Enlightenment, Some Assembly Required

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The main figures that populate accounts of the Enlightenment are human--be they enemies of Enlightenment, such as the priest or the tyrant; defenders such as the philosophe or Aufklärer; or intellectuals socially assembled in coffee houses or salons, exercising opinion in rational, critical debate.[1] But in his 1784 essay, "What is Enlightenment?," the first figure Immanuel Kant identifies as an antagonist of the Enlightenment is the book [das Buch]: "It is so easy to be immature if I have a book that has understanding for me [das für mich Verstand hat]."[2] Personified books and other forms of print dispossess humans of their rational capacities; they alienate thought, just as priests or doctors serve as guardians for those who have yet to emerge from their "self-incurred immaturity." Kant's triplet--the book that has understanding for me, the pastor who has a conscience for me, and the doctor who judges my diet for me--shadows his three major critical works of philosophy. But the book, ranked first and aligned with the problem of understanding (with the Critique of Pure Reason), poses a special threat to enlightenment because it appears as an agent or knower in its own right. Standing between its human authors and readers, a book is not simply an inert container of human thoughts. It could, worried Kant, displace or supplant human understanding.

Kant's claims are complicated, of course, by their medium. For the enlightenment to make progress, what was needed, as Kant put it, was "the freedom to make public use of one's

reason," that is, "that use which anyone makes of it as a scholar [Gelehrter] before the entire public of the reading world."[3] And for late-eighteenth century German scholars intent on addressing this "reading world," print was the primary way of using their reason publically. As a medium of exchange, the printed page separated author and reader even as it put them in contact. But even in the lecture hall, contact between a scholar and his audience was hardly immediate: the intimacy of private téte-à-tétes contrasts sharply with broadcasts and publicity. In Jürgen Habermas's reconstruction of the bourgeois public sphere, an ideal type, an "audience-oriented subjectivity" nurtured in private, animates the Gelehrter, "whose writings speak to his public, the world."[4] Departing from Habermas and further simplifying for the sake of argument, we might say that to make "public" use of one's reason was to do so in print.

So Kant relied on books--his metaphor is significant--to help him "think out loud."[5] But books and other print products posed a threat to the activity of thinking (making use of one's own understanding without guidance) by which humans might free themselves from their immaturity. Or again, the Enlightenment came to depend on the circulation of printed texts, even as these same printed texts threatened to disorder the process of enlightenment. Kant's late eighteenth-century moment witnessed an astonishing expansion of book-based knowledge, an "endlessly accelerating, self-regenerating inflation of print" that, in Paul Keen's words, "threatened to exceed any strategy for its assimilation."[6] This ready availability of printed texts represented a challenge to the core of what Kant claimed was true enlightenment: "thinking for oneself" [Selbstdenken].[7] "Thinking for oneself," wrote Kant, "means seeking the highest touchstone of truth in oneself, that is, in one's own reason. And the maxim to think for oneself at all times is Enlightenment."[8] An overreliance on books threatened the very disposition of Enlightenment: "Sapere aude! Have courage to make use of your own understanding!"[9] Shun

books and do one's thinking oneself. The philosopher Rüdiger Bittner drily remarked, "booksellers at any rate would find such a maxim of enlightenment uncongenial," before he bends the Enlightenment imperative to think back on itself in order to cancel it. How could such a maxim even be applied?--"you cannot fail to obey the injunction."[10]

By invoking "the book," then, in "What is Enlightenment?," Kant recasts the question so that his answer must specify what form autonomous thinking will take in an age beset by print. In this essay, we characterize Kant's media environment by looking to the reading public facilitated and produced by one of the late German Enlightenment's most important periodicals, the Berlinische Monatsschrift--the setting for the original publication of Kant's essay on Enlightenment. In reading the Monatsschrift, one of our broader aims is to revisit the concepts of "the public" and "publicness" as first articulated by Jürgen Habermas and then critiqued and complicated by English-language scholars over the past two decades.[11] But in light of the revisions and challenges to Habermas's initial thesis, our point is rather simple: the eighteenth-century public, or "das Publikum," insofar as it can be said to have existed, had to be assembled. The "public" did not simply emerge as some ineluctable product of modernity, supervenient on rational subjects and informed citizens, but was a function of particular and contingent decisions facilitated by print technologies. The way in which the Monatsschrift assembled itself and its readership will therefore be described as a bibliographical and literary, as well as a political and ethical, undertaking.

Historians of the book have debated the term "print culture" for some time now, many asking whether it obscures more than it clarifies.[12] But for us the oxymoron serves our purposes quite well, because it captures the sense in which technology and the cultivation of the human are conjoined. The phrase aptly describes an eighteenth-century situation in which books were

readily personified while readers, publishers, hacks, and philosophers were all understood to be creatures of print. James Schmidt has recently suggested that "one of the chief reasons why the Enlightenment has remained controversial is that it has never been entirely clear what the process of enlightenment involves."[13] In this essay, which is much informed by Schmidt's work on Enlightenment, we detail a key element of this process, namely, the assembly of Enlightenment in and as a print culture.

Thinking of reading publics as assembled will enable us to see just how multiple, contingent, and particular they were. Doing so will also help us understand Enlightenment as not simply a particular historical period or liberating philosophical activity, but also as a particular process bound up with print.[14] To ask, as a great many German intellectuals did in the 1780s, "what is Enlightenment?" was to consider the limits, boundaries, and conditions within which thought could be made public or, to put it more precisely, to consider what it meant to think with and through print technologies. The question of "enlightenment" concerned not a set of dates, 1784 or 1750!, a national context (France, England, Germany?), or a list of thinkers (is it Diderot and Voltaire or Mendelssohn and Kant?), but rather the possibilities and limitations of thinking, communicating, and living together in an age of print.[15] And this question, as the eighteenth-century Berlin pastor Friedrich Zöllner noted, was almost as important as "what is truth?"[16]

I. Locating the Enlightenment in Kant's Essay

We begin with the first page of Kant's 1784 essay, entitled "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (fig. 1.1). As an answer, Kant's essay is not a response to a general question about a cultural moment floating around in some vague discursive field; instead, it is a specific response to a question posed in a particular footnote, namely, the question "what is

