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Studying *Kanonbildung*: An Exercise in a Distant Reading of Contemporary Self-descriptions of the 19th Century German Philosophy

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**ABSTRACT**

In 19th century Germany, the number of publications in the history of philosophy increased dramatically. According to Ulrich Schneider's calculations, from 1810 through 1899, 148 original textbooks by 114 authors were published in German. The aim of this article is to analyse how the documented in these publications canonic vision of 19th century German philosophy evolved. An analysis of 66 treatises published from 1802 through 1918 allows dividing 19th century philosophers into groups based on the frequency of their names across the tables of contents, describing the changes in the leading group composition and in the share of attention received by a given philosopher over time (the patterns of attention for Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Herbart, Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, Jacobi and Fries are discussed in detail). The paper presents thus a formal analysis of how historical reputations of philosophers were made, how they stabilised, or faded. The authors claim that the current understanding of the history of 19th century philosophy differs significantly from the one recorded in the German textbooks of the era (e.g. Herbart's key position within the 19th century philosophical Canon; Schopenhauer's recognition by university philosophers during his own lifetime).

A special place is reserved for the 19th century in the institutionalisation of the history of philosophy. It was only then that the history of philosophy began its transformation from a generalised body of knowledge into an academic discipline (Hartung and Pluder 2015b). Ulrich Schneider, the author of *Philosophie und Universität*, attributed to this process a remarkable increase in the number of works in the history of philosophy published in German. He admits that some growth was noticeable in other language domains (including English and French), but that the increase in German-speaking literature was most numerous. Schneider connects this to the university reforms, which began with the opening of Berlin University in the academic year 1810–1811. According to Schneider's calculations, from 1810 through 1899, 148 original works by 114 authors were published in German. Many books were, in fact, published in several volumes, so the total number of separate volumes reached 248, and only 30 of them did not exceed 200 pages. Schneider's calculation, however, did not include the numerous amended editions (which add another 151 volumes to the total). Although the majority of contributors to this industry were German-speaking university professors, Schneider indicates that, of 114 German authors,
74 were affiliated with Universities, 14 with Gymnasia, 13 were private teachers, and for the remaining 13, their occupation was unknown (Schneider 1999, 325–327).

Nineteenth century ideas on the history of philosophy have been analysed in depth in a number of works (Geldsetzer 1968; Hartung and Pluder 2015a; Heidemann and Krijnen 2007; Köhnke 1986; Michalski 2010). In our paper, we would like to shift the focus from the analysis of ideas and the reconstruction of conceptual schemata to the analysis of the classification and selection practices of 19th century historians of philosophy. We will analyse textbooks of the era and the patterns they employ in describing 19th century philosophy. A purely temporal reference is somewhat misleading, but here we only follow the sources. One might call it this the ‘long’ 19th century, because the majority of authors that studied here considered Kant's works to be the 'lower' limit of the period, while the 'upper' limit was floating, being determined by the time of the creation of a particular textbook and the period, perceived as 'contemporary' by its author. By choosing the 19th century as the subject of our analysis, we would like to contribute to the growing body of literature problematising historical narratives on German philosophy of the first third of the 19th century. We refer here, in the first place, to a critical essay by Walter Jaeschke who has shown that the term ‘Deutscher Idealismus’ was not a philosophical school's endonym but a much later historiographic invention constructed in the works of the second half of the 19th century (Jaeschke 2000, 220–234). A similar criticism was developed by Petr Rezvykh, who points out that the cliché phrase 'classical German philosophy,' widely used in Russian historical writing, is problematic and has very little to do with any ‘real’ historical process (Rezvykh 2009, 419–434).

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, we will describe the process of the formation of standardised versions of the history of German philosophy as seen from contemporary perspectives. These standardised representations of the history of the discipline played a major role in the indoctrination and identity formation of several generations of scholars. We believe that a deeper understanding of these contemporary self-descriptions can help us to obtain a clearer picture of the disciplinary field as seen by the actors immersed in it. The second aim is methodological. We are attempting to develop formalised methods of studying Kanonbildung as a process. We hope these formalisations may turn to be useful beyond the original scope of our project, in a wide range of possible studies in intellectual history and mechanics of cultural memory formation.

**Methods**

A transition from a conceptual reconstruction of the history of philosophy to a study of practices implies closer attention to implicit rules and patterns, which remain often unnoticed by the actors themselves. Since we are primarily concerned with mass practices, we decided to break with the established tradition of ‘close reading’ in favour of ‘distant reading’. The latter term was coined by Franco Moretti to denote a study of patterns and implicit rules standing behind the fiction texts, which is based on technical procedures that allow working with objective characteristics of large amounts of digitised texts (Moretti 2005, 2013).

