



Towards intellectual history
A review on the Journal of the History of Ideas
2006-2010
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Introduction

“By the history of ideas I mean something at once more specific and less restricted than the history of philosophy.”¹

With this sentence philosopher Arthur Oncken Lovejoy (1873-1962) introduced the readers of the early twentieth century into a new and distinct field of inquiry: the history of ideas. Even though precedents can be discovered in for example the eighteenth century history of the human mind, or in nineteenth century history of philosophy, Lovejoy was the first to use this specific term for the research focusing on the history of human thoughts in written form.² Since Lovejoy was born in Berlin, the grand tradition of the history of philosophy in Germany served as the soil in which he sowed the seeds of the history of ideas.

The central focus and distinct feature of this approach is the so called “unit-idea”, an individual concept or principle, emerging at a certain point in time and staying relatively unchanged. The concept of unit-ideas is foremost a methodological innovation, providing one with a tool to divide material in a special way, creating “groupings” or a “chain” that has its own life throughout the history of thought.³ Furthermore the unit-idea can be traced through all of the provinces of history: philosophy, science, literature, art, religion, or politics.⁴ Consequently it called to scholars of different disciplines to join forces. Single scholars with limited training would not be able to grasp the whole range of the unit-idea; one ought to strive for precision and completeness.⁵

As a professor of philosophy at John Hopkins University of Baltimore, Lovejoy founded the History of Ideas Club in 1920, together with his colleague, George Boas, attracting many prominent and intellectual historians, humanists and scientists.⁶ After the publication of his theory in *The Great Chain of Being. A study of the history of an idea* in

¹ A.O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A study of the history of an idea* (Harvard 1936) 3.

² Similarities can be found between Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s notion of “philosophemes” and Lovejoy’s notion of unit-ideas. See: D.R. Kelley, ‘What is happening to the history of ideas?’, *Journal of the History of Ideas (JHI)* 51 (1990) 1, 3-25, see 4.

³ L. Catana, ‘Lovejoy’s reading of Bruno: or how nineteenth-century history of philosophy was “transformed” into the history of ideas’, *JHI* 71 (2010) 1, 91-112, see 111-112.

⁴ Lovejoy, *The Great Chain*, 3-23.

⁵ A. Grafton, ‘The history of ideas: precept and practice, 1950-2000 and beyond’, *JHI* 67 (2006) 1, 1-32, see 6-7.

⁶ S. Black, ‘Interview with Dr. Warren Breckman, University of Pennsylvania’, <http://jhi.pennpress.org/PennPress/journals/jhi/BreckmanInterview.pdf> (October 2007; consulted on the 5th of April 2011) 1.

1936, the founding of the *Journal of the History of Ideas (JHI)* followed in 1940 serving as a forum for this “new” discipline.⁷

Together with Philip Weiner, Executive Editor of the *Journal* for forty-five years, Lovejoy shaped the journal and the field over time. Simultaneously comparable traditions within western and southern Europe arose, like the *Begriffsgeschichte* in Germany, *l’histoire des idées* in France, and *la storia delle idee* in Italy.⁸ However, with the expansion of the field across the borders of North-America, it also encountered opposition. Quentin Skinner and John Pocock, founders of the “Cambridge School” of political thought subscribed to the “linguistic turn” of the history of ideas. They focused on how language performed in a given historical circumstance and serves purpose, thereby rejecting Lovejoy’s unit-ideas as being only momentary performative: “(...) when the language is played out, the idea leaves the stage and the curtain drops.”⁹

Cultural historian Robert Darnton stated in 1980, that this growing dissatisfaction with the concept of unit-idea, a decline in interest, and the emergence and popularity of new fields like social history caused the fading prominence of the history of ideas from the 1960s onwards.¹⁰ A period of reflection on the discipline and its relation to its history and future dawned. Every time a new Executive Editor took office, both in 1985 and in 2006, an article was published about the status of the history of ideas and how it should develop in the upcoming years.¹¹

Nowadays the once “new” discipline of the history of ideas has evolved into the wider framework of “intellectual history”. Paradoxically the title of the journal still refers to former times, making one question how this journal relates to both past and topical developments. This paper will therefore pose the question in what way the journal relates to its tradition, but also how it tries to focus on the future by innovative authors and topics. With both a qualitative and quantitative approach of the past five years (2006-2010) this paper will give insight into the *JHI* and the wider framework of intellectual history.

⁷ Leo Catana wrote an article in the *JHI* in which he argues that even though the history of ideas contains methodological innovation, it stays connected to the historiographical terms of the nineteenth century history of philosophy. One can therefore question the “newness” of this discipline. See: Catana, ‘Lovejoy’s reading’, 91-95.

⁸ Kelley, ‘What is happening’, 3.

⁹ J.P. Diggins, ‘Arthur O. Lovejoy and the challenge of intellectual history’, *JHI* 67 (2006) 1, 181-208, see 184.

¹⁰ R. Darnton, ‘Intellectual and cultural history’, M. Kammen (ed.), *The past before us: contemporary historical writing in the United States* (Ithaca 1980) 327-328.

¹¹ Kelley, ‘What is happening’, 3-25 and Grafton, ‘The history of ideas’, 1-32.



Before contrasting present to past and future, a clear overview of the present-day situation will be given in the first three sections. The first section will look at the current state of affairs: what are the aims, scope, and goal of the *JHI* nowadays? What is the organizational structure of the journal? What are the major developments of the past five years? The second section will focus on the journal's recent reception by looking at different rankings and indexes. Thirdly the content will be discussed: what does the *JHI* consist of? What are trending topics or themes? How does the scope in time and place relate to the aims and goals of the journal? But also: who are the authors and where do they come from? How does their background relate to the topics they discuss?

The fourth section will then contrast the third section to the former editorial period under Donald R. Kelley showing the lines of development and stagnation.

Finally, the last section will assess the outcomes in relation to the main question and provide suggestions for the path that could and perhaps should be followed in the future.

