

## The Kantian School and the Consolidation of Modern Historiography of Philosophy

The history of philosophy presents to us reason in its sublime aspect, in its divine striving after truth without concealing its weaknesses, since it shows us its aberrations and entanglements in vain whimsy; it gives us a faithful painting of the transience of human opinions and of the ever more victorious struggle of reason against error and superstition.

—Wilhelm Tennemann (1798)<sup>1</sup>

In 1791, Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1758–1825), the important early exponent of Immanuel Kant's philosophy, decried the lack of agreement among philosophers on what constitutes the proper object of the history of philosophy.<sup>2</sup> There was no agreement on even a concept of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> It remained an unresolved question whether the scientific study of nature, for instance, came under the domain of philosophy. None of the existing concepts of philosophy satisfied Reinhold, who was compelled to give his own definition: Philosophy is the "science of the determinate interrelation of things, independent of experience."<sup>4</sup> He elaborated this definition term by term: Philosophy is "scientific" as opposed to that which is "common, unordered" or "irregular."<sup>5</sup> The "philosophy of the common man" consists of accidental knowledge as means toward the satisfaction of sensual needs and does not qualify as philosophy.<sup>6</sup> If philosophy is to fulfill its

intended purpose, it should satisfy the need of consciousness only, the need of reason itself. Philosophy is the science of the “determinate” or “necessary,” as opposed to the accidental, interrelation of things.<sup>7</sup> Things accidentally related to each other come under the domain of history and not philosophy.<sup>8</sup> Philosophy is “independent of experience” since the forms by which reason arrives at the interrelation of things are determined by the nature of human consciousness, the human faculty of representation, which does not originate in experience, but rather makes experience possible.<sup>9</sup>

Due to a “completely indeterminate” concept of philosophy, the idea of the history of philosophy has been equally indeterminate. This is the reason why one commonly confused the “actual” history of philosophy with intellectual history (the history of the sciences in particular) and with the “lives and opinions” of the philosophers. Reinhold also drew a distinction between the history of philosophy and the special histories of particular subfields of philosophy; such as metaphysics, which was often confused with philosophy in general.<sup>10</sup> Reinhold considered the history of philosophy as separate and distinct also from the history of the literature of philosophy.<sup>11</sup> This traditional confusion of genres gave him cause to strictly define the history of philosophy as “the portrayed quintessence of the changes that the science of the necessary interrelation of things has undergone from its [first] emergence to our times.”<sup>12</sup>

Reinhold also wanted to exclude from the history of philosophy biographical details of the philosophers, excerpts of their writings, and reports by others of their contents. He wanted to exclude even historical information derived from the philosophers’ own writings.<sup>13</sup> However, he did concede—but only barely—that in the special cases in which the psychological or moral character of a man, or certain circumstances of his life, had a decisive impact on his philosophical system—indeed, if his philosophical system was a peculiar one; that in these rare cases, the history of philosophy may take such historical data (e.g., biographical details) into consideration.<sup>14</sup> However, even the most accurate historical information could supply at best “nothing more than materials for the history of philosophy and not this history itself.”<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding rare exceptions, recounting the life circumstances of a philosopher would be a “useless waste of time” in the lecture hall and, Reinhold added, would even excuse the lecturer as well as the students from thinking.<sup>16</sup>

In this chapter I argue that, in distinguishing between what the history of philosophy had been previously and what it ought to be, Reinhold was calling for reform in this field of knowledge. He

inaugurated a movement in the writing of history of philosophy that would span the rest of the decade and spill into the nineteenth century. As never before, German university philosophers would explicitly discuss the concept, content, form, purpose, method, scope, types, and value of the history of philosophy. Greater space was allotted to the discussion of these themes in the introductions and prefaces to a growing number of student handbooks on the history of philosophy as well as full-scale works on the same. These appeared alongside a dozen separate theoretical treatises on history of philosophy in this period.<sup>17</sup> That issues relating to the history of philosophy drew more attention in the 1790s than at any other time in the eighteenth century was due partly to the radical changes in the political and social order of Europe then occurring and philosophical reflection in Germany (as elsewhere) on the meaning of these changes for the history and destiny of humanity. During these years, Kant posed the question, "Whether the human race is constantly progressing?"<sup>18</sup> Interest in the history of philosophy received a concrete stimulus in 1790 with the announcement of the Berlin Royal Academy's prize question: "What real progress has metaphysics made in Germany since the time of Leibniz and Wolff?" After looking through German philosophical journals of this period, the historiographer Lutz Geldsetzer reported that "the overwhelming portion of the philosophical research is devoted to historical themes."<sup>19</sup> One should note that Reinhold's essay, "Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie" ("On the Concept of History of Philosophy"), was published in a journal wholly devoted to the theoretical discussion of the history of philosophy: *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, edited by Georg Gustav Fülleborn. Seven volumes of this journal appeared from 1794 to 1799.<sup>20</sup> That there was increased interest in the history of philosophy among academic philosophers is more than plausible if one considers that the discussion of the history of philosophy was philosophical in nature, beginning with the very concepts of history and philosophy.<sup>21</sup> "It is above all in Germany and in the northern countries that the most important works of history of philosophy were conceived and executed," states Joseph-Marie de Gérando in *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie* (Paris, 1804).<sup>22</sup> Wilhelm Tennemann, the leading German historian of philosophy at century's end and de Gérando's translator, declared with some self-conceit: "The German nation has done far more for the reclamation and culture of the field of history of philosophy than any other nation." He added, "This is a fact that needs no proof."<sup>23</sup> More recently, Lucien Braun has commented, "The history of philosophy is, at the moment

