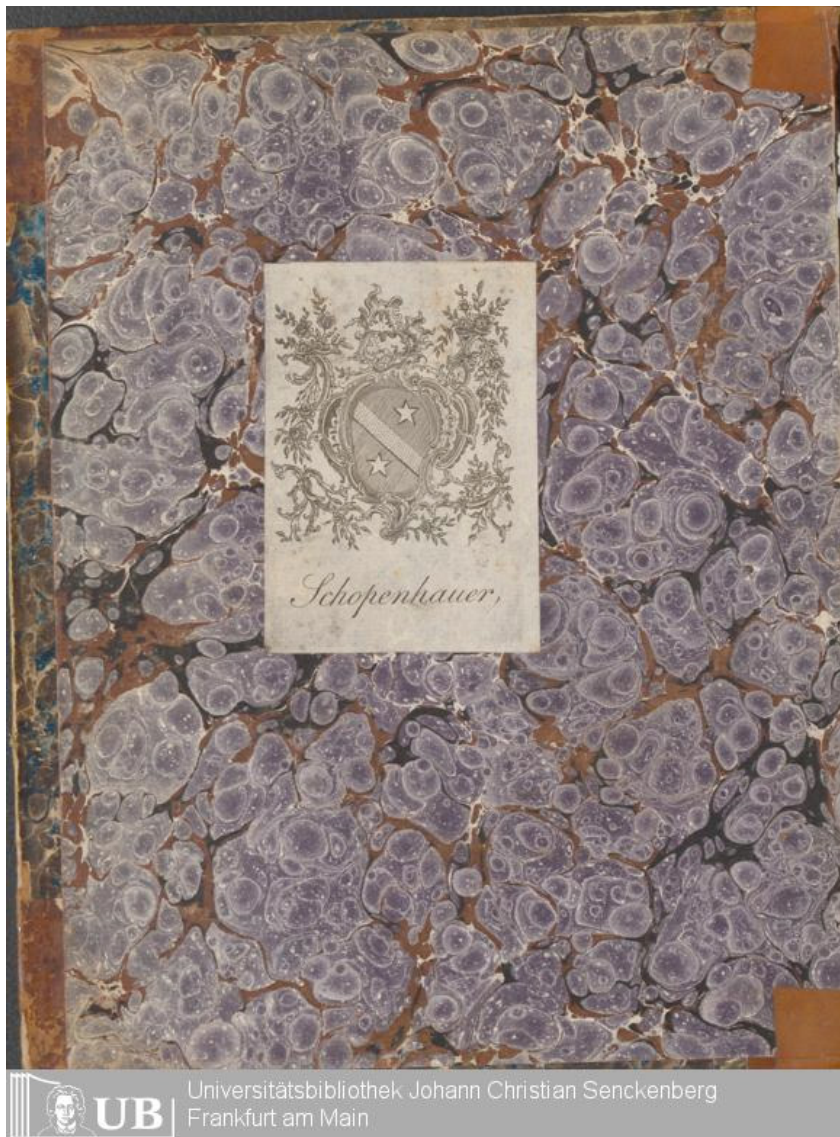


FIG. 1 *Oupnek'hat (id est, Secretum tegendum) Vol. I*, endsheet. Frankfurt library. Frankfurt University Library, Schopenhauer Archive: urn:nbn:de:hebis:30-1129583.



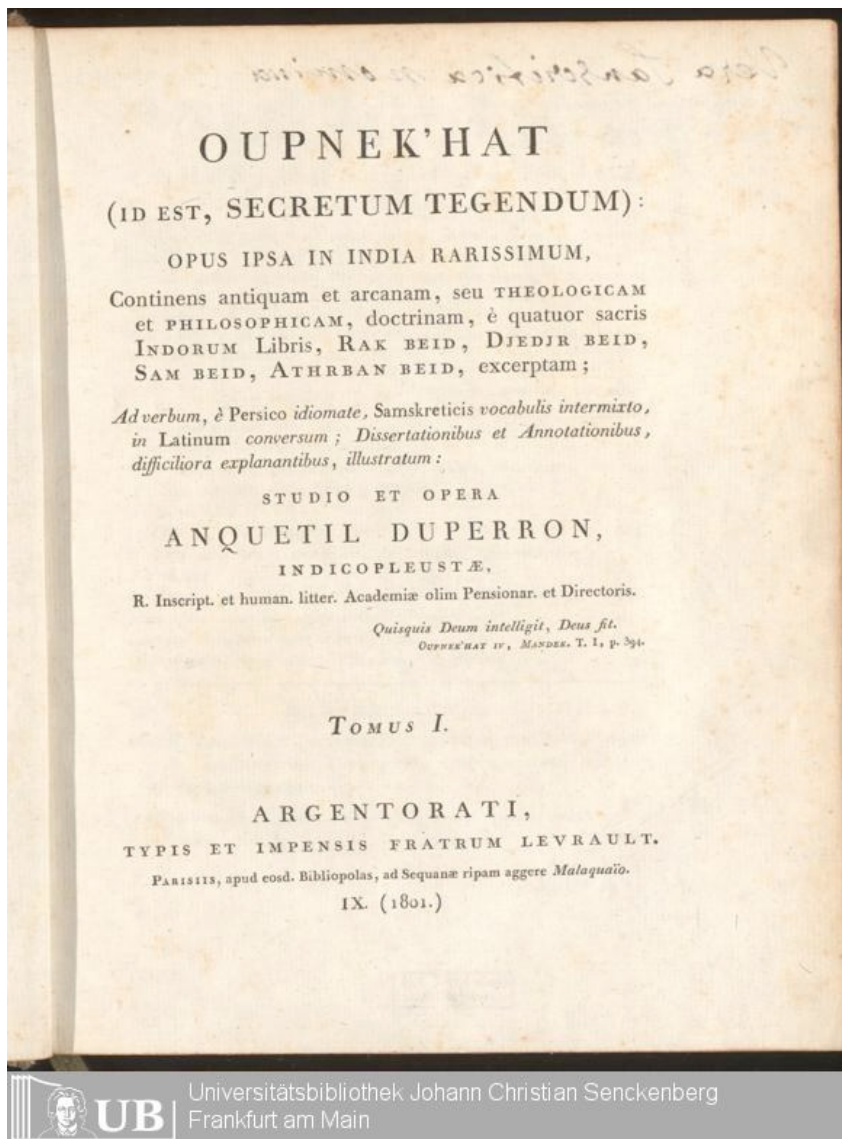


FIG. 2 *Oupnek'hat (id est, Secretum tegendum) Vol. I*, title page. Frankfurt library. Frankfurt University Library, Schopenhauer Archive: urn:nbn:de:hebis:30-1129583.

