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## In Time: Periodical Theories and Philosophies of History in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

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# In Time: Periodical Theories and Philosophies of History in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout modern history, concepts and metaphors of time have been part of the self-conception and self-marketing of countless periodicals. Concentrating on journals and magazines from the German-speaking countries between around 1800 and around 1968, the article outlines a history of the periodical as a subject and object of philosophies of historical time. The cases examined not only show the affinity between periodical theory and the philosophy of history, but also shed light on the specific roles that have been attributed to periodical publishing in varying conceptions of the modern intellectual public sphere.

## KEYWORDS

modern intellectual history, periodical theory, philosophy of history, temporality, theory journals, history of philosophy

In the history and historiography of modern intellectual periodicals, concepts and metaphors of time are not hard to find. From the Age of Enlightenment to the digital era, journals and magazines have been designed and perceived as media with a special relation to historical time: they mirror and reflect ‘their times’, they seek to ‘write’ the past, the present, and the future, and they produce their own temporalities through beginnings, endings, and re-beginnings.<sup>1</sup> Journal editors and magazine authors pose questions that are considered to be contemporary, and thanks to the serial mode of publication, makers, readers, and scholars have traditionally considered the periodical to be *the* media of time and times.<sup>2</sup>

In view of such topoi, one could sceptically point to the fact that this close relationship to time is not exclusive to the periodical. After all, any media format can be regarded as time-mirroring or time-shaping; every written and pictorial source potentially manifests an individual’s or group’s perception of time. Furthermore, one could ask whether temporality really is the most important aspect of periodical publishing: scholars have pointed to spatial aspects of journals and magazines that relate more to their synchronic than to their diachronic dimensions, such as the potential to ‘store’ texts and images and to create productive juxtapositions.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, since the late eighteenth century, reflections on periodicals have first and foremost appeared as reflections on temporality — in the sense of up-to-dateness or ‘seasonableness, suitability to the time’.<sup>4</sup> Such reflections have become part of the self-conception and self-marketing of countless journals and magazines.

In the following, I will outline a history of the periodical as a subject and object of philosophies of historical time. To this end, I will concentrate on a small number of cases from the German-speaking countries between around 1800 and around 1968. While this sample is by no means exhaustive, I argue that it shows the affinity between periodical theory and the philosophy of history and thus points to the specific roles that have been attributed to periodical publishing in modern intellectual history.

- 1 This article elaborates research questions partially outlined in Moritz Neuffer, *Die journalistische Form der Theorie: Die Zeitschrift ‘alternative’, 1958–1982* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021). My discussion of periodical temporalities has been particularly inspired by Yvonne Albers, ‘Start, Stop, Begin Again: The Journal *Mawaqif* and Arab Intellectual Positions since 1968’, *Eurozine* (26 July 2018) [accessed 12 December 2021] and Nora Ramtke, ‘Zeitschrift und Zeitgeschichte: *Die Zeiten* (1805–1820) als chronopoetisches Archiv ihrer Gegenwart’, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 45.1 (2020), 112–34.
- 2 In this article, the singular ‘time’ mostly refers to chronological time, while the plural is used as a synonym for the present or any other period in historical time. In translations of German texts that use the singular ‘Zeit’ in the latter sense, the singular is maintained. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author’s.
- 3 Sean Franzel, ‘Metaphors of Spatial Storage in Enlightenment Historiography and the Eighteenth-Century “Magazine”’, in *The Radical Enlightenment in Germany: A Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Carl Niekerk (Amsterdam: Brill, 2018), pp. 328–52; Gustav Frank, Madleen Podewski, and Stefan Scherer, ‘Kultur – Zeit – Schrift: Literatur- und Kulturzeitschriften als “kleine Archive”’, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 34.2 (2009), 1–45; Malte Lorenzen, ‘Die Zeitschrift als Medium des Vergleich(en): Eine exemplarische Analyse der deutschsprachigen Rundschau-Publizistik während des Ersten Weltkriegs’, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 45.1 (2020), 209–27; Oliver Scheiding and Sabina Fazli, ‘Einleitung: “Zeitschriften als Imaginationsraum und Anschauungsmaterial der Gesellschaft”’, in *Handbuch Zeitschriftenforschung*, ed. by Oliver Scheiding and Sabina Fazli (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022), pp. 11–41.
- 4 *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), II, p. 3326.

## Timeliness and the Birth of the Modern Intellectual Journal: Around 1800

Since the early beginnings of the modern intellectual public sphere, philosophical reflections on periodicity can be linked to the semantics of the French and English ‘journal’, but even more so to the German ‘Zeitschrift’. Wordplay like *Die Zeitschrift* — *Schrift der Zeit* is grounded in an etymology that has always encouraged interpretations of the relationship between time(s) and the media format.<sup>5</sup> As a term for periodical publishing, ‘Zeitschrift’ was used from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, gradually replacing the Gallicism ‘Journal’. The earliest evidence of the word in the periodical sense has been traced back to 1751, when the Saxon official Peter Freiherr von Hohenthal referred to his cameralistic periodical *Oeconomische Nachrichten* as a ‘Zeitschrift’, since his publication was devoted to pressing problems of its times.<sup>6</sup> Previously, the word had referred primarily to chronicles, historical works, and mnemonic inscriptions; the dictionary compiled by the Brothers Grimm speaks of ‘Zeit- und Denkschriften’ that were ‘cut in trees or written in marble columns with gold’.<sup>7</sup>

