

New Frontiers in Reviewing: Experimental German Philosophical Review Practices around 1800

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Abstract: This paper introduces a grouping of experimental philosophical review journals around 1800, situated around editors associated with German idealism and German realism. By examining one journal edited by Reinhold the degree of experimentation is demonstrated within the context of experimental journals as well as established philosophical review standards in the second half of the 18th century. Among the transformations are the review length, scope, the use of mockery and literary style.

Keywords: Philosophical reviews, history of philosophy, critical standards

‘This review kills.’
Steffens to Schelling, 1800

1. Introduction

What is a reviewer allowed to write in order to further his or her critical arguments or to add rhetorical force to his or her opinions? By and large, we adhere to certain standards when we review something in print. These standards of reviewing have been codified and are generally accepted. For one, only in extremely exceptional cases is it acceptable to connect printed ideas to the character of an author. This specific connection was not always beyond the pale in reviewing.

In this paper I will draw attention to a period in philosophical reviewing, around 1800 where these standards were decidedly less codified and where existing standards were open to renegotiation. I argue that there was a specific group of journals that represented an experimental thrust in philosophical review practices, which experimented with the scope and form of the review format as well as the underlying standards of reviewing. From a broad historical perspective, this group is significant because it produced a counter-reaction in the 19th century, mainly by scholars aiming to understand German idealist thought. This likely contributed to the overall codification of review practices in particular and the public role of criticism in general.

Within this experimental group of journals, I will focus mainly on Reinhold’s journal *Beyträge zur leichtern Übersicht des Zustandes der Philosophie beyem Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts* (1801-1803) (hereafter: *Beyträge*) because it mate-

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rialized in-between two significant extremes of review experimentation, *after* Fichte's unsuccessful attempt to launch a journal that aimed to review whole scientific disciplines and *before* Schelling and Hegel's now infamous *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* (1802-1803). I believe that Reinhold's journal is important as a midway point because it operationalizes many of Fichte's ideas on critique through experimental form and scope and thereby prefigures and even inspires many review practices that would be employed by Schelling and Hegel.

Terms like "tone" and "style" are often employed as collective terms to identify departures from the norm of writing. While sometimes valuable in individual instances, in general the use of these terms obfuscates the underlying principles and strategies employed, since it creates the expectation that these are merely matters of style of writing. My aim is to make these matters specifically cogent within a space of experimentation with reviewing practices allowing for a broader understanding of changes in philosophical reviews and how they reflect but also incite the tenor of philosophical discourse. One might also expect an extended engagement with the readership constructions in the republic of letters.¹ While this might indeed be profitable for even longer historical developments, I lack the space to do so, and moreover it is exactly the readership construction which becomes increasingly eclipsed by other principles behind reviewing.

In analyzing these review practices, I will abstract from the actual philosophical arguments as much as possible, in order to focus on the interrelated transformation of criticism and reviewing. It is my hope that this abstraction will allow for a better understanding of the transformations in review practices. However, in seeking to understanding the reasons behind the need to experiment with the review it is important to consider several aspects of the second half of 18th century philosophical, public and scientific discourse as well as dominant review practices, which I will mostly introduce in section 2. Consequently, I will characterize the experimental group as it leads up to *Beyträge* in section 3 and Reinhold's *Beyträge* itself in section 3. Finally, I will explore responses and reception in section 4 and draw conclusions about the broader transformation of criticism in section 5.

2. The Critical Landscape of German Philosophical Reviewing in the Second Half of the 18th century

There are three journals that put forward what were, in contrast to what would happen around 1800, fairly conservative review practices in philosophy during the second half of the 18th century, leading up to 1800: *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend* (1759-1765), *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (1765-1806) and the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (1785-1849) (hereafter respectively *Briefe*,

¹ Anne Goldgar's *Impolite Learning. Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* offers many hints as to how one could contrast this period in the republic of letters with the experimental review journals around 1800 (Goldgar 1995).

ADB and *ALZ*). I will outline the overall character of these practices and the most significant ways in which these journals can be connected to the contributors of the group of experimental journals.

Although there is a significant difference between the overall rationalism of *Briefe* and *ADB* on the one hand, and the Kantianism of the *ALZ* on the other, all three journals clearly operate within the overall framework of the Enlightenment. That means that they generally held some antagonism with theological authors, and that they were generally concerned with making the public more rational and free. In this, they conform to larger trends during the 18th century.

As Van Horn Melton demonstrates, the 18th century was preoccupied with publishing reviews because it was thought that this would stimulate the public to read more (Van Horn Melton 2001, 93). The theological attacks on the Kantian and general Enlightenment review journals were echoes of attacks on popular and Enlightenment novels earlier in the 18th century (Van Horn Melton 2001, 111). Most of these attacks can ultimately be brought back to the concern that these reviews and the books that they praised would spoil or tarnish the readers in some way. By and large, by the second half of the century the theologians had recognized the turning of the tides. The goals behind reading had changed. No longer was reading merely undertaken for religious edification and moral instruction. Now, reading fed an interest in the world, typified by a veritable obsession with the intermingling of public and private affairs (Van Horn Melton 2001, 111).

On the subject of reviews in the 18th century, Van Horn Melton remarks that criticism and taste had become intimately bound up (Van Horn Melton 2001, 115-6). Criticism was an expression of taste and having taste was not possible without proper criticism. Friedrich Nicolai's aim of reviewing every published German book in the *ADB* should therefore be seen as an attempt to make the reading public more discerning (Van Horn Melton 2001, 115). I follow Van Horn Melton with his claim that this interconnection between criticism and taste has a tactical value, in that it allows the critic, particularly the reviewer, to speak on behalf of the public, giving their judgments the air of a superior validity. No doubt, the anonymity of the reviewer, which was a standard practice in these journals, adds to this air of presenting a universal judgment. Van Horn Melton does not describe malice to this tactic, because it in fact follows from the Enlightenment commitment to produce agreement and consensus through clear reasoning (Van Horn Melton 2001, 116). We should, however, not underestimate this effect and the value of this strategy for individual authors and editors.

One review journal functioned as the gold standard of Enlightenment reviewing throughout the middle part of the 18th century. *Briefe* was immensely influential, mainly due to the editors and reviewers involved with it: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Moses Mendelssohn and Friedrich Nicolai. Mendelssohn wrote most of the letters dealing with philosophy and philosophical literature. His contributions are especially important due to his conflict with Johann Georg Hamann, which is, as I will later show, in a sense a first siege of the bulwark of rationalist philosophy. This siege would later be followed by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's attacks on Kant and Fichte, as final manifestations of philosophy

as a fully rationalist project (much of which would contribute to the critical reviews in *Beyträge*). One can disagree with these labels, but not with the fact that Hamann and Jacobi saw a methodological continuity between rationalism and idealism. This second siege is tinged by the ways in which Hamann and Mendelssohn initially clashed, and particularly by the way in which criticism was conducted in Mendelssohn's reviews during this time.

First, we must consider the principles of criticism and reviewing that were put forward in this journal. The principles that can be drawn from this will function as a model for analyzing the ways in which the 1800 group of review journals can be considered experimental.

In an early letter Mendelssohn complained about the 'universal anarchy' among 'young people' who 'judge everything; laugh about everything' (Mendelssohn 1759, 130). This sets the scene, far in advance of Kantianism, of a new generation that is losing all respect and has no standards for judging. For them 'the best world is a flight of fancy, the monads are a dream, or a joke by Leibniz, Wolf is an old windbag, and Baumgarten a dark dreamcatcher [Grillfänger], [since] they were silly enough to transform that which Leibniz had put forward in jest into a system' (Mendelssohn 1759, 130). Although this perception of universal anarchy seems to be at the basis of any generational conflict, this letter functions as a call to arms to defend the standards of criticism, rather than merely uphold established views. In other words, it is not that they disagree, but the way in which they disagree, a subject that rationalist philosophers were particularly sensitive to:

They care little for proof behind the propositions they have adopted, because they *want* to be convinced. Even less do they think of the difficulties that are solved by the popular system, or those difficulties connected to it. Truth itself becomes, through the way in which it is adopted, a prejudice. [Vorurtheile] (Mendelssohn 1759, 133–4).

For Mendelssohn, this called for the cultivation of better critical standards. A reviewer must be able to counteract the rhetorical effect of a book, in order to allow the reader to be more critical. In a later contribution to the journal this leads him to conclude:

The author must first think of the progress of science and after that of the comfort of the reader. The first takes precedence, while the reader is obligated to sacrifice his comfort (Mendelssohn 1760, 242).