1. The current state of affairs

1.1. Defining identity: aims, goal, and scope

In 2006 the aims, goals and scope as formulated by the Executive Editors of the *JHI*, seem to bear the marks of its history. The crossroads as laid out and paved by Lovejoy function as an attractive meeting point for many disciplines.¹² The *JHI* sets, as ever, great store by an interdisciplinary character as the most prominent target. Besides, the journal wants to represent and support all new developments in the field, “welcome investigations of texts and ideas – especially when these are located in time and space and explicated, in part, in terms of a wider historical context.”¹³ Executive Editor Anthony Grafton also explicitly states what is excluded from the journal: it is not a forum of debate on questions of Theory or of its status per se. The emphasis is on the realms of “Theory’s Empire”, publishing “historically informed studies of the development of hermeneutics, and the work of influential theorists”. A theoretically inspired study of past texts and ideas is permitted, as well as articles that raise questions on method; as long as theory itself does not become the object of study.¹⁴ Apparently it is still tried to oppose the identity of the history of ideas, like Lovejoy did, against fields in the same realm like the history of philosophy and philosophy of history.¹⁵

Furthermore, the journal ventilates a broad scope. Published articles must for example be accessible and readable to more than specialists in a particular humanistic discipline. And as the website of the *JHI* states, intellectual history – considered an interchangeable name for the history of ideas – is defined expansively and ecumenically; approachable to many fields of interest. It asserts to include, based on Lovejoy’s writings, the history of philosophy, of literature and the arts, of the natural and social sciences, of religion, and of political thought. Subsequently the journal propagates the expansion in regional coverage and encourages diversity in chronological range.¹⁶ Grafton connects these latter goals to a political neutrality, stating that the *Journal* “will never again be tied to a particular political program” but that it will “commit itself to one current policy: globalization.”¹⁷ The following traditions within

¹² Grafton, ‘The history’, 30.

¹³ Ibidem, 31.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 32.

¹⁵ See the quotation of Lovejoy at page 3.

¹⁶ ‘Statement at the top of the homepage of the *JHI*’, <http://jhi.pennpress.org/strands/jhi/home.htm;jsessionid=7D54CF004BBB2D2DD88D0673336312FC> (consulted on the 31st of March 2011).

¹⁷ Grafton, ‘The history’, 33. Grafton could in this statement refer to the political commitment of Lovejoy in the field of civil liberties.

this global arena are hoped to be attracted: Asian, European, American, Jewish and Muslim traditions, aiming to make the character of the journal more “cosmopolitan”.

1.2. A ruling quartet: the organizational structure

To put a mission statement like this into a practice, the *JHI* consists of a multi-layered organizational structure. As different from other journals, the top of this structure is occupied by not one, but four Editors-in-chief, or Executive Editors. This distinct feature came into being in 2006, when Executive Editor Donald R. Kelly resigned after twenty years of service. Consequently the range of fields is now divided among four people, each to administer a part of the journal’s scope in place and time: Martin Burke, Americanist, connected to the City University of New York, Anthony Grafton, Renaissance and Early Modern scholar at Princeton, Ann Moyer, Renaissance historian at the University of Pennsylvania, and Warren Breckman, specialized in the field of 19th and 20th century Europe at the University of Pennsylvania.

In the monthly editorial meeting the new submissions are divided among these four Executive Editors, each article to be read by two persons. The articles are in that way subjected to a first round of selection, in which, according to Warren Breckman, seventy to eighty percent does not make it to the peer-reviewing process.¹⁸ The Managing Editor, in this case Robin Ladrach, manages the correspondence and solicit the peer reviewer for the twenty to thirty percent that do manage to stand this first test. After receiving the peer reviews the editors decide together if an article is accepted outright, is entirely rejected or if revisions are requested.

The Board of Editors of the *JHI* consists of ten women and nineteen men, of which nineteen are connected to a university in North-America, eight to a university in England and one person to a university in Germany and one in Argentina.¹⁹ They have, according to the Executive Editors, three important tasks, firstly peer review reading six to eight submissions per year, per person. When the expertise is not at hand, they secondly contact people and thereby broaden the pool of available experts. A third task is advising the Executive Editors in the editorial meeting, that is held every year.²⁰ The member that stands out, is Quentin

¹⁸ Black, ‘Interview’, 5.

¹⁹ ‘Masthead’, <http://jhi.pennpress.org/strands/jhi/journalInfo.htm;jsessionid=5B42FEA5468EB96BE6E4CBA4A4A096F0> (consulted on the 5th of April 2011).

²⁰ Black, ‘Interview’, 2.

Skinner; as already mentioned, an outspoken opponent of Lovejoy's unit-ideas and a fervent supporter of the "linguistic turn".

Lastly the organization contains so called Consulting Editors; independent, non-staff literary editors, that can assist in the editing process. The *JHI* have listed 13 consulting editors of which eight men and five women.

1.3. The University of Pennsylvania: organizational binding

The potential readers of the journal can subscribe or renew their subscription via the website.²¹ The presence of a special subscription fee for students is a very common feature among journals that functions to attract future readers. The *JHI* is published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, a nonprofit organization, owned by the University of Pennsylvania. Both Executive Editors Warren Breckman and Ann Moyer are stationed at the department of history within the School of Arts and Sciences at this university. Although no direct link can be found between the education and the journal, one does notice the special attention for specific topics within the curriculum. The major of history contains different "concentrations", either regional, like "American", "European", and "World History" or thematic. "Intellectual History" forms part of the latter, together with "Diplomatic", "Gender", "Economic" and "Jewish History". A closer look at the different courses within "Intellectual History" supplies the curious searcher with two familiar names underneath the title of "faculty advisors", those of Breckman and Moyer.²²

1.4. The internet: recent developments

The year 2006 was the point of departure for a new, in this case, group of, Executive Editors. Certain developments between the years 2006-2010 can be outlined, although there is not always a clear distinction between an attempt and an actual change. For example in 2007, it was intended that the Board of Editors would be less involved in peer reviewing and making more actual contributions to the journal. As a result many of the editors published for the *JHI*. An attempt was then made to produce commissioned articles, big synthetic articles about the state of a field. Accordingly this shift away from peer reviewing can partially be explained by

²¹ For students there is a reduced price (\$32), individuals can choose between a printed version and online version (\$43) or the online version only (\$38). The same goes for institutions, where the latter option costs less (\$108) than the former (\$120). If one is not residing in the United States an extra fee of \$17 is charged.