Enlightenment?" that was posed by Johann Friedrich Zöllner in the same journal of the year before. The title of Kant's famous essay on Enlightenment, originally printed as the lead essay in the December issue of Berlinische Monatsschrift, is immediately followed by a citation: "S. Decemb. 1783. S. 516."--See December 1783, p. 516. This parenthetical directive--to look for Enlightenment on a page in the December 1783 issue of the Berlinische Monatsschrift--exhorts the reader, before he or she even engages with what has ever since been regarded as the content of Kant's essay, to look elsewhere, to look back to Zöllner's essay and into its footnotes. The graphic design and paratextual elements of Kant's essay are key elements of interpretation.[17]

In reading this way, the question posed in the title is, in effect, answered by the page's design and layout. The citation at once belongs to the title but, because put in parentheses and set in a smaller typeface, is distinct. It coordinates two pages in two different volumes of the same journal. Looking into the Berlinische Monatsschrift, we locate it not here on page 481 of the magazine in front of us (volume 4 from December 1784) nor even there on page 516 of the (volume 2 from December 1783), but in the act and moment of cross-reference. The answer to the question of Enlightenment is thus bifurcated: we can read Kant's essay or we can stand back and locate it in the larger structure of reference and citation.[18] Following references, as we will in this study, serves to re-assemble the networks of communication that constituted a "reading public," or trace what James Schmidt calls the "chain of questions and answers" that is the process of Enlightenment.[19]

In fact, if we follow Kant's citation and look to page 516, where Zöllner's famous footnote is to be found (fig. 1.2), we find ourselves in the middle of an essay by Johann Friedrich Zöllner, a Berlin pastor who published several sermons in the Berlinische Monatsschrift. Zöllner's essay, like Kant's, is titled with a question: "Is it wise to no longer sanction marriage

through religion?"--that is, Zöllner asks whether the removal of clergy from wedding ceremonies would be "enlightened." And his essay was, in turn, a response to another essay in the Berlinische Monatsschrift from September of 1783, Johann Biester's "A Proposal No Longer to Bring Clergy into the Execution of Marriages." The chain of questions and answers carries us from one issue to another, from question to proposal. Kant's essay refers to an essay by Zöllner that references an essay by Johann Biester, editor of the journal.

Despite this linking of essay to essay, scholars have long read Kant's essay in isolation, as Kant's essay, an autonomous piece of thinking.[20] Dislocated from its position in the Enlightenment network of citation, it has been reduced to its ostensible philosophical content and arguments. This sundering of the essay from its print context was codified by the Akademie Ausgabe, which did not print the parenthetical citation "Siehe 516," but already in a 1799 edition of Kant's Vermischte Schriften (fig. 1.3), the essay was reprinted without the citation, and effectively de-historicized in its own moment. As Cliff Siskin and Bill Warner observe, later editions bold the word "eigenen" (own), as if further enforcing Kant's authority and ownership.[21] When editors of the essay excise the opening cross-reference, they make obscure the dynamic structure of citation as the main process of Enlightenment. That is, the editorial decision erases what Enlightenment entailed, namely, a broad confidence in a bibliographic system: what Novalis termed the Enlightenment's Bildungskette, in which the Great Chain of Being was transfigured as a Great Chain of Books. This confidence was most simply the assumption that the system of print was robust and stable enough that the reference, "S. 516," could be easily followed. It presumed that printed objects were bound together in a chain of relations that constituted a realm of print--standardized, ordered, fixed, and simultaneous.[22]

At the bottom of page 516 in Zöllner's essay, there is an extended remark on the phrase "Unter dem Namen Aufklärung" in which the question "Was ist Aufklärung?" is posed. Eighteenth-century intellectuals had long expressed a widespread confidence that the expansion of print and literacy was proportional to the spread of Enlightenment. But Zöllner's query, like Kant's thinking books, also signals an anxiety about the Enlightenment's increasing reliance on print. To ask, as Zöllner does, "what is Enlightenment?," was a sign of an oversaturated semantics: a newly proliferating terminology (Erklärung, Aufklärung, Bildung) had to be fixed and defined.

Neither Zöllner nor Kant were saying anything radically new in their essays, but they were further circulating ideas already in print. They shared in the general eighteenth-century sense that print and enlightenment were not only compatible but necessarily related. Asking candidly and suddenly "what is Enlightenment?" in medias res, Zöllner interrupts debate and exchange in order to fix the process of enlightenment and gain conceptual clarity. To nominalize "Enlightenment" is to objectify it, but on our account the Enlightenment was neither fixed nor abstract; it was an activity. "I have yet to see [the question about Enlightenment] answered!" writes Zöllner. Of course not, because every answer to the question extends the process of Enlightenment. To engage with the Enlightenment was to assemble printed publics, to make connections and form networks in print. It is only the process of posing the question and debating the limits of distribution that gives content to the term. By the time Zöllner asks "what is Enlightenment?" there are already too many footnotes, too many journals, too much print clamoring in and under the name of Enlightenment. Once the question about Enlightenment had to be posed, it was too late to fix upon a single answer.

II. Herr Mendelssohn's Answer to the Same

Kant's "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" opens and closes with references that frame the essay. The first, the citation of Zöllner's question, has been discussed above; the final, a footnote shown below, follows Kant's signature and date stamp as a supplement (fig. 1.4) and points to another answer: "In the Büsching's Weekly News from the 13th of September, I read today the 30th of the same [month], the advertisement for the Berlinische Monatsschrift from this month, in which Herr Mendelssohn's answer to this same question is printed." Kant refers to a weekly newspaper, which in turn refers to an essay in the Berlinische Monatsschrift by Mendelssohn that is a response, like Kant's, to the question posed in Zöllner's footnote. Having read the weekly, Kant learns that Mendelssohn's essay exists (it was published in September 1784 issue of the Berlinische Monatsschrift*)* but cannot know what it says.

The bifurcation of Enlightenment is starkly illustrated in this closing note: "Knowledge is of two kinds," as Samuel Johnson put it, "We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it."[23] Knowing where to locate Mendelssohn, Kant saturates his footnote with deictic markers, words and phrases that without context, place, time, or topic, would make little sense: "the 13th of September," "the 30th of the same month," "today," "this month," "the same question." But the note is overloaded, as if Kant is unsure whether he is pointing his reader to the correct pages in the broader network of print or to a (to another) correct answer. Unlike the confidence displayed in the first parenthetical citation--look exactly here on page 516 of December 1783 issue--Kant's final footnote is composed of a series of citational phrases all intended to locate his answer in relation to Mendelssohn's. The hyper-indexical language dramatizes both the network's sentience (the Busching's Wochentliche Nachrichtung and the Berlinische Monatsschrift have knowledge for us) as well as the fragile and contingent

nature of the public. Enlightenment was always being assembled and, at the same time, ever on the verge of dissolution.