of its radical modification, a German thing, a Protestant thing."<sup>24</sup> All elements of the history of philosophy were subject to debate, and opinions were so varied that in 1800 one internal observer remarked, "Among the writers of history, no type is more disunited than the writers of the history of philosophy."<sup>25</sup>

I view Reinhold, Kant's greatest early exponent, as leading a movement to overthrow the long tradition of history of philosophy writing in the West.<sup>26</sup> This tradition has its beginnings with Diogenes Laërtius, the third-century author of *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, which has been one of the most frequently consulted sources on ancient philosophers since its Latin translation and printing in 1475.<sup>27</sup> The work organizes philosophers into schools, following their chronological succession and beginning with the biographical details and philosophical views of each school's founder. As late as the eighteenth century, "lives and opinions," a combination of doxography and biography, was the dominant mode of history of philosophy writing.<sup>28</sup> The "lives and opinions" mode is characteristic of several successful works of history of philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One such work is Thomas Stanley's *The history of philosophy: containing the lives, opinions, actions and discourses of the philosophers of every sect* (1655–62), which draws its material heavily from Isaac Casaubon's Latin edition of Diogenes's text.<sup>29</sup> Another example is Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, expanded and republished several times since the first edition of 1697.<sup>30</sup> (Bayle ordered his articles alphabetically by philosopher's name.) An early eighteenth-century example is Gerhard Johannes Voss's *De philosophia et philosophorum sectis* in the enlarged edition of 1705.<sup>31</sup> History of philosophy was offered in *Acta philosophorum*, a journal edited by Christoph August Heumann from 1715 to 1726.<sup>32</sup> André-François Boureau-Deslandes' *Histoire critique de la philosophie, où l'on traite de son origine, de ses progrès et des diverses revolutions qui lui sont arrivées jusqu'à notre temps*, published in 1737, is another work of "lives and opinions."<sup>33</sup> These were all eclipsed by the *Historia critica philosophiae*, written by the Lutheran theologian Jacob Brucker.<sup>34</sup> Its five volumes (the fourth volume was issued in two parts) appeared between 1742 and 1744; a sixth volume appeared with the second edition of 1766–7.<sup>35</sup> It would not be an exaggeration to say that the eighteenth century consulted Brucker. Several generations of philosophers learned the history of philosophy from his work. After finishing his own six-volume history of philosophy, Dieterich Tiedemann complained that his contemporaries still used Brucker as if no new work in the history of philosophy had been done since.<sup>36</sup> Johann

Gottlieb Gerhard Buhle, another end-of-century historian of philosophy, considered Brucker the true founder of the history of philosophy.<sup>37</sup> Goethe learned his history of philosophy from Brucker. Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer referred to Brucker.<sup>38</sup> The great bulk of the articles on philosophers and topics in the history of philosophy in Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* are not much more than translations of the relevant parts of Brucker's Latin work.<sup>39</sup> (Denis Diderot and his collaborators used Boureau-Deslandes' *Histoire critique* secondly.<sup>40</sup>) There were yet other foreign imitators.<sup>41</sup> De Gérando wrote that the *Historia critica philosophiae* was "the vastest composition of this genre that still [sees] the light of day."<sup>42</sup> With Brucker's work, the history of philosophy attained new heights of erudition through the study and criticism of an array of sources and with attention paid to the historical and cultural context of the philosophers' ideas.

Nonetheless, Reinhold charged that historians of philosophy, Brucker not exempted, had devoted more space to the lives of philosophers than to their philosophical ideas. Thoroughly dissatisfied with the existing works of history of philosophy, he declared,

The man who has in his possession and power not only the old monuments and sources of the history of philosophy, but all necessary and useful historical, philological, grammatical and logical aids is nevertheless called a mere compiler and mechanical handler of the materials for a future history of philosophy, not inventor of its plan, not architect of its structure.<sup>43</sup>

If all previous authors of history of philosophy were compilers and mechanical handlers, what new requirement did Reinhold set for a man to deserve the title of historian of philosophy? He required that he have "an acquaintance with the nature of the human faculties of representation, knowledge, and desire."<sup>44</sup> That is, he required them to be acquainted with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Reinhold was not happy and would not be happy until a Kantian thinker wrote the history of philosophy. Until this future event, the history of philosophy was condemned to read like Bayle's unrelentingly skeptical account of philosophy in *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, one of the more widely known sources on the history of philosophy circulating in the eighteenth century in which, Reinhold bewailed, "the most famous and worthy autonomous thinkers [*Selbstdenker*]" are treated "in the most unworthy manner." By the end of the eighteenth century,

eleven editions of Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, including the German edition of 1741–4, existed.<sup>45</sup>