Most journals around this time and probably well into the 20th century, before sales numbers and target demographics emerge as important metrics, operate under the constraint of a readership that is constructed through critical analysis. This readership may be real, imagined or ideal and the articulation of this readership might be put forward at the outset, or only articulated much later in the lifespan of a journal. In the abstract, this prospective improvement of the German reading public largely overlaps with Enlightenment ideals of being better able to think, reason and judge, but it should not be forgotten that in

practice, the results of these principles vary greatly depending on the critical analysis initially used to construct the view of its prospective readership. We will call this first principle *the interconnection of mission statement with a diagnosis of prospective readership*.

Not only were the conditions of the critical review theorized, but also the conditions of the validity of criticism of published reviews. With this the editors put forward a mechanism through which they could be held accountable for their criticism, in effect a sort of procedure of critical appeal. The editor of *Briefe* argues that one must demonstrate at least some ability to engage with the arguments or a facility to reason, otherwise your criticism will be ignored (Nicolai 1762, 32). This is undoubtedly also a basic condition of legibility and conceivably. How, after all, would one be able to engage with a criticism if it is unclear what the criticism is? But this stricture also gatekeeps the critical debate, excluding based on social class and level of education. One can only develop reasoning that is recognized within a discipline by being educated in this discipline. We will call this second principle *the standards of critical appeal*. It must be remarked that this second principle, by virtue of the exclusion involved, strengthens the construction of readership involved in the first principle because it pre-selects those who engage with the criticism on the terms in which it was put forward, thereby only acknowledging the readers that were intended to engage with the journal.

In a way, the *Atheismusstreit* changed this hegemony of critical appeal, since many non-philosophers and academics publicly engaged in the charges of Fichte's atheism, especially for him as an educator.² This, in connection with the attempts to make Kantianism a public philosophy (efforts spearheaded by Reinhold's early Kant reception), likely contributed to the standards of public criticism in philosophy becoming more dynamic and crossing more social lines. Not only were criticism by non-philosophers considered (such as Jean Paul's *Clavis Fichtiana Seu Leibgeberiana*, see section 3), but philosophers were also allowed to experiment with criticisms that did not adhere to established standards, utilizing for instance the ad hominem and less than fully comprehensible prose. These established standards could be effectively flaunted using literary devices, resulting in many critical reviews crossing the boundaries of philosophical text into literary text. All of this contributed to a unique moment in the popularization of philosophy during which the experimental journals emerged.

Of course, the editors of *Briefe* also articulated many internal standards for reviewing. What we would now call the impartiality of a review was actually constructed out of several different principles. In response to the complaint that the reviewers only look for errors, it is countered that they also look for beauty (Nicolai 1762, 42). They add that a few brief words of carefully formulated praise are more valuable than many pages of empty compliments. The actual standards follow from the reasons why more attention is paid to the errors

² See for instance *Schreiben eines Vaters an seinen Sohn über den Fichtischen und Forbergischen Atheismus*, written by 'G' (G 1798).

than to the beauties of a work in a review: i) the journal is correcting for a trend in Germany to highly praise mediocre works, ii) the reviewers write for the initiated in the field that the book is published in, those who are perfectly capable themselves of appreciating the beauties of a work, iii) it is important to unmask seeming beauties as actual errors, and iv) the reviewers are hard to please because they measure everything by the very best that has been produced recently and by the ancients (Nicolai 1762, 43-7). Reasons (i) and (iii) resolutely follow the first principle we have distinguished, allowing us to see how this diagnosis of readership translates to specific review practices, in this case the de-emphasizing of praise in order to stimulate critical faculties and the attempt to offer what educated readers cannot themselves discern. Reasons (iii) and (iv) provide us with new critical principles, to wit the third principle of *unmasking a rhetorical or aesthetic attempt at veiling a lack of argumentative rigor*, and the fourth principle of *universal standards of comparison*, including ancient and recent works on the same critical scale.

Interestingly, all of these reasons directly relate to a supposed public task that the reviewer is serving in his critical actions. This concept of the German reader that the journal is subservient to is mainly composed through another critical analysis. For instance, the public has been fed too much praise for mediocre work, therefore it needs to learn to distinguish good works from bad works (i) and it needs to learn to distinguish supposed beauties from actual errors (iii).

Much of this is maintained but also transformed in the experimental journal landscape. We will consider the particulars of *Beyträge* in section 4, but from the outset we can already observe that beauty is not something the critical reviews published there emphasize at all. What matters to Reinhold there is the degree to which a line of reasoning can be seen as leading up to or contributing to his own position. One could say that he is still distinguishing seeming beauty from actual error when, reviewing his competitors, he attempts to show where their position is amenable to his own and where their supposed errors emerge, but the emphasis is much more on the virtue of argumentation rather than the beauty of the review object. After shifting from his initial intent (see section 4), Reinhold is most certainly writing for the initiated, although some effort is made to retain clarity when he abandons the position of the reviewer and puts forward his own position. Consequently, much more time is spent on criticism than on praise, even more so as the critical responses to *Beyträge* start piling up. The focus on the history of philosophy makes the principle of the universal standards of comparison especially important for Reinhold, as it would become for many philosophers during the 19th and 20th centuries, when it became commonplace to hold up every new publication against the best quality of work produced in the history of philosophy.

Of special interest in *Briefe* is Mendelssohn's review of Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and the conflict with Hamann that emerged from it. It is, first of all, of interest because it places some serious strictures on how review standards can be applied to literary texts, particularly if those literary texts aim to make philosophical points, like Rousseau's letter novel. Mendelssohn is

concerned by the fact that he believes Rousseau has not understood the subject of love from experience (Mendelssohn 1761, 273-4). He believes that this deficiency is evident in the fact that Rousseau aims to evoke the experience of love through hyperbole and proclamations. The standards he puts forward are that one should write and argue from one's own experience and that only a modification of lived experience can stir the reader through the verisimilitude. In effect, this constitutes an attack on the use of literary devices in order to give the reader an understanding of a subject matter. The use of the literary form also draws out the limits of the review format for Mendelssohn, since he remarks that he cannot convince the reader of this failure of verisimilitude through examples, but that the one must read the whole letters in Rousseau's book. Evidently, here there are limits in evidence-based reviewing that are particularly relevant when a book employs literary devices in order to make philosophical arguments, which have to do both with an extended length and lack of direct focus on argumentation from lived experience. Mendelssohn's views are most likely typical of philosophical discourse and attempt to separate its own scientific discourse from literary style. It is exactly this separation which will be brought into doubt by many of the experimental review journals.

It was Mendelssohn's review, much of which attempted to articulate the limits of reviewing such a work as *Julie*, which started a conflict with Hamann, who at that time had launched an allegorically veiled attack on rationalism, which Mendelssohn also reviewed.³ We find a counter-review in Hamann's response to Mendelssohn's review of Rousseau's *Julie* (Beiser 2009, 235-40). Hamann used an ad hominem reference in order to relate Mendelssohn's Jewishness to his arguments as a reviewer: 'Who is this aesthetic Moses who may prescribe weak and paltry laws to free citizens?' This reference explicitly questions the authority of the reviewer and the principles he uses to prescribe how a book should be written or read. We later find an allusion to Hamann's analogy between philosophers and Jews, both being more concerned with the letter than the spirit, in Jacobi's comment in *Jacobi an Fichte* on circumcision, which shows a special connection between Hamann's attack on rationalism and the later realist-idealist discussions (Jacobi 2004, 196).

Mendelssohn subsequently wrote a counter-review to this counter-review, in which he adopted Hamann's own review practices, particularly his penchant for dark allusions. The root of this conflict was review standards. If we look beyond his rationalist commitments, Mendelssohn argued that a work of literature needs to be cogent enough for the reviewer to be able to demonstrate its merits, while Hamann argued that greatness is evident to those open to it, making the review nothing more than a testimony. A middle way is not explored. In response to the conflict, Mendelssohn invited Hamann to contribute to the

³ For an extended discussion of this conflict, see: Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing and Hammermeister*, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Beiser 2009; Hammermeister 2002).

journal, which would likely have forced Hamann to articulate his own review practices, but this offer was rejected.

Jacobi, who was also a contributor to *Beyträge*, can in some sense be seen as Hamann's disciple. Jacobi's attack on Mendelssohn during the so-called *Pantheismusstreit* around 1785 was initially planned with Hamann's advice.⁴ Therefore, when Reinhold publishes a posthumous review by Hamann on Jacobi's recommendation he is in many ways perpetuating an older conflict between Hamann and rationalism. This makes the publication of Hamann's review a kind of triumphant return of Hamann's style of criticism.