Moretti’s approach is not the only possible application of formal analytic methods to the history of philosophy. Randall Collins provides a different formalisation using social networks (Collins 1998, see esp. Chapters 12 and 13). Our task is to complement these etic network visions of the field with a study of the field’s emic dimension – a formal analysis of how the focal points of these networks (philosophers’ names), enter the ‘grand narrative’ of the history of philosophy.

When building two datasets for our research, we used a bibliography of German works in the history of philosophy published from 1810 through 1899 compiled by Schneider as our point of departure (Schneider 1999, 327–339).

For the first data-set used to assess the overall publication activity, we selected from Schneider’s bibliography all the books dealing with 19th century philosophy (i.e. works dealing exclusively with ancient or mediaeval philosophy were not included). These books can be subdivided into three groups: (1) treatises in a general history of philosophy that conclude with a review of 19th century philosophy; (2) separate volumes devoted entirely to the Modern philosophy or its recent developments (sometimes
they were included in multi-volume general histories); (3) works dealing exclusively with 19th century
German philosophy. Being focused on review works in the history of philosophy, Schneider’s bibliography
does not include treatises entirely devoted to polemics with authors’ contemporaries, e.g. Hegel’s
*Differenz des Fichte’schen und Schelling’schen Systems der Philosophie* (understandably, our data-set
does not include books of this kind either).

The resulting overall publication activity data-set includes 96 relevant books by 81 authors. Twelve
of the latter authored but one booklet (22–120 pages) in the history of philosophy. These books belong
mostly to the category of *Repetitoriums*, i.e. very brief, sometimes graphical representations of lectures’
content. As they differ dramatically from the lengthy narratives of other more conventional books in the
history of philosophy, we did not include them into the further analysis. Moreover, the data-set does not
include books by Kuno Fischer, because his multi-volume *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* was planned
in such a way that every major philosopher was treated in a separate volume (and, sometimes, even
in a series of volumes). In three cases, we ventured beyond the scope of Schneider’s bibliography. We
added two books: *Kant und die Epigonen* (Stuttgart, 1865) by Otto Liebmann and *Grundriß der Geschichte
der philosophischen Systeme von den Griechen bis auf Kant* by Joseph Socher (München, 1801) and one
re-publication, which falls beyond the temporal scope of Schneider’s bibliography, the twelfth edition
of *Kurzer Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* by Christian Johann Deter (Berlin, 1918, 1st edn.: Berlin,
1872). Each entry of the data-set includes basic bibliographic information, including author’s name,
title, publisher, place and date of publication.

The initial selection for the second data-set used in the analysis of tables of contents’ included 54
original works by 50 authors. Successive editions of eleven works were found to contain differences
significant enough to be treated separately. Nine works are thus represented by two different editions
and one by three different editions. The resulting data-set includes tables of contents for 66 books
(see Appendix). Working with a non-random sample from the complete population, we feel obliged
to discuss the problem of representation. Out of 17 authors whose works survived three editions or
more, 14 are included in our selection. These 14 are represented with 18 works (some of them in sev-
eral editions, so the total number of items reviewed is 30). Besides them, our data-set includes 36 less
prolific authors, each represented by one publication. The data-set seems to satisfactorily represent the
geographic variation (the books were published in 20 cities). Due to unavailability, we missed another
19 books by 19 authors from Schneider's bibliography. They were rather proportionally scattered over
the 19th century, five in the first third, six and eight in the remaining two-thirds, respectively. All in all,
we do not expect the resulting data-set to be systematically biased. Its further extension could shift
the exact counts but it could hardly change the general patterns and conclusions.

The resulting tables of contents’ data-set includes 845 entries for 151 philosophers’ names. Each entry
includes basic bibliographic information (author of the treatise, title, edition when necessary, place and
date of publication), a philosopher’s name, paragraph number (by paragraph, we mean a small section
of the book named after a particular philosopher or a group of them), philosopher’s number in order of
appearance in this particular treatise, start and end page of the paragraph, start and end page of the
section devoted to the whole 19th century. When a paragraph dealt with several philosophers and the
amount of pages secured for each of them was not possible to determine on the basis of the table of
contents, we indicated the same start and end pages for all of them.

The data were entered with the aid of standard electronic tables software. Further data processing
and preparation of illustrations was performed using R (The R Development Core Team 2015).