What is revealed in these citations is a print system that was not in fact always simultaneous and smooth. Rational consensus and communication among deliberating publics were, in part at least, subject to the contingencies of print technologies, both their efficiencies and failures. Kant's prose highlights, for example, the delays in the communication of information from his home in Königsberg in east Prussia to Berlin. Interruptions and delays were normal; the print network was neither homogenous nor complete but full of blockages and gaps.[24] Writing that he has not been able to "get his hands on" Mendelssohn's essay, Kant decides to go ahead and publish his own. The entire endeavor, he continued, would be an experiment to see if "chance" could bring about "unanimity of thoughts"--as if one type of knowledge (knowing where to find information) may be reconciled with the other (knowing the subject ourselves).

III. Assembling the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*

The Berlinische Monatsschrift, which provided the network in which Zöllner's, Mendelssohn's, and Kant's essays appeared, ranks as one of the most important journals of the German Enlightenment.[25] Published from January 1783 to December 1811, the journal was closely associated with the Berlin Mittwochsgesellschaft or Wednesday Society. The society consisted of twenty-four members, a combination of Prussian bureaucrats and cultural elites, who met twice a month in the winter and once a month in the summer in the home of one of their members.[26] Meetings began promptly at 6pm with a dinner and ended by Members at 8pm. After the meeting's host read a prepared manuscript, society members commented on the lecture one

after the other in a set order. After the meeting Johann Erich Biester, the society's secretary and co-editor with Friedrich Gedike of the Monatsschrift, would enclose the lecture manuscript in a capsule and then have it circulate among the society's members, each of whom had his own key.[27] Before passing the capsule on, each member would place written comments, referred to as Vota, in the capsule and lock it. After the capsule had been passed among the entire group, Biester would have it delivered, now full of commentaries on the original lecture, to whomever had delivered the lecture. The commentaries would refer to the original manuscript as well as the previous comments. The circulating manuscripts and commentaries reproduced the society's in-person interactions in written form and produced a lasting record of their debates and questions.[28]

The same month that Zöllner's essay was published in the Berlinische Monatsschrift, Johann Karl Wilhelm Möhsen delivered a lecture to the society on December 17, 1783, entitled "What is to be done toward Enlightenment of the citizenry?" Möhsen opened his lecture by suggesting that he and his Wednesday Society colleagues determine precisely "what is enlightenment?"[29] The society's interactions and procedures can be pieced together based on archival material that was later edited and published.[30] In their individual vota, members commented not only on Möhsen's original oral lecture but also their colleagues' commentaries, each of which was dated. In this instance, the capsule seems to have circulated quickly at first. Half of the society's twenty-four members commented on the lecture between December 18 and January 2. But circulation among the remaining members took almost two months and did not conclude until February 22. One member even asked for his colleagues to forgive him for holding up the capsule. "Because my servant was not immediately available," he wrote, he put the capsule in his desk drawer and "forget about it."[31] In this complex practice of oral

presentation and discussion and circulation of written notes, we can observe how the society's protocols for interaction were deliberate, well organized, and designed to facilitate a certain type of interaction among a particular public.

Many of the oral lectures delivered for the society were eventually edited and published by Gedike and Biester in the Monatsschrift. But in addition to lectures delivered in the society, the journal also published excerpts and fragments from previously printed material or work that was just about to be published, including translations and travelogues. It re-circulated items previously printed elsewhere. Looking back on the journal's run, Biester described the practice of republishing printed material of well-known authors as one of its central feature and, thus, what made it part of the larger system of print, which he termed the "multiplication industry."[32] The key feature of print, for Biester at least, was not the creation of new but the circulation and reassembly of what already was.

In the preface to the first volume of the Berlinische Monatsschrift, Gedike and Biester laid out their plans for not letting the Monatsschrift succumb to the exigencies of ephemeral production, in particular what some intellectuals were by the 1780s calling the "journal flood." Regular subscribers, they explained, would be provided with all the necessary elements to collect and then have their issues bound so as to ensure their longevity. Individual issues would be published on a monthly basis, and in addition every sixth issue would come with a title page and table of contents that organized the previous six issues. Every sixth issue would also come with a frontispiece: a copperplate engraving of, as the editors put it, "a remarkable, deserving man whose image is not yet well known."[33] These frontispieces, assured Biester and Gedike, would be included "at no additional price."

The images were generally not of the Wednesday Society members but of other Prussian bureaucrats or of well-known men of the day. Shown here (figs. 1.5) in profile are engravings of the heads of Karl A. Freiherr von Zedlitz, Prussian minister for ecclesiastical and educational affairs, and Benjamin Franklin for volumes one and two; and Joachim Wichard von Möllendorff, a Prussian general field officer, and Stephan and Joseph Montgolfier, the brothers of hot-air balloon fame, for volumes three and four. The frontispieces were engraved copper portraits that included a circular frame. Most of them also had an image of a nail or hook with a thin ribbon from which the portrait hung, emphasizing the portrait effect. The portrait-style frontispieces put a head on the body of the book, and they stood in for the physical bodies of the society's members and the authors of the various essays and contributions in each volume. They sought to remind readers that actual people participated in the process of Enlightenment, not just printed texts. But the contradictions of print culture abide: the Aufklärer are remediated and printed as pages.

By including frontmatter at the end of the six-issue run, Biester and Gedike encouraged readers to have the individual issues bound together in a single volume. The readers then participate in the Enlightenment not least by converting their periodicals into bound books; the serialized Monatsschrift providing a kind of kit that a reader could use (in cooperation with a book binder) to collect the individual pieces of the journal into a volume (ein Band) that would lend the journal the printed book's greater sense of stability and heft. Within bound volumes monthly issues could be brought together and consolidated--physically gathered together, stab-stitched, and bound.[34] As each Band represents something like Kant's "unanimity of thought," each individual part was separated only by a thin printed line and a title introducing the issue.

In the pages of the journal, Biester and Gedike consistently exhorted readers to contribute essays, reports, translations, and poems. They worked hard to assemble a print public and to represent the public so assembled in conversation. That is, they called upon the journal's readers to assemble, physically, the Monatsschrift as a book while also participating in the exchange of ideas. The notion of what constituted an Enlightenment work was thus altered. A bound volume of periodical papers was produced through a variety of interactions: editorial, compositional, and bibliographical. All this assembly was necessary, noted Biester and Gedike, because the Monatsschrift was entering a print market that was not only "enriched" but also "drowning" and "infested" by printed material.[35] The best way to distinguish the Berlinische Monatsschrift was to cultivate a readership that would interact with it and make it their own. In the language of Silicon Valley, Biester and Gedike were recruiting readers by including user-generated content.

