

Albrecht von Haller's Self-Reviews and Style of Reasoning

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Abstract: Despite the review ethos introduced by the physician Albrecht von Haller when he took over the *Göttingische gelehrte Nachrichten* as chief editor in 1747, he wrote many self-reviews. This article examines von Haller's numerous self-reviews in order to explore the aims of reviewing, the openness of scholarship, the relationship between reviewing and truth, and the scientific language used, which can be summarised as what Marco Sgarbi, in a stimulating article, has called a "style of reasoning." Reviews and self-reviews did not develop as an autonomous genre, but were integrated into a system of intermediality in which publications, reviews, (semi-)private letters and images responded to one another. They were primarily aimed at correcting and advancing science in the complexity of his intellectual, personal and cultural options.

Keywords: Albrecht von Haller, style of reasoning, scholarly journals, reviews, scientific illustration, anatomy

1. Introduction

During his lifetime, Albrecht von Haller (1708–1777) impressed his contemporaries with his immense erudition and the sophistication of his information management. He was said to have read every scientific and certainly every medical work, and to have developed an ingenious system of notebooks with internal cross-references to serve in particular as working tools for his "libraries" or *Bibliothecae*, his monumental works reviewing the state of knowledge in a particular branch of learning. But alongside, and perhaps even more than, these voluminous works, scholarship was played out in public debate, especially in reviews of works in scholarly journals.

The review was invented and defined as a new literary genre in the founding issue of the *Journal des Sçavans* in 1666. The aim of the journal was to provide scholars with regular information on new publications and the academic world. The very term "journal" used by its first editor, Denis de Sallo, referred to a register in which merchants and tradesmen recorded their daily accounts and transactions, archiving and indexing them so that it could be consulted at a later date:¹ from the outset, therefore, journals were not simply channels for

¹ Vittu 2005, 527–28.

information, but had to store and index the knowledge disseminated in the Republic of Letters.

The *Journal des Sçavans* had no systematic structure. For contemporaries, the internal openness of the journals contributed to the usefulness of knowledge. Some scholars, such as Leibniz, took a very self-confident stance,² even though the status of the ‘reduced’ knowledge provided by scholarly journals quickly became controversial – it was lamented very early on that people no longer read books, but only more or less biased reviews.

From the outset, Denis de Sallo, in his “Avis de l’imprimeur au lecteur,” distinguished between two categories of texts: “extraits” (reviews) on the one hand, and “lettres” or “mémoires” (scientific news) on the other. In order to guarantee the ‘freedom’ of the reviewer, the “extraits” had to remain anonymous. In a letter from Jean Gallois, it is made clear that all extracts must provide information on the specific features of the book under review:

It is a good idea to make the review a little longer so that I can get to know the book better. It should note what is good or bad about the book, what the book can be used for and what profit can be made from it if it has already been written about, and make a comparison with those who have written about it before the author of this book.³

In order to produce an accurate review, one must first “read carefully,” then assess the quality, usefulness and value of the book, recall previous studies on the subject and make a comparison with them. In this way, the reviews should contribute to the development of literary history (*historia literaria*), a reasoned history of knowledge and therefore a history of the Republic of Letters.

Nevertheless, the art of reviewing remained an area of debate between several models: firstly, the ‘skeleton’ model, which retained only the structure of the book under review; secondly, the sequence of extracts from selected passages; or thirdly, the reasoned assessment of the publication.⁴ It also depended on material constraints such as the periodicity and format of the journal: should the reviews be brief and topical, or more substantial but less topical? As a result, there were not one but several arts or styles of criticism.⁵

In 1747, almost a hundred years after Denis de Sallo, Albrecht von Haller – a professor of anatomy, surgery and botany at the newly founded University of Göttingen from 1736 to 1753 – became chief editor of the *Göttingische gelehrte*

² Gantet 2018.

³ “Il est bon qu’il fasse l’extrait un peu ample afin que je puisse avoir plus de connaissance du livre. Il fault remarquer ce qu’il y a dans le livre de bon ou de mauvais, a quoy le livre peut servir et quel profit on en peut tirer, si on a desja escrit sur cette matière, et faire comparaison de ceux qui en ont escrit avant l’auteur de ce livre,” Jean Gallois to Denis II Godefroy, about a review to be prepared by Chabron. Quoted by Vittu 2002, 353.

⁴ See Léchoth 2017.

⁵ I therefore take the opposite view to that of Thomas Habel, who reduces discussion to a single form of criticism. Habel 2007.

Anzeigen (henceforth: *GGA*). From the outset, in the preface to the 1747 volume of the *GGA*, Haller defined the functions of a reviewer.⁶ First of all, the reviewer had to have access to a large number of recent works; he had to be familiar with many sciences and speak several languages; but as no one person could master all the sciences, the collaboration of several scholars, each covering his own special field, was necessary. A scholar who studied a work in his field had therefore to give a precise judgement, positive or negative, in the interest of the progress of science.

When Denis Sallo had defined the recension in 1666, exchanges between scholars were taking place within the classical framework of the Republic of Letters. Anne Goldgar has shown that these contacts were governed by codes of politeness and moderation: the Republic of Letters was based on a community of obligation. According to Goldgar, the Republic of Letters came to an end under the influence of French philosophers, who replaced polite exchanges with calls for mobilisation in the name of humanitarian virtues such as tolerance.⁷

As Hubert Steinke has pointed out, Haller's example contradicts Goldgar's theory. Not only did French philosophers still respect the codes of the Republic of Letters, but Haller placed the progress of science and the scientific community above the codes of the Republic of Letters. What Haller required was the verdict of a specialist. The reviews he wrote and demanded in the name of special scientific expertise had to be clear in their judgement, which did not necessarily go hand in hand with collegial courtesy. Like Hubert Steinke, I interpret this tension as the beginning, within the Republic of Letters, of the outline of a scientific community.⁸

Haller wrote some reviews as early as the 1730s. It seems that the controversies about the mechanism of respiration with Georg Erhard Hamberger and the heritage of the Leiden Professor Herman Boerhaave, which both began in 1744 simultaneously with the publication of his *Icones anatomicae* and were conducted through review journals, persuaded him of the crucial importance of this kind of criticism. He started to work for the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée* in 1742, but only in 1745 did he begin to write for the Göttingen journal. As in 1747, finally, he became chief editor of the *GGA*, he guaranteed to submit half of all the articles. Despite his return to Switzerland in 1753, he almost honoured his commitment and provided some 9,000 reviews only to the *GGA* alone, before his death in 1777.⁹ To these must be added at least 44 reviews in French for the *Bibliothèque*

⁶ Prefaces by Haller, *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, volumes 1747 and 1748. The title *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* is a collective title for the Göttingen scholarly journal, which was published under the following titles: *Göttingische Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen* (1739–1752) and *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* (1753–1801). See in particular Boshung and Pross (eds.) 2008; Holenstein, Steinke and Stuber (eds.) 2013.

⁷ Goldgar 1995.

⁸ I take up Hubert Steinke's excellent analysis, which inspired this article. Steinke 2005b, 256.

⁹ Guthke 1962. See Steinke and Profos (eds.) 2004, n° 2477.