from his youth to his old age was not directly Buddhist, but a collection of Hinduist Vedas, the Upanishads. However at the time reading it, Schopenhauer thought it to be Buddhist, and even closer to the original Buddhist teaching than all other texts which he read later. However, as App shows, through the *Oupnek'hat* Schopenhauer had unknowingly received basic Buddhist ideas as well. The text, which was known under this title at Schopenhauer's time, had been translated by the early French Orientalist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperon (1731–1805) from a Persian version into Latin. The text thus contained many Latin annotations and was thus not a pure text-version of a Sanskrit original. On the contrary, the *Oupnek'hat* was a collection of Sanskrit Upanishad texts compiled and translated into Persian in 1656 by a Persian Crown-Prince of the Mughal Dynasty (named Dara Shikoh 1615–1569) and his Indian translators. They already had added Persian and Sufi-comments, as well as those stemming from the Indian master Shankara's (788–820) Veda-interpretations. These additions of the eighth/ninth century were brought in by the Indian translators of the Prince. Through Shankara, early Buddhist ideas came into the text as well. As a whole, the text gave Schopenhauer an early interpretation of those central Indian ideas of how this world is conceived and how suffering will end: like Brahman or Brahm (ultimate reality, universal power) and atman (individual self), anatman (non-self) or maya (illusion) as well as nirvana (nothing).

Through abundant annotations made by Schopenhauer and underscoring of terms in his personal copy,<sup>6</sup> it becomes clear which parts Schopenhauer understood as relevant to his philosophy. So he equated the term maya, the illusionary world, to his will of creation in his philosophical system; Brahman or Brahm itself he took as the universal power or will itself to the will to live; and atman as the individual will.<sup>7</sup> These terms had already in the *Oupnek'hat* been interpreted in a semi-Buddhist way. As App furthermore claims, through the Buddhist terminological interpretation of Shankara in the com-

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<sup>6</sup> Online source in the Frankfurt University Library, Schopenhauer Archive: urn:nbn:de:hebis:30-1129583 and App, *Schopenhauer's Kompass*.

<sup>7</sup> App, *Arthur Schopenhauer and China*, 13–15.

mentaries of the *Oupnek'hat*, Schopenhauer perceived unknowingly even Buddhist Yogacara concepts.<sup>8</sup>

So the *Oupnek'hat*, in fact the translation of a Hinduist text, indirectly received Buddhist interpretations through the translators. It was the most influential Asian text in Schopenhauer's life. Schopenhauer read in the *Oupnek'hat* all his life until his death and saw it as his constant companion. He called it 'Trost meines Lebens ...und wird der meines Sterbens sein' (the consolation of my life and will be that in my death).

However, according to App, Schopenhauer must have encountered his first real Buddhist text in the *Asiatische Magazin*. The translation of *The Sutra of Forty-two Chapters* was the only real Buddhist text Schopenhauer read before writing *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* in 1813 and 1814.<sup>9</sup> Again following App, this text was not an Indian Buddhist text containing the pure and original thoughts of Buddhist thinking as the Western Buddhist scholars of the nineteenth century and Schopenhauer thought, but was probably created in fifth century China, or even later, as it contains passages traceable to Zen Buddhist thinking.<sup>10</sup>

As fascinated as Schopenhauer was through his readings on Buddhist philosophy, many others became interested in Buddhism through reading Schopenhauer.

Eduard von der Heydt states in one text asked about the reasons of collecting Buddhist art, that the initialization took place during his youth through the reading of Schopenhauer.<sup>11</sup> Thus, we know that von der Heydt read Schopenhauer during his student days and that he was inspired by him to explore Buddhism. Von der Heydt owned a large library with some key-works of Indian and Asian literature,

<sup>8</sup> App, 'Schopenhauers Begegnung', 41–42.

<sup>9</sup> App, 'Schopenhauers Begegnung', 43; App, *Arthur Schopenhauer and China*, 6–12.

<sup>10</sup> App, 'Schopenhauers Begegnung', 44–45.

<sup>11</sup> Illner, *Eduard*, 22 referring to von der Heydt and von Rheinbaben, *Auf dem Monte*, 36. However, Illner is not mentioning the Buddhist influences and that of Schopenhauer, but those of Daoist Philosophy.



history and philosophy. Possibly he had a copy of Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, but it has not been found so far. This is why it is interesting to look at some of the books that were in Eduard von der Heydt's library (which are available nowadays in the Rietberg Museum Zürich) to uncover which thoughts interested him.<sup>12</sup>

## II. Schopenhauer's Buddhism and Eduard von der Heydt: Literary influences on collecting art and philosophical thinking

Von der Heydt himself stated that it was Schopenhauer who not only inspired his Indian philosophical reading, but brought him to collect Buddhist art as well. It was in Amsterdam that after World War I von der Heydt became acquainted with Asian art in general and Buddhist sculpture in particular. Von der Heydt describes his initiation into collecting Buddhist art when he spotted a Buddha head in the shop window of the art dealer Aaron Vächt (Figure 3):<sup>13</sup>

Durch die dunklen Straßen Amsterdam's fegt der Herbstwind. Der Regen klatscht...Aus einem kleinen Fenster strahlt Licht. Durch die Scheiben schaut groß und ruhig der marmorne Kopf eines Buddha, unbeweglich im Sturm der Elemente. Ich bleibe stehen. Erinnerungen tauchen auf an die Lektüre meiner Studentenjahre: an Schopenhauer, an die Upanishaden, an die Buddhistischen Sutras...<sup>14</sup>

The autumn winds sweep the dark streets of Amsterdam. The rain is beating on the street...light is flooding from a tiny window. Through its panes I behold a marble head of Buddha, great and silent.... I stop. Thinking back to the reading of Schopenhauer, the Upanishads, the Buddhist sutras during my student days.

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<sup>12</sup> Most of his books on East Asia are in the Rietberg. Many thanks to Josef Huber, the Scientific Librarian at the Rietberg, who was extremely helpful and generous with his advice and shared his knowledge with me.

<sup>13</sup> Stamm, 'Eduard von der Heydts', 7.