IV. Assembling a Network of References

The contemporary book historian who bends back the pages of a bound volume of the Monatsschrift and peers into its gutter may discover the threads that, stitched through the individual issues, bind the Band together.[36] But the Monatsschrift was assembled in another, less obvious, sense as well. The articles contributed by readers and authors prepared a citation network that Kant's exemplary essay on enlightenment joined in 1784 and that was further articulated in the issues that followed. The authors and the articles reference each other as part of a manifold and interactive whole.

Figure 1.6 gives a graphic representation of this interaction as a map of references. Reading through the first four volumes of the Monatsschrift, we collected every footnote or citation and produced a directed graph of the cross-references internal to the magazine--that is,

our visualization maps a structure of footnotes and citations that point from one article to another article published in the Monatsschrift. That the graph is "directed" means that the arrows point from one article to another article published in a previous issue (there were a few references internal to a single issue and a few to the "following issue" that are not shown in our graph). As with any visualization, the graph sacrifices some detail: we analyzed hundreds of footnotes and in-text citations and in order to isolate the seventy-eight cross-references shown. And because we wanted to emphasize links between issues, the articles are subsumed in their issue and not otherwise made visible. Each of the four vertical ranks corresponds to a Band or volume, collecting six monthly issues (the issues are abbreviated thus: April 1783 is "Apr (83)"). The "edges" or lines connecting the nodes of the graph identify cross-references between articles in the issues. Notice that within each rank the monthly issues of the journal are not ordered chronologically: we allowed the graphing software (called Graphviz) to reorganize the nodes of the network so as to improve the legibility of the graph as a whole. The issues therefore in any volume, although locked on their rank, do not appear in chronological order but are scrambled and spaced so as to minimize the crossing of lines. Readers new to network analysis learn that such matters of layout are not in themselves meaningful: it is the structure of the nodes and links (which nodes are linked and by how many edges) that is significant.

The graph shows the development of a network of citations from the first, to the second, to the third, and then the fourth volume. Read from left to right, it shows how increasingly interlinked the Berlinische Monatsschrift became over time as its new articles pointed more and more to previous articles. It visualizes the process of Enlightenment with a web of links; and the visibly increasing number of references figure an Enlightenment that becomes aware of itself as distinct and self-perpetuating. With each new issue, more and more references, more lines, are

filiated in the graph. We discover that by the December 1784 issue, in which Kant's essay on Enlightenment appears, a complex network had been assembled. Up to that December moment, the four-volume run of the Berlinische Monatsschrift is fully assembled, but the criss-crossed saturation of references betrays Kant's original anxiety that books "have understanding for us" and that the Enlightenment has become overly dependent on print mediations. Already by the third volume the structure of reference is too complicated to be easily described, and would we comprehend it, we must draw it as a graph or set it out in a table.

Anxiety was the motor that produced links, and the ground for editorial intervention. Throughout the Monatsschrift, footnotes appear signed "A. d. H." These are "Anmerkungen der Herausgeber," the notes of the editors Gedike and Biester. For example, in an essay on deism, the editors claim not to take sides: "an diesen oder ähnlichen Streitigkeiten."[37] But they do. They do not stand idly by; they intervene to train and cultivate their readers in the proper participation in the Enlightenment, encouraging diversity of opinion and repeatedly invoking the "deutschen Publikum,"[38] even as they solicit "contributions from distant places."[39] In one footnote they lament that so many readers still cannot distinguish the publisher from the author.[40] They even collect citations of the Monatsschrift by other journals, recording the expanded conversation in new footnotes.

The cross-references, whether authorial or editorial, are sinews, threads that seem to proliferate spontaneously and stitch together the whole. As the Monatsschrift began to include more and more reflexive citations and editorial comments, its pages, as Christina Lupton puts it in a different context, "quicken[ed] with sentience."[41] One of the busiest nodes in the Monatsschrift was an article by the physicist Pierre Prevost entitled "On the Inventor of the Flying Air Machines" printed in the February 1784 issue. Prevost was trying to determine the

validity of various reports on flying machines coming out of France and Italy. Citing reports and articles from a range of periodicals and newspapers, both German and French, Prevost points to particular pages in particular journals, using the reports to evaluate the new experiments. Immediately after Prevost's article, the editors printed what they termed a "Zusatz," in which Martin Heinrich Klaproth, a chemist who among other things discovered uranium, identified calculation errors in Prevost's article. Immediately after Klaproth's "Zusatz," the editors also included another short piece in which Prevost disputes Klaproth's arguments. In the July and September issues, articles, one written by Prevost again, are printed that continue the debate by pointing back to Prevost's original article. This series of citations makes up one of the most complex and interlinked set of nodes in our graph. In the concluding article of the June 1784 issue, the editors reported on articles in other periodicals in which the Berlinische Monatsschrift was mentioned—-that is, they point to exact pages in other journals, in the Der Teutsche Merkur for example, that cited the Monatsschrift. And they express their satisfaction: "The Berlinische Monatsschrift achieves its ultimate purpose when through the ideas that it reports, it provides an opportunity for further discussion."[42] The entire point of the journal was to circulate and link ideas.

In Dan Edelstein's influential genealogical account, the Enlightenment was both a self-aware narrative and a collection of texts and practices. But he gives precedence to narrative and mentions only in passing its material embodiment in print.[43] This "narrative of Enlightenment," however, was inextricable from its dissemination in print, or, to put it more forcefully, this narrative was printed, and its self-awareness constituted as an interconnected and interacting set of print artifacts. Readers, scholars, writers, and publishers were increasingly aware that they were participating in something called Enlightenment, because they were assembling it. The

story of the Enlightenment is not one of epistemic shift but rather one of intensified self-awareness that brought both a new confidence in the potential of print to structure a cosmopolitan republic of letters and a related anxiety.

Kant claimed that he and his fellow contributors to the Monatsschrift lived in an age of small-e enlightenment, and not die Aufklärung (capital-E Enlightenment). By assembling cross-references and visualizing them as network graphs, we offer a synoptic view of the enlightenment not available to Kant and his contemporaries. The graph captures a process and undercuts the common notion that the Enlightenment is primarily a period or a pure philosophical process of learning to think for one's self. It matters that each issue or Stück--the German is literally "bit, piece, part"--is associated with a moment. The journal is published monthly; the cross-references point from month to month. The pieces only become a whole in and over time.

