

### STRUGGLING FOR THE EMPEROR'S BLESSING: FRANZ FICKER'S AESTHETICS TEXTBOOKS

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This essay endeavours to cover and clarify the extraordinarily long and complicated approval process – unparalleled in the history of European aesthetics – of the first Austrian court-approved university textbook of aesthetics of local provenance, Franz Ficker's *Asthetik* (1830). The detailed account of the negotiations preceding the approval is followed by general conclusions concerning the nature of Austrian aesthetics, the operation of Austrian universities, and Austrian university policy in the period preceding the March 1848 revolution.

On 9 January 1838, Emperor Ferdinand I of Austria (also known as Ferdinand the Benign) issued a rescript permitting the use of the second, revised edition of *Asthetik oder Lehre vom Schönen und von der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange* (Aesthetics; or, a Theory of the Beautiful and of Art in Its Full Scope), by Franz Ficker, a Professor of Classical Literature and Aesthetics at Vienna University, for the teaching of aesthetics at German-language universities in Austria.<sup>1</sup> With regard both to the history of the Austrian aesthetics of that time and to contemporary aesthetics in what is today Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, and Ukraine (Ficker's textbook was used at lycées and universities in all those countries),<sup>2</sup> this decision has been of fundamental importance because it is the first court-approved university textbook of aesthetics of Austrian provenance.

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<sup>1</sup> All the manuscript archive records related to the imperial declaration of Franz Ficker's *Asthetik oder Lehre vom Schönen und von der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange* as a textbook, which are cited in this essay, are deposited in the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Studien-Hof-Kommission, box 879, shelfmark 24 'Publikationen, Lehrbücher, Schulbücher: C Philosophie, Ästhetik'. Henceforth I will cite only the specific document from this box.

<sup>2</sup> According to lecture lists, the first edition of Ficker's *Asthetik* was used at Lemberg by Michael Franz von Canaval (1830/31) and Carlmann Tangl (1832/33, 1834/35, 1836/37, 1838/39), at Graz by Albert von Muchar (1834/35), at Innsbruck by Lorenz Gabriel (1833/34) and Aloys Flir (1835/36, 1837/38, 1839/40), and at Olomouc by Joseph Leonhart Knoll (1830/31) and Michael Franz von Canaval (1832/33, 1834/35, 1836/37, 1838/39, 1840/41, 1842/43). The second edition was used at Olomouc by Carl L. Kopetzky (1844/45, 1846/47) and at Prague by Joseph Wessely (1843/44) and Michael Franz von Canaval (1845/46, 1847/48). After the publishing of the second edition in 1840, Tangl at Lemberg (1840/41, 1842/43, 1844/45), Muchar at Graz (1844/45), and

All the previously set textbooks were either German translations of foreign-language textbooks (for example, by Charles Batteux and by Henry Home, Lord Kames)<sup>3</sup> or textbooks that, although German, were by authors who were born, educated, and academically employed outside Austria (like Johann August Eberhard and Johann Joachim Eschenburg).<sup>4</sup> Considering the importance of this state act, together with the extraordinarily long and complicated negotiations preceding it, one should note that historians of aesthetics and of Austrian universities have completely ignored the archive sources related to the process of approving Ficker's textbook. In the rest of this essay, I endeavour to fill this gap. I cover the whole approval process, clarifying its key points, and I draw from them general conclusions concerning the nature of Austrian aesthetics, the operation of Austrian universities, and Austrian university policy in the *Vormärz* (that is, the period preceding the March 1848 revolution). On the other hand, the essay does not comment on the textbook itself or the accusations made against it during the approval process, since that would require separate research<sup>5</sup> and distract from the main topic – the approval process itself, which is unparalleled in the history of European aesthetics and thus merits our full attention.

## I

Franz Ficker's<sup>6</sup> *Aesthetik* was published by Heubner in early 1830. On 25 February of that year, Ficker requested the Studienhofkommission (Court Committee on

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Flir at Innsbruck (1841/42, 1843/44, 1845/46, 1847/48) used Ficker's textbook without stating in the lists which edition they were working with. Apart being used at German-language universities, *Aesthetik* was also used at Austrian universities and grammar schools in the Italian provinces. See the Italian translation by Vincenzo de Castro, a professor of aesthetics at Padua, Francesco Ficker, *Estetica, ossia teoria del bello e dell'arte* (Venice: Naratovich, 1845). The aforementioned record group contains separate archive documents for these Italian translations.

<sup>3</sup> Of the German translations of works by Batteux and Home, I shall consider only the Vienna editions: [Charles] Batteux, *Einleitung in die schönen Wissenschaften*, 4 vols., trans. Karl Wilhelm Ramler (Vienna: Trattner, 1770–71); Heinrich Home, *Grundsätze der Kritik*, trans. Johann Nikolaus Meinhard, 2 vols. (Vienna: Trattner, 1785, 1786); *Grundsätze der Kritik*, trans. Johann Nicolaus Meinhard, 2 vols. (Vienna: Schrämbli, 1790).

<sup>4</sup> Johann August Eberhard, *Theorie der schönen Wissenschaften: Zum Gebrauche seiner Vorlesungen* (Halle: Waysenhaus, 1783) and Johann Joachim Eschenburg, *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Wissenschaften: Zur Grundlage bey Vorlesungen* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1783).

<sup>5</sup> I shall discuss the content of Ficker's *Aesthetik* in separate articles.

<sup>6</sup> Franz Ficker was born on 25 February 1782 in the north Bohemian village of Nebovazy (Nokowitz in German). He read philosophy and law at the University of Prague. Upon graduating, he worked in several grammar schools in Bohemia. In 1816 he was made Professor of Classical Literature at Olomouc and in 1823 Professor of Aesthetics and the History of the Arts and Sciences at Vienna. In 1833 his professorship was expanded to include classical literature. He died in Vienna on 22 April 1849. The basic biographical literature comes from Constant von Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, vol. 4 (Vienna: Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1858), 219–20.

Education, the forerunner of the Ministry of Education) to issue a declaration approving the work as the official textbook of aesthetics at Austrian universities in the German-speaking provinces.<sup>7</sup> Its being declared a textbook, Ficker argued, would meet the long-standing requirement of the Court that lecturers avoid the mere mechanical dictation of subject matter and would at the same time enable the authorities to monitor what was being taught. The book, he further argued, also met the requirement that aesthetics be taught in its full scope. In this respect it surpassed, he continued, Eschenburg's *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Wissenschaften*,<sup>8</sup> which had been used up to that point, because *Aesthetik* discussed art of all kinds, not only belles-lettres and rhetoric. The superiority of *Aesthetik* was, according to Ficker, also in its methodology, because, unlike other textbooks, it presented supreme works of art as models, avoided 'foreign philosophical terminology', and in its reflections on beauty, while taking into account all contemporary specialist literature, did not associate itself with 'any prevalent system of philosophy'. Last but not least, Ficker expressed the conviction that the content of the book could, despite its considerable length (571 pp.), be presented in lectures in the five hours a week which were allotted to aesthetics by the curriculum.<sup>9</sup>

The Studienhofkommission immediately began the approval process by asking the Studienrevisionskommission (Education Review Committee) for its opinion. This committee asked the vice directorates (state supervisors working in parallel with the deans) of all faculties at Vienna (that is, not only the Faculty of Arts, but also those of medicine, law, and theology) for their assessments of Ficker's *Aesthetik*, and also the vice directorate of grammar schools and the inspectorate of German schools. We know nothing more about the approach taken by any of these state bodies, with the exception of the vice directorate of the Faculty

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<sup>7</sup> Ficker's request has not been preserved. His arguments are summarized in the draft of the Court Chancellery, addressed to Emperor Francis I and signed by Count Anton Friedrich Mittrowsky von Mitrowitz und Nemischl on 17 July 1830. In general, it is fair to say that the absence of this and further sources presents no fundamental obstacle to our knowledge about the course of the process: it is clear from those that have been preserved that later documents always repeat the conclusions of the preceding ones with little variation.

<sup>8</sup> Eschenburg, *Entwurf einer Theorie*. For the use of Eschenburg's *Entwurf* at Austrian universities, see Tomáš Hlobil, *Geschmacksbildung im Nationalinteresse: Die Anfänge der Prager Universitätsästhetik im mitteleuropäischen Kulturraum 1763–1805*, trans. Jürgen Ostmeier and Michael Wögerbauer (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2012), 269–86.

<sup>9</sup> For the curriculum adopted in 1824, which Austrian universities followed at the time of the review and approval process of Ficker's *Aesthetik*, including references to the sources, see Tomáš Hlobil, *Geschmacksbildung im Nationalinteresse II: Der Abschluss der frühen Prager Universitätsästhetik im mitteleuropäischen Kulturraum 1805–1848*, trans. Jürgen Ostmeier (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2018), 25–29.

of Arts. We know only their conclusions summarized in the proposal of the Court Chancellery (Hofkanzlei) of 17 July 1830 (which I analyse later in this essay). And only in the case of the interim vice director of the Faculty of Arts, Blasius Primus Knees, do we know that the assessment was not written up only by the civil servant himself: on 21 April 1830, he had asked Franz Nicolaus Titze, Professor of World History, for an initial assessment. Though Titze's assessment of 12 May 1830 has not been preserved, we know from later documents that he fully supported the approval of *Aesthetik* as the textbook.

The Studienhofkommission gathered all the assessments required by the Studienrevisionskommission, and then sent them, together with its own statement, to the Court Chancellery. All the assessments were favourable. The Court Chancellery also took a positive position. It stated that the benefits of the book were its clear and effective organization, as well as its sober philosophy, which did not use incomprehensible formulations, maintained a true and decent attitude, took into account virtuousness and education for *Humanität*, and wrote with dignity about Christianity. It found the language of the book educated and charming. It saw great merit in the fact that should the Emperor decide favourably, then Ficker's *Aesthetik* would substitute not only for the deplorable dictation but also for foreign textbooks. Considering Professor Ficker's assiduousness, one could, it stated further, expect that he would continue to improve on it and would not deny if a better work were published by someone else and would in fact appreciate it. But, 'at least for the time being,' remarked the Court Chancellery, 'Ficker's work seems to be the best we have.' Consequently, it decided to propose to the Emperor, on 17 July 1830, that Ficker's *Aesthetik* should be 'the required textbook at all university chairs where lectures on aesthetics are given in German'.

Judging from the positive assessments and, perhaps even more, from the speed of the whole review and approval process (it took less than five months from the day when Ficker submitted his request to the day when the Court Chancellery made its proposal, even though nine different institutions were drawn into the process), it is reasonable to deduce that none of the participants assumed that the approval would run into any obstacles. And yet one obstacle did arise. It was an anonymous review, written independently of the official approval process of which the Court Chancellery and the Studienhofkommission were in charge (both were presided over by Count Anton Friedrich Mittrowsky). Only two short pieces of information about the review have been preserved, each incomplete: one of them notes that the review was requested by 'the supreme authority of the State' (*oberste Staatsbehörde*) and the other that Mittrowsky was disturbed by the role that the Studienrevisionskommission played in the whole

matter, referring to its 'misguided expert assessment'. From these pieces of information it is reasonable to deduce that the impetus for writing the assessment came from the Emperor's advisory body, which was allowed to act independently of the usual official procedures and to which all bodies of the state administration were subordinated.<sup>10</sup> We do not know who exactly provided the impetus to review the matter. Judging from Mittrowsky's reaction, it is fair to assume that the supreme authority of the state requested the elaboration of the assessment from the Studienrevisionskommission. Who this committee selected to make the assessment is unclear from the documents. The assessment continues to be called the 'anonymous review' (*anonyme Recension*).