To calculate the number of pages devoted to each philosopher and the share of the 19th century
section devoted to him, start and end pages of the paragraph and those of the 19th century section,
respectively, were used. When a paragraph dealt with several philosophers, they were ascribed equal
shares no matter how many pages they really occupied within the paragraph. Calculation of paragraph
volumes in whole pages and a too formal approach to philosophers sharing the same paragraph leads
to somewhat distorted counts (e.g. the shares of philosophers would appear systematically, even though
not significantly, bigger). We, however, decided not to inspect every paragraph individually, because
a negligible increase in the exactness of counts would not compensate for the significant additional workload required to accomplish such counting.

In our visualisations of the temporal dynamics, we used three-point sliding averages. This led to predictable losses of information at the expense of highlighting general trends.

**Philosophical Bestsellers and Title Rotation**

In his work on treatises in the history of philosophy, Ulrich Schneider provided a diagram showing the distribution of titles by decades, counting separately first and subsequent editions (Figure 1). One may see the range of variation (the number of volumes per decade varied from 17 to 36), two peaks (in the 1830–1850s and 1880–1890s), and a shift from original works to the publication of amended new editions (from the 1860s on, the number of the latter was nearly equal or even exceeded that of the former) (Schneider 1999, 235–236). Even though Schneider's diagram is an important step towards understanding some general features of the dynamics of publication in the history of philosophy, it shows neither which works were re-published nor how intense the rotation of titles was.

And still, these two parameters deserve much attention. First, because the very fact of a repeated re-publication of a book may serve as a persuasive evidence for a high demand for it. The decision to publish a new edition or a reprint likely means that author and publisher agreed on the high probability of the commercial success of the enterprise. Some of these re-publication series continued for 20, and some even for more than 40 years. Sometimes even the author's death was unable to put an end to the enterprise, and the book was kept being edited by an author's colleague or pupil. Those successful projects that survived several editions deserve to be classified into a separate group called 'bestsellers', in order to distinguish them from volumes that were never or only once republished. Secondly, an analysis of amendments made to the text from one edition to another allows us to see the shifts of emphasis in the treatment of the history of philosophy from one edition to the next.

The analysis of publication patterns of philosophical bestsellers (works published thrice or more) allows to distinguish four groups (see Figure 2). First group presented by early textbooks (Wender and Tennemann) were in use from 1810s and discontinued in the 1830s. Second group consist of the textbooks published for the first time in the 1830s (Reinhold and Chalybaeus, Schwegler). Except the book by Schwegler, all these works were discontinued before the beginning of 1860s. Schwegler's

![Figure 1. The number of German language publications in the history of philosophy by decades.](image)

Note: White bars: original works, dashed bars: re-publications (after Schneider 1999, 326).
‘Geschichte der Philosophie im Umriß’ took middle place between the second and the third group. During the Schwegler’s lifetime the book was published only twice, but after his early death at the age of 40, the project was taken over by his friend and colleague Köstlin. From 1857 through 1887, Köstlin prepared as many as 12 editions.

From 1860s onwards, the Historiography of Philosophy flourished in Germany. A new generation of bestsellers (Ueberweg, Dühring, Stöckl and Deter), the third group, took the stage. The treatises in history of philosophy by Deter and Ueberweg continued to be published even after the beginning the World War I. The broadly known Ueberweg’s *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Sketch of the history of philosophy) published for the first time in 1866, since 1905 edited by Heinze and since 1916 by Oesterreich, survived 12 editions until 1922. Windelband, Falckenberg and Eucken represent the last fourth group of the 19th century bestsellers in the history of philosophy. However, when this new wave of publications emerged in the 1880s, the generation of the 1860s was still in use.

The rotation of philosophical bestsellers, even though influenced by change of authors’ generations, is not fully explainable by the latter. In the following section, we shall turn to the content of the textbooks tracing a stepwise formation of the canonic version of the history of philosophy.

**Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Thinkers**

Traditionally, a hierarchical position within the historical canon was described in terms of diminished degrees of ‘greatness’. Some philosophers were described as ‘great’ or ‘primary’, while the others as...
‘secondary’ or even ‘tertiary’. Working with large sets of formalised data, we understand the frequency that a particular name appears across tables of contents as a proxy measure of relative ‘greatness’. Thus, a ‘primary’ thinker would be a person mentioned in more than 80% of treatises, a ‘secondary’ thinker in 50–80% and ‘tertiary’ in less than 50% but more than once. We did not include the names, mentioned only once in our graphs.