²² 'Intellectual history concentration', <http://www.history.upenn.edu/courses/concentrations/intellectual.shtml> (consulted on the 5th of April 2011).

the growing participation of a “new member” of the organization: the internet. Via the internet the best experts of the world for a specific topic can be traced and approached. Consequently the Board of Editors does not always have to have the desired expertise at hand, since it has become much easier to expand the network.²³

And looking at this “new member” on a more practical level: the journal is, as stated above, not only available in print but also made accessible via JSTOR and Project MUSE. People are now able to gain access very readily, causing the numbers of subscribers of the print edition to decline. On the other hand, the numbers of subscribers to the electronic version are growing, compensating for probable financial concerns. One of the Executive Editors, Warren Breckman, a man in his mid-forties, expects that the paper copy will eventually disappear. But, according to him, not in the foreseeable future, since “I think that insofar as anyone, say older than 30, grew up with books and paper and material objects, there is a lot of ambivalence about contemplating that scenario.”²⁴

2. Reputation, reception and judgment

2.1. ERIH and ERA: rankings

To be able to evaluate the impact and quality of different journals over the world or on a specific continent, different rankings grew out of the soil of many institutes, each of them with their own fields of interest. Due to the broad scope of the journal, the *Journal of the History of Ideas* is included in a wide range of rankings and indexes. One of the most important ones is the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH), part of the European Science Foundation (ESF). Since much European humanities research was seen to be struggling with low visibility, it was initially meant to use the ERIH as a tool to broaden the reception of high-quality activity of European humanities researchers.²⁵ But aside from European research, activity in the field of the humanities in the rest of the world is also included. Consequently it does not limit itself to research that is written in English.

Within the index of 2007 a categorization is made between A-, B- or C-ranked journals, with the *JHI* belonging to the A-list. Remarkably the *JHI* is not included in the

²³ Black, ‘Interview’, 2-3.

²⁴ Black, ‘Interview’, 6.

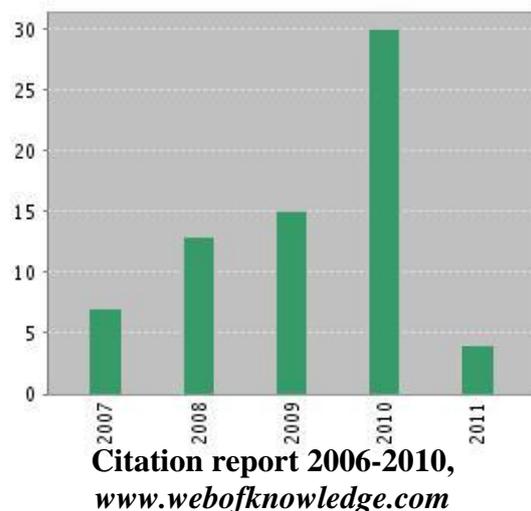
²⁵ ‘European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH)’, <http://www.esf.org/research-areas/humanities/erih-european-reference-index-for-the-humanities.html> (consulted on the 6th of April 2011).

rankings of the Australian ERA-project (Excellence in Research for Australia). A reason for its absence can probably be found in the background information of the authors that contribute to the *JHI* as well as in the geography of themes discussed in the different articles (see section three). The *JHI* is excluded from the website journal-ranking.com as well. This index states to be the “only online interactive journal ranking service in the world”, giving university professors, research scholars and students the opportunity to evaluate the journal’s impact based on their own interest.²⁶ Although an objective ranking is never possible, this website seems to be too accessible for everybody to adjust at will, to be able to guarantee a certain level of seriousness and quality. Other indexes, like for example the Social Sciences Citation Index or the Arts and Humanities Citation Index are part of the initiative of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI, see next sub-section).

2.2. Citation report: the Web of Knowledge

Rankings are based on a range of criteria, including the amount of articles that have been cited. The ISI has developed the so called Web of Knowledge on which one can receive a citation report of a certain journal. In these citation reports one makes use of the “impact-factor”, reflecting the average number of citations in a particular year or period, and the “h-index”, measuring within a certain time-span the amount of citations a number of articles have at least. In this way disproportionate weight of highly cited papers, or papers that not have been cited yet, are discounted.

Over a time span of five years, from 2006 until 2010, 71 citations have been made of the articles in the *JHI*. They are included in 69 articles of which 54 are not published in the *JHI* itself. The average citation of the total of 158 items – including articles, source-material and obituaries – consist of an average of 0.45 citations, with an h-index of 3, that is to say there are three articles within the total of 158 that have at least 3 citations.



Concerning the impact-factor over five years, there have been 30 citations in 2010 about

²⁶ ‘Welcome to journal-ranking.com!’, <http://www.journal-ranking.com/ranking/web/index.html> (consulted on the 6th of April 2011).



articles written between 2006-2009. This leads to an impact-factor of 0.23. This grade in fact only bears meaning if compared to different journals, preferably of the same discipline.

When looking at the translation of this overall picture to the separate years, one could make some remarks regarding the development over time.

| Division of the citation report into separate years | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Year</i> | <i>Number of citations</i> | <i>Number of citing articles</i> | <i>Average citations p.a.</i> | <i>h-index</i> |
| 2006 | 35 | 34 | 1.13 | 3 |
| 2007 | 16 | 16 | 0.44 | 2 |
| 2008 | 16 | 16 | 0.47 | 2 |
| 2009 | 2 | 2 | 0.07 | 1 |
| 2010 | 2 | 2 | 0.07 | 1 |

Naturally one has to consider the fact that an article published in 2010 does not have the same amount of time to be cited as an article published in 2006. Consequently the number of citations and the number of times an article gets cited is higher in 2006 than in the years after. But one could still notice a difference between for example 2006 and 2007 and between 2008 and 2009. This change in citations can perhaps be explained by the popularity-rate of certain authors or topics. But of course it should also be considered that it is pretty common among researchers to cite their direct colleagues or friends in order to receive more “hits”.

3. Content analysis 2006-2010

3.1. Trending topics: different types of discussions

With an average of thirty articles per volume and seven to eight articles per issue the size of the journal in relation to others is normal.²⁷ The articles have an medium length of twenty-one pages, not exceeding a number of 9.000 words. Each issue is based on a chronological composition of articles, starting with Antiquity and ending with the Modern period. Most important within the *JHI* are the articles (90%) and the lists of received books (3%).

Within this covering section of “articles” one can distinguish three categories that consist of a cluster of articles, namely a debate, a forum and a congress. These discussions have a clear surplus value over the separate articles, since they connect to current research and gather different opinions on the same subject. They mirror the trending topics and also represent the journal’s favored identity. An example of a debate or one to one “battle” is the one between Robert Edward Norton and Steven O. Lestition about the writings of Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997) in which he presents the two German philosophers Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder as the main representatives of the “Counter-Enlightenment.”²⁸ Besides there are the debates about Francis Bacon and feminist historiography and about the relationship between Thomas Hobbes and religion.