The anonymous reviewer, in eleven pages, provides a lengthy commentary on the content of Ficker's *Aesthetik*. He divides his criticisms, inconsistently, into three groups. In the first group he criticizes the unsystematic character of Ficker's presentation. He contrasts Ficker's stated aim, to build his whole account on a single idea (*Idee*), as the fundamental principle that runs through the whole work,<sup>11</sup> with its heterogeneous content, of which the reviewer provides a thorough outline. He sees a particularly unsuitable approach in the introduction to the book. Ficker, according to him, has made an indefensible mistake by beginning his account with an explanation of the term aesthetics, 'instead of demonstrating the original interest of the human spirit in truth, goodness, and beauty as the sole basis of philosophy in general and of ethics and *philokalia* in particular'. The fact that Ficker did not place these *Ursideen* at the head of his interpretation, but instead discusses them only in the general part of his textbook, has had the effect, according to the reviewer, that 'a subjective view' has taken 'the place belonging only to the Objective or the Absolute'. The reviewer considers this mistake utterly unacceptable because he is convinced that only beauty itself as an absolute entity is the basis of the scholarly character of aesthetics. The result of this first attack was the conclusion that 'the whole conception [of the book] is misguided because it lacks a logical arrangement and ordering of the concepts from the highest principle'. The reviewer did not even hesitate to write about the 'misguided system both in the basis and in the execution'.

The second group of criticisms was aimed against the eclectic nature of Ficker's book. The reviewer remarked that apart from the misguided system 'one can hardly find anything in the whole work which would be the author's own,

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<sup>10</sup> This imperial body was created in the reign of Empress Maria Theresa and continued to exist under various names and in various forms in the reigns of later Austrian monarchs. See Ursula Floßmann and Dieter Kalb, *Österreichische und europäische Rechtsgeschichte des öffentlichen Rechts* (n. p., n. d.), 88, 108.

<sup>11</sup> Franz Ficker, *Aesthetik oder Lehre vom Schönen und der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange* (Vienna: Heubner, 1830), iv.

and where it does seem to be his own, uncertainty and wavering are immediately evident'. He calls the book an interpretation 'composed of nothing but individual fragments'. Its backbone, he alleges, comprises parts taken word for word from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, Eschenburg, Aloys Schreiber, and Jean Paul. Consequently, the reviewer calls Ficker's *Asthetik* 'a quite ordinary compilation, without insight and seriousness, which can quite justifiably be called plagiarism because it does not cite sources everywhere and remains completely silent about the main source'. He believes that the main source is the 1824 edition of the Brockhaus encyclopaedia.<sup>12</sup> This edition was not, according to the reviewer, so well known that the word-for-word lifting of its interpretations would have been obvious to others. To support his claim, he compares the entries, including references, for 'Grazie', 'Schön', 'Naiv', 'Witz', 'Komisch', and 'Humor', with the relevant passages in *Asthetik*. After carrying out his comparison, the anonymous reviewer hoped that others would believe 'that each page of Ficker's textbook truly does contain the borrowed passages and that this can be demonstrated right to the end of the book'.<sup>13</sup> He describes *Asthetik* as a work composed by combining entries from the Brockhaus encyclopaedia with word-for-word borrowed passages from other textbooks. 'In this way, a mosaic-like work has been created', he summarizes in his devastating condemnation, 'of which hardly more than the paragraph numbers belong to [Ficker]; a work, which has no value other than that of a quite ordinary compilation, a work without a systematic plan, full of extraneous ingredients in form and essence, in which it makes no difference whether the lecture begins with the end or the introduction.'

The third group of criticisms attacks Ficker's way of working with the sources. Ficker, according to the reviewer, was unable to distinguish between various schools of aesthetics and different stages of aesthetic thinking. He combines incompatible theses and principles. He does not understand the difference between the use of a work and its copying out, resulting in an inconsistent patchwork (*Flickwerk*). This approach cannot be defended even by Ficker's admission (in the preface) that he has taken what he considered to be the excellent parts of other authors' works.<sup>14</sup> According to the reviewer he would have done better if he had kept to only one source – the Brockhaus encyclopaedia, whose entries on aesthetics were by Amadeus Wendt, Professor of Philosophy at Göttingen. He would have thus made a more cohesive work than the one he has presented. Even the division into paragraphs has not

<sup>12</sup> The reviewer means the *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände*, 10 vols., 6th ed. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1824).

<sup>13</sup> In the passages mentioned by the reviewer, Ficker truly has copied word for word. The copied passages are actually very short and are placed in different contexts.

<sup>14</sup> Ficker, *Asthetik*, v.

helped the comprehensibility or clarity of the account. Nowhere in *Aesthetik*, he remarks, does the reviewer find any trace of the author's talent and certainly not of genius. He considers the bibliographies to be wanting and the length of the work excessive.

The three principal objections to the book (that it was insufficiently systematic, failed to acknowledge word-for-word quotations to be the work of others, and inadequately treated the sources) compelled the reviewer to doubt, in a flurry of rhetorical questions, the usefulness and reasonableness of a decision to declare Ficker's *Aesthetik* to be the aesthetics textbook at Austrian universities. The book, which, the reviewer argued, in no respect advances research on aesthetics and is but a mere compilation, cannot be forced upon other teachers and thereby limit their independent research spirit, for it would be an 'oppressive monopoly over free communication'. In this connection, he did not hesitate to suggest that the author and the publisher had been guided by the aim of making a profit. And behind the request to have the book declared the textbook, the reviewer sees the bookseller's craving for increased sales and profits, promising a higher fee for the author, with little concern for contributing to scholarship. Everything that he has enumerated is, he argues, even worse with regard to the needs of the State, since Ficker in his book has failed to sufficiently discuss the central topic – namely, the relationship between art and religion, the infinite spirit and the finite spirit of art, that is, God as the originator of the beautiful and the sublime in nature and in man as an artist. He describes his own criticism of Ficker's book as moderate. Aesthetics is, he writes, a highly complicated field, which someone without a brilliant inquiring mind cannot properly work in. As the last link in the chain of philosophy, aesthetics requires combining knowledge of the whole of philosophy with practical knowledge, which is a rare quality. It is, the reviewer claims, only detrimental to aesthetics when its development is hampered by attempts like Ficker's, 'and that is why the presented book, *Aesthetik*, can never become a standard textbook'.<sup>15</sup>

The anonymous reviewer's negative assessment of the book clearly encumbered the hitherto smooth approval process. Whereas the collecting of assessments from nine institutions and the submission of a proposal to the Emperor took less than five months, almost a year went by from the proposal of the Court Chancellery to the time of the Emperor's decision. Francis I eventually sided with the reviewer. On 10 July 1831 he decided that Ficker's *Aesthetik* demonstrably suffered from a number of shortcomings and did not meet the requirements to qualify as the textbook. Consequently, he turned down

<sup>15</sup> The reviewer calls Schreiber's textbook markedly more helpful than Ficker's. See Aloys Schreiber, *Lehrbuch der Aesthetik* (Heidelberg: Mohr, 1809).

the proposal to set *Aesthetik* as the textbook at German-language chairs of aesthetics. At the same time, he called upon the Studienhofkommission to see to the speedy writing of an aesthetics textbook that would perfectly meet the requirements. The Emperor's rejection, closing the first round of the process, had an immediate practical consequence. From the statement of the vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts at Vienna, of 15 August 1835, to the Studienhofkommission, it follows that Ficker was not permitted to use *Aesthetik* as the basis of his lectures.<sup>16</sup>

## II

The second round of the approval process began with an appeal from the presidium of the Court Chancellery, on 27 July 1831, addressed to the Studienrevisionskommission, to collect from all the originally addressed institutions, in the course of four weeks, new assessments of Ficker's *Aesthetik*, which would respond to all the reservations raised in the anonymous review. The presidium itself, moreover, turned to the Bohemian and Moravian-Silesian governments (the Böhmisches Landesgubernium and the Mährisch-Schlesisches Landesgubernium) to obtain assessments from Anton Müller, Professor of Aesthetics and Classical Literature at Prague, and from Joseph Leonhart Knoll, Professor of Austrian and World History and Auxiliary Sciences of History at Olomouc (who was at the same time a substitute lecturer in aesthetics). The Bohemian government submitted Müller's assessment to the presidium of the Court Chancellery on 6 September 1831 and the Moravian-Silesian government submitted Knoll's on 4 October. Müller found Ficker's book to be lacking in 'scholarly clarity, definiteness, and consistency'. These shortcomings, according to him, would be acutely felt by students because of the great length of the volume. Consequently, he stated that it was unsuitable as a textbook.

A favourable review from Knoll, Ficker's colleague during his earlier work at Olomouc, made the Studienhofkommission enthusiastic. In his assessment, Knoll first of all refers to Ficker's having pointed out that the aim of this work is didactic rather than strictly scholarly. Nevertheless, it can, he claims, serve not only university students, but also other members of society, especially young artists. In order to meet with a wide response, Ficker has sought to accommodate human needs. Yet his book is no less scholarly in spirit. Knoll argues for the scholarliness of the work, stating, 'an idea penetrates all parts of the book equally' and 'the effort

<sup>16</sup> Ficker circumvented the ban by stating in the lecture lists that he was teaching from his own notebooks, not from *Aesthetik*. See the lists for the academic years 1831/32, 1833/34, 1835/36, and 1837/38. Not until 1838/39 did he officially begin to lecture 'based on the second edition of his textbook'.



to achieve a systematic whole is visible throughout'. Ficker's aesthetics does not belong to any school of philosophy; it is eclectic; it does not claim to be original; instead, it has, in a mere 570 pages, gathered together what is valuable in German aesthetics. Knoll therefore calls it a 'rich harvest of thought-provoking opinions and ideas, a correct capstone of superior philosophical education'. Despite his praise for the volume, Knoll makes eight recommendations for a revised, second edition to increase its usefulness. In particular he elaborates in great detail his suggestion to establish a general principle on which to base the account of theories of individual kinds of art. He recommends that Ficker should always organize these accounts so that they first discuss the inorganic, the rigid, the unarticulated, and the material, and only afterwards the organic, the mobile, the articulated, and the spiritual.

The Studienhofkommission received assessments from professors outside Vienna soon after it had made its request. The rapid initial course of the second round, however, was slowed down at the Vienna Faculty of Arts. The interim vice director there, Knees, clearly ignored the request of the Studienrevisionskommission, and it was thus forgotten. The process was not revived until almost two years after a formal notice from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Carl von Heintl. On 3 May 1833, Heintl requested an assessment from Johann Peithner von Lichtenfels, Professor of Philosophy, in the belief that he had been the author of the review in the first round of the process. Lichtenfels accepted the task, but pointed out that he had not written the original review. After searching in the records, the vice directorate ascertained that it had been written by Titze, but was unable to find either his or Knees's subsequent assessment. Consequently, the vice directorate requested Titze, on 10 August 1833, to write a new assessment in which he would take into account the reservations of the anonymous review and justify his earlier standpoint. Titze completed the assessment on 25 August. The Studienrevisionskommission collected the assessments of all the addressed institutions and sent them to the Studienhofkommission on 15 January 1834.