It seems more than a coincidence that the word ‘Zeitschrift’ first appeared around 1750, and thus in the earliest phase of the historical epoch Reinhart Koselleck famously characterized as the ‘Sattelzeit’ [‘saddle period’]. According to Koselleck, in the century between 1750 and 1850 a significant temporalization of thought, language, and the concept of history took place. Historical time not only became a subject of science, but was now generally perceived as an entity moving along a linear timeline: since the Enlightenment, the plurality of pre-modern ‘histories’ had been subsumed under ‘History’.<sup>8</sup> Even if some of Koselleck’s hypotheses on the ‘Sattelzeit’ have been contested and differentiated by other scholars, they are still of heuristic value.<sup>9</sup> This applies especially to periodical studies, as temporalization is widely reflected in the periodicals that circulated in the intellectual sphere around 1800. In the German-speaking world alone, the years between Weimar Classicism and early Romanticism saw a wave of new intellectual journals that came along with names and metaphors symbolizing the relationship between time and the media format. A famous example is Friedrich Schiller’s literary-philosophical monthly *Die Horen* (1795–97), whose title refers to the Greek goddesses of the seasons.<sup>10</sup> During the planning phase, the editor expressed

- 5 Wilmont Haacke, *Die Zeitschrift – Schrift der Zeit* (Essen: Stamm, 1961). Cf. David Brehm et al., *Zeit/Schrift oder Chronopoetik des ‘Unregelmäßigen’*, *Journalliteratur* 3 (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2022).
- 6 Previous studies have named *Neue Musikalische Zeitschrift zur Beförderung einsamer und geselliger Unterhaltung* (1791) as the first periodical to use the word ‘Zeitschrift’ in its title. Yet the *Zeitschriftendatenbank (ZDB)* lists several examples from the 1780s, the earliest of which is *Nichts ohne Absicht und Nutzen: eine gemeinnützige Zeitschrift oder Abhandlungen und Aufsätze aus der Oekonomie, Naturlehre, Naturgeschichte, Menschenkenntniß und allen dahin gehörigen Wissenschaften* (1781). Cf. Hansjürgen Koschwitz, ‘Der früheste Beleg für das Wort “Zeitschrift”’, *Muttersprache*, 79.5–6 (1969), 174–76; Hans-Albrecht Koch, ‘Zeitschrift’, in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. by Georg Braungart et al., 3 vols (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1997–2003), III (2003), pp. 884–86.
- 7 ‘in bäumen geschnitten oder in marmorseulen mit gold geschrieben.’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, ed. by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, 33 vols (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1854–1971), xxxi (1956), p. 571.
- 8 Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
- 9 Elisabeth Décultot and Daniel Fulda, eds, *Sattelzeit: Historiographiegeschichtliche Revisionen*, *Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäischen Aufklärung* 52 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2016).
- 10 More recent contributions on Schiller’s *Horen* include Steffan Davies, ‘Weimar Classicism and Intellectual Exile: Schiller, Goethe, and *Die Horen*’, *Modern Language Review*, 114.4 (2019), 751–87; Renata Schellenberg, ‘Print and Preserve: Periodicals in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany’, in *(Re-) Writing The Radical: Enlightenment, Revolution and Cultural Transfer in 1790s Germany, Britain and France* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 88–101; Bernhard Fischer, ‘Friedrich Schiller und sein Verleger Johann Friedrich Cotta: Zur Gründungsgeschichte der “Horen”’, *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie*, 125.4 (2006), 499–517.

his conviction that his periodical would become an ‘epoch-making’ work by setting new aesthetic and intellectual standards.<sup>11</sup> In the preface to the first issue, of which the publisher Johann Friedrich Cotta had two thousand copies printed, Schiller announced that the humanistic journal would please its audience with contributions radically different from that ‘by which everything now pleases’.<sup>12</sup> Paradoxically, contemporaneity in Schiller’s sense meant being independent from the demands of the day and the current political and intellectual struggles in post-revolutionary Europe. His conception of aesthetic education, for which *Die Horen* was supposed to serve as a flagship, was timely in the sense that it would help humanity evolve to a higher stage by producing and diffusing content of timeless value.<sup>13</sup>

Around 1800, Schiller was by no means alone in his conviction that a journal was the ideal tool with which to contribute to humanity’s change for the better. Goethe’s *Propyläen* (1798–1800), the Schlegel brothers’ *Athenaeum* (1798–1800), Hölderlin’s *Iduna* or Heinrich von Kleist’s and Adam Müller’s *Phöbus* (1808) were short-lived economic failures with only a few hundred copies sold or, in Hölderlin’s case, never even published.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, these projects were marked by a consciousness of beginning, transition, and evolution. With *Propyläen*, a title that refers to the gateway of the Acropolis, Goethe chose a symbol for the journal’s threshold position on the path to Classicist aesthetic renewal. Kleist presented his art journal in a lyrical prologue that was no less carried by a spirit of intellectual progress and also referred to Schiller’s divine name-givers: ‘Give yourself to the Horae! Not around thee, nor beside, nor backward, Forward turn thy gaze’ reads the prefatory poem to *Phöbus*.<sup>15</sup> Ernst Osterkamp has analysed the ‘pathos of radical new beginning’ in these periodicals around 1800 as an expression of ‘historisches Schwellenbewusstsein’, a consciousness of standing on a ‘historical threshold’.<sup>16</sup>

Although the aesthetic journals explicitly turned their back on the present, they shared their epochal consciousness with periodicals that were more occupied with current events and affairs. Amidst the upheavals in the (post-)Napoleonic era, serial formats were increasingly used to document and comment on what was perceived as a new and continuously changing era.<sup>17</sup> Nora Ramtke has exemplified this in her analysis of the ‘chronopoetical’ magazine *Die Zeiten: Archiv für die neueste Staatengeschichte und Politik*, published in Halle from 1805 to 1820 by the philosopher and professor of constitutional law Christian Daniel Voss. *Die Zeiten* exercised the time-reflexive