Taking the four periods based on the pattern of bestsellers’ publications, as a basis for calculations, one may trace the stages of stepwise maturation of the canonic version of the history of philosophy (Figures 3 and 4). During the first period (1800–1830), the segregation of philosophers into ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ was not yet prominent. There is little doubt that the small number (6) of treatises taken into consideration contributes much to this apparent equality. However, even though this number is small, it includes nearly all contemporary works in the history of philosophy that devoted a special section to the 19th century, so the sample is representative of the overall situation. It is worth mentioning that, during the first 30 years, Hegel received less attention than e.g. Schelling and held close to Jacobi, Reinhold, Beck and Schultz.

The gaps between ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ and ‘tertiary’ philosophers began widening during the second period (1831–1855). A group of four leaders, (Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel) was formed (their leading positions among the philosophers of the first half of the 19th century remain unchallenged until now). Jacobi was pushed away into a transition zone where he met a rising star of Herbart. Both authors were at a considerable distance from both leaders and outsiders of the canon. They were followed by a group of 6–7 authors represented in 25–50% of the contemporary treatises. A considerable widening of the list of names can be seen. Twenty-two new names emerged, and not a single person from the previous period left the stage. Among the newcomers was Arthur Schopenhauer, a well known critic.
of the university philosophy. It is worth mentioning that Schopenhauer became a classic during his lifetime, with his views being included in three textbooks by 1855.

In the second half of the 19th century, the structure of the canon was simplified. All philosophers were divided into three groups. The leading group grew slightly to include five authors (Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Herbart). They were included in every book on the subject. The ‘transition’ zone was occupied by Schopenhauer and Schleiermacher. It should be noted that the former, who entered the scene as a newcomer during the previous stage, received 12 of 15 possible mentions in 1855–1879, while the latter is the only ‘secondary’ thinker of the previous stage who managed to gain the points after 1855. The third group included authors mentioned in less than 20% of the works under study. Jacobi and Reinhold lost their points and Bouterwek vanished into oblivion. 12 new names emerged, while 9 left the stage to never reappear again.

During the fourth period (1880–1900), Schopenhauer joined the leading group of five philosophers of the previous period. A distinct group of ‘secondary’ philosophers (Hartman, Schleiermacher, Lotze, Beneke, Fechner, Jacobi, Krause, Reinhold, Fries and Baader) was formed. It is worth mentioning that all of them, except Schleiermacher, had been infrequent guests of the tables of contents of the textbooks of previous periods. Among these ten, only three (Lotze, Fechner and Hartman) died after 1880. The
activity of the remaining seven fell within the first half of the 19th century. When we compare the list
with that of the previous period, we find 16 newcomers and 8 lost names.

Considering gains and losses, we should mention that it was philosophers of the first third of the
19th century who secured most stable positions within the canon. Of the 14 names mentioned in the
textbooks of the first period, 10 survived until the fourth. The frequency of the survivors’ mentions
changed over time, which may be explained by a shift of emphases, but the names persisted.

Speaking of the newcomers, one may notice that, despite the extreme ‘germanocentrism’ of the
German narrative of the history of 19th century philosophy, there are few names from outside the
German-speaking cultural area. Of course, some textbooks included special sections like ‘Philosophy
abroad’ or ‘Philosophy in France’. However, it was not until the end of 1860s that the first thinkers from
outside the German-speaking area appeared among 19th century philosophers. They were Comte and
Mill, in the first place, who were mentioned four times, Darwin and Bentham (twice) and Maine de Biran
who appeared in several editions of Windelband’s work.

**German Philosophers in the Struggle for Attention**

The very fact of presence in the canonic history does not tell us much about the part a philosopher
played in it. Neither is it the only possible way to measure a philosopher’s significance. In this section,
we shall examine what we defined above as the share of attention measured as the number of pages
devoted to a particular person divided by the number of pages devoted to the whole 19th century
section. As we have said above, the more is the share of pages reserved for a particular philosopher,
the more important he should have been from the perspective of the author of a textbook under con-
sideration (both in terms of the significance in the history of philosophy and ‘presence’ in the current
philosophical debate).

An analysis of selected treatises in the history of philosophy might reveal some unarticulated (or, at
least, not explicit) preferences of their authors. Our strategy, however, is different. Our paper focuses
not on particular textbooks but on the canon as a whole. In this spirit, we decided to trace the trajectory
of varying degrees of attention to most prominent philosophers on a large data-set, which embraces
many textbooks and covers the entire 19th century.