Georg Goess, *Privatlehrer* at Erlangen, agreed perfectly with Reinhold: The history of philosophy should be something distinct from the existing genres of "history of the human intellect," history of sciences, and "lives and opinions."<sup>46</sup> Goess also wanted to separate the history of philosophy from the history of mathematics, natural history, and the history of mankind and its religion.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the forementioned Buhle, a professor *ordinarius* of philosophy at Göttingen (and a Kantian), taught that the history of philosophy was separate and distinct from other historical sciences, e.g., intellectual history, the history of arts and sciences, and history of religions.<sup>48</sup> For Buhle, too, a collection of literary and biographical notes ("lives and opinions") relating to the texts of philosophers or philosophical schools did not qualify as history of philosophy.<sup>49</sup> The history of philosophy as presented by Johann Heinrich Alsted, Gerhard Johannes Voss, and Daniel Georg Morhof, "for whom philosophy itself . . . was in the first instance a form of literature," would not be acceptable.<sup>50</sup> Morhof's concept of history of philosophy encompassed exactly those things that Goess wanted to exclude: natural philosophy, mathematics, astrology, and magic.<sup>51</sup> Brucker's approach was also unacceptable because the *Historia critica philosophiae* was, at a certain level, a history of natural philosophy concerned centrally with the theory of matter.<sup>52</sup>

Morhof's *Polyhistor*, a fine example of the genre *historia literaria*, which flourished in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, consists of three parts: *literarius*, *philosophicus* and *practicus*.<sup>53</sup> The *Polyhistor literarius* is divided into seven sections: libraries, method, excerpting, grammar, criticism, rhetoric, and poetics. The *Polyhistor philosophicus* is divided into the history of philosophy (*Polyhistor philosophicus-historicus*), covering the ancient schools, the Scholastics, and the *Novatores* as well as the history of natural philosophy (*Polyhistor physicus*) including metaphysics (in the Aristotelian sense), the *artes divinatoriae*, magic, mathematics, and, finally, the theory of knowledge. The third part, *Practicus*, covers ethics, politics, economy, history, theology, jurisprudence, and medicine. Like its predecessor, the Humanist encyclopedia, the *Polyhistor* disclosed the contents of the great philosophical, poetical, rhetorical, and historical texts of antiquity, but in addition gave a historical account of each field through an account of the literature relating to it. The *Polyhistor* was in this sense "literary history" in that knowledge of any discipline is intimately tied to knowledge of books and libraries.<sup>54</sup>

In the early pages of the first edition of the *Polyhistor*, Morhof claims the glory of being the first to write a work of *historia literaria* as outlined by Francis Bacon in *De augmentis scientiarum* (1623).<sup>55</sup> There, Bacon proposes the idea of collecting philosophical systems and opinions from the writings of the ancients, whether they dealt directly with philosophical matters or not.<sup>56</sup> *Historia literaria* combined Baconian methods of attaining knowledge with the older, Humanist methods of attaining knowledge through texts.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, when the Kantians moved to separate the history of philosophy from the history of all other fields of knowledge; when they insisted on a distinction between the history of philosophy on the one hand and the history of literature on the other, they were rejecting both Humanist and Baconian modes of historical writing, which were by then two-hundred- and three-hundred-year-old practices.

Reinhold, Goess, and Buhle wanted the history of philosophy to become an autonomous field of knowledge and hoped to set its boundaries with a Kantian definition.<sup>58</sup> To them, it was necessary to have a definition and to base the definition on a precise concept of philosophy. "*Philosophy* is the science of the nature of human mind in and for itself, and of its pure relation to objects outside itself. The *history of philosophy* is a pragmatic account of the most important attempts made by the most preeminent minds of antiquity and modern times to bring about this science."<sup>59</sup> That previous historians "did not correctly, precisely, and distinctly establish . . . the concept of philosophy and . . . the purpose of the history of philosophy and mistook its true domain" is why the discipline, in its current state, is more "literary" or "cultural history" than history of philosophy.<sup>60</sup>

In the same year that Reinhold called for the reform of the history of philosophy, another essay appeared, bearing a remarkable title: "A Few Ideas on the Revolution in Philosophy Brought About by I. Kant and Particularly on the Influence of the Same on the Treatment of the History of Philosophy."<sup>61</sup> The author, Carl Heinrich Heydenreich, claimed that Kant's philosophy necessitated a "complete transformation of the method of treatment of philosophical history" just as it necessitated a revolution in philosophy itself; and that even the best of the existing histories must appear as mere compilations in relation to a (yet to be realized) history of philosophy composed according to Kantian principles.<sup>62</sup> Now that Kant presented the one true system of philosophy, in Heydenreich's opinion, it was now possible to give an account of philosophy that could present its development toward its true end. The term he used for such an account was "pragmatic history."<sup>63</sup> He also argued that, since Kant had sized up the whole

field of pure reason, a pragmatic history of metaphysics was now possible as well. Furthermore, a pragmatic history of practical philosophy could now be written since the “path to the true principles of morality” had been established.<sup>64</sup> A pragmatic history of religion was likewise for the first time feasible now that Kant had arrived at the true principles of rational religion.<sup>65</sup>