The forums, consisting of a main piece with different small responses of four to six pages, and a final reply, focus on the “moral turn in history” by George Cotkin, and consider the book of Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds*.²⁹ Where the debates focus mainly on the 17th and 18th century, the forums deal with current issues of the twentieth century. Additionally the congresses, about the history of natural sciences and idols concern Early Modern Europe.³⁰

In this way the topics dealt with in these different discussions do not only represent an interdisciplinary range, they also cover a divers time-span. At first sight there is in this case a correspondence between the aims, goal and scope of the *JHI* and the actual situation.

²⁷ Based on the presentations held in “Peoples, Borders, Transactions, and Institutions on the 19th and 26th of April.

²⁸ R.E. Norton, ‘The myth of the Counter-Enlightenment’ and S.O. Lestition, ‘Countering, transposing, or negating the Enlightenment? A response to Robert Norton’, *JHI* 68 (2007) 4, 635-658 and 658-681.

²⁹ See for G. Cotkin, ‘History’s moral turn’, *JHI* 69 (2008) 2, 293-315 and further and for Stefan Collini’s, *Absent Minds*, *JHI* 68 (2007) 3, 363-405.

³⁰ From R. Goulding, ‘Histories of science in early modern Europe: introduction’, *JHI* 67 (2006) 1, 33-40 until L. Kassell, “’All was this land full fill’d of faerie”, or magic and the past in early modern England’, *ibidem*, 107-122.

3.2. Remarkable sections: prizes and lists of received books

A strong connection with current research is not only noticeable in the mentioned discussions, but also in the notices. Within this section the Selma V. Forkosch Prize and the Morris D. Forkosch Prize play a central role. These prizes are distributed for the best article published in the *JHI* and for the best book in intellectual history in a certain year. The latter can only be won by a single author publishing his or her first book in English. This partially explains why all the winners of this prize of 2006-2009 are attached to universities in North-America. The scope of their objects of research is on the other hand quite broad: from contemporary French thought to the Kuzari and the shaping of Jewish identity.³¹ However, the topics discussed in the prizewinning books, do not correspond with the topics discussed in the *JHI* the past five years. There are for example several books on existentialism and metaphysics; philosophical areas that are excluded or only occur very rarely in the regular articles.³²

A section that explicitly does not stimulate insight into innovation within the field is the list of received books in which only the formal information about a book – like author, title, year of publication, place of publication, number of pages and sometimes prize – is given, together with one line of text about the object of research. This section covers three percent of the total amount of pages, indicating a fair amount of importance one ought to ascribe to this category. It is unclear why the editors have chosen to inform their readers in this specific way about recent research in the field. Book reviews are almost entirely excluded, causing that readers, apart from reading the notices of the Forkosch Prize, cannot gain insight into the value or importance of a work.³³

3.3. The articles: emphasis in thematic, chronological, and spatial coverage

Since the *JHI* asserts that intellectual history covers many fields of interest, it is interesting to compare this to the results of the total amount of articles. The division they have used themselves, is applied to categorize the 151 articles of five years: philosophy, literature, arts, natural sciences, social sciences, religion, and political thought. Although the overview, as presented in the graph (page 17), gives a fairly good impression of an existing consistent

³¹ ‘Winners of the Morris D. Forkosch Prize for the best book in intellectual history’, http://jhi.pennpress.org/PennPress/journals/jhi/Forkosch_wins.pdf (consulted on the 10th of April 2011).

³² For example: E.C. Kleinberg, *Generation existential: Heidegger’s philosophy in France 1927-1961* (Cornell 2007); P.E. Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: between Judaism and German philosophy* (California 2005); D. Bradshaw, *Aristotle east and west: metaphysics and the division of christendom* (Cambridge 2004).

³³ There does consist a forum about Stefan Collini’s *Absent minds: intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford, New York 2006) that very extensively evaluates his book.

relation between the different themes, a focus on separate years or issues does learn that some deviations of the average exist (see table). This concerns “Literature” (2009), “Natural sciences” (2006), and “Religion” (2009) the most. A reason can be found in the published forums and/or congresses. These clusters of articles deal with a central object of study and are therefore most often categorized within the same theme. Consequently the years in which a forum or congress occurs, show a deviation of the average.

| Relationship between themes based on percentages of number of articles | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Year</i> | <i>Philosophy</i> | <i>Literature</i> | <i>Arts</i> | <i>Natural sciences</i> | <i>Social sciences</i> | <i>Religion</i> | <i>Political thought</i> |
| 2006 | 28 % | 7 % | 3 % | 24 % | 7 % | 14 % | 17 % |
| 2007 | 30 % | 6 % | 15 % | 6 % | 6 % | 12 % | 24 % |
| 2008 | 30 % | 9 % | 12 % | 12 % | 6 % | 15 % | 12 % |
| 2009 | 17 % | 17 % | 7 % | 7 % | 7 % | 24 % | 21 % |
| 2010 | 26 % | 4 % | 15 % | 11 % | 4 % | 19 % | 22 % |
| Mean | 26 % | 9 % | 11 % | 12 % | 6 % | 17 % | 20 % |

Based on the graph, the overall impression is that three themes, “Philosophy”, “Political thought” and “Religion”, reign this journal. Notably these themes can be considered to belong to a conventional approach to intellectual history, giving the impression that this journal can be called conservative at the level of content. Trending topics within these themes seem to underline this statement. For example, the theme “Philosophy” contains different articles that evaluate the history of ideas itself. The first issue of 2006 is a good example in this respect, showing that three out of nine articles – of which another five belong to a forum – focus on either the history of ideas or on Lovejoy.³⁴ And throughout the journal this focus remains.³⁵ Furthermore, traditional topics like the Enlightenment return regularly as well.³⁶ Consequently names of a traditional list of philosophers pass in review, for example John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft.

³⁴ *JHI* 67 (2006) 1, 1-218.

³⁵ For example: J. Parsons, ‘Defining the history of ideas’, *JHI* 68 (2007) 4, 683-699; L. Catana, ‘Lovejoy’s readings of Bruno: or how nineteenth-century history of philosophy was “transformed” into the history of ideas’, *JHI* 71 (2010) 1, 91-112; T. Lacy, ‘The Lovejoyan roots of Adler’s philosophy of history: authority, democracy, irony and paradox in Britannica’s *Great book of the Western world*’, *JHI* 71 (2010) 1, 113-137.

³⁶ Look for example at: J. Israel, ‘Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment?’, *JHI* 67 (2006) 3, 523-545, Norton, ‘The myth of the Counter-Enlightenment’; Lestition, ‘Countering, transposing, or negating the Enlightenment?’