11 Friedrich Schiller’s letter to Gottfried Körner, 12 June 1794, translated in *The Correspondence of Frederick Schiller with C. G. Körner*, ed. by Leonard Simpson, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), II, pp. 269–71 (p. 269). Historically, the concept of ‘epoch’ varies between the notion of a turning point in time and the designation of the period that follows this turning point. Cf. Eva Geulen, ‘Die Moderne und die Epochen. Einleitung’, in *Eigenzeiten der Moderne*, ed. by Helmut Hühn and Sabine Schneider, *Ästhetische Eigenzeiten* 15 (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2020), pp. 131–44.

12 ‘In der Tat scheinen die Zeitumstände einer Schrift wenig Glück zu versprechen, die sich über das Lieblingsthema des Tages ein strenges Stillschweigen auferlegen und ihren Ruhm darin suchen wird, durch etwas anders zu gefallen, als wodurch jetzt alles gefällt.’ Friedrich Schiller, [Preface], *Die Horen*, 1.1 (1795), iv–x (p. iv).

13 Todd Kontje, *Imperial Fictions: German Literature Before and Beyond the Nation-State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), p. 95.

14 Günter Mieth, ‘Friedrich Hölderlin’s “Iduna”-Projekt. Das Schicksal eines Dichters’, *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, New Series, 3.3 (1993), 596–602.

15 ‘Gieb den Horen dich hin! Nicht um dich, neben, noch rückwärts,/ Vorwärts wende den Blick.’ Heinrich von Kleist, ‘Prologue’, *Phöbus: Ein Journal für die Kunst*, 1.1 (1808), 4.

16 Ernst Osterkamp, ‘Neue Zeiten – neue Zeitschriften: Publizistische Projekte um 1800’, *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte*, 1.2 (2007), 62–78 (p. 71).

17 Clare Pettitt, *Serial Forms: The Unfinished Project of Modernity 1815–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Mark Turner, ‘The Unruliness of Serials in the Nineteenth Century (and the Digital Age)’, in *Serialization in Popular Culture*, ed. by Rob Allen and Thijs van den Berg, *Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies* 62 (Abingdon: Oxon, 2014), pp. 11–32.

potential of the media format by depicting the ‘Geburtswehen’ [‘birth pains’] of their times and by giving order and meaning to the overflow and acceleration of historical events. In historicizing the present, the periodical intended to provide ‘ein treues Bild der Zeiten’ [‘a faithful image of the times’], Voss wrote.<sup>18</sup>

Contrasting the production of this ‘faithful image’ with Schiller’s ‘epoch-making’, two functional definitions of periodicals in relation to the past and future of the present can be identified. On the one hand, the ‘epoch-making’ periodical claims to actively shape the discourse of its times, while, on the other hand, the ‘faithful’ periodical rather passively depicts it. While this distinction may seem somewhat schematic, it is echoed in numerous reflections on journal-making from 1800 to the present day. One example of this dichotomy is elaborated in the writings of philosopher Friedrich Joseph Wilhelm von Schelling, who made an excursion into the world of periodical publishing in the early nineteenth century.

### Temporal ‘Double-Sidedness’: Schelling’s Journal

In 1813, while working as a lecturer without permanent employment at the University of Erlangen, Schelling founded the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift von Deutschen für Deutsche*, published by Johann Leonhard Schrag in Nuremberg. This periodical, only four issues of which were produced, was intended to provide insights into the ‘essence of German science, art, and education.’<sup>19</sup> In his preface to the first issue, Schelling described a ‘double-sidedness of the journal’:

In general, one could say that the true journal should be at the pinnacle of its time; in order to achieve this, it must in itself be equal to and face the highest [qualities] of its time. Journals which only endeavour to profit from the badness of the times and to swim along with the stream of wretchedness are, in truth, beneath their time. Since, however, it may be assumed that the highest and best of every time is foreign to the greater parts, the true journal must be above its time and ahead of it, but without ever being allowed to completely abandon its relation to the present. In this view, it should be regarded as a mediator of the future with the present. For that which still lies outside and before time, and that which has detached itself from it in the process of coming into being, it should find the historically mediating elements through which it can be brought closer to time or absorbed into it.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to see the double-sidedness of the journal, insofar as it influences time yet also depicts it.<sup>20</sup>

18 Quoted in Ramtke, p. 112.

19 ‘das Wesen deutscher Wissenschaft, Kunst und Bildung’. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, ‘Vorrede’, *Allgemeine Zeitschrift von Deutschen für Deutsche*, 1.1 (1813), iii–xiv (p. x).