Heydenreich published an expanded version of his essay under a different title, *Originalideen über die Kritische Philosophie* (1793), which poses these questions: “Is there one philosophy? What is its essence? From when can one recount its existence? In what sense and to what extent can one call Kant the creator of philosophy? What kind of influence do his investigations have on the treatment of philosophical history?”<sup>66</sup> More boldly than in the earlier version, Heydenreich claimed that Kant’s Critical Philosophy provided a universally valid concept of philosophy. Believing that he was in possession of this true concept, he defined philosophy as

[t]he science of human nature, to the extent that its powers are determined by the original, essential, universally valid forms, rules and principles and to the extent that the efficacy of these (powers) can be grasped through the pure consciousness of these (forms, rules, principles) individually and as a whole.<sup>67</sup>

Original sources and the careful scrutiny of the same, so essential to humanist and modern-historical practice, were thought more or less superfluous if one may judge by Heydenreich’s assertion that “[t]he only source of knowledge for all philosophy is consciousness itself,” the purpose of philosophy being the investigation of “the faculties of human nature.” He also claimed that the form and function of these faculties were a design of nature and that one should understand them “through pure consciousness of the natural laws” that rule their operation.<sup>68</sup>

For Heydenreich, the most conspicuous sign of the incomplete state of philosophy before Kant’s arrival was the absence of a universally valid concept of this science—a point that Reinhold had also made. One was faced with a choice among a dozen concepts of philosophy. Heydenreich noted that it was actually a position taken by certain “skeptical” opponents of the Critical Philosophy that, due to the existence of several competing concepts of philosophy, one should withhold assent to any one concept. For them, the purpose of the history of philosophy was to show the strengths and weaknesses of exist-

ing systems of philosophy and to demonstrate especially the inherent limitations or defects of systematic philosophy in general. They compared systems of philosophy and allowed themselves to take the best aspects of two or more systems if, in doing so, it should prove useful to their ends. These unnamed opponents of Kantian philosophy were Johann Georg Feder, Christoph Meiners, and Christian Garve, known to the learned German public as “common sense philosophers” and known to today’s historians as *Popularphilosophen*.

As Feder explained, “[i]n order to protect myself from the delusions of one-sided representations and to reach well-founded insights it is necessary to compare different ways of representation and to study several systems.”<sup>69</sup> The method of *Popularphilosophie* is exhibited in Feder’s textbook history of philosophy, *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften, nebst der nötigen Geschichte, zum Gebrauche seiner Zuhörer* (1767; 2nd ed. 1769).<sup>70</sup> Kantians ridiculed Feder and other *Popularphilosophen* for their concept of philosophy, which they derided as “syncretism.”<sup>71</sup>

Although the *Popularphilosophen* received training in Leibnizio-Wolffian philosophy, it was not their intention to produce systematic philosophy. They were not interested in finding the rational foundations of human knowledge and morality and were not persuaded by the recent claims of the Kantians to having done so. Johan van der Zande has described them as moderate or “methodical” skeptics who settled for probabilities in knowledge and not certainties.<sup>72</sup> The Kantians may have claimed that Kant had strictly shown the limits of the human faculties of knowledge, but the *Popularphilosophen* claimed that they had always assumed these limits as a given.

Heydenreich complained of the “skeptics” who “cannot persuade themselves that Kant’s critical system is new and singular, the first and last of its kind. They refer to history and accuse all those of ignorance who claim that no attempt of a philosopher before Kant can be compared . . . to the latter’s enterprise.”<sup>73</sup> Here, Heydenreich was echoing Kant’s irritation with the “scholars for whom the history of philosophy (ancient as well as modern) is itself their philosophy”:

[I]n their opinion nothing can be said that has not already been said before; and in fact this opinion can stand for all time as an infallible prediction, for since the human understanding has wandered over countless subjects in various ways through many centuries, it can hardly fail that for anything new something old should be found that has some similarity with it.<sup>74</sup>

Like Kant, Heydenreich did not say who these critics were or what they argued exactly, but he could well have been referring to the first reviewer of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The anonymous review appeared on January 19, 1782 in a supplement to the *Göttingische Anzeigen*.<sup>75</sup> The reviewer, who would later reveal himself as Christian Garve, summed up Kant's philosophy as a "system of higher or transcendental idealism" *not* unlike that of George Berkeley.<sup>76</sup>

Bishop Berkeley claimed that objects in the world were mere representations or "modifications" of ourselves.<sup>77</sup> To the extent that this seemed true of Kant's philosophy, it invited comparisons to Berkeley's.<sup>78</sup> Others compared Kant to David Hume. Johann Georg Hamann, for instance, called Kant the "Prussian Hume."<sup>79</sup> Late eighteenth-century critics pegged Kant's philosophy as a skeptical idealism, which common sense philosophers regarded moreover as a form of solipsism or "egoism," i.e., doubt of the reality of everything except one's own self.<sup>80</sup>