When one speaks of the most frequently mentioned representatives of ‘German idealism’, it may seem
that all of them enjoyed equal position within the canon. The two common stereotypes described by
Rezvykh (2009) were as follows. First, the philosophies of Kant and Hegel were considered to form the
pinnacle of German Idealism (accordingly, both Kant and Hegel appeared to dominate in the Canon,
while e.g. Fichte and Schelling were considered as great and deep thinkers, however of secondary
importance as compared to Kant and Hegel). Secondly, there was some idea of ‘logical’ continuity
between the ‘great thinkers’.

At a first glance, both these stereotypes seem to be obvious, but an analysis of the available data
shows that this obviousness is deceptive.

Let us turn to the distribution of attention to Hegel, Schelling and Fichte (Figure 5). A quick glance
at the graph reveals dramatically different dynamic temporal patterns for these three authors, as well
as a considerable variation of attention to them over time. When, in the 1820s–1830s, Schelling, and,
somewhat later, Hegel, appeared on the stage, one may notice a marked decrease of attention to Fichte.
Hegel, who appeared several years later than Schelling, attracted considerable attention and became
a central figure in 19th century philosophy. For almost 30 years, exposition of his views comprised
about one-fifth of all 19th century sections. Only the philosophy of late Schelling, which provoked
some interest in his philosophical heritage as a whole, secured Schelling’s leading position among the
three, but only for a short time.

It was only from 1870s on, that the ‘attention trajectories’ of the three began to look similar. Despite
minor fluctuations, the shares of all the three authors diminished (compared to the first half of the
century). It was Hegel who lost more points than the others. These days, he received as much attention
as Schelling, and, sometimes, even less. However, the decrease of popularity notwithstanding, Fichte,
Schelling and Hegel kept their positions as important philosophers, receiving together about 30% of the section on 19th century philosophy.

It is only possible to achieve a well-founded assessment of the dynamics of popularity of a given philosopher when the data are placed in comparative perspective. A remarkable variation among the ‘primary’ philosophers can be seen easily in the examples of Kant and Herbart (Figure 6). Herbart’s share of attention in the 1830s was close to that of Kant and Hegel. In the decades to follow, it remained stable, reaching almost 10%. From 1850 through 1860, Herbart with his 10% lagged far behind the author of the *Science of logic*; however, by the end of the century, when popularity of Helgel’s philosophy faded, the shares of the two became nearly equal again.

![Figure 5](image1.png)

*Figure 5.* Dynamics of Fichte’s, Hegel’s and Schelling’s shares of the 19th century section (three-point moving averages, see ‘Methods’).

![Figure 6](image2.png)

*Figure 6.* Dynamics of Kant’s and Herbart’s shares of the 19th century section.

Note: Hegel’s curve serves as a scale-bar.
Kantian philosophy exhibited a completely different trajectory. While Hegel’s share in the 1830s–1850s often exceeded that of Kant, the situation changed dramatically in the second half of the century. By the second half of the 19th century Kant was steadily attracting a considerable share of attention and strengthening his position, at a time when other philosophers’ shares were declining. From the 1870s on, the interest in Kant went far beyond the circle of neo-Kantians. Rather, the interest in neo-Kantianism itself could be explained by a growing interest in Kant, who, by the end of the century, was considered the key figure of the whole of 19th century philosophy.

What happened to less remarkable people – the ones of ‘secondary’ or even ‘tertiary’ importance, the ones who sunk into oblivion by the end of the century? To address these questions, we shall consider the dynamics of attention to Schleiermacher and Schopenhauer (see Figure 7). With few exceptions, Schleiermacher received a markedly lesser share of textbooks authors’ attention than Fichte. Moreover, Schleiermacher’s share remained nearly unchanged, with the exception of the final decade of the 19th century, when, against the background of a fading interest in German idealist philosophers (except Kant) on the whole, Schleiermacher experienced some growth in popularity. This growth, in turn, allowed him to approach the statuses of Fichte and Schopenhauer, even though he could not outrival them. It should be noted that initially Schopenhauer’s philosophy was only briefly mentioned in the textbooks but not described in any detail. His doctrine fell under scrutiny in the mid 1860s, but after that, his share diminished to an average level characteristic of the majority of representatives of German idealism.

A deeper understanding of the historical-philosophical process is hardly possible without paying attention to those authors who now appear marginal at best, like Jacobi and Fries (see Figure 8). Jacobi’s share of attention reached almost 10% in the 1830s. After the 1840s, he nearly ceased to interest historians of philosophy. Authors of textbooks mentioned him but did not treat his views at length. Around the mid-century, Fries, much like Jacobi, appeared to be a person about who little was known beyond basic biographical facts. The situation changed dramatically towards the end of the century, when Fries went from an outsider into a figure relatively more important than Hegel. An interest in Jacobi’s views also began to grow, when, all of a sudden, they completely disappeared from the textbooks.