Of the seven reviews that were written up, only three have survived until today – namely, the statement of the vice directorate of grammar schools and the assessments of Lichtenfels and Titze. The vice director, Meinrad Lichtensteiner, who was a Benedictine priest of the Schottenstift (Scottish Abbey) in Vienna, emphasized that the work fully complied with the current regulations for textbooks. That is why he found Ficker's *Aesthetik* 'useful' and 'suitable', at least until a better textbook were submitted, which had so far not happened. Not until the very end of his assessment, does he include remarks in which he takes issue with the anonymous review. In keeping with his usual approach, however, he did

not react to most of the conclusions, attacking instead the overall starting point. The reviewer, in his opinion, has not asked whether Ficker's textbook was in keeping with the regulations for textbooks, but instead whether it could not be acknowledged to be a 'standard textbook', which would monopolistically take over the teaching of aesthetics at Austrian universities. The assessments of the vice directorate, however, did not take this tack. Ficker, after all, published the lectures only because no newer textbook on aesthetics had been set and because it was forbidden to dictate the material to students. To call his textbook 'useful', however, did not exclude the possibility that other textbooks might also have been useful. This description means only that no better aesthetics textbook had been submitted to the Studienhofkommission. The standpoint taken by the vice directorate of grammar schools was not undermined by the reviewer's references to Ficker's alleged plagiarism, because, even if 'perhaps really' the same passages occurred in *Aesthetik* as in the Brockhaus encyclopaedia, one could only deduce from this that the encyclopaedia had also borrowed from reputable authors. This was, after all, according to Lichtensteiner, how 'every didactic writer' must work if he wants to acquaint the reader with the leading authorities in the field. To call Ficker's book as a whole a work of plagiarism of the aesthetics entries in the Brockhaus encyclopaedia because of a few borrowed passages was, he felt, exaggerated and unfair. After all, the logical rule is 'Qui nimium probat, nihil probat' (He who proves too much proves nothing). With this Latin saying, Lichtensteiner ended his assessment.

Unlike the assessment of the vice directorate of grammar schools, two assessments by professors at the Vienna Faculty of Arts (both of whom were Ficker's colleagues), Lichtenfels and Titze, which were intended for the vice directorate of this faculty, concentrated in particular on the reproaches in the anonymous review with regard to the content of Ficker's *Aesthetik*. Lichtenfels, a professor of philosophy, in the introduction to his twelve-page assessment, dated 9 May 1833, remarked on his own lack of qualifications in aesthetics,<sup>17</sup> and noted that one could therefore not expect him to write a 'straightforward assessment of a new account of this largely still quite young and incomplete academic discipline'. His aim in the assessment was, he states, more modest – namely, to evaluate the criticisms of the anonymous reviewer and indirectly to criticize Ficker's book. The core of the assessment comprises eight points, each beginning with a quotation from the anonymous review and followed by

<sup>17</sup> In the Austrian university system, the teaching of aesthetics was from the very beginning separate from philosophy. Professors of philosophy simply did not teach aesthetics. See Hlobil, *Geschmacksbildung im Nationalinteresse*, 19–68; *Geschmacksbildung im Nationalinteresse II*, 21–68.

Lichtenfels's negative judgement. The longest is the seventh point, concerning the accusation that Ficker was a plagiarist. Lichtenfels dismisses the accusation outright. Ficker, after all, expressly stated that he made no claim to originality and was only endeavouring to give a clear and comprehensible demonstration. And he achieved this aim. If Ficker had cited all the sources that he had drawn on, his work would have been considerably longer than it already was. The reviewer himself, however, faults the book for its great length. Lichtenfels does not deny that Ficker has taken the mentioned passages from Brockhaus, but this fact cannot justify anyone's claim that the aesthetics entries in the encyclopaedia had been his main source. Ficker used them only marginally to explain terms that he had himself defined elsewhere in his own words. Though he does not demonstrate that Ficker took passages from other textbooks, the reviewer does suggest it. After going through the reservations, Lichtenfels took a standpoint on the reviewer's overall conclusion – namely, that Ficker's book should never become a 'standard textbook'. Lichtenfels rejected the view that this textbook could prevent other lecturers from having their own ideas. If that were true, he argued, no textbook should be published, because all fields are developing and none is complete. Aesthetics, moreover, seemed to him to be a field going through great changes in connection with great works, a field in which much had to be left to the subjective opinions of the individual teachers. Even if Ficker's book were unsuitable as the textbook, it should at least be allowed to be used by its author. The book is correct, thorough, and systematic. It testifies to Ficker's being highly knowledgeable about his field. Its quality in no way deserves the reviewer's insulting accusation that Ficker's motivations for wanting it to be declared a textbook were profit-seeking. At the end of the assessment, he therefore condemns the disdainful tone of the review.

Titze, a professor of world history, also put together an assessment, eleven pages long and dated 25 August 1833. In its wide-ranging introduction, he recapitulates the circumstances accompanying the writing and fate of the first assessment, including the positive standpoint. He then moves on to a new assessment, which was made easier by Lichtenfels's criticism of the anonymous review. He could now more easily reiterate his original support. He divides his assessment into two parts. In the first, he rebuts the anonymous reproaches; in the second, he praises the strong points of Ficker's book. Titze calls the reviewer an aesthetician who ignores all his colleagues. This inappropriate tendency, intensified by the fact that in this case he has become the chief arbiter, has, Titze argues, led him to accuse Ficker of plagiarism, which Titze finds off the mark. In his opinion, the reviewer has an utterly mistaken notion about what a textbook

should be. The essence of a textbook, he argues, does not, after all, consist in its originality. Textbooks should be judged not according to where their authors have borrowed individual words or passages, but according to their overall plan and organization, the sequence of their parts and of their ideas. Titze is particularly unhappy that the reviewer has torn to shreds Ficker's account of beauty. Paragraphs 8 to 20 seem to Titze to be so dense that they do not allow for any excerpting. The reviewer has therefore been forced to criticize by means of referring to the Brockhaus encyclopaedia. To call Ficker, on the basis of that, a mere compiler, is, according to Titze, repugnant and unfair. Ficker may, according to him, have truly borrowed many opinions, but he always did so with spirit and restraint. He has importantly revised the borrowed passages and improved them. Titze even considers Ficker's way of handling the sources to be so exemplary that it fortifies virtue. Borrowing is, moreover, also manifested by Brockhaus. Titze, in addition, considers it unsuitable to reproach Ficker with being insufficiently systematic. This reproach demonstrates that the reviewer either has not understood what a scholarly textbook is or has been blindly led by an unwholesome jealousy. The reviewer's approach is not only 'biased' and 'incorrect'; it is also insulting. The reviewer's sole aim is to prevent Ficker's book from becoming the set textbook. His book does not, argues Titze, bind anyone. On the contrary, it is thought-provoking because it is a good combination of all the research conducted so far. After his criticism of the anonymous review, Titze commences his own three-page ode to Ficker's *Aesthetik*. The book, according to him, is characterized by its well-considered overall plan, effective organization, and apposite presentation of the parts. Ficker teaches correct judgements and the appreciation of beauty and art, not only to students, but also to practising artists. He avoids eccentricity, flights of fancy, and the frequent detrimental features of contemporary aesthetics theories. The basis of his account, and its chief merit, is its 'prudent eclecticism', which enables him to achieve the 'correct sober standpoint of the real philosophy of art'. Ficker's book is distinguished by a genuinely scholarly organization of the whole and the parts, the skilful borrowing of ideas of other thinkers, and its wealth of new conclusions. It is enhanced by a superb, clear, and comprehensible style, distinct and precise instructions, as well as lively, illustrative, and true examples. All of these assets are, moreover, preserved without violating virtuousness. In conclusion, Titze expresses the wish that Ficker will this time have better luck in getting his application approved than he had in his first attempt.

The Studienrevisionskommission gathered together the statements of all six vice directorates in Vienna and also the assessments of the Vienna professors

Titze and Lichtenfels, and sent them, on 15 January 1834, to the presidium of the Studienhofkommission, which forwarded them to the Court Chancellery. It was two and half years after the original call, which was supposed to have been answered within four weeks. The presidium of the Court Chancellery, on 28 May 1834, sent the Studienhofkommission all the assessments gathered by the Studienrevisionskommission, together with the assessments made by two non-Vienna professors, Müller and Knoll, so that the Studienrevisionskommission could use them for a new aesthetics textbook that would meet the demands of the court. The Studienhofkommission discussed the matter on 14 June 1834. In connection with the results of the session, the commission then processed the reservations raised in the assessments, including the anonymous review, in the form of remarks entitled 'Bemerkungen über das Werk betitelt: *Aesthetik, oder Lehre vom Schönen und der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange* von Franz Ficker Professor der klassischen Literatur und Aesthetik an der Wiener Universität' ('Remarks on the book titled *Aesthetik* by Franz Ficker, Professor of Classical Literature and Aesthetics at Vienna University'), which in the autumn of that year were sent to the Studienrevisionskommission, with instructions to put forward a proposal based on them as soon as possible, which was necessary for the writing of a new textbook that would fully meet current requirements.

The seven-page 'Bemerkungen' of the Studienhofkommission constitute the most important official document on the matter. In two parts, it expresses the Austrian notions of the desired aesthetics. The first consists of reproaches against Ficker's book; the second consists of proposals for its improvement. The 'Bemerkungen' reproach *Aesthetik* with not having discussed in greater detail the development of German aesthetics, not having analysed Longinus's discussion of the sublime, not having included the dispute between Johann Gottfried Herder and Immanuel Kant in its demonstration of the charming, and with not including a reference to the fact that Kant had not succeeded in deriving the beautiful from the four categories – quality, quantity, modality, and relation. The 'Bemerkungen' also reproach Ficker for having excessively long accounts of painting and music. The model it proposes for abridgement is *Kunstwissenschaft* by Franz Anton Nüsslein.<sup>18</sup> In the account of colour and the qualities of the human body, the authors of the 'Bemerkungen' state that they would have liked to have seen examples; in the account of painting, they would have liked to have seen the judgements of Johann Joachim Winckelmann,

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<sup>18</sup> Franz Anton Nüsslein, *Lehrbuch der Kunstwissenschaft zum Gebrauche bei Vorlesungen* (Landshut: Krüll, 1819).

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Friedrich Wilhelm Basilius von Ramdohr,<sup>19</sup> and Johann Dominik Fiorillo,<sup>20</sup> and, in the account of architecture, Aloys Hirt<sup>21</sup> and Christian Ludwig Stieglitz.<sup>22</sup> Ficker was, the 'Bemerkungen' allege, to have completed the survey of the development of the plastic arts in Antiquity and the periods that followed, and should not have verbosely described music theory. The account of the kinds of verse should have been enriched with examples, and the analysis of the idyll should be moved to epic poetry and that of the epigram should be moved to didactic verse. In his analysis of the elegy, Ficker should work with Schiller's discussion of naive and sentimental poetry; and in his account of lyric verse, he should analyse in more detail the great authors and omit the lesser ones. In his account of legend, Ficker did not employ Herder's views on this genre. The greatest criticisms expressed in the 'Bemerkungen' concern Ficker's discussion of epic poetry. Here, Ficker was called upon to consider more systematically, among other things, the conclusions of Herder and Jean Paul. Concerning his account of tragedy, Ficker should have based himself on Michael Leopold Enk von der Burg<sup>23</sup> and Herder. In his account of the 'moving play' (*rührendes Schauspiel*) he should have more emphatically drawn attention to the danger that this genre poses for virtue. In his account of the epigram, he should have included Herder's remarks on the Greek epigram, and in his account of rhetoric he should have added a historical survey as he had done for the other kinds of art. After these reproaches, the 'Bemerkungen' suggest that Ficker make the following changes. He should shorten the account of music and use the space thus gained to expand the examples in the parts devoted to poetry and rhetoric. In his account of lesser genres of poetry, he should include whole poems, as Schreiber had done.<sup>24</sup> In places where he quotes from the works of others (for example, Nüsslein and Schreiber), he should either change the original wording or cite his sources and thus preempt accusations of plagiarism. He should conceive his survey of

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Basilius von Ramdohr, *Mahlerei und Bildhauerarbeit in Rom für Liebhaber des Schönen in der Kunst*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben, 1787); *Charis oder Ueber das Schöne und die Schönheit in den nachbildenden Künsten*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Dyck, 1793).