Heydenreich also did not mention Johann August Eberhard at Halle, who referred readers to the history of philosophy, specifically to the achievements of Leibniz, in arguing for the *unexceptionality* of Kant's work.<sup>81</sup> Eberhard claimed that whatever was true in Kant's philosophy was already discovered by Leibniz and that wherever Kant differed from Leibniz, Kant was wrong.<sup>82</sup> Eberhard carried out his polemic in a journal founded specifically to combat Kantianism, *Philosophisches Magazin*, edited by himself and J. G. Maass and J. E. Schwab.<sup>83</sup> In an article appearing in the first volume (1788–9), Eberhard wrote,

The Leibnizian philosophy contains just as much of a critique of reason as [the Kantian philosophy], while at the same time it still introduces a dogmatism based on a precise analysis of the faculties of knowledge. It therefore contains all that is true in the new philosophy and, in addition, a well-grounded extension of the sphere of the understanding.<sup>84</sup>

If this were true, the Kantians could not claim that Kant's philosophy represented a real advance over the Leibnizio-Wolffian system. Claims of a "Copernican revolution" effected by the new philosophy would be unfounded. In Eberhard's view, there was no real progress in philosophy since the time of Leibniz and Wolff.

The first counterattacks came from Reinhold and another Kantian, A. W. Rehburg, through articles and reviews that appeared in the Jena-based *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, but the Wolffians' provo-

cation was too great: Kant broke a personal vow not to engage in controversies with his critics and wrote a rare polemical piece, *On the Discovery According to Which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One?* (1790).<sup>85</sup> Here, he reiterates, but in clearer terms, the central theses of his *Critique of Pure Reason* and accused Eberhard of misinterpreting—indeed, misrepresenting—his philosophy to the public. Thus, in 1793, with no sign of this controversy relenting, Heydenreich came to Kantianism's defense by arguing that those who denied the originality of Kant's philosophy by referring to history betrayed an inability to judge that philosophy. He contended that history showed the novelty and singularity of the Kantian system.<sup>86</sup>

From Heydenreich's (Kantian) perspective, philosophy was in a woeful state before Kant, when all systems "without exception" were "groundless and inconsequential" by virtue of the fact that they were not "Critical" (not Kantian). He likened this state of philosophy to a state of war, which the *Critique of Pure Reason* brought to an end.<sup>87</sup> Heydenreich would not altogether deny the usefulness of previous philosophical work, but what could one expect from eras that did not know Kantian philosophy?<sup>88</sup> In a Kantian era, a history of philosophy was at last possible. The "pragmatic historian" could now show the progressions and revolutions of philosophy in their coherent totality and describe the development of a system or opinion of a philosopher in connection to the nature of the faculties of the human mind. The author of such a history should be able to judge the diversity of opinions and systems by applying firm principles. He should be able to explain why the human mind took this and that turn, leading ultimately to the most recent revolution in philosophy. It was as if Kantian philosophy bestowed on the historian special powers of divination, enabling him to see the past and future course of philosophy. Heydenreich called Kantian philosophy the "light" that reveals the link between one moment in philosophy to the next. He even stated that the historian of philosophy was to show the "goal" to which philosophy was directed.<sup>89</sup> Finally, as if to forestall criticism that an application of Kantian principles to the history of philosophy would skew that history and result in one-sidedness, Heydenreich assured the reader that "the rules of critique and hermeneutics" were not to be discarded; that no inappropriate meaning would be imposed on this history but, rather, its "actual" meaning would be strengthened.<sup>90</sup>

Possibly the most rigorous theorist to tackle these questions was Johann Christian August Grohmann, a Kantian philosopher at Wittenberg.<sup>91</sup> In an essay *Über den Begriff der Geschichte der Philoso-*

*phie* (1797), Grohmann defined the history of philosophy in stricter terms than even Reinhold or Goess: "The history of philosophy is the systematic exposition of the necessary and effective systems of philosophy considered as science of *a priori* knowledge."<sup>92</sup> Philosophy is concerned with knowledge that is neither empirical nor temporal.<sup>93</sup> The chronology of history can contradict the progress of philosophy since the latter "proceeds systematically according to the laws of thinking itself."<sup>94</sup> Grohmann warned that the historian who sticks to chronology is apt to do so at the expense of reason. The history of philosophy did have some sort of order, but, for Grohmann, this order was not chronology.

Does the Kantian theory of history of philosophy actually conform to Kant's own thought? Kant never offered a lecture course on the history of philosophy. He never produced a formal work of history of philosophy nor did he publish theoretical views on the history of philosophy, but, as I have shown, the converts to his philosophy published in this area and sometimes with his approval. In their responses to the Berlin Academy's prize question on the progress of metaphysics, K. L. Reinhold, Johann Heinrich Abicht, and Christian Friedrich Jensch argued that Kant's philosophy was a decisive step forward from Leibniz's and Wolff's.<sup>95</sup> Kant himself drafted a response to the Academy's question.<sup>96</sup> In "Lose Blätter zu den Fortschritten der Metaphysik" ("Loose Papers on the Progress of Metaphysics"), published in Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften*, there is a fragment "on a philosophical [*philosophirende*] history of philosophy"<sup>97</sup>:

All historical knowledge is empirical and thus knowledge of things as they are, not as they must necessarily be. . . . A historical account of philosophy relates how and in what order one has philosophized until now. However, to philosophize is a gradual development of human reason, and this could not have gone on or have even begun empirically, but, indeed, by concepts only. What reason compelled through its verdicts on things . . . must have been a (theoretical or practical) need of reason to climb toward the grounds [of things] and further toward the first grounds; from the very beginning through common reason. . . .<sup>98</sup>

Unlike ordinary history, the history of philosophy is not empirical; it is not characterized by chance or accident. The history of philosophy as "a gradual development of human reason" has a logical necessity. Kant continues:

A philosophical history of philosophy is itself not historically or empirically possible, but rationally, that is, *a priori* possible. For when it selects the *facta* of reason, it does not borrow them from historical narrative, but draws them from the nature of human reason; as philosophical archaeology.<sup>99</sup>

For Kant, the terms “historical” and “empirical” do not describe the work of the historian of philosophy.<sup>100</sup> So different is the history of philosophy from ordinary history that Kant suggested to rename it “philosophical archaeology.”

“How is an *a priori* history possible?” Kant posed this question in 1794 and alluded to the traits of a prophet.<sup>101</sup> In a letter of August 14, 1795 to Carl Morgenstern, Kant flatters his friend, writing that he is a man capable “of composing a history of philosophy that does not follow the chronological order of books relating to it, but the natural order of the ideas which must successively develop themselves according to human reason.”<sup>102</sup> In “Lose Blätter,” Kant describes the history of philosophy as “so special a kind that nothing of what is recounted therein could happen without knowing beforehand what should have happened and therefore also what can happen.”<sup>103</sup> Thus, Kant himself seems to prescribe the *a priori* construction of the history of philosophy.

In another of Kant’s manuscripts, one finds this passage:

There are thus three stages that philosophy had to go through with respect to metaphysics. The first was the stage of dogmatism; the second was that of skepticism; the third was that of the criticism of pure reason. This temporal order is grounded in the nature of the human faculty of knowledge.<sup>104</sup>

Not only do Kant’s words authorize the *a priori* construction of the history of philosophy; they also prescribe the narrative: Metaphysics was dogmatic; skepticism falsified it; and then true metaphysics was achieved by Kant. The history of philosophy culminates in Kant’s philosophy.<sup>105</sup>

Attacks against Kantianism grew more intense in the 1790s. Critics renewed the charge of Humean skepticism even as Kant and Reinhold maintained that Kantian philosophy refuted Hume’s skepticism. Salomon Maimon thought that Kant succeeded in refuting the dogmatism of School Philosophy, but he was not persuaded that Kant succeeded in refuting skepticism. Indeed, Maimon interpreted

Kantianism itself as a variety of skepticism. This was also the view of Kant's friend in Göttingen, Carl Friedrich Stäudlin, the author of *Geschichte und Geist des Skepticismus, vorzüglich in Rücksicht auf Moral und Religion* (1794).<sup>106</sup> Stäudlin was aware of Kant's claim that he had defeated skepticism, but he pointed out that, to some readers, Kant's philosophy seemed as harmful to religion and morality as the works of the greatest skeptics.<sup>107</sup> In the introduction to *Geschichte und Geist des Skepticismus*, Stäudlin disapproved of popular disruptive kinds of skepticism, while approving of the "philosophical skepticism" that he, during the 1780s as a student at Tübingen, found in Kant's work. He related further how, after studying the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he and fellow-students became more skeptical, doubting everything that they had been taught, including their religion.<sup>108</sup> Despite Kant's and Reinhold's statements to the contrary, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was interpreted from the moment of its first appearance as the newest incarnation of skepticism. Kant was a skeptic *malgré lui*.

Kant's philosophy was attacked continually since 1781. Among the battery of arguments used by the *Popularphilosophen* and orthodox Wolffians were arguments from history. As Heydenreich noted, the history of philosophy, as it stood, did not do justice to Immanuel Kant. History was used not infrequently to indict Kant on a variety of charges, including Berkeleyan subjectivism and Humean skepticism. Historical precedents, the failures or successes of past systems, were facts brought up in arguing that Kant's philosophy did not represent real progress in philosophy.

If the history of philosophy could be used to confute Kant's claims, it could be used also to defend them. In the 1790s, the rival philosophical schools moved the battle into the field of history of philosophy, with the Kantians hoping to usurp the writing of the history of philosophy from those empiricists, eclectics, and other pre-Critical writers whose job it had been previously.<sup>109</sup> Within a decade of the completion of Kant's philosophical project, there arose a coordinated effort among Kantian philosophers to rewrite the history of philosophy so as to remake it into the unfolding of the Critical Philosophy. The break from historiographical tradition could not have been more complete: The Kantians favored *a priori* construction in historical writing and insisted on a definition and criteria for philosophy derived from Kant's system.