<sup>14</sup> Von der Heydt, 'Ich sammle', 1.



FIG. 3 First Buddha Head in von der Heydt's collection of Chinese Buddhist sculptures. Tang Dynasty, seventh century. Rietberg Museum Zürich.

This quasi-religious experience initiated a life-long interest in Buddhist sculpture, after which von der Heydt acquired the nucleus of his collection in Amsterdam. Interest in and fascination of the Buddhist religion is probably a recurring theme, observable by other European collectors of Buddhist sculpture as well.<sup>15</sup>

The head von der Heydt had spotted in the Antique shop of Aaron Vächt in Amsterdam was a Buddha-head of the Tang Dynasty,

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<sup>15</sup> Théodore Duret (1838–1927), for example, who travelled in Asia with Enrico Cernuschi (1821–1896), read Schopenhauer and was inspired by him to buy a Buddhist sculpture as the centerpiece of his collection and museum. Cernuschi bought the large Meguro Bronze Buddha, which now dominates the main hall in the Cernuschi Museum in Paris.

possibly originally from the Longmen area, which is still in the Rietberg Museum's Collection.<sup>16</sup> The idea of putting a Buddha-head on the writing desk, and to be constantly in its presence, was again an inspiration from Schopenhauer:

dass jeder beim Eintritt schon sieht, wer hier in diesen heiligen Hallen herrscht

to make it clear to everyone entering, who is ruling in this/my sanctuary...

Schopenhauer's Buddha had influenced many to follow his example as Anton Hübscher and others in the Schopenhauer society, but also Eduard von der Heydt:

Mich fesselte hauptsächlich der Hinweis auf die indische Philosophie, und ich nahm mit Interesse davon Kenntnis, dass er (i.e. Schopenhauer) in seiner Frankfurter Wohnung einen Buddha zur Inspiration seiner Meditationen aufgestellt hatte. Eifrig las ich die damals maßgebenden Werke über indische Philosophie von Oldenberg, Deussen, Rhys, Davis. Dadurch entstand bei mir der Wunsch ein Kunstwerk zu besitzen, das sich auf die ferne Gedankenwelt bezog.<sup>17</sup>

I was captivated by his (Schopenhauer's) remarks on Indian philosophy and I realized with great interest, that he had a Buddha for inspiring his meditations in his flat in Frankfurt. Diligently I read the at that time authoritative writings by Oldenberg, Deussen, Rhys, Davis. Through that I got the feeling, that I should own an art-work, which relates to this remote world of thought.

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<sup>16</sup> Illner, *Eduard von der Heydt*, especially the essays by Esther Tisa Francini and Eberhard Illner.

<sup>17</sup> Von der Heydt and von Rheinbaben, *Auf dem Monte*, 36. Cited after: Illner, *Eduard*, 22.

These first acquisitions in Buddhist sculpture, to which the Buddha-head for von der Heydt's writing table belonged, were soon surpassed in quantity and quality by the sculptures which he bought in the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> Prominent additions of those years were, for example, six Bodhisattvas from the caves of Tianglongshan 天龍山 (Mountain of the Heavenly Dragon) in Shanxi 山西 province dating from the sixth to the eighth centuries. The 'Mountain of the Heavenly Dragon' was 'discovered' by the Japanese art dealer Yamanaka Sadajiro (1866–1936) between 1924 and 1926.

However, this Buddha head from Longmen must have had a special aura to von der Heydt, as he transferred it rather late to the Rietberg collection as a letter to the then director Elsy Leuzinger (1910–2010), director from 1956–1972, states:

Den ersten Buddha-Kopf, den ich gesammelt habe, ist ein nicht besonders interessanter, mittelgrosser Tang-Steinkopf, der sich in meinem Hause befindet und den ich Ihnen gelegentlich einmal zeigen werde. Er hat gewisse Anklänge an die Gandhara-Kunst, ist aber rein-chinesisch. Er ist nicht gerade ein Glanzstück meiner Sammlung. Später kommt es natürlich in den Rietberg. Ich hatte den Buddha-Kopf nur zurückgehalten, weil er mich an die alten Zeiten erinnert.<sup>19</sup>

The first Buddha head, which I collected, is not an especially interesting, middle sized Tang stone head, which is in my house and which I will show you occasionally. It has a certain affinity to the art of Gandhara, but is purely Chinese. It is not a masterpiece of my collection. Later he will come to the Rietberg too of course. I have only kept this Buddha head, because he reminds me of old times.

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<sup>18</sup> In the 1930s, the Chinese Buddhist sculptures of the von der Heydt collection temporarily complemented the paintings Otto Kümmel had acquired in the art-collection in Berlin. After World War II they were donated to the Rietberg Museum in Zürich. Part of the collection remains in Buffalo, United States of America.

<sup>19</sup> MRZ, Archiv, K. 0002-0003, von der Heydt an Leuzinger, 13.8.1957. A research catalogue of the Buddhist sculpture collection of von der Heydt was written by With, *Bildwerke Ost-*, and Siren, *Chinese Sculptures*.

Further influence on von der Heydt's way of life came again through Schopenhauer, this time indirectly. Von der Heydt read many authors from the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries, on Buddhist philosophy and literature, who were still under the spell of Schopenhauer's thinking.

Besides his comments and statements in his letters and his writings, which Antje BIRTHÄLMER has presented in the 2015 Wuppertal catalogue,<sup>20</sup> the books von der Heydt consulted during his life do give an interesting insight in the perception of Buddhism at the time. They give a testimony how pervasive the Schopenhauer viewing-glass on Buddhism was in early twentieth century Germany. Consequently we can trace this outlook in many of the books read by von der Heydt. Though there does not exist a list of books of the former von der Heydt library, now in the library of the Rietberg museum Zürich and in the Wuppertal von der Heydt museum (and possibly other locations), most books on Asian art, culture and philosophy are at present in the Rietberg library. As some of them have an ex libris of von der Heydt, we know that he had kept them in Ascona. The list here gives some of the more important readings:

- Deussen, Paul. *Erinnerungen an Indien*. Kiel: Lipsius & Tischer, 1904.  
 ———. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy: With an Appendix on the Philosophy of the Vedanta in its Relations to Occidental Metaphysics*. Berlin: Karl Curtius, 1907.  
 ———. *Der Gesang des Heiligen: eine philosophische Episode des Mahābhāratam*. Übersetzt aus dem Sanskr. Von Paul Deussen. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1911.  
 Eliot, Charles. *Hinduism and Buddhism—An Historical Sketch*. 3 vols. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD, 1921.  
 Grimm, Georg. *Die Lehre des Buddha. Die Religion der Vernunft*. München: Piper, 1917.  
 Neumann, Karl Eugen. *Buddhistische Anthology. Texte aus dem Pali-Kanon*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1892.