Ranging these topics in time, one notices an emphasis on the Early Modern and Modern period. The overview of the articles of five years confirms this evolvement (page 17). Articles about the Antiquity and Middle-Ages do exist, but do not determine the course of the journal. When focusing on the separate centuries to nuance this image, one encounters an inconvenience. Since the writings of historical actors form the point of departure for most articles, they can not be easily divided along the categorical lines of centuries. Such a division is therefore less appropriate for the graph stated below. The only remark one could make is that within the Early Modern period, the emphasis is on the 17th and 18th rather than on the 16th century.

Corresponding with the trending topics, the scope in geography is clearly demarcated (page 17). On beforehand it should be mentioned that since the “idea” is the central topic of each article, it is fairly impossible to attach it to one specific country. Even though the articles discuss particular thinkers, it is mostly the discourse in which the thinker finds himself that plays the leading role. Since one only limits the range of the discourse when attaching it to one specific country, it is better to situate it in a broader region. Therefore the graph is divided into the six continents, with a specification for Europe in north, south, east, and west. It is this continent that determines the character of 75% of the total with 113 out of 151 articles. It should also be considered, as the specification shows, that the main part of the articles about Europe, deal with western-Europe: mostly Germany, England and France. The southern part competes as well, but is in fact limited to mainly one country, namely Italy. An article about Denmark and one about Sweden represent the northern part, and the eastern part is completely neglected. Next to Europe, North America plays a leading role, leaving South America, Asia and Africa far behind.

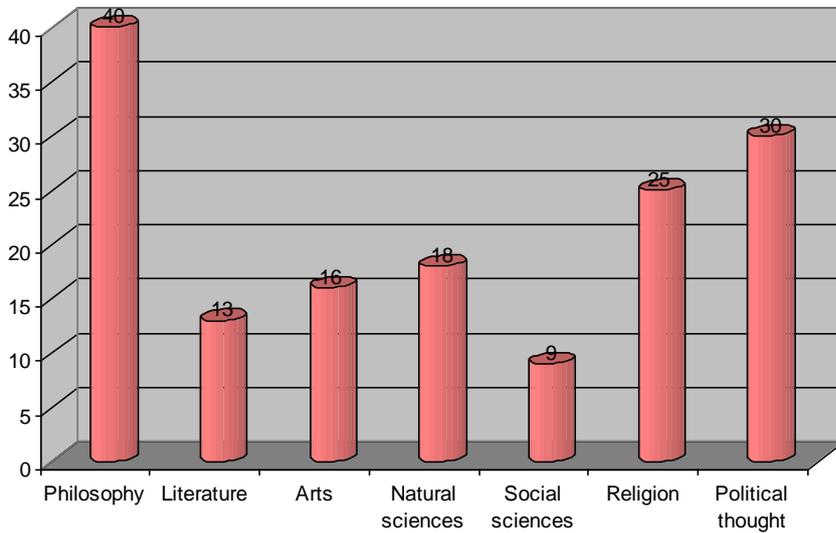
In this graph we can perhaps also find the reason for the absence of this journal in the ERA ranking: none of the articles focus on Australia.

The obvious focus at the Western World and the 17th to 20th century contradicts the scope in time and place the journal propagates. Moreover the exceptions of the rule paradoxically underline the core. Looking at the three percent of articles about Asia, for example, the items relate to Asia, but are in fact located in Europe or North America. Chen Tzaraf-Ashkenazi wrote about ancient India, but only through the eyes of Friedrich

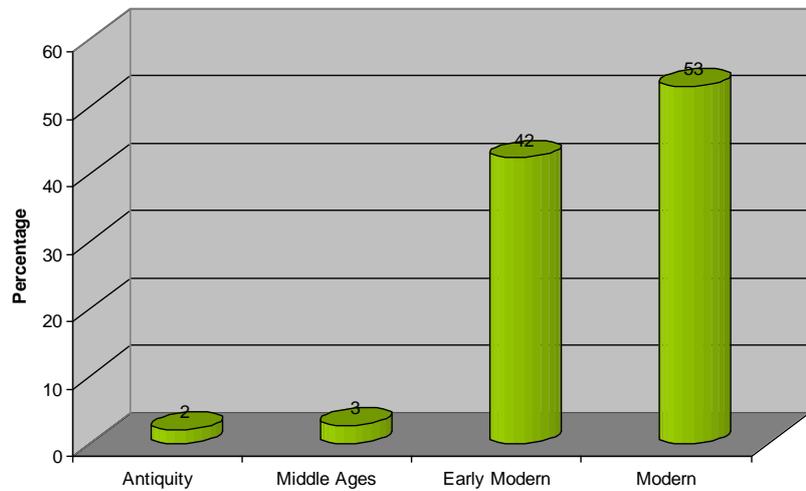
A response to Robert Norton'; T. Weststeijn, '*Spinoza sinicus*: an Asian paragraph in the history of the Radical Enlightenment', *JHI* 68 (2007) 4 537-561; J.R. Betz, 'Reading "Sibylline Leaves": J.G. Hamann in the history of ideas', *JHI* 70 (2009) 1, 93-118.

Schlegel's conception, aiming to redefine the European and German cultural and national identity.³⁷