We can now turn towards two other dominant review journals. Nicolai's *Neue Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* had set out to review every book published in the German territories. Fichte fought a highly public conflict with Nicolai, on whose character he even published a book, *Friedrich Nicolai's Leben und sonderbare Meinungen* (1801), which in many ways echo's Hamann's criticism of Mendelssohn as a reviewer. Fichte argues that Nicolai measures all of his reviews by the limited understanding that he personally has, and that this prism leads him to reject worthwhile work, among which, of course, Fichte's own (Fichte 1801, 82-96). As personal as this attack is (which is part of the intensification of the *ad hominem* in reviewing around 1800), it also, like Hamann, questions the standards of the reviewer as relatively obscure to the reader.

Finally, the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* was an established institution in reviewing philosophical publications.⁵ When it was edited by the Kantian Christian Gottfried Schütz, it effectively cemented Kantian philosophy as the dominant philosophy and even having a review published represented a certain level of recognition in the philosophical discipline. As such, Reinhold and Fichte both occasionally published reviews in the journal. As experimental as the contributors to the experimental group of journals were, both stylistically and methodologically, virtually all of them considered themselves as operating in the wake of Kantian philosophy or in some way elaborating on Kant's critical philosophy.⁶

In terms of review practices, the *ALZ* has been contrasted with the Schlegel brothers' *Athenaeum*, specifically as a clash between the late Enlightenment and early romanticism.⁷ For our purposes, this perspective is too broad and not specific enough. Too broad because it considers the relationship between these journals from the perspective of broad historical labels, and not specific enough

⁴ See Beiser's *Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* for an account of this conflict (Beiser 1987).

⁵ The values of comprehensiveness, impartiality and anonymity are discussed in *Archive der Kritik: Die 'Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung' und das 'Athenaeum'* (Napierala 2007).

⁶ It might be objected that Jacobi was famously critical of Kant. This is certainly the case, but he also admitted that Kant had transformed the philosophical landscape in a way that made the limitations of philosophy abundantly clear. This makes Jacobi's antagonistic relationship with Kant extraordinarily complex.

⁷ Stefan Matuschek considers this appraisal in *Organisation der Kritik. Die Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung in Jena 1785-1803* (Matuschek 2004).

because I would argue that the conflict between *ALZ* and *Athenaeum* must be seen in the broader context of experimentation with review standards. The fact that the Schlegel brothers explicitly set out to ‘destroy the *ALZ*’ is rooted in the critical authority that this journal claimed during this time.⁸ Although there is certainly more nuance to that aim, one of the principal reasons that the Schlegel brothers and probably many other authors who contributed to the experimental journals found the critical dominion of the *ALZ* so odious was related to the loose rule that reviews must be published anonymously (Napierala 2007, 97–113). One of the effects of this edict is that the critical authority of the reviews were transferred to the editors, rather than the authors of the reviews.⁹ August Wilhelm Schlegel certainly committed an act of insurrection against this authority when he published a list of his reviews in *ALZ* in the *Athenaeum* in 1800 (Matuschek 2004, 9). It should be noted that the practice of publishing reviews anonymously was a longer one, also followed by the *Briefe*. Both of these journals seem to take their inspiration from Lessing in this matter.¹⁰

3. Extended group characterization

Any characterization of the experimental journals as a group will necessarily be incomplete due to the limited space available. For this reason, I have chosen to highlight one specific journal extensively in section 4. It should also be noted that this is a tentative grouping, to which, in all likelihood, other journals could be added.

1798-1800: August Wilhelm Schlegel and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (Ed.), *Athenaeum*

1799/1800: Johann Gottlieb Fichte (Ed.), Unsuccessful attempt to establish a journal

1801-1803: Karl Leonhard Reinhold (Ed.), *Beyträge zur leichtern Übersicht des Zustandes der Philosophie beym Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts*

1802-1803: Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling/ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*

1803-1805: Friedrich Bouterwek (Ed.), *Neues Museum der Philosophie und Litteratur*

1803-1805: Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (Ed.), *Europa*

⁸ From a letter cited by Matuschek in *Organisation der Kritik* (Matuschek 2004, 8). See also Napierala in the same volume (Matuschek 2004, 106–7).

⁹ This also led to challenges of intellectual authority, which Schelling, another editor among the experimental journals, pointed out when he characterized the *ALZ* as a ‘collective’ of ‘heterogenous things’. This exchange, and the anonymity of the *ALZ* is discussed by Stephan Pabst in *Organisation der Kritik* (Matuschek 2004, 23–4). See also Mark Napierala in the same volume (Matuschek 2004, 107–10).

¹⁰ This issue is admirably untangled and given more nuance than I can offer here in *Organisation der Kritik* (Matuschek 2004, 10–12).

I have grouped these journals together because they are specifically connected through the discipline of philosophy and the increasingly polemical discussions about philosophy around 1800. Beyond the experimentation with review standards, these journals can most reliably be related through Jacobi and Fichte. Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel was a student and later a close collaborator of Fichte's.¹¹ Schelling was at one point a disciple of Fichte and later criticized Fichte with Hegel. Bouterwek was a kind of remote disciple of Jacobi. Finally, Reinhold considered himself at one point a Fichtean and later a Jacobian. Considering these connections to Jacobi and Fichte, it is not surprising that we find much of the impetus behind the experimentation with critical standards and the review format with these authors. Jacobi's contributions to the *Pantheismusstreit* and the *Atheismusstreit* had shown the public at large that there were different ways of critical assessment and different kinds of things to assess (systems of thought, for instance). Fichte's attempts to organize criticism around the progress of society in general and a scientific field in particular, which culminated in his unfruitful attempt to start a critical journal, demonstrated that review standards should aim at the fundamental principles of a scientific field, particularly of philosophy. In utilizing these review standards, a much more experimental approach to delivering criticism effectively became possible.

These experiments were also made possible by a certain outsider privilege. Many of the editors of these journals were relatively young academics (Schlegel, Schelling, Hegel, Bouterwek) or, at the time operating from academic appointments that commanded less respect (Reinhold, Fichte).¹² In this position, these editors could afford to publish critical reviews that partook more of the polarization and radicalization that popular controversies such as the *Pantheismusstreit* and the *Atheismusstreit* had dealt in. Although these controversies certainly caused a critical reassessment of thought, many of these philosophers were young enough to remember that they were also uncannily popular among students, which certainly was not of no financial concern in attracting students to their lecture halls. The fact that most of these reviews were no longer published anonymously, as was the standard in *Briefe* and *ALZ*, must bear some relation to this overall attempt to gain prominence, although transparency was of course one of the key values of the Enlightenment.

Certainly these experimentations genuinely engaged with more pamphlet-like textual structuring in order to advance what the authors saw as the correct way of thinking, but these experimentations were also meant to draw the appetite of a reading public for philosophical texts which had been greatly expanded by these controversies. No longer could a new system of philosophy count on aca-

¹¹ Since I cannot examine it more closely, see Napierala's contrasting of *ALZ* with *Athenaeum* in *Archive der Kritik*, in particular the second half of the book (Napierala 2007).

¹² There is also a kind of generational conflict at play in the public reception of idealism. Fichte, for instance, condemned Bardili's insults towards 'transcendental idealist youths' (Fichte 1997, 450).

demical reviews, but also on such diverse responses as a collection of letters from a preacher (Eberstein 1799) or a (supposed) letter from the father of a concerned student (G, 1798). In this sense, these experimental journals were catching up to a transformed, more popularized publication landscape.

Fichte's unrealized journal plan was significant because it was in part conceived with Schelling and the Schlegel brothers. It displays a clear dissatisfaction with other review journals: 'the essential thing is to not review singular books, but to work on overviews [Uebersichten] of an entire field' (Fichte 1973, 326). In the written plan Fichte puts forward the notion of 'Kritik', criticism, as the central activity of the proposed review journal (Fichte 1981, 425). The journal was to present criticism of 'the course of the human mind [Geist]' to accurately gauge whether there are 'advances, retreats or circularities' and 'designate the timely character of the dominant views in a field'. This approach is consistent with Fichte and transcendental idealism's pairing of systematic unity and structuring of the sciences with classic Enlightenment ideas of advancing humanity through science and art, unified by a critical mind.