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<sup>20</sup> BIRTHÄLMER and FINCKH, *Weltkunst von Buddha*, 46 and 47.



- . *Der Wahrheitspfad—Dharmapadam, ein buddhistisches Denkmal*. München: R. Piper & Co, 1921.
- Oldenberg, Hermann. *Reden des Buddha*. München: Kurt Wolff Vlg, 1922.
- Rhys Davids, T. W. *The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Sanyutta-Nikāya) or Grouped Suttas [...]*. Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids. London: Oxford University Press, 1917–1930.
- . *Psalms of the Early Buddhists*. London: Frowde, 1909–1913.
- Richard, Timothy. *The New Testament of Higher Buddhism*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910.
- von Glasenapp, Helmut. *Der Buddhismus in Indien und im Fernen Osten*. Berlin/Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1936.
- Ward, Edith. *Light from the East. Being Selection from the Teaching of Buddha*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1901.
- Ziegler, Leopold. *Der ewige Buddha*. Darmstadt: Reichl, 1922.

Several of the above books include annotations made by Eduard von der Heydt and show his interests in Indian philosophy's answers concerning morality, life and death or suffering. Schopenhauer's metaphysics and statements become especially obvious in the lives and writings of three authors, all present in von der Heydt's library and attentively read and commented on by von der Heydt: Paul Deussen (1845–1919), Karl Eugen Neumann (1865–1915) and Georg Grimm (1868–1945). The influence their writing seemed to have had on Eduard von der Heydt, and the still prevalent impact of Schopenhauer's Buddhist thinking, represent the kind of Buddhist acceptance prevalent in Germany during the early twentieth century.

Karl Eugen Neumann was a Vienna-born Indologist and studied with the Indologist Hermann Oldenberg (1854–1920) in Berlin. He also was one of the earliest translators of texts from the Pali Canon into German. Neumann, according to Zotz,<sup>21</sup> wanted to ground Buddhism in German and Christian thinking. As he was already acquainted with Schopenhauer's work from his family, he saw himself in Schopenhauer's line of Buddhist thinking.

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<sup>21</sup> Zotz, *Auf den glückseligen Inseln*, 90.

Von der Heydt owned several books by Neumann, among them an early edition of Neumann's *Buddhistische Anthologie. Texte aus dem Pali-Kanon* from 1892. In the introduction to his translations, he claims his indebtedness to Schopenhauer and sees him and himself in congruence with the 'true' ideas of Buddhism. Von der Heydt carefully read at least the introduction and made annotations and underlinings. As he did this often with double-lines and with an exclamation-mark on the side, he obviously agreed with Neumann's thinking and found it interesting. The idea that the early Buddhist sources like, for example, the Pali Canon, would represent a true Buddhism, not degenerated like the Buddhism of later years, probably lead to Neumann's translation of these early texts, as did Schopenhauer's preference of these texts. Von der Heydt seems to agree with the claim made by Neumann that a Christian reception of Buddhism was not objective, but prejudiced and therefore would give Buddhism a negative reception. Here he double-underlined with an exclamation-mark. Interestingly Hermann Hesse, who was equally interested in things Buddhist, as his *Siddharta* shows, read Neumann's translations of Pali texts. Neumann had many critics, but Hesse, though of course an amateur, obviously liked Neumann's versions and defended him. While working on *Siddharta* he even wrote a review of one of Neumann's translations of the speeches of Buddha and made fun of some 'nervous, German Professors', who feared Germany's downfall with the flood-like acceptance and spread of Buddhism.<sup>22</sup>

Another book in von der Heydt's library, which he obviously read with even more enthusiasm, was Georg Grimms (1868–1945) 'Die Lehre des Buddha. Die Lehre der Vernunft' (The Teaching of Buddha. The Teaching of Reason) (Figure 4, Figure 5). München, 1922. Grimm was born in Bavaria and originally studied theology. He later studied law and became a judge, but through Schopenhauer was initiated to study Buddhism and learned Pali. In 1911 he founded together with Eugen Neumann and Paul Deussen the Schopenhauer Gesellschaft, in 1921 the 'Buddhistische Gemeinde für Deutschland' (German Buddhist community). Grimm had a

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<sup>22</sup> Michels, *Materialien zu Hermann*, 140–42.