*raisonnée des ouvrages des savans de l'Europe*¹⁰ and a few more for the *Nouvelle bibliothèque germanique*. The sheer number of reviews – an average of 266 per year, or one review every 1.3 days – demonstrates the importance of reviews in Haller's scholarly work. Haller's correspondence shows in turn the weight that authors and readers attached to reviews. Contrary to the ethics of the reviewer Haller set out in his preface to the *GGA* of 1747, he frequently reviewed his own works when they were published.¹¹

The practice of self-review, which was made possible by anonymity, was the subject of ambivalent judgements. On the one hand, it ran counter to the impartial judgement advocated by learned journals and the ethos of the Republic of Letters. On the other hand, editors could be sure that the reviewer had actually read the book he was assessing and mastered the topic.¹² I propose to examine Albrecht von Haller's numerous self-reviews in order to explore the aims of reviewing, the openness of scholarship, the relationship between reviewing and truth, and the scientific language used, which can be summarised as what Marco Sgarbi, in a stimulating article, has called a "style of reasoning."¹³

I have undertaken an exact count of Haller's self-reviews, but had to give up for lack of time. In any case, there are several hundred in the *GGA* alone, as well as others in French-language scholarly journals. Rather than undertake an exhaustive study, I will focus on an influential publication in order to shed light on the role of self-reviews in Albrecht von Haller's scholarly work: the *Icones anatomicae*, which was published between 1743 and 1756, not as a finished work but in the form of illustrated fascicles. They provide a particularly good insight into the interactions between science and the public, or in other words, science in the making through 'external' reviews and self-reviews.

My approach to Haller's reviews will not be purely 'internal,' but will integrate them into the intermedial system ('external' reviews, correspondence, images, etc.) into which they were integrated, in search of Haller's specific way of arguing. In fact, not only the reviews, but also the number of Haller's letters is enormous, with 12,000 letters addressed to him and several thousand written by him. The University of Bern's hallerNet database provides easy access to Haller's letters and reviews. My considerations will be based largely on an exploitation of this database and on a few surveys of the other GJZ18 database.¹⁴

¹⁰ Guthke 1973 was able to provide evidence of 44 reviews by Haller in the *Bibliothèque raisonnée*. Lagarrigue estimates at least 50 reviews by Haller: Lagarrigue 1993, 93–123 and 132.

¹¹ Catherine 2013: 247. Profos Frick 2009: 108. He reviewed his own literary works 28 times, but in fact these are mainly reviews of translations and new editions.

¹² See Lécho 2017.

¹³ I borrow this expression from Ian Hacking's notion of "style," as reinterpreted and clarified by Sgarbi 2024. This means not only thinking, but also arguing and demonstrating in the public arena of the Republic of Letters. See Hacking 1992; Sciortino 2017; and newly Sgarbi 2024. My warmest thanks to Marco Sgarbi for sending me his article while it was still forthcoming.

¹⁴ The very powerful database <https://hallernet.org/> and the more traditional database <https://adw-goe.de/gjz18/datenbank/>. All the data were consulted in February 2024.

I will proceed in three parts of unequal length. The first part will examine the relationships between self-reference and the openness or public dimension of science; the second part will examine the scientific language used; and finally, the third part will examine self-reference in the work of Albrecht von Haller, all in the context of the changing Republic of Letters.

2. An open science? Self-reviews between scientific norms and values

Haller never stopped writing about the works of others, but also about himself. He kept his collections of reading notes and his working copy of the *GGA*, in which he wrote an 'H' in the margin for reviews of his own writings. In his *Iudicia*, or collections of excerpts, he kept a record of his reviews and self-reviews. So not only can we easily identify them, but we can also assume that they played a role in his knowledge management.¹⁵ Self-reviews had three main functions.

2.1. Personal vanity and ambition

Self-reviewing was, of course, a means of self-promotion. Haller never missed an opportunity to announce one of his publications in the *GGA*. This was an act of vanity, and Haller was not averse to it. Haller listed the first biography written about him, by his student Georg Zimmermann:

We have found nothing against the historical accuracy. We only wish that Mr Zimmermann had complained as little about academic envy and republican jealousy as Mr v. H. himself did in his writings [...].¹⁶

A rival journal to the *GGA*, the *Jenaische gelehrte Anzeigen*, even denounced abuse: Haller was using the journal not to promote the progress of science, but his own fame. The Jena journal – and behind him, presumably, Haller's rival, the professor of medicine Georg Erhard Hamberger – argued that Haller was misusing the *GGA* to further his own reputation and “deceive the readers with all sorts of incomplete information and judgements concerning his own affairs.”¹⁷

However, Haller, who could be extremely incisive in his reviews, was careful in his self-reviews. He endeavoured to present only facts.

Haller was not just a self-promoter. It was not only an “I” that spoke in his (self-) reviews, but also a “we.” The “we” form, of course, concealed the self-review

¹⁵ See Gantet and Krämer 2021.

¹⁶ “Wir haben nichts der historischen Richtigkeit wiedriges gefunden, nur hätten wir gewünscht, daß Hr. Zimmermann so wenig über den Academischen Neid und über die Republicanische Eifersucht geklagt hätte, als Hr. v. H. selbst in seinen Schriften darüber geklagt hat,” Albrecht von Haller über Zimmermann (1755) in den *GGA* 1755 (1), issue 66, 2 June 1755, 615–16, Editions- und Forschungsplattform *hallerNet*, <https://hallernet.org/data/review/09018>. Review of Johann Georg Zimmermann. 1755. *Das Leben des Herrn von Haller*, Zürich: Heidegger und Compagnie.

¹⁷ *Jenaische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1750, 23. Quoted by Steinke 2005b, 261.

and gave it an external authority – as if the review had been written by a society of scholars, a university tribunal, even though the *GGA* was not the journal of the University of Göttingen.¹⁸

This characteristic can be illustrated by the example of the *Icones anatomicae*, a series of annotated anatomical plates that Haller published in eight leaflets between 1743 and 1756. This work, with its meticulous engravings, was intended to show for the first time the network of the arteries in the human body. The stakes were high, not only in terms of anatomical and physiological knowledge of the body, but also in terms of the iconographic methods used.

Haller published self-reviews of each fascicle in various journals. I was able to count 28 reviews of this work, an indication that science was largely played out in journals. Of these 28 reviews, at least 11 – almost half – were Haller's own, as evidenced by his initials 'H' in the margin of his working copy, by a mention in his collections of excerpts, or even by his correspondence.

The massive presence of self-reviews among the reviews is an unmistakable sign of a desire for publicity as the reviews reacted to each other: public interest was created by multiplying the reviews. More than half (exactly 16) of these reviews concerned the first four issues, while Haller published self-reviews up to the eighth and last issue.

In his self-reviews, Haller gave a history of anatomical studies and illustrations, mentioning the qualities and faults of each author, including himself. He asserted his authorship by emphasising his functions from the outset. Thus in the first review, which was logically a self-review:

For this reason it is easy to understand how such a skilful and attentive naturalist as Mr personal physician is able to describe the various parts of the human body more accurately than has been done so far.¹⁹

From the outset, Haller violated the codes of modesty, moderation and collegiality of the Republic of Letters, as the editors of other journals were quick to point out. Indeed, this first self-review immediately provoked irritation. The reviewer of the *Neue Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen* in Leipzig noted that Haller had taken two of his illustrations from his prosector Johann Jakob Huber (1707–1778) and criticised the accuracy of two other plates, while confirming that Haller's plates were better than those of Jacques-Bénigne Winslow, professor of anatomy at the Jardin du Roi in Paris.²⁰ The prosector, who until then had

¹⁸ According to Martin Gierl, Haller was also promoting the University of Göttingen corporately: Gierl 2013.