Fichte speaks of 'the critic' in a very modern sense, as the specific role of the reviewer. The critic proceeds from his knowledge and overview of his science as a whole and holds this against 'the measure of the temporal appearance [Zeiterscheinung]' (Fichte 1981, 425-6). This means that the critic judges a book against already existing knowledge and his understanding of the scientific field. In essence, Fichte is calling for a scientific contextualizing of a work, and its appraisal against an established state of the art. This also has specific consequences for the tone of the review: since the perspective is from the 'high region' of the scientific field, the person disappears, except in poetry, where the 'individuality' of the author is of relevance. In other words, for such an academic journal, an ad hominem argument is unacceptable because the author does not concern the critical reviewer.¹³

Relatively new in this period is the focus on the importance of understanding the history of the human mind *for criticism*, which would later also be championed by Hegel, who exerted a large influence on the 19th century intellectual approach to historiography. Fichte formulates this approach rather pointedly in relationship to the task of reviewer: 'this journal establishes a *mere knowing*: a pragmatic temporal history of the human mind' which has a '*practical use*' in that it points the way for further development, can identify novelty and repetition and allows one to demonstrate 'non-understanding' [Nichtbegreifen] (Fichte 1981, 425). We can understand this as a transformation of the principle of the universal standards of comparison, in that an understanding of historical contributions is not considered to be a merely theoretical pursuit, which is beyond reproach, but a measured assessment by an expert in the field who does not put

¹³ It is perhaps significant that it is not Fichte, but Unger, the prospected publisher, who adds that the reviewers will remain anonymous in order to secure their identity (Fichte 1981, 426).

forward historical comparisons from conservative motivations, but rather for a practical use, in order to measure to what degree a new work or approach allows for a progression in the field.¹⁴

Although Fichte's plan for a review journal is not the earliest example of an experimental review journal (it is antedated by the Schlegel's *Athenaeum*, which appeared one year earlier) it is representative of the basic transformation of review standards put forward by the journals in this experimental group. On the whole they put much less stock in the authority of the reviewer, and the critical review is embedded in a more systematic approach to scientific research and increasingly abstract universal standards. Although many authors in this group are, at times, at odds with one another, as philosophers they share a deep commitment to and respect for critical thought and the scientific process. This means that they at times demand a lot from themselves, from each other and from the reader. This is a curious reversal of the authority of the reviewer during the earlier periods of the 18th century. Only very rarely are they concerned with their own clarity, or the possibility of trying the readers patience or intellect. In a sense, this is the effect of an enormous respect for the mental abilities of the human being. This is then, the group's own version of the principle of the interconnection of mission statement with a diagnosis of prospective readership: their diagnosis is, by and large, that the prospective readership should not be patronized, and wants to be challenged. Only in this way can the greatest depth of thought be attained.

Finally, Fichte's plan does not discuss the activities of the critic at length. We do not gain a clear view of the ways in which he believed that using literary elements in order to make philosophical points was valid. A brief look at Fichte's life should make it abundantly clear that, although he employed such methods scantily, possibly due to a lack of literary talent, he generally admired such attempts. As a young man, he was greatly influenced by Rousseau who employed such methods routinely. The way he responded to more literarily inclined attacks on his position during the *Atheismusstreit* strengthens this conclusion. Not once did he complain about Jacobi's Hamann inspired analogies in *Jacobi an Fichte*, and when the Jacobian novelist Jean Paul published a literary review of his position Fichte did not seem to mind the form of this text and remained on friendly terms with Jean Paul.¹⁵ Most famously among the editors of these experimental journals, Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel especially employed literary elements and the literary form productively in order to offer criticism. On the other hand, while literary elements and form were utilized precipitously in this experimental group of journals, it was never explicitly discussed in terms of what distinguished a bad use of literary elements from a good one in offering

¹⁴ It is in this specific use-oriented sense that Fichte used the word 'pragmatisch', likely inspired by Jacob Hermann Obereit (Breazeale 2013; Hüttner/Walter 2021).

¹⁵ It is likely that Fichte did not view this a critical review because of its literary form, and because he believed it actually makes some insightful remarks on the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

philosophical arguments. This leads me to conclude that it was not an essential part of the critical principles employed by this group, but rather a way of emancipating philosophical criticism from a previously established format. We will return to concrete examples in the next section.

We will now consider how Reinhold's journal functioned in the wake of these transformations of the principles of the critical review and the transformation of the form of the review that was slowly being popularized.

4. Reinhold's *Beyträge* as a significant middle point in the development of review practices in the experimental journals

To contextualize Reinhold's motivations behind editing *Beyträge*, we need to first consider at what point in Reinhold's career it is published. Although originally a monk, Reinhold would soon join the popular Enlightenment. He was an early convert to Kant's philosophy, which he ultimately developed into his own *Elementarphilosophie* (roughly in the 1786-1797 period). After that, he briefly became a Fichtean (1797-1798), before being convinced of the validity of Jacobi's critique of idealism (1798-1801). *Beyträge* was composed in a period during which Reinhold sought to synthesize Jacobi's and Fichte's position, and these commitments led him to convert to a position that had recently been put forward by a relatively unknown gymnasium teacher, Christoph Gottfried Bardili, who was, coincidentally, also Schelling's cousin. This would not be the final time that Reinhold would change his position since from 1806 to 1823, he was preoccupied with developing a philosophy of language and truth.

These regular changes of position have given Reinhold the reputation of being somewhat mercurial, and only his period of Kantianism and propounding the *Elementarphilosophie* has been extensively integrated into the scholarly history of classical German philosophy.¹⁶ However, a more charitable reading could claim that there are some throughlines, some systematic commitments that facilitated the shifts in his position. In this sense, the abandon with which Reinhold changed his position could even be described as admirable. It did, however, lead to him making enemies, and the story of *Beyträge* is, in a way, the story of Reinhold making enemies of most of his former allies and receiving ridicule for his shifts in position.

There is a definite sense in which Reinhold's position can be seen as *realist*. Although he seems to have less of a systematic commitment to Jacobi's realism (Giesbers 2017, 140-156), his support of Jacobi certainly led to Reinhold and *Beyträge* being seen as committing to the label of realism as an alternative to idealism. Jacobi had coined his own type of realism in 1787 (Jacobi 2004, 9-100) and had explicitly declared himself part of a group of realists (Giesbers 2017, 1-4, 40-98; 2020; 2023). Elsewhere, I have defended the claim that it is

¹⁶ This is not to say that initial studies of his later periods have not been put forward (Bondeli 2020; Giesbers 2017, 139-155; Valenza 2023).

plausible that he was referring to a proto-realist group of acquaintances (Giesbers 2017, 17–39).

Around 1800, this group also had explicit adherents, who were in various senses sanctioned by Jacobi, such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Jean Paul, Friedrich Köppen and Johann Neeb (Giesbers 2017, 99–139, 156–168, 199–205). To complicate matters there were also authors who were inspired by Jacobi, but who were developing their own kind of practical realism, such as Bouterwek and Friedrich Rückert. In this complicated landscape, *Beyträge* was initially seen as an attempt to bring together realists, but due to Reinhold's editorial choices it would emerge as a journal that attacked all but Reinhold's own kind of realism.

Reinhold's new commitment to Bardili placed him under a self-descriptive realist label: 'rational realism'. This new type of realism would slowly erode Reinhold's relationship with Jacobi, whom he had recruited as a contributor to *Beyträge*. As Reinhold elaborated on his Bardilian realism, it became clear to Jacobi that it was impossible to reconcile the methodology behind this realism with his own and that it could be more properly grouped with idealist methodological excesses, than Jacobi's more methodologically modest practical or negative realism (Giesbers 2017, 42–48; 2020; 2023; Sandkaulen 2019, 154)¹⁷ Although it was slowly creating hairline fractures in this alliance, the introduction of a new kind of realism which is explicitly used to circumvent the excesses of earlier realism and idealism is a strategy that was spearheaded by Jacobi. In that sense, Reinhold was inspired by Jacobi's critical and rhetorical strategies.

It seems that the review project behind *Beyträge* was initially conceived in a markedly different way than what ultimately ended as the six volumes that appeared from 1801 through 1803. The main reason for this is the rapid pace at which the experimentation with review standards was proceeding during this period. Reinhold's new position had evoked reviews that would employ similar experimental forms that he had pioneered in the first two volumes. As a result, he started to published fewer and fewer contributors, and *Beyträge* became the main way in which Reinhold was defending himself from other experimental review journals.¹⁸ Initially, Reinhold had conceived of the perspective of the journal as 'comments of an observer on the state of German philosophy at the start of the 19th century' (Bondeli 2020, xviii). This initial mission statement aimed at the scientific standards of the objective observer about the state of German philosophy, in a similar vein to Fichte's proposed journal. The 'easier overview'

¹⁷ Friedrich Köppen's wrote the closest thing we have to a sanctioned Jacobian realist criticism of rational realism (Giesbers 2017, 149–53).

¹⁸ Reinhold wrote the vast bulk of the contributions. Bardili contributes four letters (one which is 103 pages in size), Jacobi contributes one article (of 110 pages), Köppen contributes one article and a posthumous review by Hamann is also published. Bondeli has argued that the way Reinhold publishes exposition of his position changes during the publication span, from a focus on the identity of pure thinking to an analysis of applied thinking (Bondeli 2020, xvi). Volumes 3–6 are therefore less focused on reviewing and more on defending rational realism, naturally leading to fewer published contributors.

in the title of the journal is most likely a reference to these scientific standards, evoking an encyclopedic project with the implicit assumption that the prospective readership is confused by the sheer volume of publications in philosophy.