By describing the Enlightenment as a process, we want to suggest that the Enlightenment was or could only ever exist at a particular moment, in a particular arrangement. This is what our graph illustrates. The concern of Kant and his Berlin colleagues in the Wednesday Society was not simply with Enlightenment as a philosophical process or activity of self-transformation but with what could be printed and assembled now. To ask about the limits and boundaries of Enlightenment was to consider the legal, conceptual, and technological limits of the process of Enlightenment. To consider the limits of Enlightenment was to consider what could or should be made public, that is, what could be entered into the network of citation and print relations. Such considerations presupposed that not everything should necessarily be put into the print system. Some texts, manuscripts, and ideas were better left unprinted, and, thus, kept out of circulation.

These types of decisions undercut the notion that print culture was one, singular homogenous public open to all.

V. Private Association, Public Citation

When the members of the Wednesday Society posed and reposed the question of Enlightenment, they were asking more broadly about the possibility of "thinking for oneself." The imperative "to use your own understanding!"--what Kant calls the "motto" of enlightenment--follows uncomfortably after a quotation from Horace (Sapere aude!) and the opening reference to Zöllner's question.[44] That the motto for thinking on one's own is borrowed seems to involve it in a performative contradiction. But importantly, we believe, Kant quotes from but does not cite Horace, dramatizing again the distinction between knowing where and knowing that. Seeing the Latin, hearing an allusion, the reader is expected to supply his or her own annotation.

In the final decades of the eighteenth century, concerns about the feasibility of "thinking for oneself" led to the emergence of numerous secret societies to cultivate "thinking for oneself" as a program.[45] Both Biester and Zöllner were members of secret societies, and the Berlinische Monatsschrift published several articles debating their propriety and role in Enlightenment. In this context, it is important to recall that the Wednesday Society was the public name for the secret society, the Friends of Enlightenment.[46] Members of the Friends of Enlightenment were sworn to keep all conversations secret and "not to speak much" about the society.[47] According to the society's statutes, a member was accepted only when it was clear that he would not "be easily offended by unrestrained and unusual ways of thinking about things that touched on religion and morals."[48] The founders also preferred, as their statutes phrased it, that members not be of the same "views and ways of thinking, or in the private systems, doctrines, or opinions."[49] The

guidelines were in large part designed, or so thought the founders, to facilitate a careful consideration of the limits and conditions of Enlightenment in an age of easily accessible information, that is, in an age of print.

But why all the secrecy? For the society's founding members, concerns about the limits and conditions of Enlightenment were inextricable from worries about, as Birgit Nehren puts it, the effect an "unenlightened public" could have on the discussions and interactions of society members.[50] Many society members worried that the quality and openness of the conversations would suffer if their comments might be made public. Not "each and every bit of enlightenment [was] immediately useful and necessary for the general masses," argued one member.[51] The process of Enlightenment was highly differentiated. Discussions concerning religion, morals, or politics should not be indiscriminately cast about. The social, intellectual, and moral situation of those who might encounter such knowledge had to be taken into consideration. The ideas and questions to which a citizen should be exposed, insisted Möhsen in his lecture before the Wednesday Society entitled "What is to be done toward the Enlightenment of the citizenry?," had to be determined according to his "degree of Enlightenment." One's exposure to the process of Enlightenment, the circulation of ideas, should be in proportion to his intellectual and practical capacities.[52]

In response to Möhsen, Moses Mendelssohn asked whether the limits and boundaries of certain ideas should be "determined through laws and censors" or based on "opinions of each individual."[53] Mendelssohn concluded that because ideas were so varied and dynamic, laws, fixed as they were, would not be adequate for determining how such limits should be set. The actual censorship and control of ideas would inevitably depend on the "judgment" of the individual censor. He concluded, therefore, that the only option was an "unrestricted freedom."

And by this Mendelssohn meant freedom from Prussian censors. Other members wondered if such freedom should be as "unrestricted" as Mendelssohn argued or, if there were to be limits, who should determine them? Who would make the actual decisions concerning what would be filtered and what not?

The members of the Wednesday Society were not simply debating how best to maintain their cultural privilege and power and enforce a system of state-sponsored censorship. They were also struggling to understand the new flows in information and knowledge. Were authors responsible for their ideas once in print? While all "truths" might in the abstract seem worth distributing as broadly as possible, were some ideas pernicious or dangerous? Was an absolutely unrestricted dissemination of information, whatever the source or quality, obviously the best option? These were questions about the dissemination of knowledge and information in an age in which distribution could operate at increasingly greater scales.

The irony of such arguments and the secrecy of the society more broadly was the implicit assumption that even though enlightenment relied on the publicity of print, and thus the circulation of ideas, the ends of enlightenment--freedom, the capacity to think for oneself--could be undercut by the process of enlightenment. "The public" or "publicity" [Öffentlichkeit] was a fragile thing, and so too was the capacity to participate in it. Not everyone, thought the founders and many society members, could handle the process of giving and exchanging reasons without a filter. All of these concerns about the limits, boundaries, extent, forms, and scope of enlightenment were questions about how the enlightenment and its multiple and oftentimes incongruous publics should and could be assembled.[54]

These types of questions and concerns are not easily accounted for by more established conceptions of the public sphere and reading publics. For Habermas, the publicum, "the abstract

counterpart of public authority," developed into the "public, the subjectum into the [reasoning] subject, the receiver of regulations from above into the ruling authorities' adversary."[55] The "public" is the structural analogue of the critical human subject, who participates in rational and open debate. Such a public developed from the social sphere of the state's exercise of authority into a social sphere in which opinions were expressed and judgments made. In his original formulations, Habermas was interested in the conditions under which "rational, critical, and genuinely open discussion of public issues" became possible.[56] Öffentlichkeit was the sphere in which private people came together as a public, and the medium of this coming together was, as he writes, "the people's use of their reason [öffentliches Räsonnement]."

Habermas, of course, emphasized the role that moral weeklies and other forms of print played in the emergence of such a public, but on his account these print objects were simply "instruments" that the frequenters of coffee houses used to communicate. They were extensions of rational subjects, mere tools that could be manipulated as intended by human subjects. They simply served the ends of an emerging public. On occasion, Habermas acknowledges this distinction, as when he suggests that "the periodical articles were not only made the object of discussion by the public of the coffee houses but were viewed as integral parts of the discussions."[57] But these journals were not simply a "mirror" for the public to recognize itself and come into consciousness of what had already been there. They were constitutive elements of that public, not readily distinguished from it. The language of "subject" implies that the public existed prior to and independent of its technological extensions, but this division is impossible. When reading and debating about journals like the Berlinische Monatsschrift or the Spectator, the public was reflexively constituting itself, assembling itself in print.