¹⁹ "Aus dieser Ursache ist es leicht zu erachten, wie es zugehet, daß ein so geschickter und aufmerksamer Naturforscher, als der Herr Leibmedicus, im Stande ist, verschiedene Theile des menschlichen Leibes richtiger vorzustellen, als bisher geschehen ist," *Göttingische Zeitungen von Gelehrten Sachen*, 1743, issue 38, 13 May: 335–36, on 336.

²⁰ *Neue[r] Zeitungen von Gelehrten Sachen auf das Jahr...* 1744, 6 February, vol. 30, issue 11: 101–2, article: http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/load/img/?PPN=PPN72918062X&physid=PHYS_0153.

usually been a surgeon or barber, was the person who cut up the flesh during dissection. However, the reviewer immediately noted that Huber had been appointed professor of medicine at the University of Kassel. Haller had therefore borrowed two anatomical plates from a scholar of the Republic of Letters and not from a craftsman, presumably without asking him.

Haller's reaction to the review in the *Neue Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen* was one of extreme pique, and he refuted both criticisms in a new, self-justifying review.

At issue in the exchange between Haller and the reviewer of the *Neue Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen* was Haller's personalisation of his scholarly work and his failure to acknowledge his intellectual debts. This personalisation was, of course, the fruit of his vanity and ambition. But the exchange between Haller and the anonymous reviewer touched on more sensitive points, which explains Haller's bitterness and which can be explored by leaving the strictly public sphere and reading the private correspondence between the two scholars.

2.2. Between authorship, heritage and corporate affiliation

Johann Jakob Huber owed the start of his career to the protection of Haller, who acted as his 'patron.'²¹ His letters to Haller were therefore full of deep gratitude to the master. At Haller's request, Huber had also carried out extensive research on the blood vessels of the thyroid gland, which he intended to publish under his own name, and he asked Haller to wait before publishing his anatomical plates (letter of 24 November 1743). Haller vehemently refused and complained to Huber. Huber replied by pointing out his own achievements in the field of anatomy and denouncing Haller's excessive language (letter of 2 December 1743).²² The clash was so serious that their correspondence ended there.

However, in a letter to his minister and protector Münchhausen in 1750, Haller attributed the break with Huber to insufficient payment and apologised for his poor health: after nights of sleeplessness, his hand was too shaky to perform the dissections himself. Separation for reasons of honour did not exclude considerations of material and physical precariousness.²³

The reviewer of the *Neue Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen* knew that Haller had ignored and despised Johann Jakob Huber's authorship. The public review therefore revealed personal matters. Naturally, Haller immediately attempted to break

²¹ On Haller's role as "patron," see Steinke 2005a and 2013.

²² See Johann Jakob Huber to Albrecht von Haller, 24 november 1743 (BB Bern, N Albrecht von Haller 105.29, Huber, Johann Jakob, 24), *hallerNet*, <https://hallernet.org/data/letter/04092> and Johann Jakob Huber to Albrecht von Haller, 2 December 1743 (BB Bern, N Albrecht von Haller 105.29, Huber, Johann Jakob, 25), *hallerNet*, <https://hallernet.org/data/letter/04093>.

²³ Albrecht von Haller to Gerlach Adolph von Münchhausen, 12 March 1750, in *Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers*, *hallerNet* 2018-23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/17653>. For an epistemological reflection on the inherent precariousness of knowledge, see Mulsow 2022.

through the anonymity of the review by asking his correspondents who might have written such a review. In his self-review published in the *Nouvelle bibliothèque germanique* in the second half of 1747, he even took the liberty of denouncing the author of this review, which he considered almost defamatory as a professor of medicine in Leipzig.²⁴ We can therefore assume that the author was probably Johann Ernst Hebenstreit (1702–1757), professor of anatomy and chemistry in Leipzig since 1737.²⁵ Haller did not denounce Hebenstreit by name, but rather his position at the University of Leipzig: beyond individuals, there was the rivalry between the new and modern University of Göttingen and the traditional University of Leipzig.²⁶

But Haller's bitterness was not merely personal, as he was opposed to Hebenstreit, who claimed to have discovered the peculiarities of the aorta. It was not just a matter of honouring the priority of a discovery made by a lesser-known scholar. It was also the legacy of the great Leiden physician Herman Boerhaave that Haller wanted to monopolise, whereas Hebenstreit had appropriated it.

Furthermore, the conflict was not only based on honour or heritage, but also extended to the members of the university whom the professors mobilised, starting with the students or the common correspondents. One of them was Georg Matthias Bose (1710–1761), who in Leipzig took the courageous step of supporting Haller, despite the "enmity" (*Feindschaft*) between the "enemies" (*Feinde*), in other words between the two sides, as he put it in a letter to Haller dated 23 January 1746:

You may therefore judge that it is not only out of esteem for your merit, or out of love for fairness, but also out of knowledge of the justice of your cause, that I take sides against your enemies in Leipsic, although it is my home.²⁷

Bose also hoped that Haller would review his writings on electricity in the *Bibliothèque raisonnée*...²⁸ Was the example of the *Icones anatomicae* an excep-

²⁴ *Nouvelle bibliothèque germanique*, 3/2, April–December 1747: 263–71.

²⁵ A letter from 1752 lamented: "Unterdessen ist es mir doch ein großer Verdruß. Ich hätte nicht geglaubt, daß der Hl. D. Hebenstreit so partheyisch bey der Sache hätte sein sollen. Ew. Wohlgebohrnen werden unterdessen finden, daß sie mit aller Mäßigung geschrieben ist: und daß ich Dero gutem Rathe würklich gefolget habe," Gottlob Carl Springsfeld to Albrecht von Haller, 8 October 1752, in Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/07946>. His responsibility is therefore far more convincing than that of Justus Gottfried Günz (1714–1754), Extraordinary Professor of Medicine at the University of Leipzig.

²⁶ See his self-review in *Nouvelle bibliothèque germanique*, April–December 1747: 263–71, on 269. On Göttingen, see for example Saada 2019.

²⁷ "Vous pouvez donc juger par là, que ce n'est pas seulement par estime pour Vôtre merite, ou par amour de l'équité, mais aussi par connoissance de la justice de Vôtre cause, que je prens parti contre Vos ennemis de Leipsic, quoique c'est ma patrie," Georg Matthias Bose, letter to Haller, 23 January 1746, in Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/00642>.

²⁸ Georg Matthias Bose to Albrecht von Haller, 23 January 1746, in Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/00642>.

tional, isolated case? Probably not. Hubert Steinke mentions the deep controversy on the mechanics of respiration with Georg Erhard Hamberger with the same characteristics.²⁹

The accusation was therefore effective, especially as it mobilised the corporate institutions of the universities. As a result, Haller introduced his self-review of the second fascicle with a “we,” suggesting that it was the voice of the University of Göttingen and its patrons (whereas the *GGA* were not the organ of the University of Göttingen) and quoted his two collaborators: Christian Jeremias Rollin (1707–1781) as prosector and draughtsman (and professor of anatomy in Göttingen), and the Göttingen academic engraver Georg Daniel Heumann (1691–1759).³⁰

The drawings are by *our* skilful and industrious prosector, Mr D. Rollin, and the plates by *our university and court engraver*, Heumann.³¹

The last reviews of the *Icones anatomicae* also underlined the importance of institutional support for the work of Haller:

With this part, the famous author concludes his magnificent anatomical work on the veins of the human body, immortalising his memory and demonstrating both his tireless and wide-ranging erudition and the extent to which the University of Göttingen facilitated such undertakings with financial aid.³²

²⁹ Steinke 2005b, 131–32: “The controversy attracted considerable attention, not least because it was seen as a rivalry between the old University of Jena and the new University of Göttingen. This reading was reinforced by the fact that both professors recruited their students for their own purposes and continued the often heated dispute with blunt statements in the university-affiliated review journals they both edited (*Göttingische* and *Jenaische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, respectively).”

