

SECOND PROTOCOL OF THE PHILISTINE

It is difficult to say with any certainty how long the phases of this Protocol were supposed to last, or in exactly what mood such actions were undertaken. There seems to be some evidence that Vater and his disruptive acolytes enjoyed parlaying some of these occasions for "Philistine Aesthesis" into rowdy charivaris of drawing room society mores, and there are reports of drunken, belching, lecherous devotees of "Vater Unser" (a scabrous invocation of "Our Father") singing macaronic Latin-German drinking songs at a vernissage sponsored by a Jena students' fine arts club in 1827. The recorded refrain runs: "Down with your sweetness and light / We'll lick at our salt lick and chew our cuds" (Mit Eurem Licht und Eurer Süsse nieder / Lecken wir den Leckstein und kauen wir wieder). Those wishing to experiment with what follows are asked to do so in a spirit of bourgeois restraint.

- 1) Place before your mind the contents of your appointment book for this week.
- 2) Notice the Work. Continue to think about your upcoming duties and obligations.
- 3) Remove from your pocket a large silver coin, and polish it with your handkerchief for some time. Glance now and again at the Work.
- 4) Raise the coin like the sun that rises slowly, slowly over the peaks of the Harz.
- 5) Close one eye. While looking at the coin, extend your arm until the coin is exactly the same size as the Work, and obscures it with unerring precision.
- 6) Hold this position until you become self-conscious.



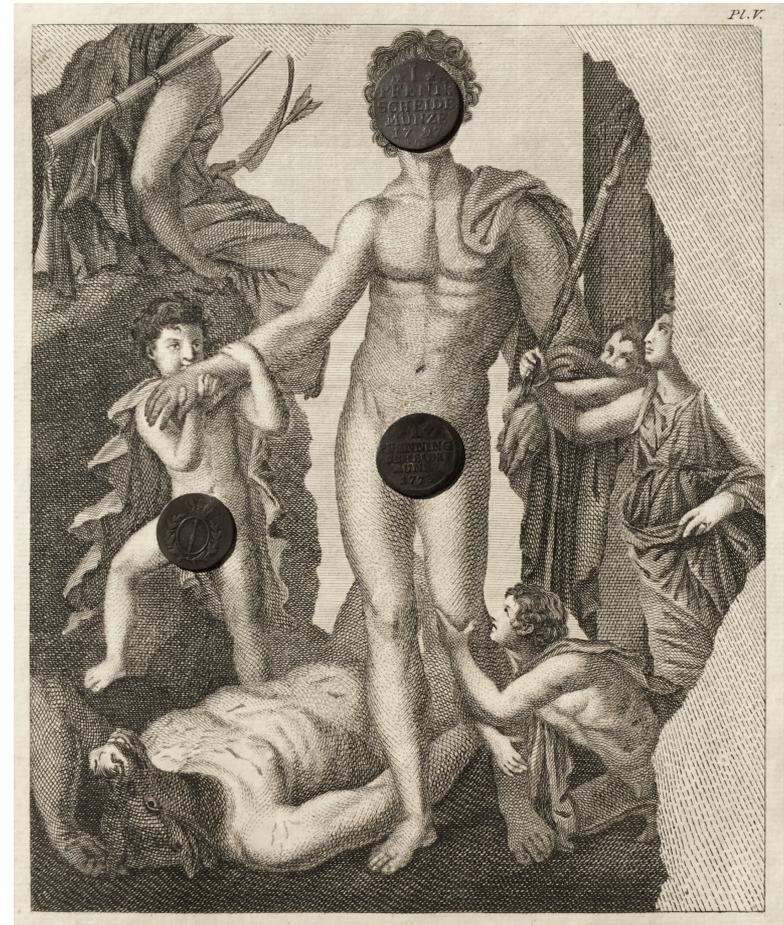
THE VATER LEGACY:

THE PHILISTERSTREIT AND PHILISTINE AESTHETICS IN THE GERMAN LANDS CIRCA 1820

Readers of the *PROCEEDINGS OF ESTAR(SER)* will already be aware of the considerable efforts made by various scholars, collectors, bibliophiles, and editors to sift the historicity of that peculiar body known as *THE ORDER OF THE THIRD BIRD*. Despite the labors of the *ESTAR(SER)* researchers, a great deal of uncertainty (and even some genuine confusion) persists concerning the nature and workings of *THE BIRDS* — a self-sequestering community that seems to function, at least in its modern incarnation, as a private association of adepts who convene to perform public and private rites of sustained attention to made things (often works of art). New documents bearing on the genesis, evolution, and practices of *THE ORDER* are continually coming to light, and we are pleased here to offer a sample from a new and interesting body of relevant materials. Details follow.

TEXT AND CONTEXT

The eccentric collage opposite and the translated/transcribed text on the back of this card both reproduce striking sources from a larger archival collation (the “Philistine Fascicle”) that appears to hail from the early nineteenth-century German lands — and that would seem to document a remarkable, if heretofore unremarked, episode in the history of aesthetics. These materials, which have only recently surfaced in the larger uncataloged repository known as the “W-Cache,” require close analysis, but even a preliminary perusal tips open fascinating problems for the historian of the Order and its tendencies. The Philistine Fascicle collects several dozen pages of correspondence, manuscript student doggerel, and related period prints — all in one way or another traceable to the pen (or the desk) of the poet and polemicist Johann Jakob Vater (1792–1841). Vater’s single volume of verse, *Die flammenden Schwänze* (*The Flaming Tails*, 1829), did not secure him a place in the Romantic pantheon, but his scorched-earth campaign against his better known contemporary Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) did leave an ashen residue in the streets of Jena. The details of their conflict remain obscure, but it would seem that the irascible Vater came to feel that Brentano’s scathing dismissal of “philistines” (those incapable of proper aesthetic appreciation of the fine arts) was in fact an *ad hominem* attack. Whether there was any basis for this sense of personal affront is unclear, but the intimate *fracas* irrupted into the so-called *Philisterstreit*, or “Philistine Quarrel” of the early 1820s. Somewhere in the ensuing exchange of insults, Vater pivoted in a most unexpected way: rather than defending himself (and his clique) from the caustic mockery of Brentano and his ilk, Vater suddenly assumed (ironically?) the mantle of a kind of philistine-prince, going so far as to allege that *only* the “true” philistine ever properly encountered a work of art. And we have concrete evidence for this astounding *peripeteia*: sources in the Fascicle, including the “Second Protocol of the Philistine” (presented here), strongly suggest that Vater and his motley *Verbindung* of knickers-down radicals actually enacted eccentric rituals of “Philistine Aesthetics” in public and private collections. The mood of such occasions is perhaps captured by this Vater marginalia on one of Brentano’s essays: “Eat with your hands, smear the grease on your trousers, behold the canvas as a Bird without learning.” More research is clearly needed.



(W-Cache — Convolute 57.8; photo courtesy of Anaqui Seer)

FIGURE: One of several loose sheets from the Philistine Fascicle to which have been affixed various coins. This leaf (18x21cm), representing the large and celebrated Roman fresco of Theseus victorious over the Minotaur, was roughly torn from T. Martyn and J. Lettice, *The Antiquities of Herculaneum* (London: Leacroft, 1773). The strategically placed coins are three Prussian pfennig (dated 1773, 1797, and 1810); they appear to have been affixed to the page by means of a gum or resin. These odd constructions would seem to be some sort of joke, presumably related to the “Second Protocol of the Philistine” (overleaf), the original of which is in fact inscribed (in German) in a very light grey ink on the back of this page.