![Figure 7. Dynamics of Schleiermacher's and Schopenhauer's shares of the 19th century section.](image)

*Note: Fichte’s curve serves as a scale-bar.*
The Last Philosopher Standing. On the Order of Appearance of 19th Century German Thinkers

Even though a historical narration is usually built around a chronological axis, proceeding from relatively earlier events to more recent ones, the history of 19th century philosophy as portrayed by contemporary authors appeared somewhat achronous. Most authors doomed to appear in some order were, in fact, contemporaries. In most cases, the narrative was composed around ascribed symbolical roles of ‘followers’, ‘adherents’ or ‘opponents’. However, the situation concerning Hegel turned out to be more complex.

The first author to publicly declare Hegel’s philosophy as the ultimate achievement of an entire era of philosophy, if not the history of philosophy itself, was the poet, essayist and exiled critic Heinrich Heine. In 1834, a Paris journal *Revue de deux mondes* published Heine’s essay *De l’Allemagne depuis Luther*. In 1835, a German translation appeared in Hamburg under a somewhat different title *Towards the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (Heine 1835).

Historisation of Hegel’s philosophy quite predictably took place among his adherents too, but it was only three years after Heine’s work had been published that Michelet wrote his version of history (Michelet 1837–1838). The notion of Hegel as a landmark figure who had put an end to a whole period in the history of philosophy had gained popularity among German philosophers, even though this view was not uncontested. When, in the first volume of his *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, Kuno Fischer granted Hegel with the title ‘der letzte Philosoph’ (Fischer 1854 S.552), for, in Fischer’s opinion, it was Hegel who was entitled to end the line of philosophy which had begun with Thales, he received an acrimonious remark by his reviewer, Julius Frauenstädt: ‘Wir glauben eher annehmen zu dürfen, daß Fischer der letzte oder wenigstens einer der letzten Hegelianer ist, als daß Hegel der letzte Philosoph sei’ (Frauenstädt 1854, 548)¹ Frauenstädt remarked further that both Herbart and Schopenhauer had freed philosophy from ‘Hegelei’ in two different ways and, as they had been Hegel’s contemporaries, the whole Fischer’s view of the history of philosophical traditions was utterly false (ibid.). The contest for the right to crown the historical development of philosophy had, however, a longer story. A vivid discussion between the followers of Hegel and those of Herbart on who deserved the title of ‘der letzte Philosoph’ broke out as early as in 1830s.

A Hegelian version of Herbart’s position was formulated with an utmost clarity by Hegel’s disciple, Michelet:
Wahrlich, wenn Herbart irgendwie in die Geschichte der Philosophie thätig eingegriffen hat, so ist es durch seine früheren Schriften geschehen, nicht durch seine spätern, die in eine Zeit fallen, wo sein nachhinkender Kantianismus längst durch die höhern Entwickelungen des philosophierenden Geistes überschritten war. (Michelet 1837–1838, Bd. 2, VI)²

This judgement pigeonholed Herbart into the dead end of the outdated ‘Kantianismus’. Accordingly, Michelet put Herbart’s section after that of Kant and before that of Fichte, between Beck and Jacobi.

Herbart’s followers, in their turn, proposed their own version of philosophical succession. Gustav Hartenstein (1808–1890), in his monograph Über die neuesten Darstellungen und Beurtheilungen der Herbartschen Philosophie, offered his vision of the mainstream development of philosophy, from Kant to Herbart (Hartenstein 1838, 7). According to this interpretation, Herbart was, in fact, the terminal link of the great chain of philosophers of the first third of the 19th century. Distant repercussions of this polemics are still visible in the subtitle of the second volume of Windelband’s Die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der allgemeinen Cultur und den besonderen Wissenschaften dargestellt which run ‘Die Blüthezeit der deutschen Philosophie. Von Kant bis Hegel und Herbart’ (Windelband 1880). The discovery of two competing visions of the relative positions of Hegel and Herbart raises the question of the prevalence of one of them over the other and of a possible temporal dynamics of the prevalence patterns.

To address this question, we assessed Herbart’s position (and Schleiermacher’s and Fries’es positions as well) relative to Hegel’s position across the data-set. To account for temporal dynamics, we divided the data-set into two parts: 1800–1850 and 1851–1900. The data on the counts of positions before and after Hegel in tables of contents of the textbooks under study can be found in Table 1.