³⁰ The relationship with Rollin seemed to be difficult, as Haller reported in a letter to his minister Münchhausen on 29 September 1746 that Rollin no longer wanted to work with him. However, in the summer of 1747, Haller asked Münchhausen to grant a pension to Rollin, whose eyesight had deteriorated to the point where he could no longer work: Albrecht von Haller to Gerlach Adolph von Münchhausen, 10 August 1747, in *Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers*, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/17623>. As for Heumann, he left Göttingen in 1751.

³¹ “Dieses Werk ist eine Fortsetzung des ersten Fasciculi, *aber* einzig von Herrn Hallers Arbeit. [...] Die Zeichnungen sind von *unserm* geschickten und fleißigen Prosector Herrn D. Rollin, und die Platten von *unserm* Universitäts- auch Hof-Kupferstecher Heumann,” Albrecht von Haller on *Icones anat.* (1743–56) in *GGA*, 17 June 1745, *hallerNet*, <https://hallernet.org/data/review/07012>. I highlight. Or he dodged the issue by blaming his bookseller for Huber’s loan! See *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32, on 25–26.

³² “Mit diesem Theil endiget der berühmte Hr. Verfasser das prächtige anatomische Werk von den Pulsadern des menschl. Körpers, womit er sein Andenken verewigt, und einen Beweis, so wol seiner unermüdeten und weit sich erstreckenden Gelehrsamkeit, als auch, *wie sehr die Göttingische Universität mit Hülfsmitteln dergleichen Unternehmungen erleichtere*, darlegt,” *Gelehrte Nachrichten* 1756, 7 July, vol. 5, issue 27, 311–12, article: http://purl.uni-rostock.de/rosdok/ppn1048341771/phys_0327.

This review referred to one of Haller's fundamental methodological principles: the multiplication of dissections in order to identify variants before drawing conclusive conclusions and illustrations – hence the enormous need for cadavers, which the University of Göttingen guaranteed him more than other universities. During his years at Göttingen, Haller is said to have dissected between 300 and 350 cadavers, mostly children and women, and very few men (39 in all)³³. It was precisely this advantage, which was also a scientific limitation, that had led Haller to concentrate on blood vessels, as children's blood vessels were easier to fill with wax than those of adults.

The collective and institutional background to Haller's (self-)reviews was also commercial.³⁴ The *GGA* appeared at a brisk pace in order to get the earliest information and possibly to set the tone by influencing subsequent reviews. Books with positive reviews were likely to sell better.

This commercial space also had an influence on the actual production of scientific work. The first works published by Haller in Göttingen had been published as essays by his students or as occasional writings and were not illustrated. In the 1740s, Haller became convinced of the potential of one of his pupils, the draughtsman Christian Jeremias Rollin. He used him and the engravers Georg Daniel Heumann and Christian Friedrich Fritzsch (1719–1772?) to illustrate his botanical and anatomical works. He then published plates on the *omentum* (or *epiploon*, a highly vascularised abdominal fat sac) and the thoracic duct, as well as new plates on the diaphragm. At this point, encouraged by his bookseller, he had the idea of presenting the results of his anatomical research in the form of separate plates under the title *Icones anatomicae*. By publishing them in successive fascicles, he hoped to attract attention, stimulate debate and boost sales.

The Republic of Letters was therefore not a smooth surface, but a community of tensions that drove a debate involving personal, collective, corporate and commercial issues. Haller knew how to take the criticism of the reviews into account. From the second fascicle of the *Icones anatomicae*, he included this dis-

³³ As the usual cadavers were not sufficient, Haller requested permission to dissect the bodies of illegitimate children and dead women. See in particular Albrecht von Haller to unknown, 7 November 1748, *hallerNet*, <https://hallernet.org/data/letter/17639>. Again in 1753, he threatened that his students would have to go to Berlin to study anatomy, and envisaged the delivery of prisoners' corpses: Albrecht von Haller to Gerlach Adolph von Münchhausen, 10 January 1753, *hallerNet*, <https://hallernet.org/data/letter/17776>. He provided an exact count of the number of cadavers supplied and the related costs, for example to Albrecht von Haller an Unbekannt, Dezember 1737, in *Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers*, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/17805>, or Albrecht von Haller to unknown, December 1739, in *Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers*, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/17806>.

³⁴ He wanted to finish the angiology fascicle before the Easter Fair of 1750 (Haller's letter of 22 April 1748): Gerlach Adolph von Münchhausen to Albrecht von Haller, 28 June 1748, in *Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers*, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/17634>.

pute in the “literary history” of anatomy. The science he proposed was shaped by public controversies, fundamentally open and therefore subject to tensions.

2.3. The reflexivity of reviews

Because self-reviews had an ambivalent status, they were subject to a number of strategies. Just as personal ambition and vanity were not the only issues at stake, reviews and self-reviews were not only public. To abolish the anonymity of reviews, as Haller did, was tantamount to discrediting a scholar. Self-reviews therefore developed in a space between publicity and the (semi-) secrecy of private correspondence.³⁵ And even publicity was not a flat surface, since reviews and self-reviews could mobilise students and motivate their work or run bookshops: there were different kinds of publicity.

Self-reviews and their refutation had a value that was not only self-referential but also self-reflexive. Hebenstreit concluded his review with these words:

These errors are not in our eyes. Connoisseurs will easily find them and many others in Mr Haller's figures, whose services to the art of dismantling we shall never fail to appreciate. Scholarly journals are an arena where truth, and not self-love, should have the freedom to speak.³⁶

In other words, beyond vanity and personal ambition, it was the progress of science through reviews that was at stake. Indeed, Albrecht von Haller, who wrote his works in Latin, presented his taxonomy and working methods in his self-reviews.

3. Reviews and scientific progress

3.1. In search of the truth

Hebenstreit criticised Haller for inaccuracies and for personalising his work, and stood by his criticisms, which he repeated in his later reviews.³⁷ He reiterated that he was in search of “truth” (“*Wahrheit*”). Haller's reaction was not only one of anger, but also of reproach. Thus, in his self-review of the second fascicle, he presented his *Icones anatomicae* in these terms:

³⁵ See Stuber 2004.

³⁶ “Diese Fehler sind nicht in unsern Augen. Kunstverständige werden diese und viele andere gar leicht in Herrn Hallers Figuren finden, dessen Verdienste um die Zergliederungskunst wir ausser dem niemals hochzuachten ermangeln werden. Gelehrten Zeitungen sind ein Schauplatz, wo die Wahrheit, und nicht Eigenliebe, zu sprechen Freyheit haben sollte,” *Neuer Zeitungen von Gelehrten Sachen auf das Jahr...* 1744, 4. Mai, vol. 30, n° 36: 325–8, on 328, article: http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/load/img/?PPN=PPN72918062X&physid=PHYS_0377.