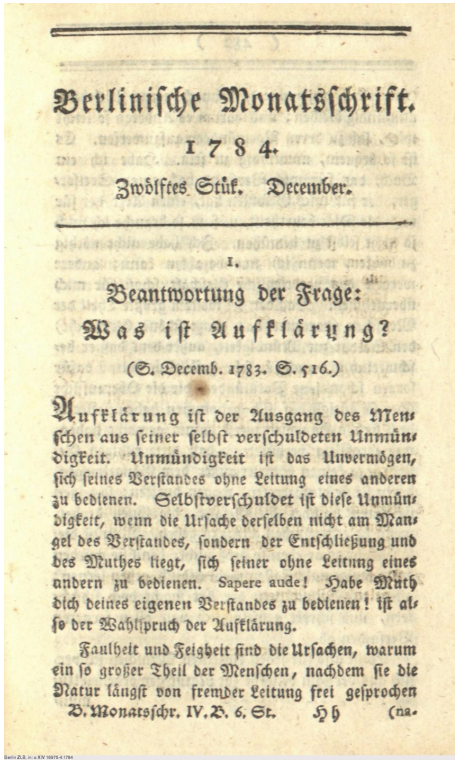
As we have tried to show, these conditions involved not only the development of a "political consciousness" on the model of the modern, rational subject but more particularly the actual mechanisms and technologies of print. The norms that guided the "public" concerned not only expectations governing rational, open debate but also bibliographical norms for interacting with print technologies, which determined how this debate might be assembled in the first place.

By conceiving of enlightenment as a process of assembly and of the public as that which is assembled, we better observe how contingent these assemblies were and evaluate how differentiated the process of enlightenment was. And we make better sense of the debates surrounding the question of Enlightenment. Beyond its bound print artifacts (seemingly legible, standard, and reproducible), Enlightenment was not a singular, homogenizing process in which a single public emerged. "Enlightenment is," as Gedike put it, "just as much a relative concept as is truth."[58] Enlightenment, he continued, "varies, and so it must according to differences in place, time, estate, and gender and other not merely subjective but also objective conditions. Thorough homogeneity of enlightenment is just as undesirable as complete homogeneity of classes and, fortunately, just as impossible."[59] Here the politics of Enlightenment come into sharp focus: an entire population cannot be enlightened all at once. The truths of enlightenment, concluded Gedike, should not be put into the "hands of a person who has not yet been sufficiently enlightened." This discriminating process of Enlightenment, nurtured in secret societies and shaped by its editors, is hardly revolutionary. But neither is it merely complicit with laissez-faire capitalism: the public sphere is not another commodity looking for more efficient distribution.[60] Varying according to national, class, and gender differences, the practice of critical debate promoted competing discourses of publicity even as it aimed to rationalize politics and unite public opinion. By proceeding one link, one citation, at a time, the Enlightenment process

aspired to unanimity from this contingency. But its inclusions proved halting and the structure of the whole was always subject to the disruptions of time and space and the vicissitudes of the networks that marked its boundaries, limits, and meaning.

Images and Figures

Figure 1.1



Berlinische Monatsschrift.

1784.

Zwölftes Stük. December.

I.

Beantwortung der Frage:

Was ist Aufklärung?

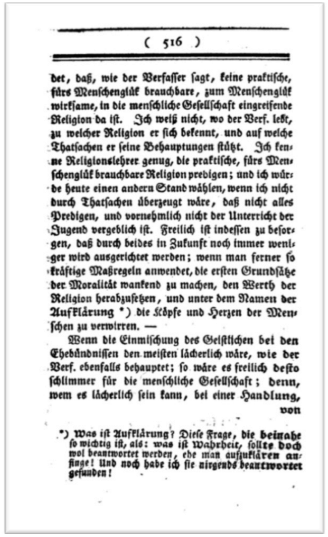
(S. Decemb. 1783. S. 516.)

Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Muthes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Muth dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung.

Faulheit und Feigheit sind die Ursachen, warum ein so großer Theil der Menschen, nachdem sie die Natur längst von fremder Leitung frei gesprochen

B. Monatsschr. IV. B. 6. St. Hh (na-

Figure 1.2



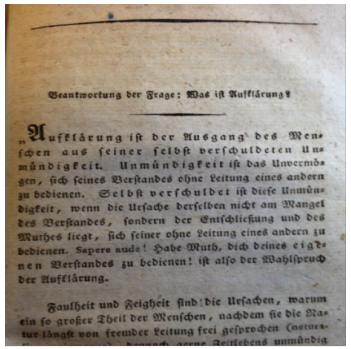
(516)

det, daß, wie der Verfasser sagt, keine praktische, fürs Menschenglük brauchbare, zum Menschenglük wirksame, in die menschliche Gesellschaft eingreifende Religion da ist. Ich weiß nicht, wo der Verf. lebt, zu welcher Religion er sich bekennt, und auf welche Thatsachen er seine Behauptungen stüht. Ich kenne Religionslehrer genug, die praktische, fürs Menschenglük brauchbare Religion predigen; und ich würde heute einen andern Stand wählen, wenn ich nicht durch Thatsachen überzeugt wäre, daß nicht alles Predigen, und vornehmlich nicht der Unterricht der Jugend vergeblich ist. Freilich ist indessen zu besorgen, daß durch beides in Zukunft noch immer weniger wird ausgerichtet werden; wenn man ferner so kräftige Maßregeln anwendet, die ersten Grundsätze der Moralität wankend zu machen, den Werth der Religion herabzusetzen, und unter dem Namen der Aufklärung *) die Köpfe und Herzen der Menschen zu verwirren. —

Wenn die Einmischung des Geistlichen bei den Ehebündnissen den meisten lächerlich wäre, wie der Verf. ebenfalls behauptet; so wäre es freilich desto schlimmer für die menschliche Gesellschaft; denn, wem es lächerlich sein kann, bei einer Handlung, von

*) Was ist Aufklärung? Diese Frage, die beinahe so wichtig ist, als: was ist Wahrheit, sollte doch wol beantwortet werden, ehe man aufzuklären anfinge! Und noch habe ich sie nirgends beantwortet gefunden!