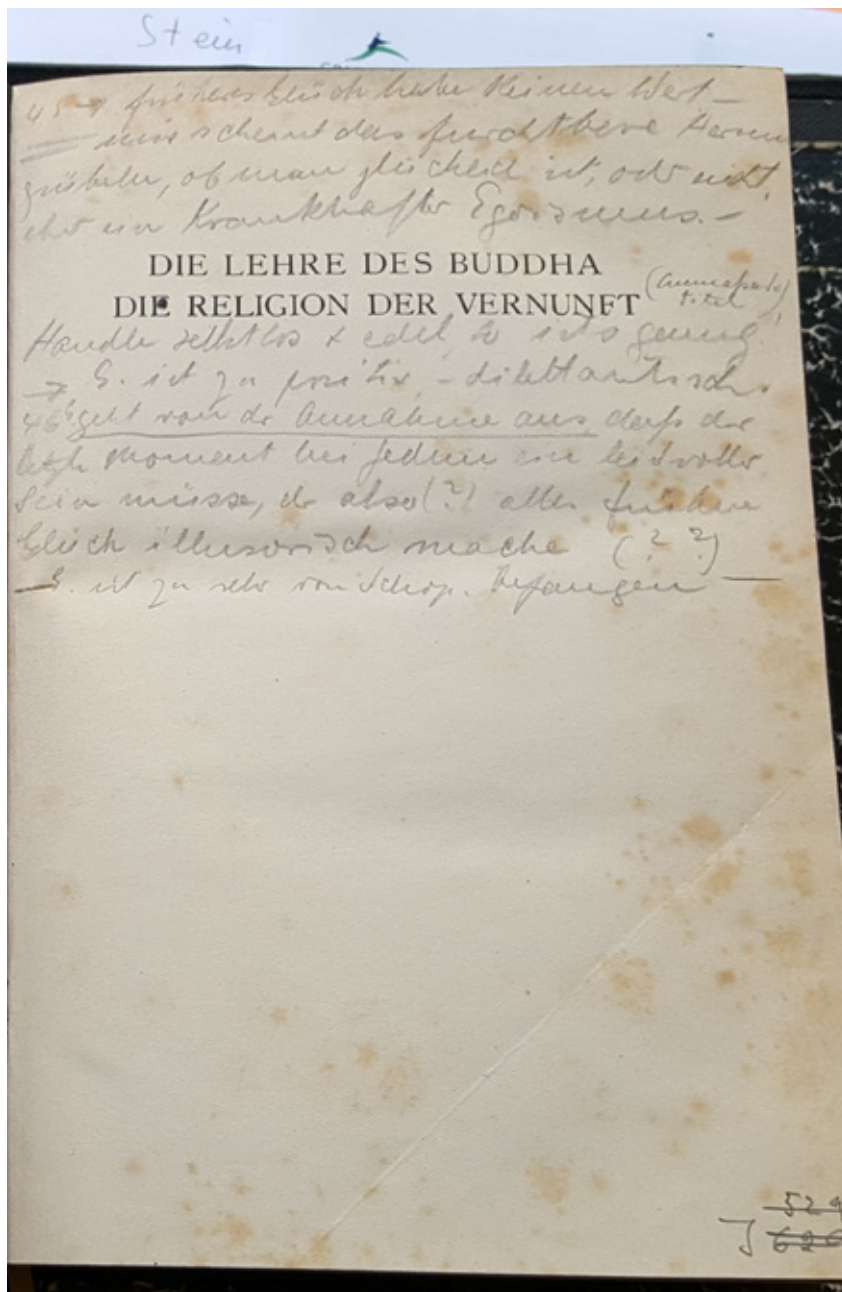


FIG. 4 Grimm, Gustav, 1917, *Die Lehre des Buddha*, half title. Photo by Petra Rösch.

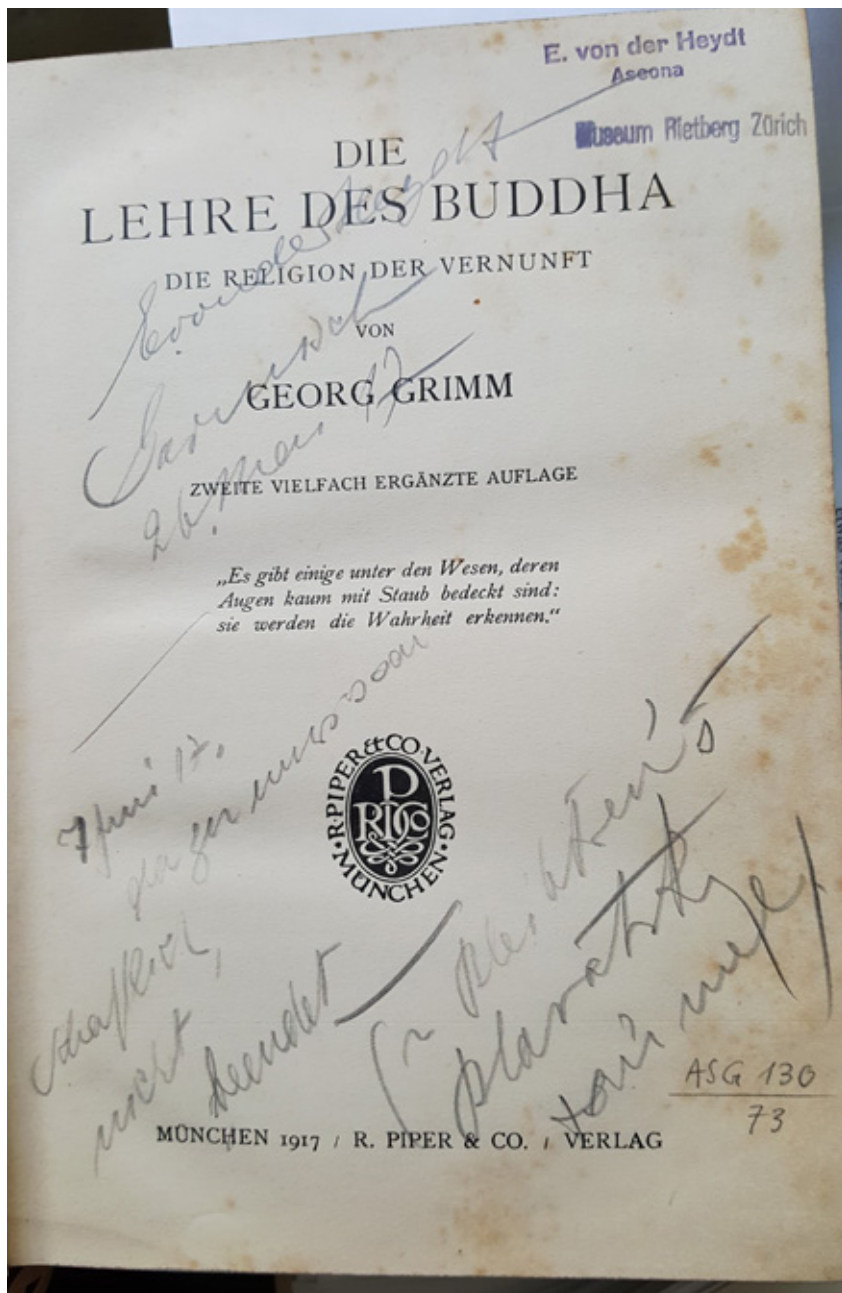


FIG. 5 Grimm, Gustav, 1917, *Die Lehre des Buddha*, title page. Photo by Petra Rösch.

strong Western and especially Christian interpretation of terms like *atta* or *atman*, which he interpreted as an ‘wahres, unsterbliches Ich’ (true, immortal self), sometimes even termed it ‘Seele’ (soul).<sup>23</sup> He interpreted *atman* as a self, which would still exist after all will and suffering was ended. After death, there would not be ‘Nichts’ (nothing), but a higher ‘Gut’ (thing), which then would be achieved. In these interpretations he hoped to follow the real, original Buddhism, however Grimm’s Christian foundation is strongly evident.

