

## **Austrian Aesthetics**

Thinking of problems of aesthetics has a long and strong tradition in Austrian Philosophy. It starts with Bernard Bolzano (1781-1848); it is famously represented by the critic and musicologist Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904); and it is continued within the school of Alexius Meinong (1853-1920), in particular by Christian von Ehrenfels (1859-1932) and Stephan Witasek (1870-1915).

Nowadays the aesthetic writings of Bolzano, Ehrenfels, and Witasek are hardly known, particularly not in the Anglo-Saxon world. Austrian aesthetics is surely less known than Austrian contributions to other philosophical disciplines, like ontology, epistemology or philosophy of science. One of the aims of this paper is to show that this is both regrettable and unjustified for the following reasons: Austrian aestheticians have dealt with a number of problems (mainly concerning the foundations of aesthetics) that are salient until today; in terms of subtlety and depth as well as exactness and originality, in general, they easily stand comparison with today's analytic aesthetics; and many of their views and arguments are still worthy of consideration.

In this paper, the focus is on a number of hardly known Austrian contributions to aesthetics. These contributions concern the following, partly inter-related, central problems of philosophical aesthetics:

- i. The problem of the definition of beauty (What is beauty? What does it mean to say of an object that it is beautiful?)
- ii. The problem of the ontological status of works of art (What kinds of objects are works of art?)
- iii. The problem of the objectivity of aesthetic values (Do we claim objective validity for aesthetic value judgements, and if so, is this claim justified?) The answers of Bolzano, Meinong, Witasek and Ehrenfels to these questions will be considered.