<sup>20</sup> Johann Dominik Fiorillo, *Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften seit der Wiederherstellung derselben bis an das Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 5 vols. (Göttingen: Rosenbusch, 1798–1808); *Geschichte der zeichnenden Künste in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Niederlanden*, 4 vols. (Hanover: Hahn, 1815–20).

<sup>21</sup> Aloys Hirt, *Die Geschichte der Baukunst bei den Alten*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Reimer, 1821–27).

<sup>22</sup> Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, *Versuch über den Geschmack in der Baukunst* (Leipzig: Dyk, 1788); *Geschichte der Baukunst der Alten* (Leipzig: Dyk, 1792); *Encyclopädie der bürgerlichen Baukunst*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Dyk, 1792–98).

<sup>23</sup> Michael Leopold Enk von der Burg, *Melpomene oder über das tragische Interesse* (Vienna: Gerold, 1827).

<sup>24</sup> Schreiber, *Lehrbuch der Aesthetik*.

the literature on aesthetics differently. His account of the history of aesthetics should be clearly built genetically, starting from the changing influence of philosophy on aesthetics. The list of works should be arranged into primary and secondary sources. The accounts of the four main kinds of poetry and also of the plastic arts, music, and rhetoric deserve to be expanded by historical surveys about their origin, flourishing, and decline in various periods and in various nations. The book, moreover, would considerably gain if its overall conception were organized by moving from the material to the spiritual, from the inorganic to the organic, and from the imperfect to the more perfect. All the accounts about poetry which are located in the appendices need to be broken up into paragraphs; the idyll has to be moved to epic poems, and, lastly, the epigram, the riddle, and the charade have to be moved to didactic verse. The account of poetry has to be more systematic and include historical surveys of the four main kinds of verse.

As a whole, the 'Bemerkungen' demonstrate that the Studienhofkommission in the second round of the approval process sought to be considerably more critical than in the first. This is supported by the fact that it took into account most of the reproaches made in the assessments. By this critical approach, the 'Bemerkungen' resemble the anonymous review. But, unlike it, their whole conception reflects an obvious endeavour to provide Ficker with clear guidelines for how to revise the book as painlessly as possible so that he could again apply to have it declared as the textbook, which is why the 'Bemerkungen' do not have the belligerent, disparaging, or even contemptuous tone of the anonymous review. In other words, the 'Bemerkungen' try to come to terms with the condemnation of the anonymous review and to encourage the Emperor to change his mind about the work, without it being necessary to write a completely new textbook.

The Studienhofkommission sent the 'Bemerkungen' to Ficker and to all the previous reviewers and invited their responses. This invitation launched the third round of reviewing Ficker's *Aesthetik*. In this round, the vice directorates of all four of the faculties of Vienna University, the vice directorate of grammar schools, and the inspectorate of German schools, as well as the Vienna professors Lichtenfels, Titze, and even Ficker himself, again expressed their opinions on Ficker's book. Only four of these statements have been preserved – those of the three professors and that of the vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts.

### III

On 15 November 1834, the vice director of the Faculty of Arts, Heintl, asked Ficker for his position on the 'Bemerkungen'. Ficker's statement, dated 6 December 1834, was in three parts. In the first, he explained what his aim has been when

writing *Aesthetik*; in the second, he responded to the suggestions that the Studienhofkommission made for changes to the book; and in the third, he requested permission to write a second, revised edition. Ficker, in the first part, described his motivation when he began writing the book. He had tried, he explained, to provide a complete theory of aesthetics which would discuss all the kinds of art according to their importance. Despite his efforts to achieve completeness, this theory did not get stuck in the sphere of speculation; rather, it acquired the greatest possible practicality. In order to achieve this, he sought to familiarize the reader with what is general, using examples of works of art, as well as historical and literary evidence. To demonstrate that he had achieved this aim, he referred to the positive reception of the book in domestic and foreign reviews. Of them, he emphasized in particular the review in the *Literatur-Blatt* (published in Stuttgart and Tübingen), quoting considerably from it.<sup>25</sup> After defending his aim, Ficker admitted that he had also made mistakes. He was now trying studiously to eliminate these mistakes and continuously improve the work. He demonstrated his unflagging will to improve his own work by referring to the second edition of his own textbook, an introduction to classical literature, which he had also made much better than the first edition.<sup>26</sup> He promised to apply himself with the same determination to improve *Aesthetik*. But, according to him, even the existing edition could easily stand comparison with any other textbook on the subject. That is why he hoped to be granted an opportunity to put together a second edition in which he would take into account all the criticism or at least explain why he could not take them into account. After an explanatory introduction, Ficker began to comment on the particular suggestions for the improvement of *Aesthetik*. From the standpoint of the approval process, the most important suggestions are those concerning the work's compilatory nature and those that demand that the accounts of the history of the various kinds of art be expanded and call for the implementation of a general principle in the account of the development of the theories of the individual kinds of art. Ficker notes that the reference to the compilatory

<sup>25</sup> Anonymous, 'Aesthetik', *Literatur-Blatt auf das Jahr 1831*, nos. 81–83, 8, 10, 12 August 1831, 321–32, concerning Ficker, no. 82, 327–28. For other reviews of the first edition, see Anonymous, review of *Aesthetik*, by Franz Ficker, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 October 1830, 'Außerordentliche Beilage', no. 167, 667; Anonymous, review of *System der Aesthetik*, by Christian Hermann Weiße, *Aesthetik als Wissenschaft*, by Johann Christian August Grohmann, and *Aesthetik*, by Franz Ficker, *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, nos. 168–71, 17–20 June 1831, 733–34, 737–38, 741–42, 745–46; Amadeus Wendt, review of *Aesthetik*, by Franz Ficker, *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Paedagogik oder Kritische Bibliothek für das Schul- und Unterrichtswesen* 2.6 (1832): 442–46.

<sup>26</sup> Franz Ficker, *Anleitung zum Studium der griechischen und römischen Classiker*, 1st ed., 3 vols. (Vienna: Geistinger, 1821, 1823, 1825); 2nd ed. (Vienna: Heubner, 1832).



nature is important and he explains how he made this mistake. He had, he admits, compiled the book on the basis of his notes in which he did not always state his sources. Since then, however, he had again read all the sources and indicated each borrowed passage. At the same time, he again pointed out that right in the introduction he had emphasized that he made no claim to originality and that he had not declared all his sources. He intended to satisfy the suggestions that he expand the account with surveys about the origin, flourishing, and decline of the individual kinds of art. But he pointed out that there was a danger of the book becoming considerably longer and yet he had already been reproached for having written one so long. He fervently agreed that he should build his account on the principle of moving from the material to the spiritual, and to this proposal he immediately added the individual ideas about how he was going to proceed in his account of the plastic arts. He would begin with the least spiritual art – architecture – and continue with sculpture and painting. In the third, and final, part of his commentary, Ficker expressed the conviction that *Aesthetik* could be improved in a new edition.<sup>27</sup> If his work were, he remarked, granted the opportunity to become the textbook, that would certainly help to improve it. Improvement was made all the more necessary by the fact that the art which it is concerned with was developing quickly, and that made it difficult to write a textbook if it were not going to be published again. If a new edition of *Aesthetik* were approved, however, Ficker promised that it would be much better and that he would expand it.

Before writing his assessment, Lichtenfels received not only the 'Bemerkungen' of the Studienhofkommission, but also Ficker's statement. He divided his assessment for the vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts, of 22 December 1834, into two parts. In the first, he reacts to the two documents; in the second, he makes his own suggestions and remarks. In the first, Lichtenfels expresses his great appreciation for the 'Bemerkungen', and supports Ficker's objections, to which he adds his own arguments. Lichtenfels describes the 'Bemerkungen' as 'an indirect rebuttal of an earlier anonymous review', because Ficker was called upon to work even more with foreign sources. In the second part of the assessment, Lichtenfels, in six points, critically comments on the key theses of Ficker's theory. First of all, he considers Ficker's decision to differentiate between the ideas of the beautiful, the true, and the good, by arguing that the first relates to the faculty of feeling, the second to the faculty of knowledge, and the third to the faculty of

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<sup>27</sup> In this connection, Ficker greatly valued the textbooks of Pölitz, Schreiber, and Nüsslein, even though they remained in first editions. See Karl Heinrich Ludwig Pölitz, *Die Aesthetik für gebildete Leser*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1807); Schreiber, *Lehrbuch der Aesthetik*; and Nüsslein, *Lehrbuch der Kunstwissenschaft*.

endeavour. Even though he disregards the slightly contradictory hypothetical nature of those three psychological faculties, Lichtenfels considers it untenable to separate truth and good from feeling. After all, he states, we regularly talk about moral or religious feelings. He believes it right that an idea and a feeling were understood as different expressions of reason – the first being objective and the second subjective –, while both expressions together related to the good, the beautiful, and the true. This approach makes it possible to speak not only about moral, aesthetic, and religious feelings, but also about moral, aesthetic, and religious ideas. The difference between the good, the beautiful, and the true consists in the fact that the good is the aim of the will or the ability of freedom, the beautiful the aim of the imagination or the artistic faculty, and the truth the aim of the intellect or the cognitive faculty. As part of the second point, Lichtenfels notes that if we could only feel and behold (*anschauen*) the beautiful, but not think it, as Ficker states, then any effort to create a theory of beauty and art would be futile. As his third point, he reproaches Ficker with not having explained which of the three presented conceptions of aesthetics he prefers.<sup>28</sup> In his fourth point, he rejects Ficker's description of logic, ethics, and aesthetics as separate from the metaphysics of the true, the good, and the beautiful, as parts of philosophy. The reason is that an investigation into thinking, wanting, and feeling, separate from the true, the good, and the beautiful, is not logic, ethics, and aesthetics, but psychology. Though philosophical ethics is the metaphysics of the good and aesthetics is the metaphysics of the beautiful, logic is no longer the metaphysics of the true, because it is merely a formal discipline. The metaphysics of the true is, according to Lichtenfels, the philosophy of religion. If aesthetics were not the metaphysics of the beautiful, it could not even be part of philosophy. In point five, Lichtenfels returns to Ficker's view that the beautiful can only be felt and beheld. Such a conclusion would, according to him, be denied by Ficker himself, since for him the aim of aesthetics is to explain philosophically the idea of the beautiful as the essence of art. Such an aim undermines the belief that the beautiful cannot be thought. In the last of his six points, Lichtenfels rejects Ficker's broad conception of the beautiful, which also includes the sublime, the charming, and the comic, because the definitions of these terms lack a generic correspondence residing in the beautiful. Their correspondence with the beautiful is also opposed by linguistic practice. In conclusion, Lichtenfels expresses his belief that Ficker will himself notice these and similar illogicalities and rectify them.

<sup>28</sup> Ficker distinguished between aesthetics in the narrower sense of 'the theory of the essence of the beautiful' (*die Lehre von dem Wesen des Schönen*) and aesthetics in the wider sense (adding to beauty the question of the artistic genius and the fine arts), and in the widest sense adding art criticism to the previous subjects. Ficker, *Aesthetik*, 4.

Similarly, the second reviewer from the ranks of Ficker's colleagues in the Faculty of Arts at Vienna, Titze, had at his disposal both the 'Bemerkungen' and Ficker's commentary. In his third assessment, addressed to the vice director of the Faculty of Arts, and sent on 31 May 1835, Titze offers only a concise review of *Aesthetik*. He notes the correspondence between his own views and the 'Bemerkungen'. According to both documents, the book in its existing form is already suitable for the instruction of aesthetics. If Ficker, with the help of the 'Bemerkungen', could improve it, as he promised to do, it would be even more suitable. He recommends that *Aesthetik* be declared the textbook, that the existing edition be quickly sold, and that the author produce the revised, second edition as soon as possible.

The vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts at Vienna gathered together the statements of Ficker, Lichtenfels, and Titze, to which it then added its own of 15 August 1835. In it, the vice director notes that if there exists a need for a textbook in any field, it is fair to assume that the teachers who are able to do so will write one even without being called upon by the authorities. General calls make sense only when no textbook exists. If it does exist, the shorter route to achieve the suitable textbook is by revising the existing one. In that case, this approach offers itself all the more in that the Studienhofkommission looked upon Ficker's *Aesthetik* as the book that would, after the proposed changes, meet the requirements. The vice directorate therefore proposed that Ficker be allowed, in view of the suggestions in the 'Bemerkungen', immediately to begin to teach based on his own book. With this permission the first edition would sell out more quickly and at the same time remedy the untenable situation in which this book, according to the lecture lists, is already being used to teach aesthetics at Graz, Innsbruck, and Lemberg, but not Vienna.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the vice directorate proposes to call upon Ficker to revise the first edition without delay and to present the revised manuscript to the Studienhofkommission. While revising, he should also take into consideration Lichtenfels's remarks.

The Studienrevisionskommission collected the statements of the six institutions and the three professors of Vienna University, and attached their own to them. We know their main conclusions from the minutes of the Studienhofkommission meeting of 28 May 1836. The Studienrevisionskommission, together with the vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts at Vienna, came to the conclusion that it was necessary to call upon Ficker to improve *Aesthetik* according to the Emperor's instructions, and also proposed that Ficker be allowed

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<sup>29</sup> For more about the use of Ficker's *Aesthetik* at German-language universities in Austria, see note 2.

to use the existing edition to lecture until the revised version was published. The set of all the assessments was sent by the Studienrevisionskommission to the Studienhofkommission on 18 May 1836. The whole matter was then discussed ten days later. It added to the existing assessments, moreover, the earlier prepared assessments of the non-Vienna professors Müller and Knoll. After carefully considering all the opinions that had been requested and also the reviews in periodicals, the Studienhofkommission concluded that Ficker's work had, in its original form, already met the 'most essential requirements' placed on textbooks. Moreover, the book could be easily improved by taking into account the remarks that had been made. The author's willingness to meet these demands was evident from how he had worked with his earlier books, which he was always seeking to improve in later editions. Franz Seraphin Cassian Hallaschka, the secretary of the Studienhofkommission, who, from the academic year 1832/33 onward, was also Chairman of the Faculty of Arts and the Director of Philosophy Studies at Vienna, therefore expressed his firm conviction that Ficker should be entrusted as soon as possible with revising the work and should then submit the revised manuscript for reconsideration. The minutes include a draft decree of 9 July 1836, ordering the government of Lower Austria to take the appropriate steps in that direction.

Ficker quickly carried out the required revisions, so that the government of Lower Austria could, already on 9 February 1837, submit the second version of *Aesthetik* to the Studienhofkommission for its assessment, together with Ficker's new book on the history of the fine arts, *Geschichtlicher Überblick der gesamten schönen Kunst*.<sup>30</sup> From the remarks about the form and content of the second version of *Aesthetik* in the later assessments, it is fair to deduce that Ficker submitted not a new manuscript, but the original book with the deletions and additions shown in the manuscript. The Studienhofkommission, on 22 February, called upon the Studienrevisionskommission to order an assessment both of this revised version and of the new book. This opened the fourth round of the approval process of Ficker's *Aesthetik*.

#### IV

The whole fourth round took place in the reign of the new monarch. Emperor Francis I died on 2 March 1835 and that same year Ferdinand I (the Benign) took his place. Ferdinand made an important change in the approval process, when, on 8 April 1837, he abolished the Studienrevisionskommission. The Studienhofkommission and the Court Chancellery were thus forced to work

<sup>30</sup> Franz Ficker, *Geschichtlicher Überblick der gesamten schönen Kunst nach ihren einzelnen Sphären* (Vienna: Gerold, 1837).

only with the assessments they had already received. These came from experienced reviewers of Ficker's book – Titze and Lichtenfels – and also from the vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts at Vienna and, in addition, for the first time, from Cölestin Keppler, Professor of Religious Studies at the Vienna Faculty of Arts and a member of the Benedictine abbey in Admont.

Titze, in his fourth assessment, repeated his praise of the first edition of Ficker's *Asthetik*, and all the more praised the presented revised version, which had, thanks to the author's changes, been greatly improved. He therefore recommended both works as 'perfectly useful textbooks'. Lichtenfels too praised Ficker's revisions (the stylistic ones and the reordering of the paragraphs) and expressly appreciated that Ficker had now cited his sources. Nevertheless, in this assessment he again expressed dissatisfaction with some of Ficker's conclusions. He reproached Ficker for not having sufficiently presented aesthetics as an integral part of philosophy and had equally insufficiently discussed the psychological conditions of 'aesthetic comprehension'. He rejected Ficker's description of poetry as an art of inner sense, because this sense is problematic and, moreover, is required by all kinds of art. Nor did he consider correct Ficker's interpretation of the relationship between imagination and art, which called imagination a creative power and art self-creative activity. He criticized what he held to be the incorrect identification of affect and passion. At the end, he emphasized that a firm conviction in the existence of a supreme being controls not only poets and philosophers but each and every person. The critical remarks were meant to help the author make his work still more perfect, precise, and concise. Keppler considered most of the changes carried out by Ficker to be rather unimportant, yet the second version seemed to him on the whole to be more valuable. He paid more attention to the second book, *Geschichtlicher Überblick der gesamten schönen Kunst*, than to *Asthetik*. Its greatest strength, he believed, is the fact that Ficker always links his accounts of works of art to a theory of the fine arts, which allows the reader continuously to compare the achieved results with the ideal.

The vice director of the Faculty of Arts, Heintl, collected the assessments of his professors and requested Ficker to respond to Lichtenfels's reservations. Ficker did so in a statement of 3 May 1837 (no longer preserved). Only after receiving Ficker's standpoint, did the vice directorate take a position of its own. The vice directorate pointed out that the first edition of Ficker's *Asthetik* was already being used without detriment at Graz, Innsbruck, Olomouc, and Lemberg.<sup>31</sup> The second version was, it added, clearly better than the first.

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<sup>31</sup> For more on the use of Ficker's *Asthetik* at German-language universities in Austria, see note 2.

The submitted statements reassured the Studienhofkommission, yet it decided by a decree of the presidium, of 17 August 1837, to request assessments of both of Ficker's works also from the two non-Vienna professors again, Müller and Knoll, both of whom were now working at Prague. In his assessment, dated 16 September 1837, Müller first of all noted the three changes that Ficker had carried out: he had cited the authors of his sources; he had expanded the lists of literature, and had added interesting remarks about art in his accounts and examples; and, where the existing form of the book allowed for it, he had corrected, reduced, and deleted unsystematic statements. Müller then immediately emphasized, however, that if he took into account the existing literature about aesthetics and poetry, he would, despite the changes that had been made, stand by his earlier opinion – he could never recommend Ficker's book to any student. This conclusion was, he argued, particularly relevant to the second version since it would be longer and therefore more expensive than the first. He especially reproached Ficker for not belonging to any school of philosophy and not being up to the task of creating his own system. But, according to Müller, textbooks must be concise and logically consistent. Without a system, no account could be easily comprehended by pupils. Ficker, in his opinion, had not achieved a more organized account even in the second version; he had merely compiled a large number of opinions. Indeed, the second version suffered from the described shortcomings still more than the first. It could therefore not be recommended even as a learning aid. Müller saw the only acceptable solution in Ficker's preparing not a second, expanded edition of *Aesthetik* but only a 'systematically organized excerpt' in which the numerous examples would merely be suggested and additions would appear in small print in the margins. Such an excerpt would become a useful textbook. He could, however, recommend the second version at most only as a 'preparatory or reference book'.

Knoll in his second assessment noted, at first with satisfaction, that Ficker had made some amendments in keeping with his proposals. Nevertheless, he was not entirely satisfied with the second version of the book. He expressed himself at length on two points in particular: one, the chosen principle by which Ficker related the development of art theory and, two, the considerable length of the book. Concerning the principle, Knoll very much appreciated that Ficker had accepted his suggestion to explain the development of theories of art from the inorganic to the organic, from the material to the spiritual, but he doubted the correctness by which this principle had been applied. He himself did not understand the development of the plastic arts from architecture to sculpture and painting, as Ficker had presented it. Knoll was convinced that architecture

was able to depict the beautiful as well as other types of plastic art could. Concerning the length of the work, he had reproached the author for making the first edition too long, and now the second was even longer. The upshot of the assessment was the 'fervent desire' that Ficker combine the two presented books into one, considerably shorten the account, and make it more systematic. Despite that radical proposal, Knoll expressed in his conclusion the eulogizing opinion that since the times of Johann Georg Sulzer's dictionary,<sup>32</sup> later enlarged by Christian Friedrich von Blankenburg,<sup>33</sup> 'no similar work on aesthetics has been published which is as long, of such value, and so universal as this double work of our highly esteemed author'.

Müller's and Knoll's assessments were sent, on 21 October 1837, to the presidium of the Studienhofkommission. The commission subsequently elaborated its own statement. Regarding *Aesthetik*, it supported its original suggestion that the first edition become a textbook. The second version, revised and expanded, had, thanks to the author's industry, become even more perfect, useful, and effective, and therefore was even more suited to be the aesthetics textbook. If the Emperor commanded that the second version be set as the textbook, the commission would call, moreover, upon Ficker to have printed in larger typeface in the second edition the parts he considered necessary to know and in smaller typeface the parts that elaborate and explain. This step would, according to the commission, further increase the 'effectiveness of this substantial work' both for students and for teachers. The commission also found Ficker's book on the history of the fine arts suitable. The book was, it stated, evidence of the author's thorough knowledge of the subject, his refined taste, his refined critical faculty, and his ardour for true beauty. It could therefore serve as the textbook for students who desired a deeper knowledge of aesthetics, the beautiful, and art.

The Studienhofkommission sent all the assessments to the Court Chancellery, which in turn, on 25 November 1837, sent a proposal to Emperor Ferdinand I, in which it recommended that the second version of Ficker's *Aesthetik* should be declared the textbook. In its proposal it roughly summarized the whole fate of the book, including the standpoints of the decisive assessments. Nor did it fail to mention Müller's suggestion that Ficker make an excerpt from the first edition and Knoll's suggestion that the two works be combined in one and be made more concise and systematic. These radical proposals for further revisions, however, were only outlined by the Court Chancellery, without commentary, so that in

<sup>32</sup> Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1771, 1774).

<sup>33</sup> Christian Friedrich von Blankenburg, *Literarische Zusätze zu Johann Georg Sulzers Allgemeiner Theorie der schönen Künste*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1796–98).

the context of the whole document they did not seem negative. The conciliatory tone in which the two proposals were presented gives the impression that the Chancellery did not intend to allow some of the assessments to lead to doubts or disputes like those that the anonymous review had provoked regarding the first edition.

