1. Though the problems of aesthetics were already discussed in ancient times, it has been considered a separate field of study only since the middle of the 18th century. Its main task is to formulate an answer to the question of what is beauty. Therefore, the primary aim of aesthetics is to accurately determine the conditions that must be complied with by certain creatures of nature and works of art in order to be deservedly called “beautiful.” These requirements are based on particular properties of objects that arouse aesthetic sentiments in spectators or listeners. In this way, the main issue of aesthetics can be reduced to the question of what properties objects (persons, things, melodies etc.) must have in order to be actually beautiful.†

2. With regard to the answers given by aestheticians to the aforementioned question, they can be divided into two groups. There are the ones who attempt to define the conditions of beauty by taking into consideration only those properties of objects that can be subject to sensory perception; in other words, only those that are actually perceived by a spectator or a listener. If we call the whole of these properties of a certain object its “form,” we can say that the aestheticians of this category search for requirements of beauty in the form of objects itself. These are the followers

† The lecture was delivered in the Reading Room for Women in Lvov on 18th February, 1899. It was prepared for print by Jacek Jadacki and published in Polish as “O estetyce eksperymentalnej” in Kazimierz Twardowski, Filozofia i muzyka (Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, Warsaw 2005), pp. 25-33 [B&J].

† In the manuscript, this sentence reads as follows: “what properties an object must have (a person, a thing, a melody etc.) to be actually beautiful” [JJ].

of the so-called **formalistic aesthetics**. According to them, the beauty of objects consists in certain quantitative and qualitative ratios of parts to each other and to the whole; therefore the beauty depends on the size of an object and its parts, on proportion, on harmony etc. The second group of aestheticians considers the form of objects as a factor of a secondary significance in relation to aesthetics. According to them, the beauty of an object is not defined by its form but by what this form expresses, and by the method used to express [it]. And when we call this expressed thing content, we can say that aestheticians of the second category search for the conditions of beauty in the content of objects. And this trend of aesthetics is known as **aesthetics of content**. According to it, the beauty of objects consists in perfect expression of a certain thought, idea – they are, in a way, pictorial presentation of an ideal.¹

3. Apart from these diametrically opposed trends of aesthetics, there is also an intermediate trend that attempts to reconcile both the aforementioned views on the requirements of beauty. Among the representatives of this intermediate trend, Gustav Theodor Fechner (died in 1866 *) is the key figure. His perception of the relation between form and content is based on an accurate psychological analysis; and by gaining wide recognition, he considerably contributed to toning down the controversy, which, especially formerly, concerned the followers of the aesthetics of content and the followers of the formalistic aesthetics.†

4. Fechner does not use the words “content” and “form,” but instead, he writes of direct and associated conditions; that is, factors of beauty and aesthetic preferences. He explains the meaning of these direct and associated factors in the following example. “An orange,” he says

   is probably the most beautiful or – if one considers use of the word “beautiful” an exaggeration – the most charming fruit to the eye... Where does this charm come from? Obviously, everyone first thinks about its beautiful and clear golden color and shape-ly curve. These are unfailingly important factors and many would agree that they constitute a sufficient explanation for our preference of the sight of an orange... Still, let us consider whether the whole charm of this fruit actually lies only in its beautiful golden color and its rounded shape. In my opinion, it does not. Otherwise, a wooden ball painted yellow would appeal to us the same as an orange does... It cannot be explained only by the aesthetic superiority of the shape and color of an orange since these properties are similar for both objects; and a wooden ball could be even ahead of an orange in this scope. The superiority of an orange may consist in the fact that we see it exactly as an orange, not as a wooden ball; the whole meaning of an orange

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¹ Cf. [Külpe 1895], § 9.
² This is a mistake; Gustav Theodor Fechner was born in 1801 and died in 1887 [JJ].
³ In the manuscript, there is no content of the note [JJ].