Figure 1.3

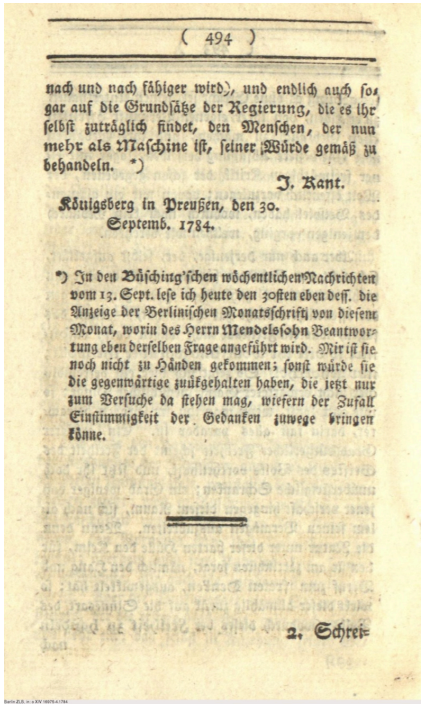


Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?

„Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Selbst verschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Muthes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Muth, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung.

Faulheit und Feigheit sind die Ursachen, warum ein so großer Theil der Menschen, nachdem sie die Natur längst von fremder Leitung frei gesprochen (naturaliter majorennes), dennoch gerne Zeitlebens unmündig

Figure 1.4



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nach und nach fähiger wird), und endlich auch sogar auf die Grundsätze der Regierung, die es ihr selbst zuträglich findet, den Menschen, der nun mehr als Maschine ist, seiner Würde gemäß zu behandeln. *)

I. Kant.

Königsberg in Preußen, den 30. Septemb. 1784.

*) In den Büschingschen wöchentlichen Nachrichten vom 13. Sept. lese ich heute den 30sten eben dess. die Anzeige der Berlinischen Monatsschrift von diesem Monat, worin des Herrn Mendelssohn Beantwortung eben derselben Frage angeführt wird. Mir ist sie noch nicht zu Händen gekommen; sonst würde sie die gegenwärtige zurückgehalten haben, die jetzt nur zum Versuche da stehen mag, wiefern der Zufall Einstimmigkeit der Gedanken zuwege bringen könne.

2. Schrei-

Figure 1.5

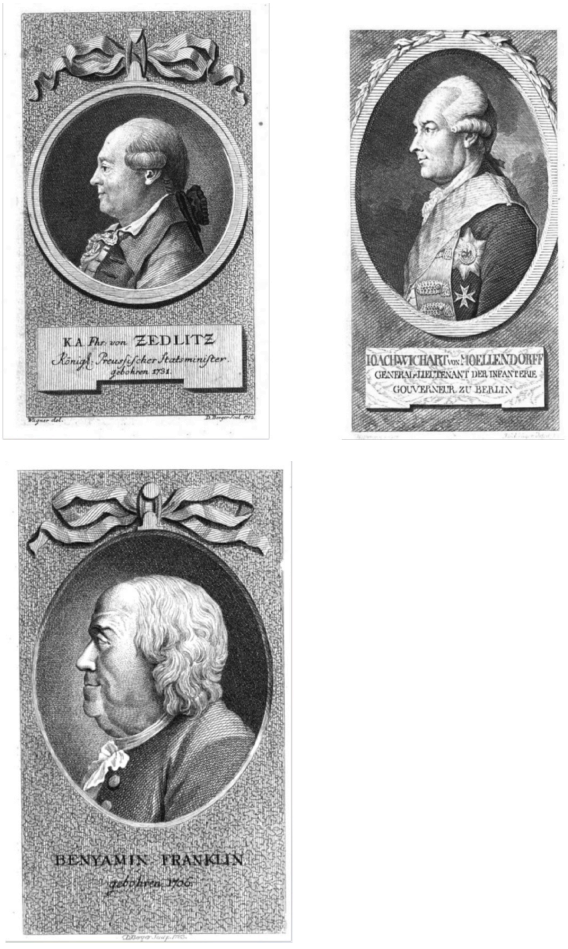
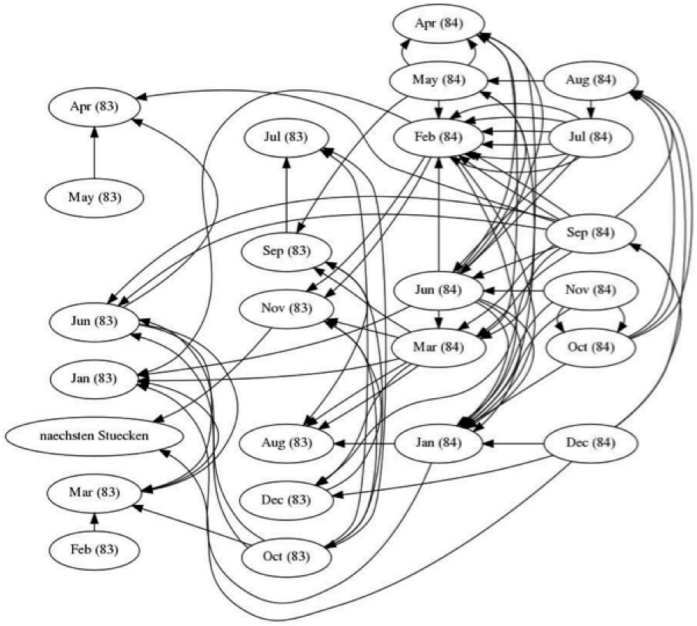


Figure 1.6



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[1] Brad Pasanek and Chad Wellmon, "The Enlightenment Index," The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation 56:3 (Fall 2015).

[2] All Kant citations, with the exception of those to the Kritik der reinen Vernunft, refer to the Akademie Ausgabe (Kant's Gesammelte Schriften). With occasional emendations, translations are our own. Here, 8:35.

[3] Kant, 8:37.

[4] See Habermas, Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 28, 106. The second quotation is drawn from Kant's essay and quoted from Habermas's main discussion of Kant, 102-17. Gelehrter is rendered in Burger's English translation as "publicist."

[5] Kant, "On the Common Saying," 8:304.

[6] Keen, Crisis of Literature in the 1790s, 107. Cited in Sher, The Enlightenment & the Book, 597-98.

[7] "What does it mean to orient oneself in thought?" Kant, 8:146.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Kant, 8:35.

[10] See Kant, "What is Enlightenment?," 347, 348.