This relative position is an indirect but a most meaningful criterion which allows to assess the degree of relative perceived recency and relevancy of a given philosopher. The closer a philosopher stays to the end of the list, the more ‘recent’ and ‘relevant’ to the current debate he is. Contemplating the contingency table one may notice the prevalence of Hegel-bound narratives during the first half of the century. However, during the second half, Herbart-bound narratives prevailed. The same is true for Schleiermacher and, partly, Fries. Both the former and the latter were never placed in post-Hegelian positions before 1850. During the second half of the century, the post-Hegelian position of Schleiermacher became prevalent. The actualisation of Fries also took place, even though to a lesser extent. Three out of 21 examined works in the history of philosophy published in the second half of the century put Fries after Hegel, while eight still considered him among pre-Hegelians.

### The Power and Poverty of a Philosophical Canon

Our study of the genesis and the dynamics of historical-philosophical canon have shown that, during the most of the 19th century, German philosophers maintained their legitimacy and their disciplinary identity by appealing to the developments of the first third of the 19th century.

The developing genre of the academic history of philosophy, on the one hand, formed a universal intra-disciplinary language, which was understandable to both neophytes and experts but, on the other hand, did not block alternative views of the philosophical process. A re-actualisation of early 19th century thinkers, whose views were connected with an empirical research program in psychology,

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<td>Schleiermacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fries</td>
<td>1800–1850</td>
<td>1851–1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** For each period, the number of books in the history of philosophy is given, which, in their tables of contents, list a given philosopher before and after Hegel.
may serve as an example of this ambivalence. A review of the ideas of Fries and Beneke was, probably, intended to substantiate the validity of empirical methods of studying psychological processes, which was at issue for the philosophical community of the last third of the 19th century.

A corpus-wide analysis has shown that our notion of who can be considered to be key figures of the 19th century philosophy differs from the ones represented in the textbooks of the era. It is not only a matter of a slight shift of the emphasis. The names of some philosophers, who, for decades, were treated as ‘primary’ ones, are names that have not reached most present-day philosophers. Herbart’s name, e.g. for a present-day reader, would rather be associated with pedagogies than with philosophy proprio dicto. The ‘secondary’ philosophers, whose doctrines were treated in dozens of textbooks, are now known only to a very limited number of experts in the history of philosophy. These are signs of a deep reformulation of the canon that happened only after the long 19th century was over.

Notes

1. ‘We believe, it would be rather accepted that Fischer is the last or, at least, one of the last Hegelians, than that Hegel is the last philosopher’ (Frauenstädt 1854, 548).

2. ‘Perhaps, when Herbart once were indeed included in the history of philosophy, it would happen due to his early writings, not the late ones, which fall on a time, where his backward Kantianism was far surpassed by the higher developments of philosophising Spirit.’ (Michelet 1838 VI).

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Michelet, Karl L. 1837–1838. *Geschichte der letzten Systeme der Philosophie in Deutschland von Kant bis Hegel* [History of most recent systems of philosophy in Germany from Kant to Hegel], 2 Bde. Berlin: Dunker & Humblot.