Von der Heydt obviously read Grimm’s book critically. He was interested in terms like ‘suffering’ and ‘self’, but he was also seeking a recipe of how to lead a happy and fulfilling life. Following the Buddhist interpretation of the emptiness of all beings and appearances, Grimm writes that past happiness is irrelevant and only the actual feelings in the moment of death are essential. However von der Heydt strongly disagrees. In his opinion, seeking and evaluating happiness for its own sake is sometimes taken to be too important, as he notes down on the front page of Grimm’s book his personal guideline:

mir scheint das furchtbare herum Grübeln ob man glücklich ist oder nicht eher ein krankhafter Egoismus. Handle stets selbstlos und edel so ist genug

It appears to me that the horrible pondering about being happy or not is more a sickly egoism. Act always selfless and noble, that is enough.

As his annotations on pages 45/46 show, he prefers a more positive evaluation of a happy life even at the moment of death, which can be reflected upon without remorse: ‘man kann auch ohne Reue an früheres Glück denken’ (one can think of former happiness without remorse) as von der Heydt notes. As described by Grimm (e.g. page 45), there is a Buddhist idea that everything is void including former happy or unhappy experiences, and only the present moment is vital. This idea seemed not to appeal to von der Heydt. The banker

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<sup>23</sup> Zotz, *Auf den glückseligen Inseln*, 156.



and collector, highly attached to materiality all his life, criticizes and argues for a persistence of feelings and experiences. He writes on the front page of Grimm's copy *Die Lehre des Buddha*:

...geht von der Annahme aus, dass der letzte Moment Im Leben ein leidvoller sein müsse, ...also alles frühere Glück illusorisch mache. G. ist zu sehr von Schopenhauer befangen

...assumes, that the last moment in life must be a painful one,... so that all earlier happiness is an illusion. G. is too much biased by Schopenhauer.

Grimm's version of Buddhism already takes a step towards the Western longing for a kind of heaven after death in interpreting 'nirvana' not as 'nothing' like Schopenhauer did, but in claiming it to be a 'higher entity, home of the true being'. However, as Zotz summarizes, Grimm understood the way to reach this 'higher entity' as one of 'rigorous renunciation, or world renouncement'.<sup>24</sup> Unsurprisingly the banker and collector von der Heydt like many others at that time too, looked for a more this-worldly and positivistic interpretation of life and its materiality than Grimm or least Schopenhauer were able to provide.

Paul Deussen (1845–1919) was a German Indologist and philosophy-professor, who published widely on Indian thoughts. Eduard von der Heydt found his *Outlines of Indian Philosophy: With an Appendix on the Philosophy of the Vedanta in its Relations to Occidental Metaphysics* interesting as he made many annotations and markings in his copy. On the first page von der Heydt made some notes, which give us a summary of the content, but also to show which points von der Heydt paid special attention. For example, on page 10 he highlighted 'moral deficiency of the old Vedas causes decay', on page 9 (in German): 'der Wille in Naturphänomenen (Donner, Regen, etc.) derselbe wie im Menschen jedoch nicht seine Persönlichkeit' (the will in natural phenomena (thunder and rain etc.) [is]

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<sup>24</sup> Zotz, *Auf den glückseligen Inseln*, 166.

the same as in human beings, though not [having] his personality), and on page 29 he was obviously concerned with the explanation of reincarnation given there. These random annotations show what the amateur reader of Buddhist philosophy at that time found intriguing. There was still a strong appeal to the Upanishads and the Vedanta inspired by Schopenhauer. Eduard von der Heydt also took interest in definitions concerning honour and morality, to which he paid special attention. Besides that he pursued the elemental questions after the human self, as in the dichotomy of ‘self’ (atman, atta) or ‘non-self’ (anatman, anatta). Despite objections from the more Christian based Buddhist adherents like Georg Grimm,<sup>25</sup> the concept of ‘non-self’ was easier to accept. Von der Heydt also imagined an idea of life that did not presume the individual beings as distinct entities, and found this thought best expressed in the ‘Tat tvam asi’ (This is you) as von der Heydt strongly underlines in Deussens book on page 63. Von der Heydt furthermore underlines Deussens explanation on page 50 concerning the self, as well as the explanations of *atta* and *anatta* on page 22. Von der Heydt adds: ‘Emerson “Over-soul”’ below this page, referring to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s (1803–1882) essay of the same title, in which he claims that the human souls are somehow connected in a so-called ‘over-soul’, which shows traces of Buddhist thinking. Therefore he might not have understood the self as remaining a distinct entity after death. As von der Heydt obviously had read Emerson’s ‘oversoul’ essay as well and connected it to the Buddhist ‘Tat tvam asi’, he likely thought it possible for all entities to be overall connected.

In addition to the metaphysical explanations concerning ‘self’ and ‘non-self’, a more Prussian morality shines through many of the comments made by von der Heydt in his reading notes. As we already learned from his note on Grimm’s front-page, a chivalrous morality is observable, which seems to merge with Buddhist ideals of behavior: ‘Handle stets selbstlos und edel so ists genug’ (always act selfless and noble, that is enough), and on the last page 65 in Deussen’s book, von der Heydt underlines heavily: ‘And so the Vedanta. ....is the strongest

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<sup>25</sup> Zotz, *Auf den glückseligen Inseln*, 156.

support of pure morality, is the greatest consolation in the sufferings of life and death, ...<sup>26</sup>

### III. German Life-Reform movements and early Buddhists: Von der Heydt's selection of an exhibition venue for his Buddhist collection

Von der Heydt was not only interested in fundamental philosophical answers inspired by Buddhism, but had the will and the means to put them into practice in daily life. Like many other intellectuals, artists and members of the upper middle classes, he was also open to other social movements. Triggered by Industrialization, growing mega-cities and World War I, existing ways of life were challenged. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, several social movements began, like the 'Lebensreform Bewegung' (life reform movement), or the Theosophical movements of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925)<sup>27</sup> co-founded by the Russian occultist Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891). During that time, not only did eurhythmics and Waldorf education begin, but other alternative lifestyle practices such as vegan diets, bio-organic farming, organic health practices (nudism), and alternative medical treatments by Sebastian Kneipp (1821-1897) and Emanuel Felke (1856-1926) were invented (Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8). Many of those new life-concepts became wide-spread and were taken up again in later times, like during the hippy-movement of the 1960s, or are still highly influential in present day German wellness ideas (spa, alternative/relaxing health treatments), ecology, or veganism. Most of these movements took shape at that time, some of them indirectly or directly inspired through Asian or Buddhist thinking. This, for example, is the case with the theosophical movement of Rudolf Steiner, though he denied it later. As Volker Zotz gives an overview of the movements that were inspired by Schopenhauer's

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<sup>26</sup> Deussen, *Outlines of Indian*, 65.