³⁷ *Neuer Zeitungen von Gelehrten Sachen auf das Jahr...* 1745, vol. 31, issue 88, 4 November: 787–9, article: http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/load/img/?PPN=PPN729351548&physid=PHYS_0841.

This work is a continuation of the first Fascicle, but exclusively the work of Mr Haller [!]. In the first work the arteria *maxillaris interna* is described in detail, and the more so because the author was attacked by another scholar.³⁸

Haller was therefore not only experimenting on cadavers in front of and with his students, but also through his reviews in front of the Republic of Letters. Fascicles 7 and 8 were published after Haller's return to Switzerland, where he no longer had an anatomical theatre. In his self-reviews, Haller presented the differences between his new observations and his previous ones, reflecting the fundamental openness of his work.³⁹ The dispute can therefore be understood as a contradictory search for common ground within the constraints of the ethos of the Republic of Letters and the individual affirmation of scholars.⁴⁰

The historiography of the 'scientific revolution' has emphasised that observation and experimentation were the hallmarks of the science practised in the Royal Society from the 1660s onwards. Fabian Krämer has rightly pointed out that reading was still widespread, even if it became more critical.⁴¹ All of Haller's handwritten excerpts and reviews were intended to provide a critical overview of the state of knowledge in particular fields.⁴² Haller described scholarship in anatomy as follows:

When one dissects a body, one knows what to see; one is informed of what is either known or disputed; one looks with interested eyes at the sizes, situations and figures. Whether one wishes to verify the discoveries of the good authors or to correct erroneous descriptions, one is attached to the work with imitation and with a pleasure unknown to uneducated anatomists.⁴³

Reading sharpened the eye and allowed oneself to verify what was not certain or to discover something new. The good anatomists cited by Haller in his

³⁸ "Dieses Werk ist eine Fortsetzung des ersten Fasciculi, aber einzig von Herrn Hallers Arbeit. In dem ersten Stüke wird die arteria maxillaris interna weitläufig, und um desto genauer beschrieben, weil der Verfasser darüber von einem andern Gelehrten angegriffen worden," Albrecht von Haller on *Icones anat.* (1743–56) in *GGA*, 17 June 1745: 407–8, *hallerNet*, <https://haller.net.org/data/review/07012>.

³⁹ So Albrecht von Haller on *Icones anat.* (1743–56) in *GGA*, 30 October 1756: 1185–86, *hallerNet*, <https://haller.net.org/data/review/09304>.

⁴⁰ See Rey 2017.

⁴¹ See Krämer 2014.

⁴² See Steinke 2005b, 252–60.

⁴³ "Quand on a lu, & qu'on a lu avec attention, on se trouve en pais de connaissance ; lorsqu'on dissèque un corps, on sait ce qu'il faut voir, on est instruit de ce qui ou connu, ou contesté ; on regarde avec des yeux d'intérêt les grandeurs, les situations, & les figures. Soit que l'on veuille vérifier les découvertes des bons Auteurs, soit qu'on veuille corriger des descriptions défectueuses, on s'attache au travail avec émulation, & avec un plaisir inconnu aux Anatomistes non lettrés," Haller, review of René-Jacques Croissant De Garengot, *Splanchnologie, ou l'anatomie des viscères* (1742), in *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, 1743, vol. 31, part 2: 269–293, on 272–3 ; see Schultka and Neumann (eds.). 2007, 113.

works, and even more so in his self-reviews, practised erudite anatomy (“*gelehrte Anatomie*”), which distinguished them from surgeons who lacked erudition.

Haller chose to begin his study with what Bernhard Siegfried Albinus (1697–1770) – his own mentor! – had neglected in his myology and osteology, namely the bones of the nose. Haller therefore turned his attention early on to angiology, a field in which he felt that research was lagging behind. Only Bartolomeo Eustachi (c. 1505–1574) had produced usable, if critical, plates. The first fascicle of the *Icones anatomicae* was thus devoted to the nose. Haller worked intensively on the preparation of blood vessels, especially arteries, so that they could be dissected and illustrated. From the second fascicle onwards, blood vessels dominated his anatomical studies, without excluding other subjects. With the exception of the fourth fascicle, they were all devoted to arteries and veins.

Haller therefore carried out specialised anatomical studies for which he commissioned specific plates to be compiled in a later major work. He did not have a fixed programme from the outset, but developed his thinking through reading, practice and criticism. He also involved his students: the essays he wrote, or increasingly had written by his students, also dealt with the anatomy of blood vessels, nerves, the brain and cellular tissue. Haller therefore decided to teach what he had dissected for research purposes, so that he offered only specialised courses. Students were obliged to obtain an overview of anatomy from the prosector.

For Haller, scientific progress could only be achieved through specialised research, especially as a comprehensive anatomy would take many years, if not a lifetime. The immediate danger, which his critics were quick to point out, was the differences in treatment and even postulates between successive fascicles. From the outset, Haller tried to fend off his critics by stating in a self-review: “It is therefore wise to give only fragments.”⁴⁴ He advocated a public and cumulative science, writing in French: “Physics needs materials, the time has not yet come to erect buildings.”⁴⁵

Following the example of the anatomist Giambattista Morgagni (1682–1771), Haller saw the solution in the multiplication of experiments and their internal comparisons, which would eventually allow the “method of nature” (“*naturae methodus*”) to speak for itself.⁴⁶ Despite the many variations, he believed that there was a rule of nature that anatomical structures followed and that the anatomist worked to find. As he explained in one of his self-reviews: “After a certain number of tests, all that remains are the results that are born of the nature of things.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ “Il y a donc de la prudence à ne donner que des fragmens,” *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32, 1746, 27.

⁴⁵ “La Physique a besoin de matériaux, le temps d’en élever des Bâtimens n’est pas encore venu,” *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32: 32.

⁴⁶ Albrecht von Haller, *Icones anatomicae*, fasc. III, 1747, preface to the third plate.

⁴⁷ “après un certain nombre de vérifications, il ne reste que les résultats, qui naissent de la nature des choses,” Haller 1760, 25.

Albinus represented the “perfection” of anatomy by applying Morgagni’s method to the description of muscles. Between 1727 and 1753, he had published anatomical atlases (on bones in 1726, on muscles in 1734, on the human skeleton in 1737, on bones and muscles in 1747, etc.) and, with Herman Boerhaave, atlases of Vesalius, the anatomical plates of Eustachi and the work of Fabricius ab Aquapendente (1737).⁴⁸ Haller only acknowledged his debts in passing.⁴⁹ In fact, he had made other methodological choices.

Contrary to his contemporaries, who denigrated dissection as a mere craft, Haller saw it as a way of working that was capable of uncovering the truth. Only through reading and repetition – and the reviews emphasised the hundreds of cadavers he had dissected himself – could truth therefore emerge. Reviews of the *Icones anatomicae* increasingly emphasised his method of observation.⁵⁰ For Haller, good observation and good writing made a good scholar.

There are two classes of scholars: those who observe, often without writing, and those who write without observing. The first of these classes cannot be too highly exalted, and the second, perhaps, not too lowly. A third class is even worse, namely those who observe badly.⁵¹

In the *GGA*, Haller wrote reviews in German of texts he had written in Latin. The aim was not just or not primarily to disseminate his work to a non-specialist audience, but also to make German a scientific language. He introduced the problems, while retaining the Latin terms he had coined to designate the anatomical elements he had uncovered.⁵²

3.2. Words and images

Haller valued language as a means of describing anatomical discoveries. The self-reviews used language to help the reader relive the journey of the scalpel in the body.⁵³ The language was, of course, reduced, neutral, simply descriptive. But Haller also believed that illustrations were just as important for clarifying where language failed. The illustrations also showed the successive

⁴⁸ See for example Bernhard Siegfried Albinus. 1744. *Explicatio tabularum anatomicarum Bartholomaei Eustachii* [...] Accedit tabularum editio nova, Leiden: Langerak et Verbeek.