Appendix. List of Books Selected for the Tables of Contents Analysis

2. Bergmann, Julius: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin 1893
3. Brasch, Moritz: *Die Klassiker der Philosophie; von den frühesten griechischen Denkern bis auf die Gegenwart*, Leipzig 1885
5. Chalybaeus, Heinrich Moritz: *Historische Entwicklung der speculativen Philosophie von Kant bis Hegel*, Leipzig 1848
6. Deter, Christian Johann: *Kurzer Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin 1883
7. Deter, Christian Johann: *Kurzer Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin 1918
8. Dühring, Eugen Karl: *Kritische Geschichte der Philosophie von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin 1869
10. Eisler, Rudolf: *Geschichte der Philosophie im Grundriss*, Berlin 1895
13. Erdmann, Johann Eduard: *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlin 1866
17. Fichte, Immanuel Hermann: *Beiträge zur Charakteristik der neueren Philosophie, oder kritische Geschichte derselben von Descartes und Locke bis auf Hegel*, Sulzbach 1841
(18) Fries, Jakob Friedrich: Die Geschicke der Philosophie dargestellt nach den Fortschritten ihrer wissenschaftlichen Entwicklung, Halle 1840
(19) Haffner, Paul Leopold: Grundlinien der Philosophie als Aufgabe, Geschichte und Lehre: zur Einleitung in die philosophischen Studien, Mainz 1881
(20) Harms, Friedrich: Die Philosophie seit Kant, Berlin 1876
(21) Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Berlin 1844
(22) Hermann, Konrad: Geschichte der Philosophie in pragmatischer Behandlung, Leipzig 1867
(23) Kannegiesser, Karl Ludwig: Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, Leipzig 1837
(24) Kirchner, Friedrich: Katechismus der Geschichte der Philosophie. Von Thaler bis zur Gegenwart, Leipzig 1877
(27) Liebmann, Otto: Kant und die Epigonen: Eine kritische Abhandlung, Berlin 1912
(28) Loewenthal, Eduard: Geschichte der Philosophie im Umris für Studierende, sowie für jeden Gebildeten, Berlin 1896
(29) Meyer, Jürgen Bons: Historisch-literarischer Leitfaden zur Geschichte der Philosophie, Berlin 1868
(30) Michelet Karl Ludwig: Geschichte der letzten Systeme der Philosophie, in Deutschland von Kant bis Hegel, Berlin 1837
(31) Michelet Karl Ludwig: Geschichte der letzten Systeme der Philosophie, in Deutschland von Kant bis Hegel, Berlin 1838
(32) Michels, Friedrich: Geschichte der Philosophie von Thales bis auf unsere Zeit, Braunsberg 1865
(33) Noack, Ludwig: Geschichte der Philosophie in gedrängter Uebersicht: Lehrbuch zum Gebrauche bei akademischen Vorlesungen und zum Selbstunterrichte, Weimar 1853
(34) Nomina, Matthias: Geschichte und Grundlagen der Metaphysik, Münster 1908
(36) Rehmke, Johannes: Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie, zum Selbststudium und für Vorlesungen, Berlin 1896
(37) Reichlin-Meldegg, Karl Alexander Freiherr von: System der Logik, nebst Einleitung in die Philosophie zum Gebrauche bei akademischen Vorlesungen und zum Selbststudium, Wien 1870
(38) Reinhold, Ernst Christian Gottlieb: Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie für alle wissenschaftlich Gebildete, Gotha 1830
(39) Reinhold, Ernst Christian Gottlieb: Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie, Jena 1839
(40) Reinhold, Ernst Christian Gottlieb: Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie für alle wissenschaftlich Gebildete, Jena 1845
(41) Rixner, Thaddeus Anselm: Geschichte der Philosophie bei den Katholiken in Altbayern, bayerisch Schwaben und bayerisch Franken, München 1835
(42) Rixner, Thaddeus Anselm: Handbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie zum Gebrauche seiner Vorlesungen, Sulzbach 1850
(43) Schaller, Julius: Geschichte der Naturphilosophie, Halle 1846
(45) Schmidt, Eduard: Umrisse zur Geschichte der Philosophie, Berlin 1839
(46) Schram Josef: Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie. Mit Bezug auf die Geschichte unserer Zeit, Bonn 1836
(47) Schwegler, Friedrich Karl Albert: Geschichte der Philosophie im Umriß, Stuttgart 1847
(48) Schwegler, Friedrich Karl Albert: Geschichte der Philosophie im Umriß, Stuttgart 1887
(49) Sigwart, Heinrich Christoph Wilhelm: Geschichte der Philosophie vom allgemeinen wissenschaftlichen und geschichtlichen Standpunkt, Stuttgart 1844
(50) Socher, Joseph: Grundriß der Geschichte der philosophischen Systemen von den Griechen bis auf Kant, München 1802
(51) Stöckl, Albert: Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie, Mainz 1870
(52) Tennemann, Wilhelm Gottlieb: Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie für den akademischen Unterricht, Leipzig 1816
(53) Tennemann, Wilhelm Gottlieb: Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie für den akademischen Unterricht, Leipzig 1824
(54) Tennemann, Wilhelm Gottlieb: Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie für den akademischen Unterricht, Leipzig 1829
(55) Thilo, Christfried Albert: Kurze pragmatische Geschichte der Philosophie, Koethen 1874
(60) Usehold, Johann Nepomuk: *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Amberg 1852
(61) Usehold, Johann Nepomuk: *Darstellung des Hauptinhalts der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Amberg 1855
(62) Willmann, Otto: *Geschichte des Idealismus*, Braunschweig 1907
(64) Windelband, Wilhelm: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Freiburg 1892
(65) Windelband, Wilhelm: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Freiburg 1908
(66) Zeller, Eduard: *Geschichte der deutschen Philosophie*, München 1875