<sup>27</sup> Himself interested in Buddhism and a reader, but more an opponent to Arthur Schopenhauer's writings.



FIG. 6 Farming and nudism. Joseph Salomonson lived according to a radical vegetarian diet. Bollmann, *Monte Verità*, 114.

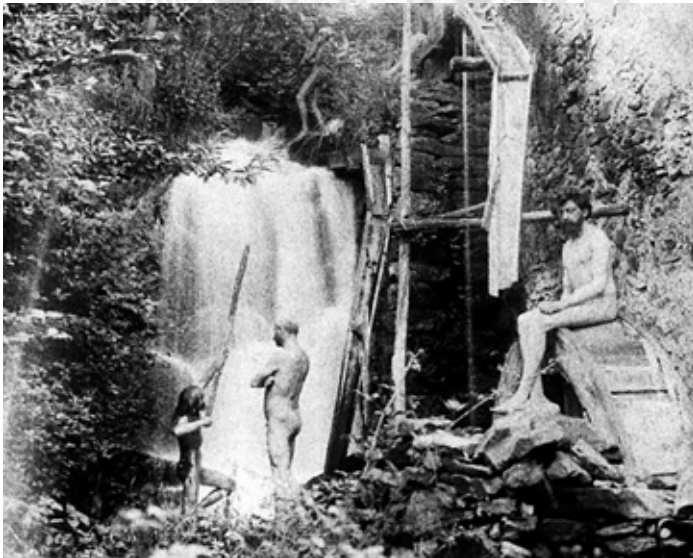


FIG. 7 Nude bathing at a place close by Monte Verità. 1906. Bollmann, *Monte Verità*, 148.



FIG. 8 Settlers and guests during a vegetarian meeting at Monte Verità. 1902. Bollmann, *Monte Verità*, 28.

Buddhism to find alternative ways to salvation, in his book *Auf den glückseligen Inseln—Buddhismus in der Deutschen Kultur* (On the blissful islands—Buddhism in German Culture), I will not further discuss these here.<sup>28</sup>

Obviously Eduard von der Heydt was a child of his time. When looking at the way and the venue, in which von der Heydt installed his art and especially his Buddhist sculptures, it becomes clear, that Buddhism, Schopenhauer and Asian thinking were important and were mixed with German Life-reform movements of the early twentieth century. This becomes obvious in his choice of his life-long home at the Monte Verità near Ascona in Switzerland (Figure 9).

Beautifully situated in the mountains on the Lago Maggiore, this peninsula was occupied from 1900 onward by a small colony of Lebensreform-eccentrics. Here gathered many artists, musicians, feminists, but also former soldiers, many of them from the European middle classes or refugees from Russia. At the beginning, a group of

<sup>28</sup> Zotz, *Auf den glückseligen Inseln*, 133.





FIG. 9 Lago Maggiore, Ascona. CC image courtesy of Carl Mueller on Wikimedia Commons.

six people had settled here and built several houses, amongst them Ida Hofmann and Henri Oedenkoven and the Graser brothers. They were gathering here to lead an alternative life according to new ideas. Social conventions were to be overcome, like marriage, the division of sexes, and the tight and constricting clothing habits of the nineteenth century. Other conventions like the paternalistic family and a market-economy society should be left behind. They strove to lead a more natural and harmonious life of liberty and peace. The warm and southern climate of this peninsula near Ascona in Switzerland, which they called Monte Verita in 1902, was the ideal place to carry out their new way of life. Among many of their novel practices the most intriguing were walking bare-footed and wearing little to no clothes while breathing the fresh air. Many also wondered about the vegan diet kept by the inhabitants and their guests at Monte Verita, as well as the sexually liberated life and new alternative medical concepts that the group followed. They developed new forms of body movements, like gymnastics and expressive movements. Rudolph von Laban (1879–1958) and his group, later also his pupil Mary Wigman (1886–1973) were some



FIG. 10 Casa Anatta, Monte Verità, May 1927. Bollmann, *Monte Verità*.

of the pioneers visiting the Monte Verità and inspired the guests to participate. These were the early beginnings of modern dance.

Several houses were built by these early colonists on the Monte Verità. Next to a central house for welcoming guests, the Casa Anatta and the Casa Selma were erected in a simple style out of wood, closely imbedded in nature. These two houses are still extant today, as are several of the reform-people's 'Licht-Luft-Hütten' (huts of light and air).<sup>29</sup> The Casa Anatta was Henri and Ida's private home and while the name deliberately referred to the Buddhist concept of 'non-self', the architecture tried to express this idea through a new style of natural materials, roundness, large roof-terrasses, big windows and simple, edge-less rooms (Figure 10).<sup>30</sup> Inner and outer world was as united as possible. The Casa Anatta was a serene and thus extremely modern building. To visitors it was one of the forerunners of modern architecture.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Landmann, *Monte Verità*.

<sup>30</sup> Bollmann, *Monte Verità*, 90–93.

<sup>31</sup> Bollmann, 92 refers to the mentioning of the Casa Anatta in an architecture-magazine 'Befreites Wohnen' by the historian of architecture Sigfried Giedion.

To finance the lifestyle of the reform colony, they invited guests to stay and live here in a sanatorium-like center. Among this early group of six, the idea was more professionally but not very successfully followed by the wealthy Belgian Henri Oedenkoven and his companion Ida Hofmann, a musician, writer and early fighter for women's rights. Despite the economic unsuccessful endeavours, visitors to the Monte Verita were numerous and included some of the most famous intellectuals of the time, like the writer Hermann Hesse or Oskar Maria Graf and many others.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless the colony of early ecological hippies had constant financial troubles, and they had to abandon the place finally in the early 1920s and had to move on to different shores, some of them to India. The Russian refugee and artist Marianne von Werefkin, who stayed with many of her compatriots at the Monte Verita, brought the declining colony to the attention of Eduard von der Heydt, who bought the place in 1926. As he had done in his previous homes, he did install his collection of world art, his African masks and sculptures, European paintings as well as Buddhist icons in the landscape and in and on the houses of the Monte Verita. His aim was that everyone could share his purchases and take delight in the beautiful setting and inspiring art works. His aim in acquiring the Monte Verita and installing his art-works was not only an investment, but had aesthetic, as well as spiritual and metaphysical reasons:

Die Kunstwerke werden hier auf dem Monte Verita sehr viel mehr zu ihrem Recht kommen und werden eher vielen Leuten Inspiration und Frieden geben können.