⁴⁹ Georg Thomas von Asch, for example, attributed to Albinus a strong jealousy of Haller: Georg Thomas von Asch to Albrecht von Haller, 19 October 1751, 1v°, in Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://haller.net.org/edition/letter/00127>.

⁵⁰ See *Gelehrte Nachrichten* 1756, 7 July, vol. 5, issue 27: 311–12, article: http://purl.uni-rostock.de/rosdok/ppn1048341771/phys_0327.

⁵¹ Haller to Bonnet, 5 January 1759. *Correspondance. Bonnet*: 153. Quoted after Steinke 2005b: 70.

⁵² So “abdomalis,” *Freyemüthige Nachrichten von Neuen Büchern und Andern zur Gelehrtheit gehörigen Sachen*, 4 April 1753, as well as self-reviews from 19 June 1749 and 26 February 1753.

⁵³ See for example on the head, Albrecht von Haller on *Icones anat.* (1743–56) in *GGA*, 3 April 1755: 369–72, *hallerNet*, <https://haller.net.org/data/review/08994>.

stages in the cutting of the flesh. Above all, Haller gave the contrasting images a didactic function.

And it was precisely in the images that previous studies had proved unsatisfactory, especially those of Albinus. Albinus had made precise drawings, but of idealised bodies with long legs and harmonious, symmetrical proportions. In a self-review, Haller declared: "It is a question of expressing with distinction those parts which the anatomist wishes to make known, without giving too much elegance to everything else."⁵⁴ This is not to say that he did not outline a certain aesthetic:

This distinction must be even greater than in nature; the features of an anatomical figure must be more distinct and the shadows sharper. This is the pitfall of the best painters; they cannot bring themselves to end the parts with black lines, which give them hardness and take away their naturalness; they cannot give up these nuances, which imitate nature but make an anatomical figure weak, confused and difficult to use.⁵⁵

Haller explained the principles of his method in more detail in his French-language self-reviews than in his German-language ones.

3.3. German and French science

As both a scholar and a poet, Haller kept a close eye on the language and the development of texts. Not only did he want to promote German as a literary and scientific language, but he also ensured that his works were translated into foreign languages and that their quality was controlled. For Haller, language played an important role in the progress of science. While he advocated classical scholarship in Latin, which he considered the most accurate language, in his learned volumes, he promoted German as a language of scholarship in and through the *GGA*. The epistemic importance of reviews depended on the target readership of the journal and its frequency, and Albrecht von Haller understood this perfectly.

The *GGA*, which discussed 700–900 books on 1,400–2,000 pages annually, reflected a German scientific culture based on an exhaustive compilation of knowledge. Haller's aim in his German-language reviews was the transmission of his Latin scientific nomenclature and concepts:

⁵⁴ "Il s'agit d'exprimer, avec distinction, les parties que l'Anatomiste veut faire connoître, sans s'attacher à une trop grande élégance pour tout le reste," *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32, on 26–7.

⁵⁵ "Il faut même que cette distinction soit plus grande qu'elle n'est dans la Nature ; les traits d'une Figure anatomique doivent être plus marqués, & les ombres plus tranchantes. C'est là l'écueil des meilleurs Peintres, ils ne sauroient se résoudre à terminer les parties par des traits noirs, qui y donnent de la dureté, & qui leur ôtent le naturel ; ils ne sauroient renoncer à ces nuances, qui imitent la Nature, mais qui rendent une Figure anatomique foible, confuse, & d'un usage difficile," *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32, on 27.

In the description he has retained as many of the known names as he could, but has given new names to the other veins, which no one had yet described in detail or correctly. The arteries that he presents and describes here are the *Saera media*, *Saera lateralis*, *Iliaca posterior*, *Obturatoria*, *Ischiadica*, *Pudenda communis Winsl. Haemorrhoeida media*, *Vesicalis ima*, *Umbilicalis* and *Vaginalis*. We retain their Latin names because the German descriptions might be even less understandable.⁵⁶

In other words, Haller was aiming for specialist communication in his German self-reviews.

But Haller also wrote at least two self-reviews in French-language journals, the *Bibliothèque raisonnée des ouvrages des savans de l'Europe* and the *Nouvelle bibliothèque germanique*, a journal of the Huguenot refuge in Berlin (around Jacques Pérard and Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey).⁵⁷ These were quarterly journals that published longer reviews.

These self-reviews were tailored to the target audience of French “honnêtes hommes.” The self-review of the *Bibliothèque raisonnée* in particular used comparisons to make the subject more accessible and opened by invoking Fontenelle, the most indisputable French scientific authority. Behind Fontenelle, it was conformity with the Académie des Sciences (of which he was permanent secretary from 1697 to 1740) that was asserted. Haller’s review ended with this remark, which evoked the profile of his reader: “Here is enough, and more than most readers want to know about a book that does not interest them infinitely.”⁵⁸

The difference in the style of argumentation between German and French journals reflects a different understanding of scholarship. In France, the figure of the “honnête homme” dismissed the German *historia literaria* as pedantry. Writing style was more important than erudition based on numerous excerpts.

However, despite the devaluation of the *historia literaria* in the French context, there were also meticulous scholars and, of course, critical readers. Mon-

⁵⁶ “Er hat bey der Beschreibung so viel der bekannten Nahmen beybehalten, als ihm möglich gewesen, den übrigen Adern aber, die noch niemand ausführlich oder richtig beschrieben gehabt, neue Nahmen beygelegt. Die Schlagadern, die er hier vorstellt und beschreibt, sind die *Saera media*, *Saera lateralis*, *Iliaca posterior*, *Obturatoria*, *Ischiadica*, *Pudenda communis Winsl. Haemorrhoeida media*, *Vesicalis ima*, *Umbilicalis* und *Vaginalis*. Wir behalten ihre lateinischen Nahmen, weil man die Deutschen Umschreibungen vielleicht noch minder verstehen würde,” Albrecht von Haller on *Icones anat.* (1743–56) in *GGA*, 19 June 1749: 465–66, on 466, *hallerNet*, <https://hallernet.org/data/review/08072>.

⁵⁷ Haller was a contributor to *Bibliothèque raisonnée*. See the lemma in *Dictionnaire des journaux*, ed. Jean Sgard: in <https://dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr/journal/0169-bibliothèque-raisonnée>. He was in contact with Jacques de Pérard, to whom he sent Fascicule III (1747), which was to be reviewed. See Jacques de Pérard to Albrecht von Haller, 24 April 1747, in *Digitale Edition der Korrespondenz Albrecht von Hallers*, *hallerNet* 2018–23, <https://hallernet.org/edition/letter/06447>.