Ferdinand I granted the proposal signed by Count Mittrowsky. On 9 January 1838 Ferdinand declared that the revised version of Ficker's *Aesthetik* would be the textbook of aesthetics at German universities. In his decision, he included the order that in the edition prepared for printing the author should proceed according to the instructions of the Studienhofkommission, that is, that he use two sizes of type in order to make it easy to distinguish between fundamental and less important parts of the account.<sup>34</sup> The decree does not mention the second book, *Geschichtlicher Überblick der gesammten schönen Kunst*. The Studienhofkommission, on 20 January, issued a decree with the imperial decision for the provincial authorities in Vienna, Prague, Brno, Innsbruck, Graz, and Lemberg. On 26 January, a government regulation concerning the textbook was issued, intended for the vice directorates of the faculties of arts.<sup>35</sup>

## V

Ferdinand's positive decision ended the fourth round of the approval process but did not yet mark the definitive end of the whole matter. The second edition of Ficker's book did not yet exist. Only on 23 September 1840, that is, almost another three years after the Emperor's decision, did the vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts at Vienna announce to the government of Lower Austria that the second edition of Ficker's *Aesthetik* had appeared in print. Ficker published the book, again with Heubner, under the slightly amended title *Aesthetik oder Lehre vom Schönen und von der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange*.<sup>36</sup> He dedicated the second edition to the secretary of the Studienhofkommission, Hallaschka.

<sup>34</sup> Ferdinand's decision is attached to the proposal of the Court Chancellery of 25 November 1837: 'I allow Professor Ficker's *Aesthetik* in the revised edition and in the way proposed by the Studienhofkommission to be used in the German[-speaking] schools as a textbook. Vienna, 9 January 1838.' After the actual publication of *Aesthetik*, this decision was published in various statute books: *Sammlung der Gesetze für das Erzherzogthum Oesterreich unter der Ens*, vol. 20 (Vienna: Hof-Druckerey, 1840), 32–33; *Vollständige Sammlung, aller im politischen, Cameral- und Justizfache, unter der Regierung Sr. Majestät Kaiser Ferdinand I. in den k. k. Staaten erlassenen Gesetze und Verordnungen in chronologischer Ordnung*, ed. Franz Xaver Pichl, vol. 4 (Vienna: Möslé's Witwe, 1840), 13, and vol. 6 (Vienna: Möslé's Witwe, 1842), 269.

<sup>35</sup> Apart from being used at German-language universities in Austria, Ficker's *Aesthetik* was also the set textbook at Italian universities and grammar schools in Austria. See note 2.

<sup>36</sup> Franz Ficker, *Aesthetik oder Lehre vom Schönen und von der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: Heubner, 1840).



The announcement of the vice directorate began the fifth, and last, round of the process. To the announcement the vice directorate attached a copy of the book with a request that the government of Lower Austria forward it to the Studienhofkommission and notify all German-language universities in Austria of this. The government did so on 26 September 1840. The Studienhofkommission discussed the second edition of *Aesthetik* at its meeting on 17 October. The minutes of this meeting contain the statement that Ficker had satisfactorily carried out the submitted proposals for the revisions to the book. He had left out the unnecessary explanations, added information, and made selected passages more precise, added examples to the rules, and organized the theories of the individual arts from the imperfect to the more perfect ones. The commission paid most attention to his following the instructions to use large and small typefaces. It appreciated that this approach had 'substantially increased' the usefulness of the textbook. The commission then issued decrees for the governments of Lower Austria, Bohemia, Moravia-Silesia, the Tyrol, Styria, and Galicia, that the lycées and universities there begin to offer lectures on aesthetics based on the second edition of Ficker's *Aesthetik*. These authorities were notified of this duty on 24 October 1840. With this step, an approval process that had lasted more than ten years was finally brought to a close. On the basis of this process, Ficker's *Aesthetik* became the first and only Austrian textbook on aesthetics of local provenance in the period from the beginning of early Austrian university aesthetics in 1763 to its end in 1848. The reform of the faculties of arts in 1849, making them equal to what were known as the superior faculties of theology, law, and medicine, completely changed the character of professorships in aesthetics, the teaching of aesthetics, and books on aesthetics,<sup>37</sup> moving them all towards original scholarship.

## VI

The complicated and lengthy process of declaring Ficker's *Aesthetik* to be the textbook on the subject reveals that the selection of textbooks in Vormärz Austria was mainly a political matter. The bureaucratic process, run by the State,

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<sup>37</sup> Instead of aesthetics being taught by professors of classical literature, there were now specialists on the individual aesthetics and histories of the main kinds of art – literature, music, and the visual arts –, for example, the Vienna chairs of Oskar von Redwitz (1851, Professor of Aesthetics and the History of Literature), Rudolf Eitelberger (1852, Professor of Art History and the Archaeology of Art), and Eduard Hanslick (1861, Professor of Aesthetics and the History of Music). Moreover, aesthetics began at this point also to be taught by professors of philosophy, for example, Robert Zimmermann at Vienna.

during which dozens of assessments of the two versions of the book were made, thus provides more general insight both into aesthetics as taught at Austrian universities and into the operation of those universities and their policies.

The first round of the approval process reveals that the standard procedure leading to the declaration of a work as a textbook took place in two streams. The first stream comprised a statement by the authorities, the second by academic experts. In the authorities' stream, the declaration that a work should be set as a textbook was made at a total of eleven institutions: eight authorities of the school administration at various levels (the vice directorates of the four faculties of Vienna University, the vice directorate of grammar schools, the inspectorate of German schools, the Studienrevisionskommission, and the Studienhofkommission), as well as the Court Chancellery, the supreme state authority, and, ultimately, the Emperor. Against the high number of official statements stood a single expert assessment by a professor of the Faculty of Arts at Vienna. It was, moreover, not written by an aesthetician but by an historian. The choice of an historian was the result of the fact that Vienna University performed the role of the institutional guarantor of expert opinion on all Austrian textbooks for subjects taught at the Faculty of Arts. Aesthetics was a subject that was taught by only one lecturer at a time. Ficker, who was being assessed, was the only aesthetician at Vienna University, and therefore the aesthetics textbook had to be assessed by a professor of a related subject. The archive records do not reveal why one of the vice directors of the Faculty of Arts chose an historian and another a philosopher.

A fundamental role in the whole approval process was played by the anonymous review requested by the Emperor, because it introduced into the process a neglected aspect of the subject – namely, that Ficker's book was first reviewed by an aesthetician. Considering how widespread in the current literature the ideas were which are declared in the review (the idea of beauty as a necessary starting point of aesthetics and the close connection between beauty and God) as were too its methodological approaches (the emphasis on systematicity and respect for ideological differences amongst the analysed aesthetic theories), it is impossible to be sure who the anonymous reviewer was who set in motion the following rounds of bureaucratic proceedings. Nor can it be determined whether he was an aesthetician in Austria or outside the country. Indeed, it cannot be excluded that the anonymous reviewer was one of the later reviewers selected after the writing of the anonymous review – namely, Knoll, Müller, or Lichtenfels. If that were the case, the reviewer would find himself in an unpleasant situation because he would be forced to react to his own review without being permitted to reveal that he was the author. In that respect, Müller

seems to be the most likely candidate; in all the rounds, he took a negative position towards Ficker's book.

The anonymous review of the first edition of Ficker's *Asthetik* and, stemming from that, the Emperor's refusal to declare it the textbook led to other, anomalous rounds of the approval process. All the aforementioned authorities continued to be drawn into them. Apart from the purely mediatory role of the Bohemian, Moravian-Silesian, and Lower Austrian governments, no new authority entered the process. One official body – the Studienrevisionskommission – had ceased to exist at the end of the process. The process of assessments in the official stream was therefore, from the institutional point of view, almost unchanged. By contrast, it changed fundamentally in the expert stream. The number of expert reviewers increased remarkably. They were, moreover, no longer selected only by the vice director of the Faculty of Arts at Vienna, but now also by the Court Chancellery. Within the Faculty of Arts, the book was again assessed by an historian who had already been selected in the first round and by a philosopher who was just now called in. That happened by mistake, when the new vice director of the Faculty of Arts thought the professor of philosophy had already reviewed the book in the first round. Both professors remained reviewers in the subsequent rounds as well. The Court Chancellery was looking for a reviewer of another kind – an aesthetician. It therefore had to turn to universities outside Vienna. These reviewers also remained part of the subsequent process. In the fourth round, reacting to the revised edition of Ficker's work, the submitted version was again assessed by Vienna professors of history and philosophy, a Prague professor of aesthetics, and a former substitute lecturer in aesthetics at Olomouc. At the Faculty of Arts of the University of Vienna, they were, in addition, newly joined by a professor of religious studies. From the second round of the approval process it is therefore possible in the expert stream to differentiate between two kinds of academic assessment – one written by aestheticians and another by non-aestheticians, professors of an affiliated subject.

A brief look at the reviewers demonstrates that in the standard part of the approval process the assessments by bureaucrats dominated over those by experts. The request for a single expert assessment, by an historian of world history no less, allows us to state that when it came to textbooks by Vienna professors teaching courses for which there was only one instructor in each, the experts were completely sidelined in the standard part of the process. The huge increase in expert statements, beginning with the second round of the process, was brought about only by the expert argument of the anonymous

review and the Emperor's justification stemming from it, which explained why he rejected the proposal to declare the work the aesthetics textbook. In all the rounds of the process ultimately fifteen expert statements (including Ficker's) were produced. They subsequently formed the core also of the official standpoints. Despite the growing importance of expert reviews, the authorities, in particular the Court Chancellery and the Studienhofkommission, held the upper hand throughout the process. Both of the offices run by Count Mittrowsky took Ficker's side. They intentionally worked with the expert assessments so that the process would end in his favour. The efforts to push through Ficker's *Aesthetik* as a textbook is particularly obvious in relation to the assessments of the non-Vienna aestheticians. Their fundamental suggestions for revisions to the book were merely recorded by both offices, with the effect that these suggestions were pushed into the background. Ficker was clearly aware of the favour shown towards both his book and his person. That is evident from the dedication of the second edition to the secretary of the Studienhofkommission, Hallaschka.

What the official and expert assessments most strikingly share is their having to consider the accusations of Ficker's being eclectic, a mere compiler, and a plagiarist. All the expert reviewers reacted to the accusation made in the anonymous review. Three fundamental topics recur in all their reactions: Ficker's statement in the preface to the first edition, that his book makes no claim to originality; the suggestion either to cite the authors in passages that are quoted word for word or to paraphrase them, together with the praise that he had done so in the second version; and the thoughts about Ficker's eclecticism, compilation, and plagiarism in particular. The last of the three topics is the most important, because the opinions about the eclectic nature of Ficker's book reflect the Austrian idea of the desired character of textbooks and, more widely, of scholarship and an ethical approach to it.

None of the reviewers condemned the eclecticism, compilation, and plagiarism, which the anonymous reviewer had pointed to. On the contrary, the Austrian professors closed ranks against the reviewer. Titze and Lichtenfels stated that those accusations were inconclusive or unproved and Titze argued that textbooks could not be written without those three features. Knoll, among others, even found Ficker's approach to be inspirational, in that it enables one to cover everything of importance, regardless of origin. This approach, Titze argued, is the only starting point on the way to a true philosophy of art. Eclecticism, based on a selection of the best of various systems and theories, was placed by the professors in opposition to a one-sided adherence to a single system or theory. For Knoll and Titze, it was even a value *sui generis*, not only of textbooks

but also of the much-desired scholarliness. In this respect, the accepted recommendation that Ficker cite the works that he drew upon and the carrying out of the recommendation in the second version of *Asthetik* appears as an incidental sop to the Emperor's request, derived from the anonymous review that the scholars considered misguided. The widespread respect for Ficker's approach, which is clear also in the officials' assessments, suggests that compilation, eclecticism, and plagiarism were seen as acceptable and usual in Austrian textbooks in the *Vormärz* period.