It was a conflict with Fichte in 1800 that likely transformed this initial mission statement into something much more partisan and critically complex. Previously, Fichte had become the subject of criticism in Jacobi's famous open letter *Jacobi an Fichte* (1799) and Jean Paul's review article *Clavis Fichteana* (1800). Both of these texts employed experimental review strategies, such as an extended situating of the author of the review within a metaphorical review space, Jacobi as a prophet waiting at the door of the lecture room, and the offering of a metaphorical key which unlocks Fichtean thought. While Fichte privately sought to obviate what he believed to be a misreading and lack of exposure to his ethical thought in Jacobi, it is striking that he did not at all object to the ways in which these reviews employed experimental writing forms. Considering the stakes, Fichte had every reason to take offense at the lack of conventional argumentation and literary ambiguity, like Mendelssohn before him. These review ventures appeared at the height of an already personally injurious public controversy (the *Atheismusstreit*) which culminated in Fichte losing his position in Jena. I believe that Fichte's amenability to the form of these reviews can partly be explained by the fact that he admired the experimentation of these reviews (another part of the explanation, as I have argued elsewhere, can be found in the fact that Fichte had some systematic sympathy for the realist position put forward by Jacobi and Jean Paul) (Giesbers 2017, 198, 268). This is borne out by the fact that the very next review that Fichte penned, the review that would cause Reinhold to change the project and tone of his *Beyträge*, employed some of the same experimental strategies.

Reinhold declared his commitment to Bardili's position by reviewing the book in which it was put forward in *ALZ*. Fichte, who was already disappointed with Reinhold's attempts to distance himself from the *Wissenschaftslehre*, wrote his own review of the book in *Erlanger Litteratur-Zeitung* (Fichte 1973, 332). This review is important for the transformation of review practices, because it is in essence a review of Reinhold's review. Reinhold would later acknowledge that it was indeed a review of his review and this is even more plausible due to the fact that Fichte would ask the publisher to send Reinhold a copy of the publication, instead of Bardili (Fichte 1973, 332). In this letter, Fichte argued that this criticism is directed at Reinhold publicly because he remained unreachable privately (Fichte 1973, 332). It is unclear in what sense Fichte considered Reinhold unreachable. Perhaps he simply did not respond or perhaps Fichte considered him *intellectually* unreceptive. Whatever the case, with this public airing of critical misgivings that were initially expressed privately Fichte follows Jacobi's strategy of publishing his correspondence with Mendelssohn. Later, it would provoke Reinhold to publish his correspondence with Fichte in *Beyträge*. Evidently, Fichte believed that there is critical value to publishing these supposed personal errors of reasoning as an exemplar of broader problems in reasoning, which trumps the faux pas of publishing private thoughts. In essence, this is

also Fichte's view of the function of criticism: to provide some insight into the broader place and value of specific claims.

Fichte calls Bardili's system a reworking of Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* which, in the context of the counter-review, suggests that Reinhold has not learned from the errors of his previous position (the position he held before becoming a Fichtean) (Fichte 1981, 435). As a counter-review, the text functions rather ingeniously as a criticism of Reinhold and his failings as a reviewer. For instance, when Fichte argues that oftentimes an author does not know what he is truly proposing, he is criticizing Reinhold's inability to draw out the implications of Bardili's position, both as an adherent of this position and as a reviewer who is failing his critical task (Fichte 1981, 436).

Fichte employs metaphors and analogy in a similar way as Jacobi and Jean Paul had employed towards him. In the title of the book, Bardili had called his contribution a 'medica mentis', a mental medicine. Fichte bitterly mocks the pretense of this medical metaphor. He uses this medical metaphor in order to refer to the book as an amateurish dissection of the I, whose 'viscera' are splayed about (Fichte 1981, 446). He would later also mock Reinhold as suffering from the 'dubious symptoms' produced by Bardili's way of philosophizing (Fichte 1973, 356-8). This implies that Reinhold suffers from the same 'traces of insanity' as Bardili had displayed by having such a high opinion of himself (Fichte 1981, 449).

Beyond these experimental review strategies, Fichte is also no stranger to intentional provocations, for instance when he asks 'Is mister Bardili a horse himself?' in response to the fact that Bardili implies that he knows how a horse reasons (Fichte 1981, 439). He continues this banality by association when he admonishes Bardili's disrespect for the public through the general disarray of the book, arguing that Bardili might as well have made his remarks *to* a horse (Fichte 1981, 448-9).

The impact of Fichte's counter-review was fittingly described by Henrik Steffens in a letter to Schelling: 'This review *kills*' (Plitt 1869, 321). Schelling later repeats this verdict in a letter to Fichte: 'This review truly kills' (Fichte 1973, 368). Some weeks before this counter-review would be published, Fichte wrote to Reinhold that he had heard that Reinhold was working on an 'anticritical philosophical journal' with Bardili and Jacobi (Fichte 1973, 356-8). After the counter-review appeared Reinhold obviously decided that *Beyträge* would be the site of entrenched philosophical warfare, where weaponized review experimentation could legitimately be used in order to demonstrate the importance of rational realism. A brief look at the preface to the first volume (written in November 1800) will illustrate this point: "the philosophical revolution is ending, we need to follow a foundational new road (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:iv)".

Drawing on a popular metaphor for the innovations of the Kantian philosophy, Reinhold argues that its revolution is ending. Bondeli points out that Reinhold also believes that the revolution has ended because it has attained its goal, not because it has failed (Bondeli, xxxvi). Reinhold does not merely employ this metaphor as a reference to drastic change, but also in the sense of warfare. This

specific characterization of Kantian philosophy, as a revolution that sweeps the nation, that conquers and unseats the powerful is borrowed from Jacobi (Giesbers 2017, 143).

The revolution metaphor is also how Reinhold elaborates on his use of what I have called the principle of the interconnection of mission statement with a diagnosis of prospective readership: “The *revolution* in *German philosophy* has ended up differently than its instigators and friends had hoped, differently than the opposition had feared (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:iii)”.

Fully exploiting the analogy with the French revolution, Reinhold is arguing that the revolution in German philosophy has also developed differently than was expected, even as he himself, as a former revolutionary, had expected. The state of philosophy has taken an unexpected turn for all involved, and critical reassessment is required. Reinhold argues that he is in the best position to offer this critical reassessment, since he was an active participant: “I have taken part in every ‘turn’ [Wendungen] of the revolution, I was not merely a spectator (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:v)”.

He anticipates that his status as a fervent revolutionary in German philosophy might make him especially vulnerable critically. This is the point at which he radically breaks with the impartial mission statement that he had initially envisioned for *Beyträge*:

Am I not wrong a *fourth* time? Is not *this true and genuine end*, that I announce and describe in this *Beyträgen*, and due to which I wish the *new century* well – again only the beginning of a new bend [in the road of philosophy]? (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:v-vi).

This peculiar temporalizing of several turns in the revolution in German philosophy, neatly established by Reinhold’s own position shifts, organically introduce the problem of critically assessing the history of philosophy as a necessity for the understanding of the present and future of philosophy. This is why Reinhold wants to demonstrate that in the ‘history of the new and newest philosophy’ ‘the *whole transcendental turn* [Umwälzung]’ merely exhausts subjectivity (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:vi).

These two temporalizing aspects put forward in the preface, the history of philosophy and the concept of a “newest” philosophy, represent some of the most important ways in which Reinhold transforms the content of the review. We will return to these aspects after we have considered some of the formal aspects of experimental reviewing that were put forward by *Beyträge*.

Whereas the traditional review format utilized by *Briefe* and *ALZ* is a relatively brief text spanning only a few pages, *Beyträge* followed *Athenaeum*’s experimental attitude to the size of the review, by shifting to long review articles, some of which appeared in multiple installments. It can even be said that the way in which Reinhold conceives of the journal in his first premise raises the possibility of shifting the locus of the review entirely to the journal. One can no longer open the review journal and select an isolated review to engage with. Reinhold envisioned the journal as a review of the state of philosophy, a vantagepoint that

can only be achieved by looking at the journal as a whole in the context of the critical thrust of its diverse types of review articles.