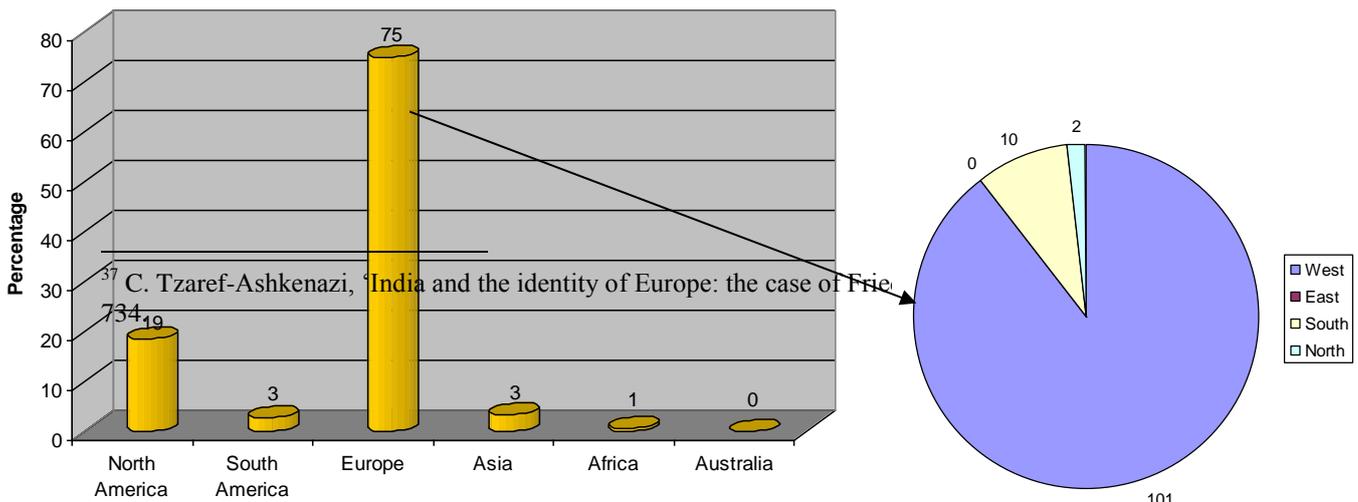
Themes of the articles



Historical period of the articles



Geography of themes of articles

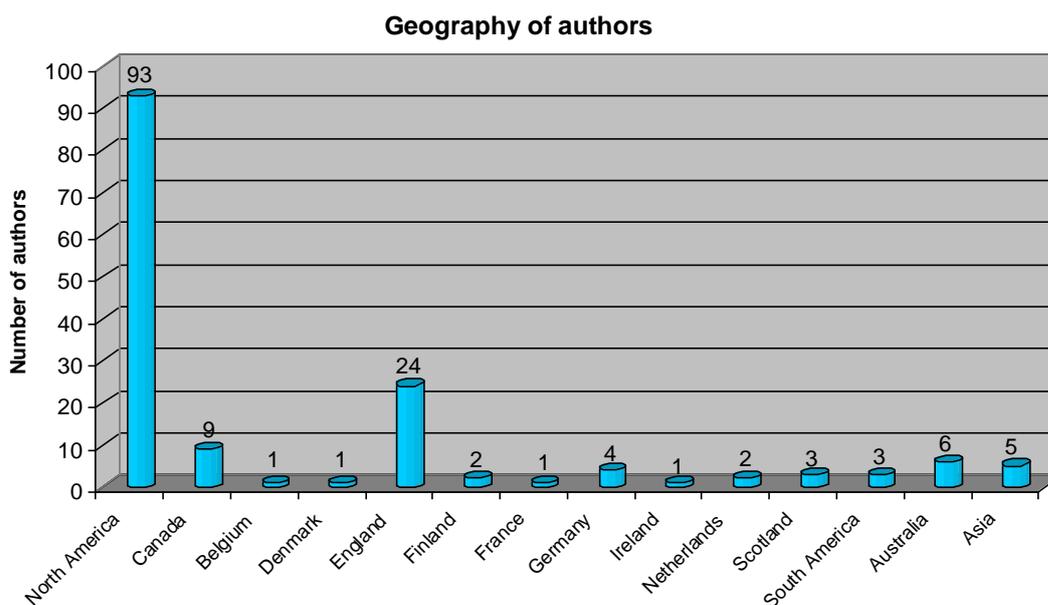


Furthermore, one of the articles focuses on Shanghai, however highlights the mid 1980s scholarly interest in North America.³⁸

The new approach in geography becomes annulled by the institutionalization of the topic in “Shanghai Studies”. The Executive Editors are aware of this problem, underlining that the global history of ideas of Lovejoy is still more a desire than a reality.³⁹ Although they state to use an “aggressive” method by bringing people like the Latin-American Elías José Palti to the Editorial Board, it is also acknowledged to be a slow process, partially beyond their control.⁴⁰

3.4. The scholars: background and publications of the authors

One would expect that the geographical position of the authors is at least expanding when reading the praise the Executive Editors have of the possibilities of internet to broaden your



network. But, as it turns out, the opposite is true. Two third of the total works at a university or institute in the United States of America. More specifically, the majority works at the eastern coast of the USA. Together with Europe, the Western World is represented with 91% of the total. Within Europe, England is the most important provider of authors. Moreover the

³⁸ J.A. Fogel, ‘The recent boom in Shanghai Studies’, *JHI* 71 (2010) 2, 313-333.

³⁹ Black, ‘Interview’, 2.

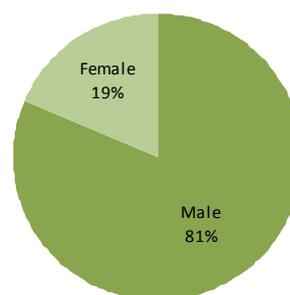
⁴⁰ Ibidem, 2.

authors that reside in continents different than Europe and the USA, also write about non-Western subjects. This is at least the case for two out of five articles from South America.⁴¹

The gender division among the authors is fairly consistent throughout the years. One of five authors is female, only two issues are limited to male authors.

Within the past five years, nine authors have published more than one article in the *JHI*. Some of them, like Robert Goulding, Jonathan Sheehan and Thomas Staley wrote the introduction of a congress, together with their personal contribution to the congress. Two others, Robert E. Norton and George Cotkin, were part of a debate or of a forum and were able to ventilate

Genderdivision authors of articles



their responses in an additional article. Leaving us with four authors that published two or even three unrelated articles. Based on the number of quotations of these authors, Elías José Palti (3), Martin Mulsow (2), Jeremy Jennings (1) and Benjamin D. Crowe (0), belong to the semi-top of quoted authors within the *JHI*.⁴² The article that received nine quotations and is also most often viewed on project MUSE is the translation of Reinhart Koselleck's (1923-2006), chapter "Crisis" in his *Geschichtliche grundbegriffe*. Koselleck was not only a renowned researcher, especially in the German school of *Begriffsgeschichte*, this new translation of a German text into English also creates new source-material. For it is now accessible also to non-German speaking scholars. Another important author is Jonathan Irvine Israel, who wrote an article on his specialization, the Radical Enlightenment.⁴³

Although professors do publish in the journal, Warren Breckman is convinced that the main part of the publishing authors in the *JHI* holds a lower position.⁴⁴ It is the peer-reviewing process that evokes this tendency, while most prominent authors publish more through invitation than via submissions.⁴⁵ A random check of the authors of 2006 – 29 in total – indeed learns that against the professors (12) the majority is non-professor, including

⁴¹ E.J. Palti, 'The problem of "Misplaced Ideas" revisited: beyond the "history of ideas" in Latin America', *JHI* 67 (2006) 1 149-179; idem, 'Beyond revisionism: the bicentennial of independence, the early republican experience, and intellectual history in Latin America', *JHI* 70 (2009) 4, 593-614.