20 ‘Im Allgemeinen könnte man sagen, die wahre Zeitschrift soll auf gleicher Höhe mit ihrer Zeit seyn; denn um dieses zu können, muß sie schon an sich dem Höchsten ihrer Zeit wirklich gleich und gegenüber stehen. Zeitschriften, die sich nur bemühen, von dem Schlechten der Zeit Vortheil zu ziehen und mit dem Strom der Erbärmlichkeit selber fortzuschwimmen, stehen der Wahrheit nach unter ihrer Zeit. Da sich indes annehmen läßt, daß das Höchste und Beste jeder Zeit dem größern Theile fremd ist: so muß in sofern die wahre Zeitschrift über ihrer Zeit und vor ihr voraus seyn, aber ohne je die Beziehung zur Gegenwart ganz aufgeben zu dürfen. Nach dieser Ansicht wäre sie als Vermittlerin der Zukunft mit der Gegenwart zu betrachten. Sie soll für das, was noch außer und vor der Zeit liegt, und was im Entstehen sich von ihr losgesagt hat, die geschichtlichen Vermittlungsglieder finden, durch welche es an die Zeit herangebracht oder in diese aufgenommen werden kann. Dabei ist indes nöthig, die doppelte Seite der Zeitschrift anzuerkennen, in wiefern sie einerseits auf die Zeit wirkt, andererseits selbst wieder ein Bild der Zeit seyn will.’ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, ‘Vorrede’, *Allgemeine Zeitschrift von Deutschen für Deutsche*, 1.1 (1813), iii–xiv (pp. iv–v).

In this preface, Schelling thus integrates both the passive and the active role of the journal vis-à-vis historical time: the ideal periodical is supposed to depict today's state of knowledge, but has to go beyond this state in order to mediate between what the philosopher calls the 'pinnacle' of the time and that which is yet to be elevated to a higher level. This periodical theory, formulated by one of the main proponents of German Idealism, reads like another avant-garde theory (*avant la lettre*), but has a less radical ambition than Schiller's 'epoch-making work'. Whereas *Die Horen* was supposed to make a clean break with contemporary aesthetics, Schelling defined the educational role of the journal in a more mediating way and with more consideration for the 'greater parts' and their level of knowledge. The ability to create something truly new or 'epoch-making' is attributed not so much to the periodical as to the monograph:

The first characteristic of a good periodical is indisputably that it is contemporary [zeitgemäß], even if not in keeping with the times [zeitgerecht] in every sense. There are journals that are beneath and behind their time, and only use its progress to be continued by it as a sluggish, inhibiting burden. To be ahead of the times is more appropriate for single works than for a periodical, although in such a periodical many an idea for whose perfect substantiation and complete development the means are still lacking can venture forth individually. But potential abuse must be avoided, since it is not difficult for inadequate talent to scatter untested thoughts at random like seeds, whereas solid talent and the character of genius alone can cultivate a single thought and develop it to scholarly perfection.<sup>21</sup>

Following Schelling, the specific mode of appearance of the periodical media format engenders the problem of ephemerality and provisionality — an argument that is partly reminiscent of Ludwik Fleck's distinction between 'journal science' and 'textbook science'.<sup>22</sup> For Schelling, the content of periodicals can hardly prove to be epochal; they only form the first steps on the way to 'independent' works that are ahead of their time and can one day last in 'perfection'. Three decades later, another variation of this topos appeared in Young Hegelian reflections on periodical publishing.

### **Movement in Time: Periodicals of Young Hegelianism**

In 1842, the former student agitator Arnold Ruge, who had become a central protagonist of the Prussian oppositional group known as the Young Hegelians, published an essay entitled 'Die Zeit und die Zeitschrift' in his periodical *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft*

21 'Die erste Eigenschaft einer guten Zeitschrift ist unstreitig, daß sie zeitgemäß, wenn auch nicht in jedem Verstande zeitgerecht sey. Es gibt Zeitschriften, die unter und hinter ihrer Zeit sind, und die Fortschritte derselben nur benutzen, um als träge, hemmende Last von ihr mit fortgeführt zu werden. Voraus vor der Zeit zu seyn, kommt selbstständigen Werken eher als einer Zeitschrift zu, obschon in einer solchen mancher Gedanke sich einzeln hervorwagen kann, zu dessen vollkommener Begründung und allseitigen Ausbildung die Mittel noch abgehen. Nur muß der leicht mögliche Mißbrauch vermieden werden, da es dem unzulänglichen Talent nicht schwer fällt, ungeprüfte Gedanken auf Geratewohl wie Samenkörner auszustreuen, indes es das Zeichen gediegenen Talents und des, es allein zu Genie adelnden Charakters ist, einen einzigen Gedanken groß zu ziehen und zur wissenschaftlichen Vollkommenheit heranzubilden.' Schelling, pp. iii–iv.

22 Fleck contrasted 'journal science', the circulation of individual articles written by experts, with 'vademecum or handbook science', which is solidified through a 'critical synopsis in an organized system'. Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, trans. by Fred Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012 [1935]), pp. 118, 161.

*und Kunst* (1842–43).<sup>23</sup> In this essay, Ruge elaborates on the Young Hegelians' concept of theory as well as their self-image as a political-intellectual and publicist movement. In the language of Hegelian dialectics, Ruge described the periodical as a manifestation of *Weltgeist*:

The journal has no claim to eternity; as long as it wants to live and fulfil its purpose, it must follow the dialectic of the spirit — the theoretical revolution — which our time is producing, and, where it can, precede it. The latter, however, is always preferably the task of the individual, while working together in a journal will represent the process more than it will make it. He who makes epochs brings the process [...] to a halt, to a definiteness that stands out and calls for a rather long struggle to overcome it. Men who write epoch-making works therefore find themselves in the position both of perplexing the process and of bringing it to contemplation, and of themselves being swallowed up and swept away by its waves. The individuals are only ever one stage; the journal, on the other hand, can, without becoming unfaithful to its course, simultaneously represent different stages that sublimate [*aufheben*] each other, especially at the time when they are still fighting with each other.<sup>24</sup>

Ruge's theory rejects 'epoch-making' as a potential of the journal, and does so even more explicitly than Schelling. An epoch is made by the individual work, which forms its own stage of intellectual revolution; the periodical serves the dialectical movement of contradictions between the old and the new. Ruge does not restrict his theory to the periodical's diachronic time-relatedness; rather, he shows its intertwinement with the synchronic dimension of the medium. Hence the journal is able to display heterogeneous, potentially antagonistic elements and is thus also a 'magazine' in a spatial sense.<sup>25</sup> The productivity of this magazine, however, always remains oriented towards an open future, a 'process' that digests and prepares significant individual works through the means of criticism. Neither in Schelling's nor in Ruge's case is the periodical an 'epoch-making' tool, as Schiller had called *Die Horen*: for the former, it moves with time, rather than bringing it to a 'halt'.