Reinhold used this variation of types of review article as a way of building a case. A case, of course, for his own position, but also a case for a certain critical assessment of the state of philosophy. A notable inclusion among these types is the letter. Reinhold publishes several letters that he had received from Bardili. A review journal such as *Briefe* ostensibly published letters as well, but these were wholly constructed as open letters to the public. Melton remarks that significance of letters or the epistolary literary format 'served to construct a public arena where readers and writers were engaged in a real or imagined dialogue' (Van Horn Melton 2001, 100). This ties into an 18th century obsession with 'rendering the private public', which also governed the autobiography trend which Rousseau's *Les Confessions* epitomized (Van Horn Melton 2001, 101). The reader is meant to be enticed by the publication of private correspondence, but the publication of these letters is also part of the attempt to personally appeal to readers, by tying responsibility for the critical review to the character of the critic. On the whole, this represents a move away from the aesthetics of the objective scientific review, in favor of the personal convictions and fortitude of the critic. The inclusion of letters by Bardili and even more so of review articles by other authors stands on an uneven ground with the way in which Reinhold envisions *Beyträge* as a journal with a singular critical thrust. Perhaps this in some way explains why, as the volumes appear, Reinhold slowly becomes the sole author of the reviews.

It is highly significant for *Beyträge*'s contribution to experimentation with review standards that it publishes a posthumous review by Hamann. We have seen that Hamann can in many ways be connected to the dissatisfaction with critical review standards of prominent journals in the 18th century, by his explicit confrontation with Mendelssohn, or by his influence on iconoclastic writers like Jacobi, Herder and Jean Paul. His review, an early version of what would become *Metakritik über den Purismus der Vernunft*, is the absolute first review of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, which Hamann was able to write because he was friends with the printer (Reinhold 1801-1803, 2:206).¹⁹ Up until this point it had never been published and it mainly circulated among admirers of Hamann. It is extremely likely that Reinhold and Jacobi chose to publish it in this journal not merely for its criticism of Kant, but also as a prototype for the new review strategies that they wanted to popularize.

Some notable aspects of this short review include Hamann calling the transcendental dialectic the 'pudenda', the vulva, of pure reason, and Kant's discussion of the paralogisms and the antinomies a 'euthanasia' (Reinhold 1801-1803, 2:210). This use of brusque metaphors, beyond the fact that they are obviously

¹⁹ It is not surprising that the experimental journals coincided with a resurgence of interest in Hamann. Herder, of course paid homage to Hamann by naming his integral commentary on the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* after Hamann's metacritical method. This caused many responses, among which a book which sought to reconnect the metacritical method to Hamann: *Mancherley zur Geschichte der metacritischen Invasion* (Rink 1800).

designed to scandalize the reader, are in fact ways of replacing the traditional arguments in reviews with a way of conveying the *effects* of a philosophical work in an abbreviated way. We have seen versions of this strategy in Jacobi's and Jean Paul's review articles on Fichte, as well as in Fichte's counter-review of Reinhold. In essence, this strategy is another way of facing the very real limitations of the review. One can extend the length of a review up to a point, but nothing can approach a book length response or an integral commentary. Reviewing is essentially the abbreviation of criticism, and these brusque metaphors are effective ways of doing this abbreviating, while engaging the reader's attention sharply, by way of a point of comparison that not only expresses the limitations of an argumentative structure, but also how one should feel about these limitations. It is then up to the reader to fill in the argumentative gap between the review object and the assessment. This may seem like a radical response to the limitations of the review, but it must be remarked that reviewing is always already abbreviating and omitting lines of critical and philosophical argumentation by virtue of the limits of its length.

Another way of abbreviating lengthy arguments is to develop a critical vocabulary that can be evoked in lieu of these arguments. Reinhold attempts to do this by synthesizing Jacobian and Bardilian realism, which were already deeply embedded in criticism of philosophical methodology. Evoking this terminology also evokes this established line of criticism. This strategy is especially evident when Reinhold employs Jacobi's and Herder's criticism of 'empty' [leere] forms and words in opposition to the Kantian 'pure' [reine] vocabulary, for instance when Reinhold argues that rational realism's connection between logic and metaphysics fills these empty forms (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:xvi, 1:55, 1:60, 1:87, 1:135, 1:144). Rather than discussing individual situations in which a specific approach fails to capture lived experience due to a failure to rehabilitate metaphysics, it is expressed for all cases as a general methodological problem by invoking this vocabulary. A drawback of this approach is that it highly depends on the readers being initiated in a specific philosophical discourse. It is for this reason that this vocabulary often seems mystifying and impenetrable to a reader who is some decades or more removed from this discourse.

Reinhold also utilizes labeling in this particularly aggressive critical vocabulary. Most notably this practice is used to group enemies in a way in which they become susceptible to a diagnosis of a specific historical framework. Of particular note here is the label 'newest philosophy' [neuesten Philosophie] (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:iv, 1:vi, 1:120). This is a response to the 18th century obsession with novelty that Melton has observed (Van Horn Melton 2001, 93-4). By using this label pejoratively, Reinhold is drawing in timeless associations with novelty: that it is fleeting fashion, that most of its adherents are young, etc. The label had up to that point become associated with the popularity of the Kantian philosophy, a synonym for young idealists who, more radical than Kant himself, sought to change society through idealist principles (Eberstein 1799). In this exact sense, Reinhold, freshly distanced from Fichte who was a major source of inspiration for these youths, embraces this pejorative label to characterize a general lack of

rigor and an avalanche of philosophical publications. In this way, he integrates a pejorative label within his critical vocabulary. Strategically, this is a boon to the effectiveness of his criticism, because in addition to the argumentative complexity that the label synthesizes (in this case a collective criticism), he also harnesses the social antipathy associated with this label. He positions *Beyträge* as a way to critically review these new philosophers.

Complementary to this critical diagnosis of his age, Reinhold writes critical reviews of the history of philosophy which strategically relabel many positions in the history of philosophy. As a result, he is able to broadly assess centuries of philosophical contributions as leading to his own rational realism. The resultant groupings are based on either conceptual development (improvements on a concept) or progressive development (wherein philosophers reiterate on each other's work) and often a combination of both. The labels are frequently some variation on the realism-idealism dichotomy (such as grouping Leibniz and Spinoza under 'demonstrative realism') (Reinhold 1801-1803, 2:iv-v, 2:30), and Reinhold's critical assessment is often that a philosophical position adheres to an improper mixture or dualism of both labels. For example, he argues that Fichte adheres to 'practical realism' and 'theoretical idealism', Bouterwek adheres to 'practical realism' and 'skeptical idealism', and Schelling adheres to 'physical realism' and 'theoretical idealism' (Reinhold 1801-1803, 2:iv-v). Interestingly, this strategy would later also be employed by Schelling and Hegel, who popularized its use to the degree that we still find it in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although it is highly reductive of historical, methodological and argumentative complexity, its appeal is quite clear: it allows one to bring enemies into the fold, while keeping them at a distance.

To write a critical history of philosophy in this taxonomizing way is another clear example of experimentation with the form of the review. Reviewing the history of philosophy also introduces the philosophical system as an object of review. This was also the subject of Köppen's contribution to *Beyträge*, 'Einige Gedanken über philosophische Systeme überhaupt und insbesondere die Wissenschaftslehre', in which he reviews Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* as a philosophical system among other systems (Reinhold 1801-1803, 2:141). The fact that the philosophical system became a suitable object of review is a demonstration of the extremely numerous attempts to present a philosophical system in the wake of Kant and Fichte.

Reinhold gratefully experiments with these reviews of the history of philosophy, for instance to introduce a *recent* history of philosophy, allowing him to look at the history of philosophy from the perspective of the newest philosophy and to counterpose the history of philosophy with the newest philosophy (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:iv, 1:vi). This critical assessment forms the backbone for Reinhold's more contemporary reviews in *Beyträge*, as well as his contributions defending rational realism.²⁰ Throughout these reviews of the history of

²⁰ It should be noted that Reinhold does not explicitly engage in critical historiography, despite the fact that he had previously demonstrated some interest in the subject.

philosophy some throughlines appear. First of all, he conceives of the history of philosophy as the history of the problem of knowledge of reality. Ethical problems follow from that problem if they are referenced at all. Secondly, Reinhold considers the history of philosophy as a way of self-accounting. These articles are a way of historicizing his previous positions in the context of trying to articulate a solution to the problem of knowledge of reality. Finally, the history of philosophy is used as a new kind of critical authority, which can be utilized to legitimize or delegitimize a new line of thought. Since he considers rational realism to be a new line of thought which is competing for the reader's attention, it was important for Reinhold to first construct and then draw on this authority.

A history of philosophy can also be characterized by those it discusses (and those it doesn't). Assessing the review articles in this way, an interesting picture emerges: Reinhold is synthesizing the historical canons of Kant (Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Wolff) and Jacobi (Hume, Leibniz, Spinoza). This new canon is followed by a modern trinity: Kant, Jacobi and Fichte, with Schelling as a capstone which introduces God as a problem for rationality. This is a testament to Reinhold's most enduring influences during this time.