⁴² 'Citation report', http://apps.webofknowledge.com/CitationReport.do?product=UA&search_mode=CitationReport&SID=R2hgEKDco11@31oF4lf&page=1&cr_pqid=4&viewType=summary (consulted on April 11th 2011).

⁴³ Israel, 'Enlightenment'.

⁴⁴ Black, 'Interview', 4.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 4.

associate professors (7), assistant professors (5) and PhD-students (5). Consequently this journal cannot confide extensively in the reputation of certain authors to build its prominence.

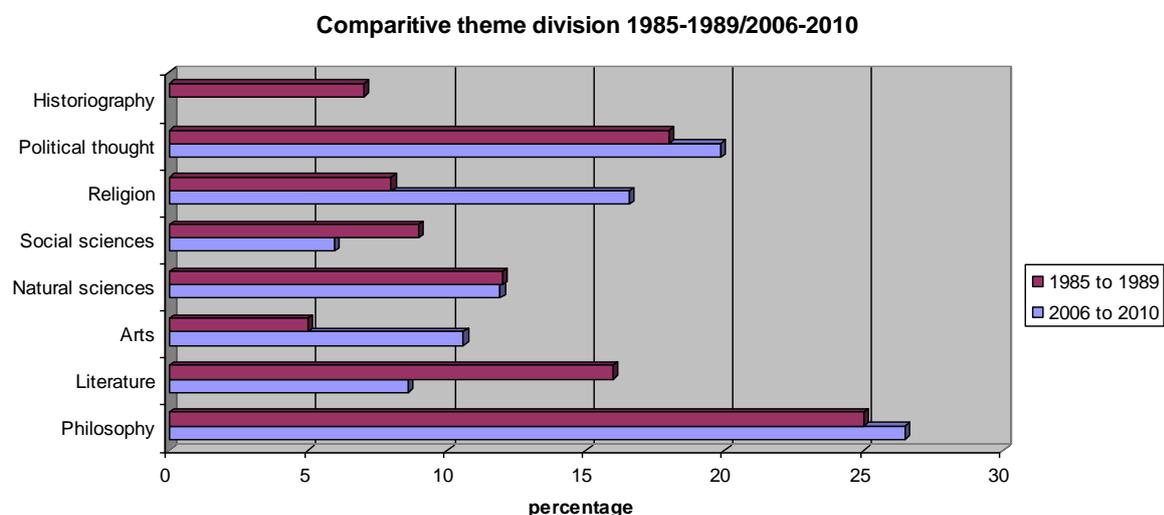
4. Compared developments

4.1. Framework, topics and source material

When the *JHI* entered its second half-century in 1990, Donald R. Kelly, Executive Editor from 1985-2006, wrote a content analysis of the journal.⁴⁶ According to him the search for the meaning of the concept “idea” by the history of ideas closed off rather than opened up avenues of inquiry, discovery and criticism. He therefore questions himself what the history of ideas has been, how it is now written and what it should be like in the future. In relation to this past analysis it is valuable to see how the main points of interest of the 1990s relate to the current state of the *JHI*.

First of all, Kelly acknowledges that there are still ties with Lovejoy’s pre-World War II vision: the focus is on individual authors, particular texts and ideas, doctrines, theories, and systems. This focus continues to prevail in the 2006-2010 period. There seem to be roughly two ground forms one can choose from: either a variation on an already existing theme is made by using a fairly new source of the - most of the time - philosopher at hand, or using a different approach to a commonly known source. Alternatively a comparison is made between two different thinkers on the same idea. This leads to an enormous range of articles that deal with an otherwise isolated and specific topic. Every article can be seen as the outline of a case study of ideas: the idea as a knight in shining armor with the historical context to lift

it



⁴⁶ Kelley, ‘What is happening’, 3-25.

up and carry it to its destination.

Furthermore in 1990 it is the old canon of the history of philosophy that continues to dominate the field of the history of ideas.⁴⁷ The former section already showed that the present state does not deviate from this path. But, one important difference should be noticed: where much attention was paid to post-modern philosophy in the 1990s, this topic is almost entirely left out within present-day articles. Executive Editor Warren Breckman forms the only exception by publishing an article on “French Theory” in the third issue of 2010.⁴⁸ The current trending topics have a more classical and conservative character, dealing for example with 18th and century ideas of the Enlightenment, or with the relationship between Thomas Hobbes and religion. Innovation can be traced in daring approaches like in the combination of hermaphroditism and Jesus Christ or Francis Bacon and feminist historiography.⁴⁹

Remarkable is the growth of present-day attention to religion. Within the field of intellectual history this topic has recently been addressed in the book *Seeing things their way. Intellectual history and the return of religion*.⁵⁰ Justifying the necessity of this book, the assumption is made that present-day intellectual historians give less priority to religion and that it does not gain the same respect as political thought.⁵¹ The authors base this assumption on the evaluation of the *JHI* by Kelly in 1990, but they should perhaps have made an inventory of the past five years as well. The present analysis of the *JHI* shows that religion is in fact an important category.

In comparing trends between the two periods, an important deviation from the chosen path cannot stay unnoticed. Where in 1990 the “linguistic turn” was the central focus of the history of ideas, concept-analysis has now disappeared from the stage. Even though some exceptions can be traced, the amount of articles carrying the words “rhetoric” or “language” in their title is very low.⁵² This evokes the feeling that the way “ideas” are being dealt with nowadays, relate more to the former “unit-ideas” of Lovejoy, non-evolving individual concepts that are not connected to the circumstances surrounding them.

⁴⁷ Kelley’s percentages are based on articles received and published during 1985-1989 in the *JHI*, see Kelly, ‘What is happening’, 14.

⁴⁸ W. Breckman, ‘Times of theory: on writing history of French Theory’, *JHI* 71 (2010) 3, 339-361.

⁴⁹ L. DeVun, ‘The Jesus hermaphrodite: science and sex difference in premodern Europe’, *JHI* 69 (2008) 2, 193-219; B. Vickers, ‘Francis Bacon, feminist historiography and the dominion of nature’, *JHI* 69 (2008) 1, 117-141.

⁵⁰ A. Chapman, J. Coffey, B.S. Gregory, (eds.), *Seeing things their way. Intellectual history and the return of religion* (Notre Dame 2009).

⁵¹ Chapman, a.o. (eds.), *Seeing things their way*, 3-5.