⁵⁸ “En voila assez, & plus, que le plus grand nombre des Lecteurs ne souhaite de savoir d’un Livre, qui les ne intéresse pas infiniment,” *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32, on 32. The *Nouvelle bibliothèque germanique* 3/2, 1747: 263–71 set out Haller’s discoveries.

tesquieu, for example, produced no fewer than 28 volumes of thematic excerpts. Far from being a simple documentation of his reading, his selective excerpts were a critical dialogue with what he had read, a pre-writing of his *Esprit des lois*. In order to write his groundbreaking political works, Montesquieu, like Haller, read with a critical and commentary pen. Even Voltaire, who enjoyed the role of polemical critic of the scholarly tradition and was in turn criticised at the time for his alleged lack of erudition, was also a zealous and meticulous scholar, producing numerous critical excerpts.

In his French-language reviews, Haller therefore stood somewhere between the French “honnête homme” and the erudite “fleißig” German scholar.⁵⁹ He did justice to both, showing in every sentence his mastery of the discoveries of both, as well as the limits of their reception:

The figure of the base of the brain is accompanied by a more detailed commentary. [...] He had Mr Petit's small ganglion engraved, together with some less generally known sinuses; [...] he gives back to Mr Duverney the occipital sinus which this great man discovered, but which was hardly known outside France before Mr Morgagni made a new description of it, without knowing that of Mr Duverney.⁶⁰

Finally, it is mainly the French reviews that mentioned the problems of anatomical representation (see fig. 1).

A painter thinks he is doing the right thing when he expresses nature, but that is not the merit of an anatomical figure. Nothing is more beautiful than the flesh of the muscles drawn by Lairesse; but all this beauty is pure loss. It is a question of expressing with distinction those parts which the anatomist wishes to make known, without giving too much elegance to everything else. This distinction must be even greater than it is in nature; the features of an anatomical figure must be more distinct and the shadows sharper. This is the pitfall of the best painters; they cannot bring themselves to end the parts with black lines, which give them hardness and take away their naturalness; they cannot give up these nuances, which imitate nature but make an anatomical figure weak, confused and difficult to use.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See Zedelmaier 2019.

⁶⁰ “La Figure de la base du Cerveau est accompagnée d'un Commentaire plus étendu. [...] Il a fait graver le petit Ganglion de Mr. Petit, avec quelques Sinus moins généralement connus; [...] Il rend à Mr. Duverney le Sinus occipital que ce Grand-homme a découvert, mais qui n'a guère été connu hors de la France, avant que Mr. Morgagni en eût fait une nouvelle description, sans avoir de connoissance de celle de Mr. Duverney,” *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32, on 29.

⁶¹ “Un Peintre croit bien faire, quand il exprime la Nature ; ce n'est pourtant pas cela qui fait le mérite d'une Figure anatomique. Rien n'est plus beau que les chairs des Muscles dessinés par Lairesse ; mais toute cette beauté est en pure perte. Il s'agit d'exprimer, avec distinction, les parties que l'Anatomiste veut faire connoître, sans s'attacher à une trop grande élégance pour tout le reste. Il faut même que cette distinction soit plus grande qu'elle n'est dans la Nature ; les traits d'une Figure anatomique doivent être plus marqués, & les ombres plus

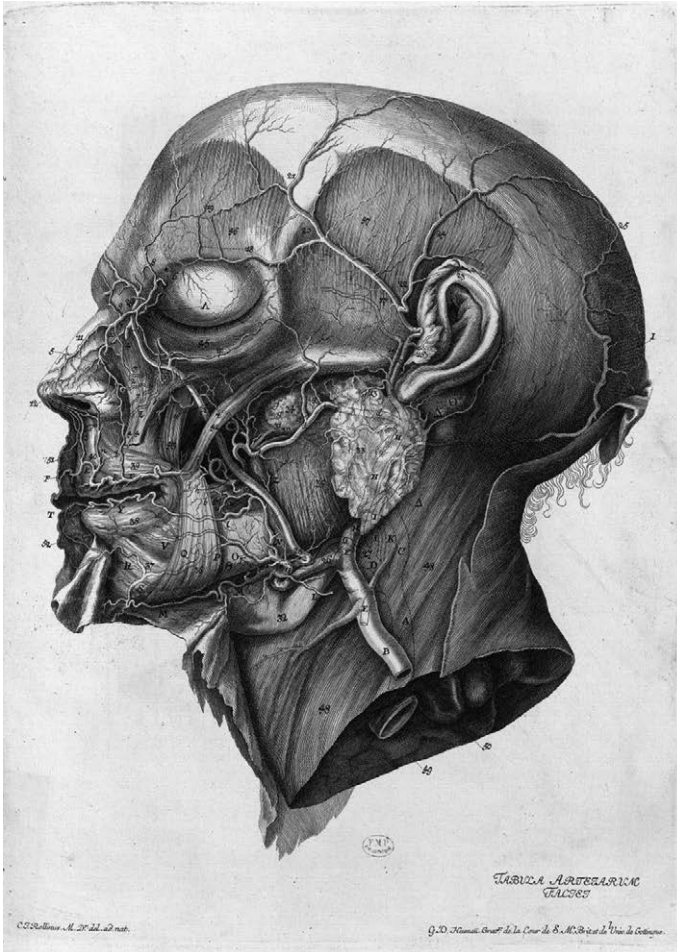


Figure 1 – Albrecht von Haller, *Icones anatomicae*, head.

An enigma remains. Why did Haller's work, and especially his *Icones anatomicae*, receive so little attention in France's leading scientific journal, the *Journal des sçavans*? In the best cases, the title of the fascicle is announced among many other works, without any review as such.⁶² A reading of the reviews in the

tranchantes. C'est là l'écueil des meilleurs Peintres, ils ne sauroient se résoudre à terminer les parties par des traits noirs, qui y donnent de la dureté, & qui leur ôtent le naturel ; ils ne sauroient renoncer à ces nuances, qui imitent la Nature, mais qui rendent une Figure anatomique foible, confuse, & d'un usage difficile," *Bibliothèque raisonnée*, vol. 36, 1746, part 1, January-March: 23–32, on 26-7.

⁶² See for example *Journal des sçavans*, 1752: 703 et 829. Gautier's *Myology* was the subject of separate articles in each of the volumes. See for example *Journal des sçavans*, 1745: 506,

Journal des sçavans reveals the intense market for publications on anatomy. In particular, its columns were filled with the announcement of the publication of a project for anatomical plates supported by the King: Jacques Fabien Gautier d'Agoty's *Myologie*, based on the anatomist Duverney and with spectacular four-colour engravings (see fig. 2).⁶³ Colour was used for didactic purposes, but also to depict life, in line with Newton's precept. Haller's plates were analytical, Gautier d'Agoty's offered an innovative aesthetic (see fig. 1 and 2). In France, the market for anatomical plates was already saturated.

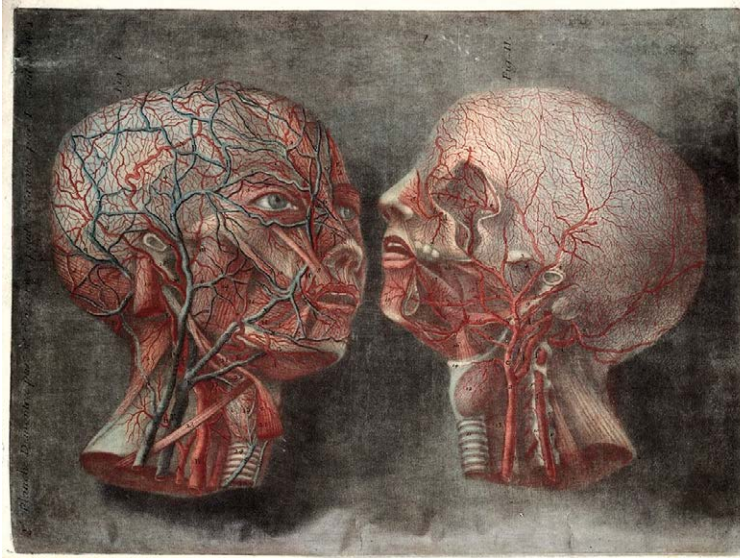


Figure 2 – Jacques Fabien Gautier d'Agoty, *Myologie*, Woman's back.

