

## Editorial

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In 2007, the European Science Foundation (ESF) published a European Index for the Humanities (ERIH): ERIH is the attempt to classify periodicals in the humanities (journals and year-books) by use of three categories, namely the categories A, B, and C. Without any doubt, this ranking has to be regarded as a judgement of quality (see the website of the ESF [www.esf.org](http://www.esf.org)). ERIH also subjects philosophical journals to this ranking; an “initial list” of magazines published all over the world can be seen on the website of ESF.

Notwithstanding the particular evaluation of their own magazine, the editors of this journal regard the procedure applied by the ESF as unacceptable.

It is puzzling and unintelligible, that

- neither relevant philosophical societies or organizations (like e.g. the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Philosophie or the Gesellschaft für Analytische Philosophie),
- nor the publishers or editorial boards of the periodicals in question,
- nor the publishing houses of these publications

were involved in the preparation of this “initial list”, or at least asked for information. It remains unknown which—if any—national academic organisations were consulted.

The criteria which lead to the A, B, C—classification reveal that “quality” is equated with “published internationally”, while “internationally” is supposed to mean „being published in English“. Thus, category A is defined as follows: “High-ranking international publications with a very strong reputation among researchers of the field in different countries, regularly cited all over the world.” On the other hand, what characterises category C is “local significance”: “Research journals with an important local/regional significance in Europe, occasionally cited outside the publishing community.” The attempt to reduce academic quality merely to the number of citations may be considered as doubtful.

Especially in philosophy, the use of the respective national languages has proved to be a decisive factor for the successful development of important traditions and paradigms. It cannot be accepted that journals which pursue such a task are altogether discredited as ‘regional’ publications, judged to be of minor quality, and therefore classified as belonging to category C.

It is the proclaimed purpose of the ERIH “to develop a platform which will allow easier access to top European Humanities research.”

However, we fear this quasi-objective platform may result in the following:

- Only contributions which appear in journals of categories A and B are considered to be of high quality (a decisive factor concerning appointment proceedings, for instance)
- The countries' academic libraries will change their acquisition policy in accordance with the ERIH-classification.

Consequently, apart from a decrease in the number of journals, there would also be a levelling down and a decline of academic specialisation, resulting not in an increase of quality, but in quite the opposite.

The publishers and editors of philosophical journals in Germany have discussed this situation in detail. Just as several of our colleagues, the editors of the JGPS declare:

We are unwilling to accept the ranking procedure of the ERIH and reserve ourselves the right to demand the JGPS not to be included in the ranking. We would like it to be noted that we do not as such reject quality assessments of our journal. Indeed, we appreciate the importance of such assessments in an academic landscape that becomes ever more international and interdisciplinary.

Nevertheless, we expect the ESF to establish a transparent procedure, one involving the relevant societies as well as the editorial staff and publishing houses of the respective periodicals, before the ranking is continued and its eventual publication is taken underway.

Bochum and Wuppertal, in December 2009,  
Helmut Pulte and Gregor Schiemann

#### **Addenda:**

1. The board of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Philosophie shares the criticism of publishers and editors of philosophical journals in Germany outlined above, and supports the demand for a more transparent procedure. However, it does not endorse the demand to remove philosophical journals from the ranking.
2. As early as at the end of 2008, the most important international journals in the history of science made a joint statement, which includes the demand not to be included in the ERIH ranking. The editors of the JGPS agree with their criticism of the ESF procedure on each and every point. For further information, see: <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-sci-med-tech&month=0810&week=a&msg=jvTfx2/NBgp5lkZgAA7jw&user=&pw=>