[11] For an overview of the reception of Habermas in American academic circles, see John H. Zammito, "The Second Life of the 'Public Sphere': On Charisma and Routinization in the History of a Concept," 90-117. See also Craig Calhoun, ed., Habermas and the Public Sphere.

[12] For an overview of these debates, see Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth Eisenstein, eds. Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Schevlin.

[13] Schmidt, "The Question of Enlightenment," 5.

[14] On the Enlightenment as a reaction to changes in print technologies and for an account to which we are indebted, see Clifford Siskin and William Warner, "Introduction," This is Enlightenment, eds. Clifford Siskin and William Warner.

[15] James Schmidt comes close to our concern: "Since neither Mendelssohn nor Kant are offering an account of an historical period, the demarcations they will be deploying in their definition of 'enlightenment' cannot take the form of dates (e.g., 'The Enlightenment began in the 1680s'), places (e.g., 'It's French'), or lists of names (e.g., 'Voltaire was part of the Enlightenment, but Rousseau wasn't'). Their concern is with how far a process can be allowed to proceed: do we set limits to what can be printed and discussed and, if so, what limits do we set?" "What Counts as an Answer to the Question 'What is Enlightenment?,'" 7.

[16] "Ist es rathsam, das Ehebündniss nicht ferner durch die Religion zu sanciren?," Berlinische Monatsschrift, 516n.

[17] For an example of sustained reading in this mode, see Janine Barchas, Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel.

[18] We can, to speak with Michel Foucault, consider Enlightenment either "as a process in which men participate collectively" or as an "act of courage to be accomplished personally." In Foucault's rewriting of Kant, "Men are at once elements and agents of a single process." See "What is Enlightenment?" in The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow, 35.

[19] Schmidt, "What Counts as an Answer to the Question 'What is Enlightenment?," 2.

[20] Schmidt, "Misunderstanding the Question," 2-3.

[21] Siskin and Warner, "This is Enlightenment," 3.

[22] We borrow the adjectives from Elizabeth Eisenstein, The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe.

[23] Boswell, Life of Samuel Johnson, 1:487.

[24] See Helge Jordheim, "The Present of Enlightenment: Temporality and Mediation in Kant, Jean Paul, and Foucault," 189-208.

[25] See Jonathan M. Hess, Reconstituting the Body Politic: Enlightenment, Public Culture, and the Invention of Aesthetic Autonomy, especially chapter 1.

[26] For a further discussion on the society, see Günter Birtsch, "The Berlin Wednesday Society," 235-50.

[27] See Eckhart Hellmuth, "Aufklärung und Pressefreiheit: Zur Debatte der Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft während der Jahre 1783 und 1784," 316n. See also Adolf Stözel, "Die Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft über Aufhebung oder Reform der Universitäten (1795)," 201.

[28] For a clear example of this interaction, see the vota on Johann Carl Wilhelm Möhsen's lecture, "Was ist zu thun zur Aufklärung der Mitbürger?," reprinted and edited in Ludwig Keller, "Die Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Geistesentwicklung Preussens am Ausgange des 18. Jahrundernts," 67-94.

[29] Möhsen, "What Is to Be Done Toward the Enlightenment of the Citizenry?," 49.

[30] See Keller, "Die Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," for a reproduction of the materials.

[31] Ibid., 1895-96.

[32] Berlinische Monatsschrift, vol. 2 (1811), iv.

[33] Berlinische Monatsschrift, vol. 1 (1781), n.p.

[34] We draw inspiration from Matthew Garrett's reading of The Federalist papers. See his Episodic Poetics: Politics and Literary Form after the Constitution, 23-59.

[35] Berlinische Monatsschrift, vol. 1 (1783).

[36] Garrett, Episodic Poetics, 30.

[37] Gedike and Biester, Berlinische Monatsschrift, 4:175n.

[38] Ibid., 4:231n.

[39] Ibid., 4:201n.

[40] Again, 4:202n. See also 3:571-72: The Monatsschrift "erreicht ihren Endzweck, wenn sie durch die Gedanken, die sie vorgeträgt, Gelegenheit zu deren weiterer Erörterung giebt."

[41] Lupton, Knowing Books, 5-6.

[42] Gedike and Biester, Berlinische Monatsschrift, vol. 1 (1784), 571.

[43] He argues, for example, that "to partake in the Enlightenment" it was not enough to write a particular type of philosophical treatise or visit a salon; instead, "it took an awareness, by oneself and others, that a particular action belonged to a set of practices considered enlightened." Edelstein, The Enlightenment: A Genealogy, 13.

[44] See Horace, Epistles I, 2, 40-41: "Dimidium facti qui coepit habet: sapere aude: Incipe." Others have remarked on the irony that clings to the use of a commonplace: see Siskin and Warner, "This is Enlightenment," 2-3. The phrase has its own citational history: it was chosen for a medal for Leibniz and Wolff and in several German engravings; also, Johann Georg Hamann used it in a 1759 letter to Kant. See Venturi, Utopia and Reform, 5-9. See also Schmidt, "Misunderstanding the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'"

[45] On this issue, see Birgit Nehren, "Selbstdenken und gesunde Vernunft: Über eine wiederaufgefundene Quelle zur Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," 87-101.

[46] For a broader discussion, see James Schmidt, "The Question of Enlightenment: Kant, Mendelssohn, and the Mittwochsgesellschaft," 269-91.

[47] Biester as quoted in Nehren, "Selbstdenken," 92. Note that in "On the Common Saying: This May be True in Theory but it Does not Apply in Practice," Kant argues the restriction of the

public sphere ("Obedience without the spirit of freedom") is the cause of secret societies. Cited in Habermas, Public Sphere, 107; see also 35.

[48] Society's ordinances as quoted in Nehren, "Selbstdenken," 92-93.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 92. For a further discussion of these concerns, see Hellmuth, "Aufklärung und Pressefreiheit," 321-25.

[51] Möhsen quoted in Hellmuth, "Aufklärung und Pressefreheit," 324.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Moses Mendelssohn quoted in Keller, "Die Berliner Mittwochsgesellschaft," 81.

[54] See Schmidt, "What Counts as an Answer to the Question "What is Enlightenment?"

[55] Habermas, Public Sphere, 26.

[56] van Horn Melton, Rise of the Public, 4.

[57] Habermas, Public Sphere, 42.

[58] Keller, "Die Berliner Mittwochs-Gesellschaft. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Geistesentwicklung Preussens am Ausgange des 18. Jahrhunderts," 85.

[59] For a discussion of these comments, see Birtsch, "Berlin Wednesday Society," 242-43.

[60] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 74-75.