4. Self-reviews in Haller's work

Haller devoted a great deal of time and energy to writing his many self-reviews. What was their purpose?

Haller's critical excerpts and reviews served as the basis for his work. They became an integral part of his way of working. But a review was a public product, open to criticism, and Haller was not afraid of controversy. When confronted with his opponents, he defended himself by turning the weapon of the review against them. He suspected or even accused some of his opponents of

1746: 318–9, 1747: 443–5, 1751: 506–7, etc.

⁶³ One of his books is available online: <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/collection/item/26527-exposition-anatomique-des-organes-des-sens-avec-des-planches-imprimees-en-couleurs-naturelles-suivant-le-nouvel-art-par-m-dagoty-pere?offset=>.

only knowing what the reviews had said about his work.⁶⁴ The scholarly style produced by the reviews threatened to escape the author. What was at stake in the self-reviews was the author's reappropriation of the semi-autonomous scientific discourse that took place in the reviews, the authorship that was brought into play and endangered by this new style of argumentation. Haller wanted to reappropriate his own reception.

The *Icones anatomicae* posed a double danger. Haller wanted to reappropriate his discoveries and the illustration. In the end, however, it was the illustrations produced by his colleagues or rivals that were most successful.

Haller's anatomical plates were of particular interest to French physicians. In a letter of 1 April 1748, Pierre Tatin informed Haller of his intention to use his plates for the article "Anatomie" that was to appear in the *Encyclopédie*. Of the 33 plates published by Tatin to accompany his "Anatomie" article, seven came from Haller's *Icones anatomicae* (1756 fascicle).⁶⁵ The double paradox of this story is that Haller's greatest reception was not directly through his work, but in the philosophical circles he abhorred. He was outraged by the mutilation of his plates in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (see fig. 3).

In Albrecht von Haller's time, scholarly disputes were essentially conducted through reviews. They involved individuals, honours and reputations, but also corporate institutions such as universities and their students. The Republic of Letters asserted the individual scholar, convinced of his personal competence and authorship, but expected to fit into the corporate institution of the university. The relationship between personal ambition or vanity and corporate membership was a constant source of tension. Since the public arena had a conflicting dimension, this gave rise to different types of criticism. The controversy over self-reviews highlighted the tensions between the affirmation of the authorship of the specialist scholar and the values of the Republic of Letters. It was an integral part of the autonomation of science that took place there around 1750.

Haller seemed to want to make his work his own, to filter and guide the scientific discussion. He failed because of the public dynamics of the scientific debate. Although he was part of a gigantic scholarly network in which he played the role of "patron," he did not pull all the strings.

His self-reviews were primarily aimed at correcting and advancing science in the complexity of his intellectual, personal and cultural options. Haller modulated his discourse according to the medium, its constraints – the more or less tight periodicity and the scientific and intellectual context of the target language – and the desired effect. His reviews were therefore brief in terms of page space and rapid in terms of time in the *GGA*, longer and more widely distributed in

⁶⁴ Catherine 2013: 241.

⁶⁵ Catherine 2012: 241.

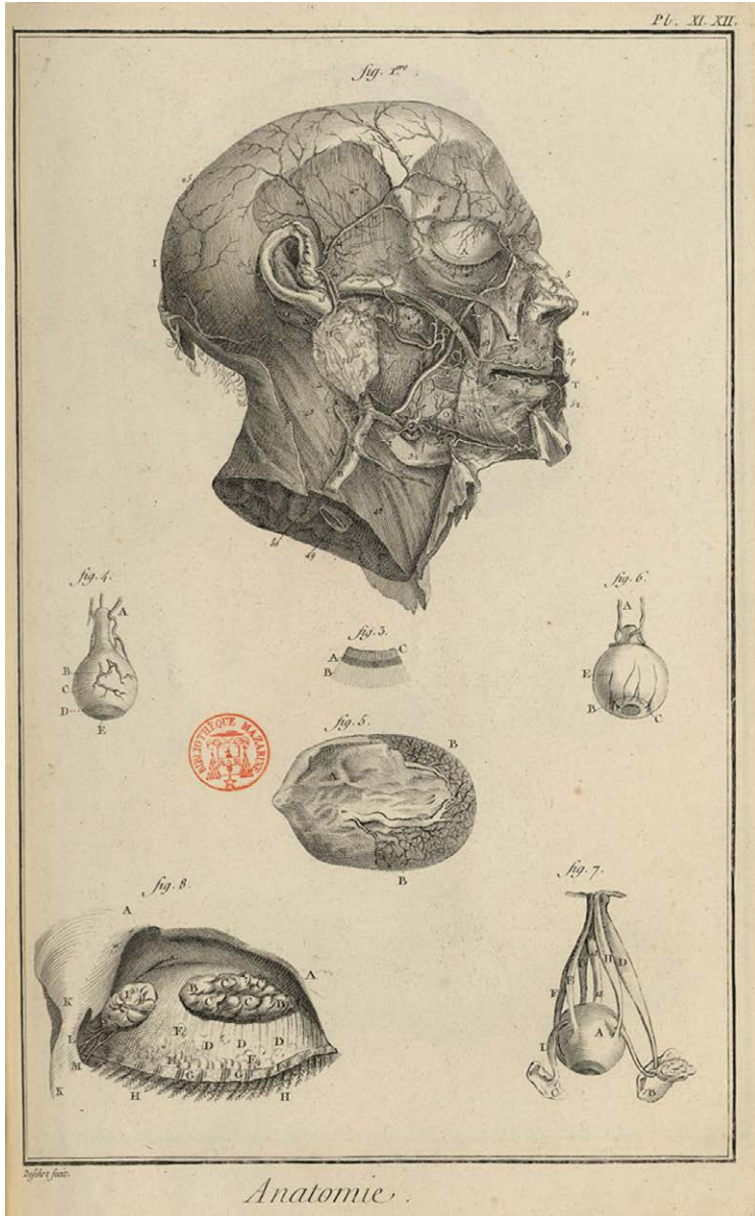


Figure 3 – Denis Diderot. 17. *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des arts et des sciences*, Plates, Anatomy.

the French-language Refuge journals: the materiality of knowledge partly determined the means of communication and scholarly discourse.

The history of the *Icones anatomicae* confirms the importance of critical scholarship and public openness in shaping a new “style of argumentation” (Marco Sgarbi). It shows the extent to which reviews did not develop as an autonomous genre, but were integrated into a system of intermediality in which publications, reviews, (semi-)private letters and images responded to one another, in other words “the constant interplay, hybridity, and complementarity of acoustic, oral, performative, sensorial, visual, written and printed means of communication.”⁶⁶

Using the example of the reader and critic Albrecht von Haller, it can be said that the project of Enlightenment criticism was at least partially built on the scholarly practices of reading and public debate through reviews or a new “style of reasoning.”

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⁶⁶ Bellingradt and Rospoche 2021, 8.

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