One reason for this difference can be seen in their differing philosophies of history or, as some scholars have argued, in the absence of a systematic philosophy of

23 *Deutsche Jahrbücher* was the successor to *Hallische Jahrbücher*, which had been founded by Ruge and Theodor Echtermeyer in 1841 as an intellectual platform of Prussian dissidents. In 1839, *Hallische Jahrbücher* had been banned in Prussia, whereupon Ruge and Echtermeyer moved their editorial headquarters to Dresden, Saxony. When *Deutsche Jahrbücher* was banned in Saxony in 1843, Ruge moved to Paris and continued their publication (for one issue only) as *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* together with Karl Marx.

24 '[...] die Zeitschrift hat auf Ewigkeit keinen Anspruch; so lange sie leben und ihre Bestimmung erfüllen will, muß sie der Dialektik des Geistes — der theoretischen Revolution —, die unsere Zeit hervorbringt, folgen, und wo sie es vermag, ihr vorangehen. Dies Letztere ist indessen immer vorzugsweise die Aufgabe der Einzelnen, während das Zusammenwirken in einem Journal den Proceß mehr darstellen, als machen wird. Wer Epoche macht, bringt den Verlauf zu einer Sammlung, zu einem Halt, zu einer Bestimmtheit, die hervorragt und einen längeren Kampf zu ihrer Ueberwindung ins Leben ruft. Männer, die epochemachende Werke schreiben, kommen daher in die Lage, sowohl den bisherigen Proceß stützig zu machen und zur Besinnung zu bringen, als auch selbst wieder von seinen Wogen verschlungen und hinweggerissen zu werden. Die Einzelnen sind immer nur eine Stufe; die Zeitschrift dagegen kann begreiflicher Weise, ohne ihrer Richtung untreu zu werden, verschiedene Stufen, die ich aufheben, zugleich darstellen, vornehmlich zu der Zeit, wo sie noch mit einander kämpfen.' Arnold Ruge, 'Die Zeit und die Zeitschrift', *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 5.1 (1842), 1–4 (p. 2).

25 According to Franzel, 'the metaphor and publicational form of the magazine [...] articulates models of storage that highlight the unruly mixture of heterogeneous components' (Franzel, p. 331).



history in Schiller's work.<sup>26</sup> Another reason could be seen in the fact that the celebratory consciousness of 'epoch-making' is more a matter for literary-aesthetic periodical makers, while the philosophically and scientifically oriented periodicals of Schelling or Ruge kept their distance from such claims. However, another debate about periodicals in *Deutsche Jahrbücher* shows that the Young Hegelians did not want to overstate the revolutionary role of periodicals in the field of literature either. Two months after Ruge's article on 'Die Zeit und die Zeitschrift' had appeared, his co-editor Robert Eduard Prutz published more reflections on the role of periodical publishing in the coming into being of *Geist*. In a controversy with the Young German writers, another group opposed to the Prussian state, the Young Hegelians had been accused of refusing to play a productive role in the creation of a new national literature. According to the Young Germans, all the Young Hegelians did in their periodicals was criticize without ever providing their readers with clear intellectual guidance. In response to this, Prutz summarized what he understood to be the potential of periodicals in history and society:

The journal serves time alone; it has no value in itself, it is only a piece of paper, only printed letters: its content and its power can only be time itself. Only insofar as the content of time is revealed in it, only insofar as it gives language to time and its demands, laments and judgements, does the journal have meaning and effectiveness. But the journal can never dominate and govern time; it cannot bring to life what time has killed, it cannot kill what is alive in time. [...] The history of literature, to put it briefly, is not made within our journals; rather they themselves are only a piece of the history of literature.<sup>27</sup>

Prutz thus limited the potential of periodical publishing to depicting and commenting. His editorial conception was, as in the case of Schelling, much closer to the concept of periodicals as a 'faithful image' or critical companion of their time than to periodicals as 'epoch-making' media formats. Prutz thus self-confidently limited the relationship between the journal and its time to the notion of critique.

In his works on the Young Hegelians, philosopher Karl Löwith emphasized that periodical writing and publishing was of significant importance to this intellectual movement.<sup>28</sup> In the *Vormärz* between 1830 and 1848, the Young Hegelians were exposed to hardships under Prussian rule, especially because their academic careers failed and their economic situation was precarious.<sup>29</sup> Journals, magazines, and newspapers thus became substitutes for professorships as well as gathering spots for *sociabilité*

26 Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, 'Geschichtsentwurf und Erziehungskonzept', in *Schiller als Historiker*, ed. by Otto Dann, Norbert Oellers, and Ernst Osterkamp (Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1995), pp. 267–80.