Concerning Ficker's and, more widely, Austrian *Vormärz* aesthetics (since *Asthetik* became the official textbook used throughout the state) as a legitimate field of study at university and what it was supposed to consist of (and to avoid), it is clear from the official and expert assessments that it was not to limit itself only to literature, but was also to cover the whole range of aesthetic phenomena from the beautiful, the sublime, the comic, the sentimental (*das Rührende*) all the way to the charming (*das Reizende*), as well as the theories of all the main kinds of art. Regarding the way in which one should discuss these topics, two tendencies emerge from the assessments. The first sought to separate Ficker's (and Austrian) aesthetics from the supreme achievements of German idealism. The separation took place at two levels. The first consisted of the general requirements placed on aesthetics. Ficker's and, more widely, Austrian aesthetics repeatedly called for practicality and sober avoidance of speculation, framed by the conviction that aesthetics, by awakening a sense of beauty and art, contributes to the fortifying of morality, *Humanität*, and Christianity. All the reviewers of Ficker's book were repeatedly urging that this aim be achieved. The second level consists in the attitudes towards German aestheticians. The Studienhofkommission took a critical approach towards Kant in particular. It expressly recommended to Ficker that he state how Kant had failed in his attempt to derive beauty from the four categories: quality, quantity, modality, and relation. By contrast, it repeatedly recommended that he include in his interpretation the views of Kant's sworn opponent, Herder, who had become the Studienhofkommission's most recommended aesthetician. The two other authorities recommended by the Austrian reviewers were either non-idealists or were, to be more precise, pre-Kantian German aestheticians – Baumgarten and Sulzer. The Studienhofkommission also wanted to see pre-Kantian thinkers included in the theories of the plastic arts – Winckelmann and Ramdohr. It highlighted as model textbook works by two professors working exclusively at south-German universities, Schreiber (Heidelberg) and Nüsslein (Bamberg). Typically, the committee (like Ficker) did not mention anything about the most influential

idealist philosopher of the time, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who was banned in *Vormärz* Austria.<sup>38</sup>

Besides the efforts to develop Ficker's (and, more broadly, Austrian) aesthetics separately from German idealism, a second tendency is also evident in the assessments originating in both streams of the approval process – namely, a marked tendency to deduction and systematicity understood as the basis of objectivity and being scholarly, and not only in aesthetics. Titze, Knoll, and Müller, like the anonymous reviewer, believed that deriving aesthetics from a single principle (most often from the idea of beauty as an absolute and spiritual entity) was identical with scholarliness. And Knoll's call for Ficker to base his account of the development of the theories of the individual kinds of art on a unified principle – namely, moving from the inorganic to the organic or from the material to the spiritual – was widely met with understanding and full support both in the official stream of the approval process (by the Studienhofkommission and the vice directorate of the Faculty of Arts) and in the expert stream. Ficker aligned himself closely with that principle. Despite the invoked practicality and opposition to speculative German idealism, Ficker's aesthetics and aesthetics generally in *Vormärz* Austria thus became highly speculative and in their own way idealistic.

With regard to the stimulating nature of the reflections on the content of aesthetics, Lichtenfels's observations stand out among all the collected opinions. As a professor of philosophy, in keeping with Austrian university convention, Lichtenfels never lectured on aesthetics,<sup>39</sup> yet his knowledge of the subject, though he stated that he had few qualifications in the field, is evinced by his textbooks on theoretical philosophy.<sup>40</sup> It was his thorough familiarity with the whole of philosophy, including aesthetics, which allowed him, when judging Ficker's *Asthetik*, repeatedly to raise fundamental questions into which he projected his own topics, chiefly the question of feeling and the relationship between philosophy and psychology. These topics remained isolated; no other assessment – even those of the aestheticians Müller and Knoll – developed them or followed on from them. The central topics linking everything together remained eclecticism, compilation, and plagiarism, which he also commented on.

<sup>38</sup> Ignác Jan Hanuš, for example, was stripped of his professorship in philosophy at Prague, because he had lectured on Hegel's philosophy and, it was argued, Hegel's ideas should not be taught at Austrian universities. See Jaromír Loužil, *Ignác Jan Hanuš* (Prague: Melantrich, 1971), 81 and (for the Austrian rejection of Hegel) 99–100.

<sup>39</sup> See note 17.

<sup>40</sup> See Johann Ritter von Lichtenfels, *Grundriß der Psychologie als Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1824), 10–11, 171–72, 178–79, 189–90, and 211; *Grundlinien der philosophischen Propädeutik*, vol. 2, *Grundlinien der Psychologie* (Vienna: Heubner, 1834), 46–57; *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Metaphysik und der Metaphysik der Religion* (Vienna: Heubner, 1843), 1–2, 19–20, 51.

Apart from conceptual views, numerous other specific proposals appeared in the assessments. What is especially important in this respect is the repeated suggestion to deepen and broaden the historiographical parts of *Aesthetik*. When we consider that Ficker added to his second edition overviews of the history of selected kinds of art and that he even elaborated a separate textbook on the history of all the fine arts, that is, architecture, sculpture, painting, engraving on wood and woodblock printing, copper engraving, lithography, gardening, music, poetry, rhetoric, and acting, another feature of his aesthetics and, more broadly, of Austrian aesthetics as a whole becomes evident – namely, the close connection between aesthetics and art. Aesthetics was to serve not only students of the faculties of arts, but also practising artists, to help them to acquire the skills required to judge works of art. The Austrian university chairs of aesthetics of the *Vormärz* period therefore fostered and developed not only philosophical aesthetics, invoking the Austrian ideal of aesthetics as more than just a practical field buttressing virtuousness and Christianity, but also as an incubator of the theories and histories of the arts, which still lacked their own departments in the Monarchy.

Translated by Derek and Marzia Paton

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# FRANZ FICKER: AESTHETICS; OR, A THEORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL AND OF ART IN ITS FULL SCOPE

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[THE PURPOSE OF AESTHETICS]

## § VI

[1st ed., pp. 5–8; 2nd ed., pp. 6–9.]

The purpose of aesthetics cannot be anything other than to explain philosophically the idea of the Beautiful, the essence of art and its various forms, that is, to search for the ultimate reasons for the Beautiful in the human mind, to demonstrate the connection between art and the highest endeavours of man and methodically to develop various arts forms, and thereby to awaken and enliven the sense for art, but not to confer the artistic sense and the creative spirit on anyone. Aesthetics does not presume to want to create geniuses; aesthetics assumes that an artistic sense and creative talent are essential prerequisites for every artist, and that at least the existence of an artistic sense is an absolutely essential prerequisite for everyone who judges it. The aesthetician can furnish the artist with the highest principle and the laws derived from it, which will show him art in the dignity that provides respect; the aesthetician can also convey to him the rules that relate to the arrangement and composition of the parts into a definite whole and relate to its tone and colour; but he cannot ever teach the artist how to invent this whole and the aesthetician must even leave it up to the artist to apply those rules. [...] It is in this way that the aesthetician furnishes the art critics with the norm (the standard), by which they measure art. But the use of that measure remains up to the critic himself. [...]

(1) Only by means of aesthetics do the artist and the art critic learn to do their work in a philosophical spirit, learn to investigate the conditions of the aesthetic

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[Franz Ficker, *Aesthetik oder Lehre vom Schönen und der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange*, 1st ed. (Vienna: Heubner, 1830), 572 pp.; *Aesthetik oder Lehre vom Schönen und von der Kunst in ihrem ganzen Umfange*, 2nd, enlarged ed. (Vienna: Heubner, 1840), 632 pp. Editor's note: In the selection of passages from the two editions of Ficker's textbook, I was guided by two considerations. First of all, the passages are intended to show the changes that Ficker made in the second edition under the pressure of the approval process described in my article 'Struggling for the Emperor's Blessing: Franz Ficker's Aesthetics Textbooks' in this issue of *Estetika*, 218–50. Secondly, they are intended to demonstrate the decisive positions of the author, his various aesthetics theories and terms. Where the text of the first and second edition is the same, it remains unmarked in the English translation. The passages that appear only in the second edition are given here in italics and square brackets. Spelling and other purely visual differences are disregarded here. The omitted passages are indicated by ellipses in square brackets.]

efficacy of the human mind and give an account of their approach, which cannot be done by someone who in his thinking and work is guided only by obscure concepts. Aesthetics has the tendency to understand the genius in his art and his individual works; indeed, it can support and guide the artist in his aesthetic activity. For the artist will more easily achieve a pleasing [*wohlgefällig*] effect on the human heart and will be more able to felicitously judge what should have an effect on the heart if he knows why and under what conditions the heart finds pleasure [*Wohlgefallen*] in beautiful objects and what actually attracts the human heart to beautiful objects by such a magical power. Though aesthetics cannot teach one how to make a work of art, it can save him from the blunders of the genius and from wrong directions imposed on taste by bunglers, for example, that art may not serve any external purpose or that it should serve only fashionable taste. [...]

(2) Aesthetics ensures the fine arts a position amongst the highest endeavours of man, on the one hand, by explaining the spiritual powers necessary for its creation, and, on the other hand, by demonstrating the influence of the fine arts on the education [*Bildung*] of people. The most beautiful, most dignified aim that a man as such can set for his endeavours is undoubtedly *Humanität*, in other words the true education of man. Art leads man to that end more certainly because in art the greatest power is wedded with the greatest charm [*Reiz*]. Their bond possesses a magical, but never oppressive, power. For art, unlike science, does not require only particular spiritual powers; rather, it reaches into the development of all human powers, awakens those powers, harmonically guides and forms them and, consequently, the whole man in a blissful way. Because aesthetics seeks as much as possible to explain this wondrous power of art, it indisputably provides scientific evidence of its great dignity. Similarly, it cannot be denied that aesthetics offers rich nourishment to one's artistic sense and taste, in that it represents the nobleness of art. History and experience provide clear evidence of just how important and noble this activity is. [...] Aesthetic culture therefore definitely provides a countable profit by giving moderation and subtlety to the whole appearance of the young man ennobled by the arts, the moderation and subtlety which cannot be acquired by any book-learning or study of languages and they, in connection with the purity of morals, convey the outer graciousness of man.

(3) Aesthetics supports and strengthens the study of works of art by allowing us to look more deeply into the fabric and beauty of the most excellent works of the human spirit and it thus has the effect that their highest nature also addresses our nature more inwardly and more vitally. An example is Winckelmann's history of classical art. [*That is not to deny, however, that there exists a point after which*

*the beauty of each true work of art becomes a mystery whose solution may be expressed in its generality but can no longer be explained in its particularities.]*

[THE THEORY OF BEAUTY]

§ VIII

[1st ed., p. 24; 2nd ed., p. 27.]

There are three primal ideas [*Urdeen*], which are not perceived in the area of sensual nature; rather, they stem from the inner sanctuary of man, the idea of the True, the idea of the Beautiful, and idea of the Good, which, like all ideas of reason, end in the idea of the Absolute (put in the negative: in the idea of the Infinite – which is, however, different from the existing, infinite spirit, from God). These three primal ideas differ from one another in that the first relates to the faculty of knowledge, the second to the faculty of feeling, and the third to the faculty of endeavour. We are led to the True by scholarship, above all by philosophy, as the centre of all knowledge, from which spread the radii variously all around. We come to the Good by means of purely human action, morality, virtue; art gives us enjoyment [*Genuß*] of the Beautiful.

§ IX

[1st ed., p. 24; 2nd ed., p. 27.]

The free activity of man seeks without limits to carry out these ideas, but without ever achieving them completely. These ideas are, however, shining stars of rational beings seeking to rise on the dark path of everyday life. They remind man of his higher origin; they merge into one with the most noble needs of his better nature; he cannot, may not, should not deny them.

§ X

[1st ed., pp. 24–25; 2nd ed., pp. 27–28.]