While there were a half-dozen Kantians who contributed to the theory of history of philosophy, there were just two Kantians who actually dedicated labor to writing histories of philosophy of

any length: Buhle and Tennemann. Buhle authored an eight-volume *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1796–1804) and a separate six-volume work, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie seit der Epoche der Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften* (1800–1804).<sup>110</sup> Tennemann, a professor of philosophy at Jena and later at Marburg, produced the lengthiest history of philosophy written in the Kantian mode: the eleven-volume, unfinished *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1798–1819).<sup>111</sup> He also published a single-volume history, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1812; later editions of 1816, 1820, 1825, and 1829).<sup>112</sup> Given the scale of Tennemann's project and the reforms he hoped to institute, *Geschichte der Philosophie* was positioned to displace Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae* as the standard work of history of philosophy.<sup>113</sup>

In the introduction to his *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Tennemann detailed the flaws of previous histories of philosophy. They were mainly collections of reports on the lives and opinions of philosophers. They made incomplete use of sources or used inappropriate sources. They were poorly organized and lacked an overall plan.<sup>114</sup> Like the other Kantians, he charged that previous histories of philosophy were simply copied out of earlier works "without critique, taste, discriminations" and "without philosophical spirit."<sup>115</sup> They perpetuated "a mass of historical errors" and the prejudices of the Church Fathers, who unfortunately relied on revelation and were biased in favor of the Jews. Subsequent historians of philosophy, the majority of them theologians, introduced the dubious notion of "antediluvian philosophy" and theological polemics into the history of philosophy.<sup>116</sup> In brief, Tennemann regarded most previous histories of philosophy as unphilosophical compilations and chronicles.<sup>117</sup>

Tennemann was able to concede that Brucker's work was a great achievement, but he made the qualification that its greatness lies in the scale of the compilation and not in any transformation of the way in which sources were studied. In Tennemann's view, Brucker, too, is guilty of giving greater description to the lives than to the systems of the philosophers, and even where he gives greater description to the latter, the result is fragmentary. In addition to these weaknesses, there are "many investigations that do not belong in there." As sharp as he was, Brucker could have possessed more "philosophical spirit"; his concept of philosophy was "too vacillating and indeterminate"; and he did not proceed from "a fixed point of view and plan."<sup>118</sup> Yet, despite these many flaws, Tennemann fully acknowledged that Brucker deserved praise for "the first complete work on the history" of philosophy.<sup>119</sup>

Tennemann recognized that the history of philosophy shared certain characteristics with other genres of history, but he still held that it was an autonomous genre separate from the history of nations, scholarship, and other sciences. In agreement with Reinhold and Goess, Tennemann cautioned against mistaking the history of the literature of philosophy for the history of philosophy itself.<sup>120</sup> In his *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1816 edition), Tennemann differentiated between, on the one hand, the history of philosophy and, on the other, the history of mankind, intellectual history, history of the sciences, biography, literary history, analysis of works, and compilations of opinions. He assigned to these latter the status of “either background knowledge or materials useful to the history of philosophy.”<sup>121</sup> No less importantly, the history of philosophy should not be a mere exposition of philosophical systems with the historical dimension omitted.<sup>122</sup>

Regarding kinds of sources, Tennemann permitted philosophers’ own writings, other literary works by them, reports and investigations of observers, and other historical data.<sup>123</sup> “Philosophemes” (*Philosopheme*) should in any case be taken only from the writings of the philosophers. Their extra-philosophical writings should be treated as supplementary sources.<sup>124</sup> Since all the information from such a fund of sources cannot be incorporated into a history, it was important to decide what should be included. Tennemann presented some rules: That which has “a relation to and influence on the formation of this science [philosophy]” may be included. That which “disrupts the coherency and overview of the history” should not be included.<sup>125</sup> Detailed biographies of philosophers should not be included as these would “injure the unity of the history” and inappropriately connect the actual object of inquiry, philosophy, to the personal histories of the philosophers. Details of the life of a philosopher may still be woven into the history of philosophy, but only if doing so enhances the coherency of philosophy’s development.<sup>126</sup>

As a philosopher practicing history of philosophy, Tennemann had no use for the fanatical precepts put forward by Reinhold and Grohmann. In the introduction to his *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Tennemann works methodically toward a definition for the “history of the discipline of philosophy”:

History in the broad sense is the recounting of past events. History in a narrower sense is the recounting of a succession of events that composes a whole. A mere chronology does not compose this whole. These events must stand in mutual relation to each other as changes, effects, or causes

with respect to an object; or their mutual relation must consist in their being directed toward a purpose.<sup>127</sup>

The history of a people, the biography of an individual, and the history of philosophy itself were given as examples of history in the narrower sense. *Contra* Grohmann, Tennemann held that chronology is essential to every kind of history, including the history of philosophy. He would observe chronology as “the first law of history.”<sup>128</sup> *Contra* Reinhold, who had argued that the history of philosophy had nothing to do with events in time and space, Tennemann held a heterodox position. He stated that events in the history of philosophy related both internally to human consciousness and externally to the world. “The development of reason occurs through external stimulation and thus depends on external causes” that advance, impede, or hold it in place.<sup>129</sup> “The efforts of reason are inner events of the mind.” “There is thus an internal and external connection among events in time. Events have their external causes and results, and they have their internal grounds in the organization and laws of human consciousness.”<sup>130</sup> Lastly, these events have a relation to reason’s purpose.<sup>131</sup> Unlike simple annals and chronicles, history as conceived by Tennemann can claim to present events “according to their real interrelation in time” as causes and effects.<sup>132</sup> “This concrete relation among events is the foundation of all history, the condition of fidelity and truth, without which history would no longer be history.”<sup>133</sup>