... Einrichtung zwecks geistiger Natur, ... dass ich den Menschen die Möglichkeit gebe...sich nicht nur zu erholen, sondern Natur und asiatische Kunst zu genießen und würdigen zu lernen.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Bollmann, *Monte Verità*, 101 provides the so far most abundant and thorough reading.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from von der Heydt to Heinrich Stöner, September 21, 1928, ZA SMB, I/MfV, OAK 029, cited after Francini, 'Ein Füllhorn', 180–81.

(Here on the Monte Verita the art works will receive their appropriate setting and will be able to give inspiration and peace to many people.

... Installation of a metaphysical nature, ... that I give human beings the opportunity not only to recreate, but also to enjoy nature and Asian art and to learn to appreciate it...)

Stefan Bollmann, a little bit sarcastically describes von der Heydt's 'Wellness concept' after having bought the Monte Verita:

Unter seiner Ägide wird aus dem lebensreformerischen Konzept der Gründer der Lifestyle besserer Leute, die es sich leisten können und wollen, gesünder, naturnäher, unkonventioneller zu leben als der Mainstream.<sup>34</sup>

Under his aegis the life-reform concept of the founders (of the Monte Verita) turns into a life-style for upper-class people, who can and want to afford to life healthier, closer to nature, and more unconventional than the mainstream.

Therefore, to cater to his own taste and the more demanding public, Eduard von der Heydt rebuilt the former central house of Henry Oedenkoven and Ida Hofmann's sanatorium into a more functional and modern hotel and restructured the park while preserving some of the former 'Lichtlufthütten' (Figure 11).

The Casa Anatta, the former modern home of Henri Oedenkoven and Ida Hofmann, which is still preserved today, was renovated by von der Heydt to become his private home. As Bollmann again sarcastically resumes: 'von der Heydt sublimated the nude bodies of the Reform people into the nude icons of Buddhist art' (Figure 12).<sup>35</sup>

Next to installing his collection of Buddhist art at the Monte Verita, von der Heydt employed several ideas from the Life-reform movements. According to Bollmann he kept himself a vegetarian diet. He also offered vegetarian food to his guests as Ida Hofmann

<sup>34</sup> Bollmann, *Monte Verità*, 277.

<sup>35</sup> Bollmann, 280.



FIG. 11 Modern Hotel at Monte Verità. CC image courtesy of LittleJoe on Wikimedia Commons.



FIG. 12 Sculptures of von der Heydt at Monte Verità. Illner, 2013, *Eduard von der Heydt*, 116.

and Henri Oedenkoven had done, but was much more tolerant and flexible with the diet.<sup>36</sup>

Von der Heydt also followed the former inhabitants of the Monte Verità in dressing very liberal and eccentric for a man of his time and position. He dressed himself in a white ‘lufthemd’ (air-shirt) and

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<sup>36</sup> Bollmann, *Monte Verità*, 280.





FIG. 13 Receiving illustrious guests. Illner 2013, *Eduard von der Heydt*. 131.

short, light trousers even when receiving royals or European nobility (Figure 13). He walked the ground like this and received guests while carrying a red umbrella, so that some described his appearance as that of 'a living Buddha' (Figure 14). Many funny comments by visitors were triggered through Eduard von der Heydt's attire, when present at the Monte Verita: 'Der Buddha vom Monte Verita'.

His tranquil round face and happy, compassionate smile became notorious (Figure 15). The behavior of the owner influenced those of the guests, who were offered a well-tailored Lufthemd as well and cherished the easy-going, but inspiring atmosphere of social equality and spiritual ease at the grounds of the hotel. Eduard von der Heydt saw it beneficial to follow the former inhabitants of the mountain also in inviting artists and people from the cultural sphere to entertain the crowd. The two modern dancers Mary Wigman and Rudolph von Laban were Eduard von der Heydt's guests as well, as were intellectuals, artists and art dealers. The East-Asian art historian Alfred Salmony, guest on the Monte Verita too, wrote in 1928: 'Die Hauptsache ist der Geist dieses Ortes' (Most important is the spirit of this place).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> BIRTHÄLMER AND FINCKH, *Weltkunst von Buddha*, 273.



FIG. 14 Von der Heydt with lufthemd and umbrella. Illner, 2013, *Eduard von der Heydt*, 117.

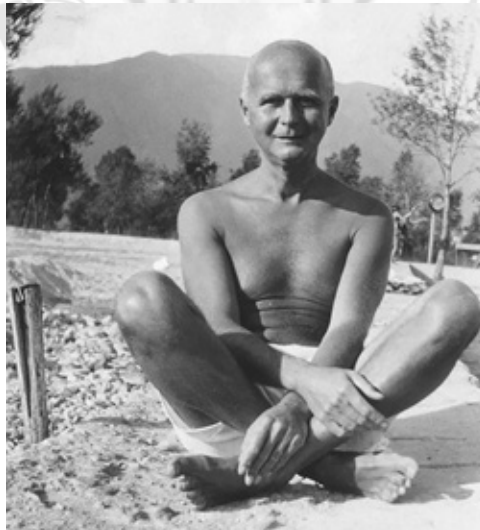


FIG. 15 Sitting almost Buddha-like at Monte Verita. BIRTHÄLMER/FINKH, 2015, *Weltkunst von Buddha, bis Picasso*, 272.

Looking at the above described example of Eduard von der Heydt, one can observe the way in which Buddhism influenced the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe and how those influences were mitigated and mixed with other indigenous European movements like the Life-reform movements. Eduard von der Heydt combined the new alternative life-movements as well as a more serious searching in Buddhism to provide answers for leading a fulfilling and harmonious life. He had read the Buddhist sources recommended by Schopenhauer and was inspired to see life differently, answering the eternal question how to lead a fulfilling life. For Eduard von der Heydt these answers were given in Asian and Buddhist texts, which lead him to live and share his acquisitions in his private Buddhist paradise on the Monte Verita.

Eduard von der Heydt was an early proponent of one of the earliest wellness and esoteric movements, which since then constantly reappeared in similar forms until the present day.

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