27 'Die Zeitschrift dient eben nur der Zeit; sie hat an sich keinen Werth, sie ist nur ein Stück Papier, nur gedruckte Lettern: ihr Inhalt und ihre Macht kann einzig und allein die Zeit selber sein. Nur insoweit in der Zeitschrift die Zeit sich offenbart, nur insoweit der Inhalt der Zeit in ihr zu Tage kommt, soweit sie der Zeit und ihren Forderungen, Klagen und Urtheilen Sprache verleiht, hat die Zeitschrift Bedeutung und Wirksamkeit. Niemals aber kann die Zeitschrift die Zeit beherrschen und regieren; sie kann nicht lebendig machen, was die Zeit getödtet hat, sie kann nicht tödten, was in der Zeit lebendig ist. [...] Die Litteraturgeschichte, um es kurz zu sagen, wird nicht innerhalb unsrer Journale gemacht, sondern sie selbst sind nur ein Stück der Litteraturgeschichte.' Robert Eduard Prutz, 'Thomas Müntzer: Ein deutscher Roman', *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 5.60 (1842), 237–40, continued in 5.61 (1842), 241–44 (p. 242).

28 Karl Löwith, *Die Hegelsche Linke: Texte aus den Werken von Heinrich Heine, Arnold Ruge, Moses Hess, Max Stirner, Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx und Sören Kierkegaard* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1962).

29 On the political and intellectual history of the Young Hegelians, see Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: De-Throning the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Wolfgang Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer. Soziologie einer Intellektuellengruppe*, *Übergänge: Texte und Studien zu Handlung, Sprache und Lebenswelt* (Munich: Fink, 1988).

*intellectuelle*.<sup>30</sup> They were also intellectual forums where theorists could turn their ‘theory as critique onto historical existence’, as Löwith has described the Left Hegelian thought style.<sup>31</sup> On several occasions, these Young Hegelian concepts of theory and critique as well as their thoughts on periodical publishing were rediscovered by political intellectuals in the twentieth century.

### Revolutionary Times: (New) Left Periodicals

The twentieth century has seen numerous variations on the topos of the ‘double page of the journal’, which both mirrors and acts upon time. In 1930, there were echoes of it in Walter Benjamin’s and Bertolt Brecht’s plans for a periodical. Their magazine project *Krise und Kritik* — which never saw the light of day — was meant to ‘determine’ [‘feststellen’] the ideological crisis of their times, and at the same time to ‘engender’ [‘herbeiführen’] this crisis in a revolutionary perspective.<sup>32</sup> Their magazine, Benjamin wrote, was supposed to be an ‘organ in which the bourgeois intelligentsia can account for itself in regard to positions and challenges which uniquely — in current circumstances — permit it an active, interventionist role, with tangible consequences, as opposed to its usual ineffective arbitrariness’.<sup>33</sup>

The political-intellectual tradition of the periodical as a medium between theory and practice has its own history and tradition, especially where Marxist thought is involved. In an essay from 2007, media theorist Régis Debray described socialism not as a political theory or movement, but as a media-based ‘ecosystem’ and ‘milieu for the reproduction of certain kinds of life and thought’.<sup>34</sup> Historically, Debray locates the conditions of existence of this ecosystem in the last phase of what he calls the *graphosphere*, the epoch of the written and printed word. According to the media theorist and former revolutionary, this graphosphere extends from the Renaissance to the second half of the twentieth century, more precisely to May 1968, when the *videosphere* began to replace the era of the book and the periodical. In his ‘mediological’ periodization model, Debray thus defines 68 not only as a political turning point, but also as a transitional phase in terms of political modes of communication. The rising importance of the image coincided with the end of the ‘life cycle’ of socialism — ‘that great fallen oak of political endeavor’.<sup>35</sup>

But the observation of a decline of left-wing print culture around 1968 seems paradoxical given the fact that in the New Left and the student movement of the sixties a new ‘market for Marx’ emerged.<sup>36</sup> Countless magazines and journals, paperbacks, and book series were dedicated to left-wing thought, critique, and practice, circulating among young intellectuals the world over, making publishing a sphere of exchange and community-building for this global movement from the late 1950s onwards. Given their focus on theory, the ‘68ers’ have occasionally been compared by contemporaries and

30 Stephan Van Damme, ‘La sociabilité intellectuelle: Les usages historiographiques d’une notion’, *Hypothèses*, 1 (1998), 121–32.

31 ‘Wendung der Theorie als Kritik auf die geschichtliche Existenz’. Löwith, p. 31.

32 Quoted in Erdmut Wizisla, *Benjamin und Brecht: Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), p. 130.

33 Translated by Stephen Parker, *Bertolt Brecht: A Literary Life* (London: Methuen, 2014), p. 286.

34 Régis Debray, ‘Socialism: A Life-Cycle’, *New Left Review*, 46 (2007), 5–28 (p. 6).

35 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

36 Adelheid von Saldern, ‘Markt Für Marx. Literaturbetrieb und Lesebewegungen in den Sechziger- und Siebzigerjahren’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 44 (2004), 149–80; Uwe Sonnenberg, *Von Marx zum Maulwurf: Linker Buchhandel in Westdeutschland in den 1970er Jahren*, *Geschichte der Gegenwart* 11 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016).

scholars to the Young Hegelians.<sup>37</sup> In 1974, the philosopher of religion Jacob Taubes wrote that the importance of theoretical discussion in the ‘journalist’ form of periodical contributions was a common characteristic of the student and the *Vormärz* movement.<sup>38</sup> In both cases, periodical publishing served as an instrument for the movement’s self-constitution.<sup>39</sup> In West Germany, there were *neue kritik* (1960–70), *Das Argument* (since 1958), *konkret* (since 1957), or *Kursbuch*, the most prominent of the West German New Left periodicals with up to 50,000 copies printed (since 1965).<sup>40</sup> In the following, I will concentrate on the literary and theoretical magazine *alternative*, which was published in West Berlin between 1958 and 1982. Following its activity allows us to observe notions of temporality that broaden the spectrum discussed in this article.

