



SHRUV RAINA

N E W D E L H I

LE GENTIL'S *VORAGE*:

ADDRESSING DISRUPTIONS IN THE NARRATIVE
OF SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS

At the first meeting of Variantology that I attended Nils Röller posed the question as to how I saw the relation between the history of science and Variantology. The questions I had tried to ask related to the social theory and historiography of science that required a different way of reading and interpreting the history of sciences in the hope of destabilising the received picture and thereby of possibly revising both the historiography and social theory of science. The path I had chosen was to interrogate the representation of the Indian mathematical tradition in the historiography of the French Enlightenment. Over the years this preoccupation has led me in two directions: one towards the Scottish Enlightenment and its mathematicians and the crystallisation of what historians of mathematics have christened the historiography of mathematical proof. The second direction along which my research concerns have stabilised, for the time being at least, could be labeled the “ethnography of disciplines”, borrowing a colourful notion taken from Clifford Geertz.¹ The preoccupation here is to understand how academic disciplines are ensconced within the confines of the structure of the university and how these disciplines get institutionalised and acquire the lustre of epistemological transcendence — if they do.

One of the concerns flowing from this interrogation of the plurality of the European enlightenment project is to understand how the first stage in the institutionalisation of

1 Clifford Geertz. *Local Knowledge: First Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, 2000).