“Science,” as defined by Tennemann, is a “system of knowledge.”<sup>134</sup> “[R]eason is the only source of all science; for every science is an architectonically rendered structure for which reason draws up the idea and guides the completion.”<sup>135</sup> The “idea of science” is a “necessary expression of reason,” subsisting through all the changes of the science’s history.<sup>136</sup> Tennemann thus reasoned that the idea of science is at the same time an *ideal* of science, but in this case, the events relating to that science, taken together, constitute a history whose course runs from what is consummate in philosophy to what is defective. Since he considered such a course “unnatural,” contradicting “every analogy of human nature,” he recommended that one view the idea or ideal of the science as the “goal.” As such, “all events . . . now appear not as changes of the science, but rather as exertions and activities of reason on behalf of science.”<sup>137</sup> Through such reasoning, Tennemann was able to arrive at a complete definition: “History of philosophy is exposition of the successive development of philosophy or exposition of the exertions of reason to realize the idea of the science from the final grounds and laws of nature and freedom.”<sup>138</sup> Even

before the turn of the nineteenth century, the first Kantian historians self-consciously set themselves on the path of teleology.

But not all students of philosophy were persuaded that a revolution had taken place in philosophy and that a corresponding revolution in historiography was necessary. Certainly, the opponents of Kantian philosophy remained unconvinced. One such opponent was Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811), the literary critic and editor of *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend*, his collaboration with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn from 1759 to 1765. He edited the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* from 1765 to 1792. Near the end of his life, this pillar of the Berlin Enlightenment and member of that city's Academy of Sciences noted that esteemed German authors still did not agree on what belongs in the history of philosophy or how this history was to be organized and made practical.<sup>139</sup> He was well aware that Tennemann thought that the purpose of the history of philosophy was to cultivate the science of the final grounds and laws of nature and freedom and their interrelation.<sup>140</sup> He related that Reinhold, as early as 1781, wanted to remove all references to "opinions" from the history of philosophy. For Nicolai, these were enough clues to indicate that Tennemann and Reinhold believed that this "science of the final grounds of nature and freedom" was already discovered; that the project of philosophy was completed through Kant's critique of theoretical and practical reason and Reinhold's theory of the faculty of representation. Or in any case, this was the tone of many followers of Kant.<sup>141</sup> Nicolai continued,

They believed that philosophical science has been fully discovered and secured; that knowledge has reached its conclusion with Kant and Fichte; and that it has fulfilled what philosophers had sought since millennia. Thus, Goess, Buhle, Grohmann, and Reinhold all at the same time viewed philosophical history from the perspective that all philosophers of ancient and modern times should be represented, and be accepted or rejected, according to how much they had in common with the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>142</sup>

Buhle came in for harsher criticism. What made both of his works "completely useless," in Nicolai's judgment, was "his slavish adherence to the Kantian system, by which he subordinates to this system the whole history of philosophy and wants to discover almost everywhere traces of Kantian ideas . . . he judges many objects all too one-sidedly; indeed, sometimes distorts the true perspective of

the doctrines of ancient philosophers."<sup>143</sup> Nicolai found that this was especially apparent in Buhle's account of Aristotle, in which constant agreements are discovered between Kant and Aristotle through, Nicolai alleged, Buhle's arbitrary translation. He did this even if the method and system of these two philosophers were essentially different. Nicolai pointed out that Tennemann, too, proceeded mainly from Kantian perspectives, although he was nowhere near the same degree a partisan as Buhle. He compared Tennemann to another historian of philosophy, Dieterich Tiedemann. While it could be said that both Tennemann and Tiedemann carefully studied sources and exercised good judgment, "Tiedemann [was] attached to no system" and was free of biases.<sup>144</sup>

Nicolai, too, had no attachment to any particular system. This eclectic philosopher was not deterred, throughout the years of Kantianism's ascendancy, from thinking that "the best philosophy" was "the one that examines all systems impartially"; the one that distinguishes "disputes over words from truly different opinions"; the one that does not separate systems, but "seeks to unite them as it selects the best from each."<sup>145</sup> In 1808, when Nicolai published these criticisms, eclecticism was already an endangered philosophy in Germany as increasingly only one system was being presented to students.<sup>146</sup>

We shall see in Chapters 5 and 6 that the Kantian School changed the conventions of writing the history of philosophy for later historians of philosophy. The Kantians discarded the old rules of composition, which had defined the genre for centuries, and embraced the rules of *a priori* construction. They (re)wrote the history of philosophy so that it read as the unfolding of Kantianism and demonstration of its truth. We shall see in Chapter 4 that they also excluded Africa and Asia from the history of philosophy, which they justified with racial-anthropological arguments learned from Christoph Meiners. This combination of *a priori* construction and racial Eurocentrism would become enduring features of modern histories of philosophy starting from the era of Kant's *Critiques*.