*alternative* was founded in 1958 by the journalist and independent publisher Ansgar Skriver. With a small circulation of only several hundred copies, it contained poetry, short essays, and illustrations by young, left-leaning writers and artists. The magazine, according to its early editors, was a ‘Zeit- und keine Ewigkeitsschrift’ — a publication for its time, not for eternity.<sup>41</sup> Since 1964, *alternative* was led by Hildegard Brenner, a literary scholar and journalist; she became the first female editor-in-chief of an intellectual periodical in the Federal Republic of Germany. Under Brenner’s editorship, *alternative* reached a peak circulation of 10,000 copies in the early 1970s; first and foremost, the contents were relevant to scholars and students in the humanities, but also to cultural journalists, teachers, or artists.

In many of its issues, *alternative* presented and discussed Marxist thinkers from the 1920s and 1930s who had been persecuted under the Nazi regime but were also heretics of Communism, such as Karl Korsch, Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, Carl Einstein, and Lu Märten. What was special about *alternative*, also compared to other New Left periodicals of the time, was its documentary method of publishing: the contributors did not just write theoretical essays on the preceding generation of Marxist theorists, but also reprinted unpublished documents, such as letters or manifestos; in this manner, they reproduced material from the archive, opening a window onto the history of left-wing ideas. This rediscovery of unorthodox Marxist traditions, although historical and archival, was a truly contemporary endeavour. Thinkers such as Brecht, Korsch, or Benjamin were at the core of the student movement’s readings; their texts were part of a cultural revolution that would extend from campuses and editorial offices into the public sphere. In the wake of the protests, the meaning of theory as well as of poetry was discussed in relation to the uses and the practical relevance for progress in society. ‘We were only interested in theory as long as it had consequences’, reads one editorial of the *alternative* from the early 1970s, emphasizing the idea of acting upon the present.<sup>42</sup>

37 Peter Bürger, “Die Wahrheit ist selbst geschichtliche Bestimmtheit”: Linkshegelianismus und Mai 68’, in *Nach vorwärts erinnern: Relektüren zwischen Hegel und Nietzsche* (Göttingen: Wallstein 2016), pp. 71–84; Werner Post, ‘Junghegelianer und Achtundsechziger’, in *Die Phantasie an der Macht? 1968 – Versuch einer Bilanz*, ed. by Richard Faber and Erhard Stöltzing (Berlin: eva, 2002), 238–55.

38 Jacob Taubes, ‘Zweitgutachten zum Arbeitsplan und Antrag von Hans-Peter Gente auf Graduiertenförderung, 15.7.1974’, reprinted in Neuffer, p. 15.

39 On ‘Wir-Konstitution’ through literary and theoretical publishing in the revolutionary *Vormärz*, see Patrick Eiden-Offe, *Poesie der Klasse: Romantischer Antikapitalismus und die Erfindung des Proletariats* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2017), pp. 106–35.

40 See David Bebnowski, *Kämpfe mit Marx: Neue Linke und akademischer Marxismus in den Zeitschriften ‘Das Argument’ und ‘PROKLA’ (1959–1976)*, *Geschichte der Gegenwart* 25 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021); Kristof Niese, *‘Vademekum’ der Protestbewegung? Transnationale Vermittlungen durch das Kursbuch von 1965 bis 1975*, *Mediengeschichte* 2 (Baden-Baden: Nomos 2017).

41 Reimar Lenz and Richard Salis, ‘Vorspruch’, *alternative*, 1 (1958), 2.

42 ‘Theorie schien uns nur wichtig, soweit sie Folgen hat, und die sollten aufweisbar sein.’ Redaktionskollektiv *Alternative*, ‘Zu diesem Heft’, *alternative*, 82 (1972), 1.

*alternative* was thus embedded in a political movement and in contemporary debates — ‘at the pinnacle of its time’, just as Schelling had demanded. But this peak in circulation coincided with a time of political crisis, when soon after 1968 the student New Left dissolved into more or less orthodox Maoist or Leninist parties, but also into new subcultures and so-called alternative movements.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, repression hit leftists in the public sector, leading to the professional bans imposed on alleged extremists, the ‘Radikalenerlass’ [‘Radicals Decree’] of 1972. In this first phase of post-68 crisis, *alternative* still hoped to contribute to a rebirth of the New Left. It continuously turned towards new political and intellectual inputs, searching for new models of thought that could stimulate revolutionary alliances between intellectuals, students, and workers. But the ‘crisis of Marxism’ became the topic of the day in Marxist discussions, be it in France, Italy, or West Germany. In this context, *alternative* turned into a chronicle of the end of 1968, giving a ‘faithful image’ of a crisis that was its very own crisis: now the periodical produced issues on intellectuals who had renounced Marxism; it bemoaned a growing hostility towards leftist theory at universities; and it reflected on the changing political thought and languages of new social movements and subcultures, only to notice how they differed from the thought and language of the ‘68ers’. ‘Theory no longer has a use value’, noted chief editor Brenner around 1980, convinced that ‘we have readers, but no longer a public’.<sup>44</sup> The debates of editors, authors, and readers increasingly addressed one question: should they concede to the course of things? Or should they continue their work, and if so, what for? The answers given to this question point again to the problem of timeliness and to differing views on the role of a journal in history.