If we compare the contributions to *Beyträge* with the principles of critical reviewing that we have previously drawn from *Briefe*, an interesting perspective on the nature of *Beyträge's* experimental role emerges. We have seen that Reinhold certainly intended to mix the mission statement of the journal with a diagnosis of prospective readership, but that the confrontation with Fichte forced him to employ experimentation with the review format as defensive measures. As a result, the supposed reader who needs a better understanding of the philosophical literature is greatly deemphasized. We see this also in the brief moments when Reinhold directly addresses the reader, where he is apologizing for his lack of clarity, or confiding in them, all functions of the exposition of his own position.²¹ As a result, the principle of standards of critical appeal are unimportant for *Beyträge*, since this principle is aimed at putting forward guidelines through which the readers can engage with the verdict of a review. No doubt a perceived disinterest in critical engagement contributed to the highly polemical, even satirical way in which the journal was received (see section 5). There is, however, a way in which *Beyträge* is more empathetic to its objects of criticism, particularly in its total disregard of the principle of the unmasking of rhetorical or aesthetic attempts at veiling a lack of argumentative rigor. The journal completely and earnestly trusts that that which it reviews was put forward in good faith, and that there has been no attempt to deceive. When it adjudicates criticism, it assumes that those it criticizes have stumbled into faulty reasoning. This attitude is a result of the overall enthusiasm for philosophy that pervaded after the emergence of Kant's philosophy. Finally, *Beyträge* employs the principle of universal

²¹ 'I know, that I will not be understood in what I am saying about the true spirit of philosophy by most readers' (Reinhold 1801-1803, 1:43). See also: (Reinhold 1801-1803, 3:iv, 6:34, 6:145, 6:147).

standards of comparison far more extensively than before, particularly due to its attempt to review the history of philosophy. While it is true that the projected progressive development in the history of philosophy meant that a full endorsement of Aristotle, for instance, was impossible, the way in which new works are held up against the arguments and concepts developed in the history of philosophy meant that it was possible to compare solutions to problems offered by the ancients and compare them to solutions offered by Reinhold's contemporaries.

The possibility of freeform contributions to *Beyträge* in form and scope also results in contributions that are larger in size. Jacobi's *Ueber das Unternehemmen des Kriticismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen, und der Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Absicht zu geben* appeared in 1802, but was heavily delayed and was most likely the inspiration for Reinhold's approach to experimental review articles throughout the journal. Jacobi had recited it in full when Reinhold visited him in 1800, and it impressed him so much that he begged Jacobi to let him publish it in *Beyträge* (Jacobi 2004, 261-2). The review article discusses Kant's philosophy in-depth, but this ultimately also serves as a critical assessment of the state of philosophy in the wake of Kantianism. It employs some of the same review strategies that Hamann used in his review, for instance when the connection between the subject and the 'thing that exists for itself' is characterized as a 'cryptogamy', a concealed marriage (Jacobi 2004, 269). This metaphor in fact expresses the critical thrust of the text: in Jacobi's view, Kant, time and again, depends on bringing two disparate pairs together without explaining their union. This critical assessment serves as a warning to philosophers, to not overplay their hand by assuming that our fundamental relationship to reality is wholly conceivable. Here too, the scope of the object of the critical review necessitates an increased length, as Jacobi decides to combine Hamann's abbreviating metaphors with extended argumentation and analysis.

5. Reception, responses and transformations

Reinhold's contributions to *Beyträge* are now mostly known because they drew intense criticism from Schelling and Hegel. First in Hegel's *Die Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie* (1801) (hereafter *Differenz*) and later in their own experimental review journal, *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* (1802-1803). The first book's subtitle is 'perspective on the first volume of Reinhold's *Beyträge*' and it is as much an emancipation of Schelling from Fichte as it is a renunciation of Reinhold's supposedly lacking critical assessment of both philosophers as closely related. In this sense, at least, the book is another counter-review.

The book also responds to Reinhold's attempt to use the history of philosophy as a way to criticize a philosophical system, to 'treat it historically' (Hegel 1968, 15). Hegel argues that one should not utilize the history of philosophy as a way of comparing systems, but as a way of gaining an understanding of the historical manifestation of philosophy (Hegel 1968, 16). This is a way of radicalizing the principle of the universal standard of reviewing, since Hegel's standard

is an Absolute which always stays the same, necessitating a more nuanced understanding of the historical appearance of a system. Reinhold is criticized for his dismissal of other historical systems as ‘preliminary practice’ and ‘ideosyncracies’, leading only to his own system (Hegel 1968, 18). Hegel does not reject the history of philosophy as a critical object, but rather the presumptive way in which Reinhold criticizes it. In the last section of the book, it becomes clear that Hegel believes that Reinhold has tacitly introduced a new object for reviewing: philosophy itself. The point of contention is, however, that Reinhold has incorrectly assessed philosophy in its essence and practice (Hegel 1968, 118).

The *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* follows Reinhold’s convention of formulating reviews around a specific issue, which also relates to a broader point. Adopting both the letter format and a more experimental approach to fictionalization in reviewing, the first volume contains a ‘Ein Brief von Zettel an Squenz’, written by Schelling, referring to fictionalized versions of Reinhold (Zettel) and Bardili (Squenz), as characters from Shakespeare.²² Zettel complains about Hegel’s review of *Beyträge* in *Differenz* (Hegel 1968, 191). Interestingly, the review is used to preempt a renunciation of the disrespectful tone of the review-book, by having Zettel say Hegel ‘is only interested in ridiculing us, which I cannot endure, because I am a soft donkey who needs to scratch when one tickles me’ (Hegel 1968, 191). Doubling down on the ridicule, Schelling also suggests that Reinhold cannot take what he dishes out.

This donkey analogy, as a way of assessing the situation, seems highly inspired by Hamann, albeit with a more literary bend.²³ The reference also applies to the way the letter ultimately discredits Reinhold, as a fool who never knew how the philosophical revolution would develop, and who cannot be trusted now (Hegel 1968, 191). The text also makes some psychological observations, in order to show that Reinhold’s shift from Fichte to Bardili was not out of a love of truth, but rather that the position of being Fichte’s student irked him (Hegel 1968, 192). This indicates that Reinhold’s character is now more the subject of review than his philosophical position, which Hegel had already reviewed by ridiculing it. Evidently, the assessment is that Reinhold’s position is so unserious that we must be dealing with a whim of his character. The text acknowledges another debt in their experimental review practices when it references Fichte’s counter-review by having Zettel praise Squenz’ ‘horse-like imagination’ (Hegel 1968, 193). Although it is certainly an escalation to employ this ad hominem, one could also imagine that Schelling was particularly irked by the consequences of Reinhold’s abandoning the principle of unmasking. If philosophers do not write inherently deceitfully, any conclusion about their supposed errors immediately relates to

²² These names are derived from characters in the German translation of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Casting Reinhold as a weaver (of the imagination) is most likely a reference to Jacobi’s contribution in *Beyträge*, where the faculty of the imagination is characterized as a weaver (Jacobi 2004, 280).

²³ The donkey is also a reference to the Shakespeare play.

their character, as lacking attention or rigor. Given the fact that Schelling obviously did not admire the quality of Reinhold's analysis, this implication must have seemed particularly presumptuous. Perhaps the ad hominem employed here should be seen as a more explicit version of what was merely implied in *Beyträge*.

Hegel famously took the ad hominem a step further, towards an ad nominem of sorts, when he made light of Krug's name (Krug also means jug) as an empty vessel with no content of its own (Hegel 1968, 184). This is an extreme example of the union of critical vocabulary, labeling and the abbreviation of complexity of argumentation by the critic. In a sense the absolute trust in the earnestness of those whose systems Reinhold reviewed naturally lead to these personal attacks, since a supposed error in reasoning is then easily taken up as a failure of character, easily identified by a comical instance of nominative determinism.

While Reinhold's rational realism became a preferred point of mockery for Schelling and Hegel as one of the problematic tendencies in recent philosophy, it is remarkable to what degree Schelling and Hegel adopt and further develop Reinhold's contributions to the experimental period in reviewing. As bitterly as they mock Reinhold's lack of philosophical rigor, the confrontation with Reinhold's dual project of expositing rational realism and experimenting with review practices raised questions that allowed Schelling, and Hegel especially, to articulate their views on philosophical methodology. The problem of reviewing now explicitly became the problem of philosophical criticism, as a thoughtful practice, rather than a problem of publication.