The Beautiful cannot be known and demonstrated; rather, it can only be seen and felt [but it can in the same way be led back, as the generally valid Good and True, to the generally valid, necessary laws of reason]. The Beautiful is, by its essence, only one, but is in reality infinitely diverse and different. A complete and satisfactory explanation of the Beautiful is possible only from the essence or idea of the Beautiful, not from manifestations of it. If we wanted to explain the Beautiful on the basis of its manifestations, we would have to know not only all truly occurring beauties, but also all beauties that have already been and will be, and we would have to be able to survey these beauties all at once. That an object is beautiful and that there exist several beautiful objects, are something

we learn from experience; but from that it does not follow that experience can also teach us what the Beautiful is.

§ XV

[1st ed., p. 28; 2nd ed., p. 31.]

But so that we can name both the essence of an object and its effect on our mind, I should like to explain the Beautiful as the representation [*Darstellung*] of the idea by the perceivable form, whereby the harmonic activity of the powers of the mind is stimulated. The idea as such cannot [*according to Nüsslein*] be led directly to the senses, cannot be objectively represented [*dargestellt*]. The idea must, like everything that wants to enter the world of the senses, also submit to the conditions of space and time, must accept the sensible form. Only in that covering is the idea perceivable by the senses. If the idea is, by means of form, to become objective as a sensible image, which is a requirement placed on the work of art if it is to be beautiful, the form must completely accept and absorb the essence of the idea that it is to represent. The form must, so to speak, perish as a form and become the essence, in other words, both must appear as absolutely one and indivisible. [*Without the life that comes from the idea, which is the only thing that gives meaning to form, form would lack life and sense, would be devoid of interest, would pass us by unnoticed and unobserved. Without the characteristic of individual form, the idea would never come out of the supersensible [übersinnlich] world, which is its home, or it would accept only an indefinite, foggy, cold, dissolving shape. As luminous shapes melt away in a mere ideal, so too they can also join into a mere individual and become the most ordinary prose. Recall Klopstock and Wieland.*] Beauty therefore requires the most perfect harmony, the most inward penetration of essence and form. And this harmony has, without reflecting upon it, to be present to the inward intuition [*innere Anschauung*] in its manifestation.

§ XVII

[1st ed., pp. 28–30; 2nd ed., pp. 32–33.]

As soon as we enter, in our experience, the realm of the Beautiful, we have to deal only with various kinds of the Beautiful and with beautiful objects of all kinds. When, in this realm, we look around more closely and further, we find that the genus concept [*Gattungsbegriff*] of the Beautiful first of all is divided into two kinds: the Beautiful of nature and the Beautiful of art. But the Beautiful belongs first of all to the sphere of art, as the True is found in science and the Good in life. When therefore we speak of the Beautiful in nature, we thus transfer this concept, by analogy, from art to nature, just as, similarly, we speak of intellect, wisdom,

skill, and the instincts of animals. Only in everything that is, in the whole of creation, in the reflection of the Divinity, which the Divinity has impressed with the character of its own perfection, is there true, supreme beauty. We can call particular things in nature beautiful only figuratively, because it is difficult for a particular work of nature to impress the idea perfectly. In nature, everything is conceived in a continuous stream, all phenomena bear the stamp of mutability and fleetingness, shapes [*Gestalten*] come and go, shapes change form in various ways. The idea, which in art is given in one immediate view [*Anschauung*], in nature disperses throughout the existence of the thing. We can therefore call the particular works of nature beautiful only figuratively and metaphorically if we have an inkling of the idea in them. [*Only in such natural phenomena, where nature reigns sufficiently uninterrupted, pure, unobstructed, and strong, in order to truly achieve its importance in the realm of the great whole of nature, does man also feel inwardly the government of the everlasting law, does he know beauty.*] Natural beauty is then differentiated from the beauty of art [*The beauty of art differs further from the beauty of nature*] in that a work of art owes its existence to freedom, but a work of nature comes into being according to the necessary laws of nature; in nature beauty appears as a random property, whereas in art beauty is the sole purpose. Moreover, the greatest thing one can say about a work of nature is that it exists, that it appears. What is sensible can achieve no greater perfection [*Vollendung*] than what it already possesses. The ideal can be approached only in the spiritual world. This is a matter of approaching the infinite, in various relations and degrees. The observation of nature in each particular case may be enjoyed [*erfreut*] by everyone who is good and accepts the Beautiful, even though – with regard to impressing on feeling and fantasy and elevating one to the supersensible, to the ideal – nature can never stand comparison to art, because art, which stems from of our inner essence, is closer to us than external nature, to which we belong only by our organization [*Organisation*]. [*The beauty of art is a beauty born of the spirit. And the more the spirit stands above nature and its works, the higher does the beauty of art stand above the beauty of nature. By means of art the supersensible world moves from the mind to reality, to existence. The higher world has now appeared as the immediately corporeal, truly material, and sensible world. Art celebrates its triumph over reality by the fact that it is also able to pin down what is most fleeting.*] Even if the blue of a cloudless starry sky, a moonlit landscape, a view of newly awakening nature, the mixture of the colours of the rainbow, the quiet course of a flowing stream, the smooth surface of the vast open sea, the ocean rising in a storm, thunder and lightning, the theatre of an erupting Vesuvius, and so forth always elicit pleasure [*Wohlgefallen*], all the more deeply must Raphael's *Transfiguration*, Correggio's *Night*, the Niobe

Group, the *Laocoön*, the *Apollo Belvedere*, Klopstock's *Messiah*, Schiller's *Mary Stuart*, Goethe's *Iphigenia*, Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*, Gluck's *Iphigenia*, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Requiem* affect our feeling, immeasurably more strongly must stimulate our fantasy and elevate the spirit to ideas.

[THE THEORY OF FINE ART]

§ XCII

[1st ed., p. 102; 2nd ed., p. 111.]

We can most suitably and in the narrowest sense of the word explain art [...] as the ability (faculty) to perfectly represent [*darstellen*] by self-creative activity the ideal in its most appropriately vivid [*anschaulich*] form.

§ XCIII

[1st ed., p. 102; 2nd ed., p. 111.]

From the very concept of fine art, it follows that only the representation [*Darstellung*] of the Beautiful is the highest principle of art and that in no case can the imitation of nature be set as the highest principle of the theory of art.

§ CXLIII [§ CXLII]

[1st ed., p. 131; 2nd ed., p. 143.]

The work of art must be [...] independent, without relations, a self-contained whole, which does not behave as a means to an end, but carries its centre and purpose in itself. It is a world existing for itself, dealing only with the new existence created by the artist. In the production of the work the artist does not seek anything but the satisfaction of the irresistible urges of his nature.

§ CXLIV [§ CXLIII]

[1st ed., pp. 131–32; 2nd ed., p. 143.]

Art is therefore not here for the sake of its usefulness. Usefulness can be demanded of art only in an age that considers the invention of the spinning wheel to be more important than the discovery of a new world system or the creation of the *Iliad*, an age that declares economic inventions the greatest inventions of the human spirit. Art is not here in order to flatter our senses or delight [*ergötzen*] them. Such a requirement can be placed on art only by an age for which it is the supreme enjoyment [*Genuß*]. But art is not here directly to teach us morality either; nor is it here to support the opposite of that. [...] The gaze of art is aimed upwards, far from the normal course of things. The aim of art is to look at what is highest, and to vividly represent the highest in the perfect form of the world.

And who uses art for a purpose inhibits its free, unbounded flight. The hand of art cannot be guided; it is governed only by its own spirit. *[The more faithfully art obeys its own laws of beauty, the more surely it also supports the nobleness of mankind, for what else should we call moral than when we prefer the spiritual in human nature over the sensual [Sinnliche], than when the divine slumbering in this nature is awakened, developed, and put into action by the force of the idea, so that it triumphs over the demands of the mundane? Art becomes a mediator between reason and sensuality [Sinnlichkeit], between urges and duties as a conciliator of these elements, which are in such a bitter struggle with, and in resistance to, each other.]*

§ CXLV [§ CXLIV]

[1st ed., pp. 132–33; 2nd ed., pp. 144–45.]

The morality of the artist therefore consists not in the moral tendencies of his products, but in the chaste, undefiled sense by which he accepts and creates. A mind affected by a higher spirit can never create works that encourage the sensual nature of man. For nothing that is not sacred can stem from the sacred. And it is a sacred blessing that the artist accepts from above. An aesthetic product that encourages the appetites ceases to be an aesthetic product. Beauty vanishes with the veil of the graces. How can the violation of any shame raise aesthetic interest and earn the applause of the virgin nymphs? *[Simply the fact that art by itself elevates the whole man, that it draws him out of the petty limitations of his everyday life, that it strengthens him for the noble forgetting of himself in the vulgarity that surrounds him, perhaps steels him in his worthy decision to ward off this vulgarity, to bind it with the law of his inner nobleness. In this way, art, like everything great, also has a moral effect.]* Because art becomes art by its ideal orientation, it has a great character of inner truth. And possible dark sides will, upon examination of the whole, give way to the harmony of the painting; the total impression is always ethical; vice is averse to true beauty. *[If art shows a fall, a decline, depravity, or destruction, then the divineness of the punishment, atonement, and elevation come out with the force of their representation and, in the force of their representation, automatically. The vulgarity, that is, the evil that announces itself as a crude fall from the heavenly, because of base, sensual lust, without a need for the better or an inkling of it, can be of no artistic interest to us: we can tolerate evil only under the film of an idea, of an impulse that is independent, consistent, and spiritual. Where humorous poetry mocks human perversities, one must bear in mind the borderline between harmless folly and the morally reprehensible in such a way that the wantonness of our waggish mood may spill over into unencumbered risibility, but behind the mocking of the morally*



*reprehensible there must remain a visibly indignant seriousness that helps itself by dressing up in ridiculousness in order to have the greater effect of true relation.] Yet not only ethical, but also religious majesty blesses the works of genius. The hopeful upward gaze towards providence and to the unknown land of eternal freedom, or the dreadful appearance of the goddesses of vengeance, the Eumenides, of the angel of death Abaddon, of the depths of Tartarus and of hell become the object of the aesthetically sublime. Those poets, too, who avow themselves to be atheists, were theists as poets, and they, contrary to their own beliefs, therefore let virtue appear in its original connection with the presentiment of God and love. As the terrestrial sky arches over the fleeting flowers of the earth, so the celestial sky floats above the magical fields of art. [Works of art which themselves touch the dignity of human disposition would have to be in themselves unconditionally declared to be the most serious sin against the divine spirit of art.]*

§ CXLVI [§ CXLV]

[1st ed., p. 133; 2nd ed., pp. 145–46.]

But as a true artist receives and creates his work with his pure, undesecrated sense, so must the viewer also approach the work of art with a pure, chaste sense. One who does not bring with himself this sense will find indecency everywhere, not only in art. It is neither art nor the work of art which is immoral; rather it is only people who are immoral and moral. [*It is only into such a soul, which has already been inoculated with the poison of life, that a dangerous drop from the painter's brush, from the sculptor's chisel, from the poet's word can perhaps also penetrate. Impartiality serves an innocent nature like the magic chalice that, according to the old sagas, destroys all lethal poisons.*] Does a work, for example, the renowned faun in the Dresden antiquities collection or even the noble *Apollo Belvedere*, deserve rebuking because it contains a pleasing physical form created as perfectly and as pleasantly as possible, and is the rebuke warranted if it is against the man of sensual enjoyment [*der sinnliche Genußmensch*] who is charmed [*entzückt*] by it? Art demands to be enjoyed [*genossen*] morally too, and simply in this way does it further morality. The Hellene, with his sense for art (and yet, alas, not a model of morality beyond the enjoyment of art [*Kunstgenuß*]), saw publicly naked shapes of statues and did not consider them immoral. Would he not have considered the many leaps and the figures of our men and women ballet dancers to be frivolous?

Translated by Derek Paton and Tomáš Hlobil