⁵² Examples of two out of four exceptions: T.W. Butler, ‘Image, rhetoric, and politics in the early Thomas Hobbes’, *JHI* 67 (2006) 3, 465-487; D.S. Bachrach, ‘The rhetoric of historical writing: documentary sources in histories of Worm c. 1300’, *JHI* 68 (2007) 2, 187-206. Compare with Kelley, ‘What is happening’, footnote 33.

Lastly, even though the written source still forms the basic point of departure for most research, there are a number of articles that look beyond the cleared ways and dare to enter the wild. There is for example an article dealing with philosophy-shows on French television to evaluate the nation building process. And the published interview with political scientist Pierre Rosanvallon shows that some attention is paid to oral history.⁵³ Still, the amount of groundbreaking source material is rare. To my opinion one can certainly not speak of a “material turn”, as Anthony Grafton did in his evaluation of the current status of the journal.⁵⁴

4.2. History of ideas versus intellectual history

In answer to the question how the *JHI* should proceed, Kelly is very clear: “In the first place, I think, the history of ideas should represent itself as (according to recent convention) “intellectual history”, if only to lay to rest the ghosts of antiquated idealism (...).”⁵⁵ Clearly ascribing to the “linguistic turn” he states that the history of ideas should abandon the identification with philosophy and with a transcendent approach to ideas and should acknowledge that interpretation should be valued over explanation.⁵⁶

Twenty years later this advice is repeated by intellectual historian Elías José Palti, who wrote two articles in *JHI* in which he managed to broaden the scope of intellectual history to Latin America and at the same time tried to pull the discipline out of its isolation.⁵⁷ He argues that we have to abandon the history of ideas as such and move on to intellectual history. Causing the increase of a “historisation” of ideas. This implicates a refocus not on the “how” of the evolving ideas, but on the “why”. In other words, it does not view the ideas as an isolated item surrounded by history, but as constituted by it. The idea liberates itself in that way from the image of a self-engaged, rationally integrated system.

Palti wrote a theoretical article about the relation between the history of ideas and intellectual history in the journal *History and Theory*, in which he uses a study of the German tradition of intellectual history to illustrate the meaning and significance of the ascribed shift.⁵⁸ The *Journal of the History of Ideas*, eager to avoid any forum or debate on questions

⁵³ T. Chaplin Matheson, ‘Embodying the mind, producing the nation: philosophy on French television’, *JHI* 67 (2006) 2, 315-341; S. Moyn, ‘Intellectual history and democracy: an interview with Pierre Rosanvallon’, *JHI* 68 (2007) 4, 703-715.

⁵⁴ Grafton, ‘The history’, 26.

⁵⁵ Kelley, ‘What is happening’, 18.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 18-25.

⁵⁷ Palti, ‘The problem of “Misplaced Ideas” revisited’ and *idem*, ‘Beyond revisionism’.

⁵⁸ E.J. Palti, ‘From ideas to concepts to metaphors: the German tradition of intellectual history and the complex fabric of language’, *History and theory* 49 (2010) 2, 194-211.



of Theory or of its status, has therefore burnt its fingers. Publishing this article would have provided the journal with the opportunity to reflect on its own status, to try to change the problem that has apparently been afflicting the journal for the past twenty years.

The *JHI* seems to have entered a stagnant and isolated position. The hopeful developments of the 1990s which were highly praised by Donald R. Kelly, like the “linguistic turn”, and the fruits of post-modernism that could pull the history of ideas out of a transcendent view on ideas, seemed to have been put aside. It is for a good reason Elías José Palti recalls the task the history of ideas has to fulfill. Moving from the history of ideas towards intellectual history is the most innovative idea they ever got hold of.

Conclusion

Even though the *Journal of the History of Ideas* has been part of the realms of intellectual history for some time now, it still seems to be unaccustomed to this expansion. The mere fact that the title of the journal refers to the history of ideas confirms this. This paper assessed in what way the *JHI* relates to its tradition, but also how it tries to focus on the future by innovative authors and topics.

Starting with relating past to present, one can clearly distinguish the firm position the original ideas of Arthur O. Lovejoy still holds within the basic outlines of the journal. His emphasis on the interdisciplinary character of the journal is mirrored in the aim of the *JHI*. There is moreover an clearly defined urge to distinguish itself from the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history. Finally the primary focus on particular authors, texts and ideas remained. Overall, there seems to be an appreciation for Lovejoy as a researcher, causing a great amount of articles to refer to him or to his history of ideas in a positive way.

Looking at the results, the propagated interdisciplinary character appears to be fruitful. The relating fields to the unit-ideas, as Lovejoy determined them in 1936, can still be traced within the articles. How these different fields cover the scope of the journal stays fairly consistent throughout the years as well. The top is reserved for philosophy, political science and religion.

Turning to innovation, some new developments can be discovered as well. The Executive Editors aimed to broaden the geographical scope of the articles. The past five years show however that the prime focus is on the Western World. This already commences with the Western-aimed specializations of the Executive Editors, and is reflected in the geography of the authors and in the geography of themes of the articles.

Thematically one can discover a range of articles dealing with daring topics related to sexuality, feminism and religion. However in the course of former times the trends of the 1990s seem to have disappeared. With a strong focus on 18th and 19th century philosophy, post-modernism has been banned from the *JHI*. Philosophers like Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are mentioned only in one article, written by one of the Executive Editors. Furthermore, one cannot discover a hint of trending topics like the ‘Holocaust’ or commemoration.



This lack of attachment to topicality is also reflected in the way newly written books are mentioned. The *JHI* does not contain book reviews, which inform the reader about the new developments in the field, it only publishes lists of books with their title, author and prize. This leaves the journal at a rather isolated and stagnated position.

Fortunately there are innovative scholars who try to reflect on the field and to expand it to provide new impulses for the future. Elías José Palti recalled the message of the former Executive Editor Donald R. Kelly. Furthermore the presence of Lovejoy's opponent Quentin Skinner in the Board of Editors could perhaps be of great value. Lastly, the planned synthetic articles the Board of Editors were about to write (see page 8) could widen the isolated status of the idea into the broader story of the discourse, just as the different types of published discussions already have proven to establish.

In determining the formal structure of the *JHI* the basic principles of Lovejoy still play an important role. However, in order to expand and innovate the journal, the focus should be, not on the past, but on the present and future. Therefore it is wise to take Palti's advise and refocus on moving from the history of ideas towards intellectual history. Changing the name of the journal into "Journal of intellectual history", would be the first step into the right direction.