Beyond the fact that they largely radicalize the approach to experimental reviewing, Schelling and Hegel largely follow Reinhold's interpretation of the principles of review standards. This is particularly evident in the introductory essay, *Ueber das Wesen der philosophischen Kritik überhaupt, und ihr Verhältniß zum gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie insbesondere*. Here they, like Reinhold, thoroughly endorse a universal standard of criticism, which they call an 'unchangeable model [Urbild] of what is the case [die Sache selbst]', or 'the idea of philosophy' (Hegel 1968, 117). This introduction challenges many of the conclusions about the limitations of philosophy that Jacobi had put forward in his review article on criticism. The authors (both Hegel and Schelling contributed) recognize that this universal standard, since it is the idea of philosophy, can by no means be understood by those who are not philosophers (Hegel 1968, 118). In this sense there is a clear limitation on the social recognition of philosophical criticism, which marks a sharp departure from earlier 18th century egalitarian approaches to universal standards of criticism. Within the field of philosophical criticism, they argue that *systematic* elaborations of this idea are more praiseworthy than 'free' elaborations, although those deserve some praise too for following this idea (Hegel 1968, 119). At the same time, and this is where the universal standard becomes especially important, it is the task of criticism to untangle the personal way of expositing from the idea of philosophy that is expressed in it. Criticism is, in this sense, a revelatory act which shows the universal standard in individual expositions. In a way, this is Schelling's and Hegel's version of the principle of unmasking, although they are of course not concerned with the in-

tentions of the author, but rather with unintentional idiosyncrasies that might distract from the idea of philosophy.

In line with the conflict with Reinhold, the *Kritisches Journal* also instigated many personal disputes which revolved around reviewing each other's work. In other ways it was merely responding to review-books published by authors who felt some kinship with the realist cause. Hegel's attack on Wilhelm Traugott Krug, savage as it was, can also be seen as a response to a series of publications by Krug that develop his own position by reviewing idealist publications (Giesbers 2017, 301-4). Similar observations can be made about Schelling's and Hegel's attacks on Jacobi, Köppen, Rückert, Jakob Salat and Christian Weiß. In many ways, they did not start the battle but inherited Fichte's opponents, and significantly intensified this battle through experimental review techniques.

Parallel to this intense experimentation with the review format and standards, a rival enterprise of reviewing was slowly taking root, which is the lexicon, dictionary or encyclopedia as a way of structuring a critical overview. For instance, Salomon Maimon's *Philosophisches Wörterbuch, oder Beleuchtung der wichtigsten Gegenstände der Philosophie* (1791) discloses Maimon's views through the structure of a dictionary. Later in their careers, Krug would write many variations on *Handbuch der Philosophie und Philosophischen Literatur* (1820) and Hegel would write his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1817). Of course, there were many lexica throughout the 18th century. If one compares these prior publications with Maimon, Krug or even Hegel, there is a striking contrast in terms of the heavy editorialization of topics and arguments in these later ventures.

There are clearly strategic advantages to structuring critique around this lexicon format. It feigns the appearance of an objective scientific discourse from the outset, even if singular entries oftentimes convey highly idiosyncratic views. Even Fichte's proposal for a journal had some encyclopedic qualities (Fichte 1981, 425-426). For many of these authors this format allowed for a better union of their dual functions as philosophers, as critics of philosophy and as teachers of philosophy. Beyond its critical thrust, the format also functions well as a teaching handbook. Under the guise of an overview of philosophy, it quickly allowed philosophers to impress their views on young students.

Given the highly polarizing methods of the experimental review journals, it is not surprising that, over the course of the 19th century, these rival review lexica gained more prominence. I cannot characterize this nuanced contrasting over time in this limited space. We will now turn to a broader historical perspective on the transformation of critical review standards from the vantage point of our examination of *Beyträge* and its immediate impact.

6. *Beyträge* in relation to the broader transformation of critical standards

In order to place *Beyträge*, as a representative of a group of experimental review journals, we must first look backwards to understand the general development that these journals should be seen in. There is a clear way in which these

authors are operating in the wake of Kant's philosophy. It was Kant who introduced many of the strategies they employed, such as labeling, and the criticizing and canonizing of the history of philosophy. Why for instance, is Hume a skeptic according to Kant, rather than an empiricist (Kant 1787, B792, B844)? A generation of philosophers spent an exorbitant amount of time reading and rereading Kant's critical work, and discussed them in both an educational and a socio-political context. It is therefore not surprising that they picked up some of Kant's strategies for criticism and self-positioning. Obviously, they employed these strategies in an increasingly radical way, to the point that these might be unrecognizable to orthodox Kantians.

The explosion of experimental review practices led to more moderate, or at the very least seemingly moderate responses which we see employed in Krug's handbooks and dictionaries. During the 19th century, extended employment of experimental review practices led to a consensus on which practices are allowed in reviewing. This codification seems to have a largely tacit character, akin to other transformations in the history of knowledge. This codification is clearly in effect in the prohibitions on the *ad hominem*, and to a lesser degree on the use of metaphor. One could also argue that boundaries have been set, at least tacitly, on the use of the history of philosophy. It is probably more correct to say that we tend to disapprove of the overt or transparent creative use, since we still find creative ways of dealing with it well into the 20th century, particularly in French philosophy. On the other hand, since Kant it has almost become a standard practice for a philosopher to, when he or she gains notoriety, put forward his or her own canon in the history of philosophy, to essentially create one's own tradition of thought. In a way this draws on practices in critical reviewing established by Kant and radicalized by Reinhold, Schelling and Hegel, by uniting the exposition of one's own position with a critical assessment of the history of philosophy. By and large this is also an expression of professional attitudes now widely spread among philosophers, summarized as the idea that the practice of philosophy is inseparable from the history of philosophy. Understanding this moment in critical reviewing around 1800 helps us understand the roots of these professional attitudes, and the ways in which they are tied to universal standards and criticism.

We could also argue that the 19th century and the early 20th century saw efforts to reach consensus on the standard definitions of labels (to the detriment of the historical complexity behind their development). These codifications in philosophy also played some part in the general codification of standards in criticism in society, particularly as German academic discourse gained international prominence in the 19th century.

Of course, there have also been some resurgences of the spirit of experimental reviewing in the 19th century. The most famous of these can undoubtedly be found in an early publication by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Die heilige Familie, oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik* (1844). As, in some sense, disciples of Hegel who employ materialism as a label to critically assess idealism, the use of these strategies demonstrates that they were in fact employing the critical strategies

of the younger Hegel to criticize the older Hegel as well as their Hegelian contemporaries. We can also see their taking up these experimental review practices as a revolutionary act, breaking with accepted standards of criticism in order to show the pressing social need for a new direction in theory.

The focus on a specific journal has allowed us to investigate how the transformation of critical standards and the experimentation with the form and content of the review allows for a broader perspective on the disparate philosophers involved. With this perspective, we can look beyond what seem like fundamental philosophical disagreements, to see what unites them. It also provides a novel explanation of the excessively personal and unpleasantly mocking tone of some of these attacks. In a sense, even more so than the love of philosophy, it is the commitment to expressing this philosophy with an emerging critical approach to reviewing that brings this group together. Such an intellectual unity has up to now only been darkly expressed in broad terminology like post-Kantianism and romanticism.

And yet, significant future research remains to be done. I have focused on a particular connection from Fichte to Reinhold and Jacobi to Schelling and Hegel, but in many ways, *Athenaeum* is one of the first experimental review journals, and should be studied as such. It should also be explored how lesser-known authors respond to this intense discussion of critical standards and reviewing, such as Bouterwek in *Neues Museum der Philosophie und Litteratur*.

Finally, I believe the practices of this group of experimental review journals raise questions that are still relevant today and bring into focus codifications which are still being challenged. The question, brought to a fine point by Hegel and Schelling after intense experimentation, is: what delimits philosophical criticism? We have seen that there is something in particular about the systematic way in which philosophers present arguments that makes the traditional review format especially untenable and difficult to engage with, on all three sides: author, reviewer and reader. This untenability necessitated bold experimentation with the textual length, the scope of the review (the kinds of critical objects), the relationship between work or thought and character, and the value of mockery and non-philosophical prose such as literature and brusque metaphor.

In not a few of these cases, the problem of untenability is obviated by a synecdochic approach, where there is abbreviation or simplification of argumentative complexity, by making a part representative of the whole.²⁴ This is accompanied by an increasingly abstract principle of a universal standard, culminating in the introduction of the idea of philosophy. The particular problematic of criticism in philosophy as a discipline also leads to the elimination of various egalitarian principles surrounding reader accessibility, in favor of a more intense allegiance to a universal standard.

This period displays a specific transformation in the possible objects of critical review, which naturally led to the question of how objects of criticism can

²⁴ Similar arguments about a work representing the whole, in this case in literature, were made in *Athenaeum* (Napierala 2007, 200).

be connected. How should one relate disparate objects like the single work, the collective thought of an author, a philosophical system, a philosophical movement or a specific line in the history of philosophy? It was overwhelmingly the increasingly abstract principle of a universal standard that facilitated these connections.

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