### Against Time?

In the closing number of *alternative* in late 1982, the minutes of a discussion on the periodical’s future were published. There were mainly two diverging views: on the one hand, there were those who, like the editor-in-chief Brenner, argued that the magazine in its established form had lost its place in the political landscape. For them, it was only logical — and timely — to cease publication.

But there was also an opposing view. A student and reader of *alternative* by the name of Klaus Schloesser had been invited to an editorial roundtable to give his opinion on the magazine’s fate. In preparation for this meeting, Schloesser had written an unpublished manifesto titled ‘The Dissolution of *alternative* is a Contradiction in Terms’.<sup>45</sup> Schloesser was deeply convinced that the journal’s crisis should not simply cause its end. Rather, he wanted the magazine to be resistant to all political conjunctures, crises, and intellectual fashions. For him, *alternative*’s duty in times of weakness and failure on the left was to produce theory precisely *about* weakness and failure. Referring to Korsch and Louis Althusser, who had been important theorists for *alternative*, he argued that the publication of a journal was ‘nothing other than the consequence of its theoretical content’. His remarks show how the existence of the periodical had itself become a political and philosophical question:

43 Cf. Sven Reichardt, ‘Is “Warmth” a Mode of Social Behaviour? Considerations on a Cultural History of the Left-Alternative Milieu from the Late 1960s to the Mid 1980s’, *Behemoth: A Journal on Civilisation*, 3.2 (2010), 84–99.

44 *Alternative* and Karl Heinz Roth, ‘Das Ende einer kulturellen Klasse: Aus einem Gespräch’, *alternative*, 145/146 (1982), 134–42 (p. 141).

45 Klaus Schloesser, *Eine Auflösung der ALTERNATIVE ist ein Widerspruch in sich*, German Literary Archives Marbach (DLA), A: *Alternative*, 145/46 (1).

Does the dissolution of the journal only call into question the next issue? Does it not also imply a revision of one's own theoretical concept? An example: in its discovery of Althusser for the discussion of the West German left, ALTERNATIVE provided outlines of a theory of intellectual labour. In its dissolution, it implicitly ties the validity of this theory to a certain 'political situation'. Wouldn't it rather have to organize a theoretical critique of Althusser, to relate Korsch's thesis of the 'application of materialism to its own history' also to itself? And that in an issue of ALTERNATIVE?<sup>46</sup> " "

In Korsch and Althusser, Schloesser cited two theorists of Western Marxism who offered arguments for ongoing reflection and revision: Korsch had claimed that for any kind of theoretical progress in Marxism, a constant critique of Marxism was necessary, while Althusser had re-read Marx in an epistemological way in order to identify the historical flaws and failures in the latter's theory. The reader Schloesser applied these theories to his call for a continued publication of *alternative*: he demanded that they did not make concessions to the 'political situation' of the day, but to continue as an ongoing, self-reflexive periodical resistant to the course of things: a timely notion of working against time in the midst of an intellectual crisis.

But Schloesser could not prevail with this proposal. Other members of the magazine were firmly convinced that *alternative's* time had passed. To the makers of the West Berlin periodical, being timely had meant activating readers and intervening in the course of history, just like Brecht and Benjamin had proclaimed for their project *Kritik und Krise*. Here, we can identify a difference between the Young Hegelians and the Marxists of the twentieth century: whereas the former had focused on turning 'theory as critique onto historical existence', keeping a distance to 'their' time, the '68ers' wanted to turn theory into practice, and in the long run envisioned the epoch-making work of revolution itself.

From literary periodicals around 1800 and the 'journalist' forms of Young Hegelianism to the print culture of 1968, periodical theories and philosophies of history, as they have been examined here, are historically entangled. It goes without saying that it is not only in the German-speaking countries that this can be observed; notions of timeliness underlie periodical publishing across time and space. But how does tracing concepts and (self-)images, which are often highly stylized and ostentatiously presented by journal-makers themselves, contribute to the field of periodical studies? Sceptically, one could argue that the number of variations on temporality in the history of the periodical is limited and thus not very illuminating. For instance, Schelling's notion of the temporal 'double aspect of the journal' might be seen as a topos that has been repeated over and over again. Also, one might argue that philosophically charged discussions about beginnings or endings of journals obscure pragmatic and often contingent reasons for decisions in publishing, such as economic promises or deceptions related to periodical-making. Nevertheless, I argue that studying attitudes towards time and history can provide insight into motivational structures of publishing: From *Die Horen* to *alternative*, there are always specific conceptions of historical agency at stake.

46 'Stellt die Auflösung nur das nächste Heft infrage? Bedeutet sie nicht auch eine faktische Revision des eigenen Theoriekonzepts? Ein Beispiel: Die ALTERNATIVE hat in ihrer Entdeckung Althusser's für die Diskussion der westdeutschen Linken grundsätzliche Umriss einer Theorie der Kopfarbeit geliefert. In ihrer Auflösung knüpft sie unausgesprochen die Gültigkeit dieser Theorie an eine bestimmte "politische Konjunktur". Müßte sie dann nicht auch konsequent eine theoretische Kritik Althusser's organisieren, also z. B. Korsch's These der "Anwendung des Materialismus auf seine eigene Geschichte" auch auf sich selbst beziehen und diese Beziehung explizieren? Und zwar in einem ALTERNATIVE-Heft?' Schloesser.

These conceptions are part of the binding force of periodicals through which they form and hold together communities or movements of editors, writers, and readers who are united by their political and intellectual intentions and self-perceptions. Reflections on a periodical's temporality can always be read as a symbolization of the relationship between the periodical and the world. Hence, where periodical theories become philosophies of history and vice versa, they are a key source for the study of modern intellectual history in general.

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