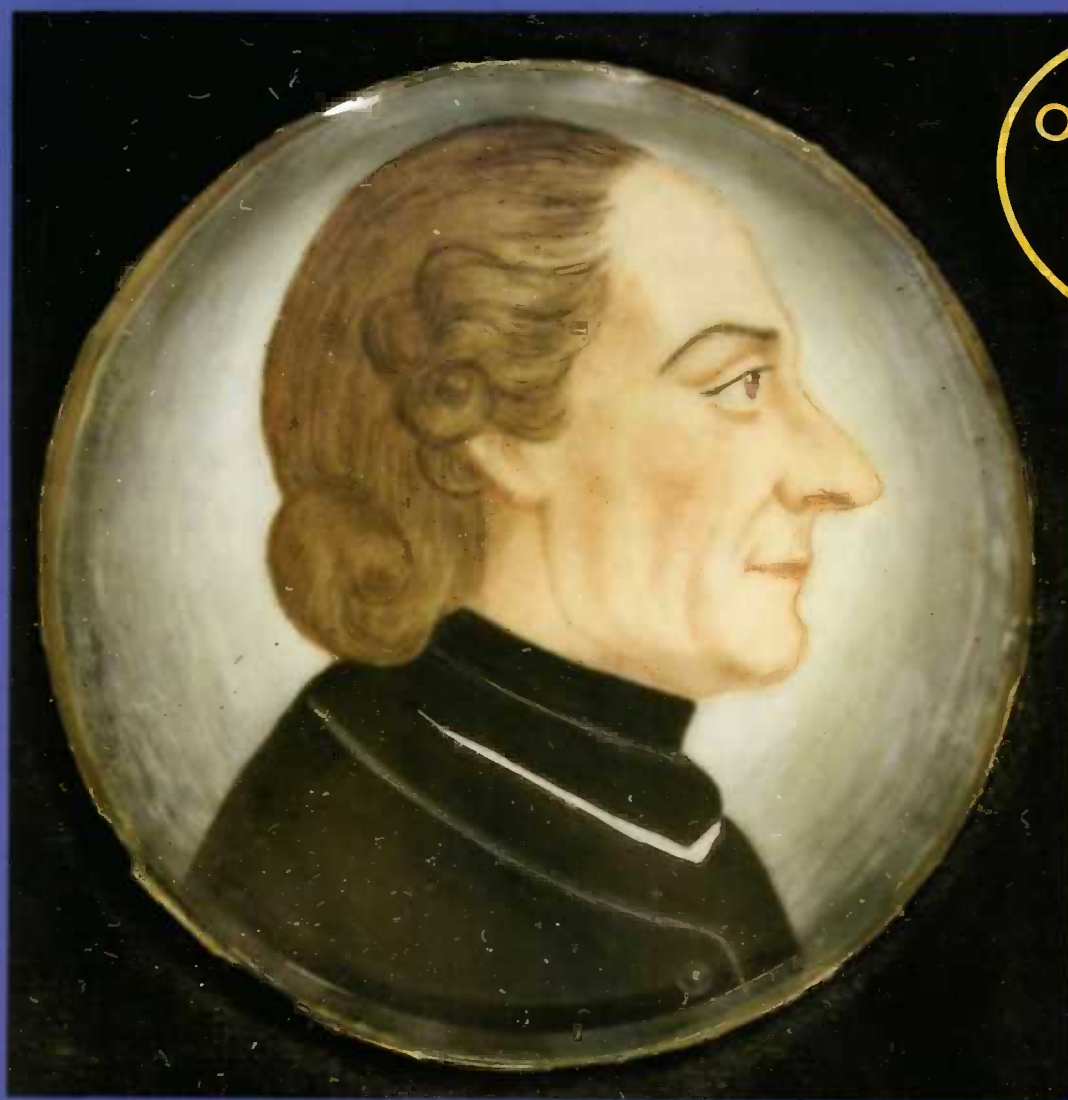


Lavater Correspondence

Letters to and from Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801)



over 21,000
letters

On-line EAD-finding aid

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Letters to and from Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801)

Lavater was admired and detested for his unconventional approach to theology and his rediscovery of physiognomy. He was an avid communicator and through his correspondence became known to almost all leading personalities of eighteenth century Europe, such as Goethe, Wieland and Rousseau. The more than 21,000 letters in Lavater's estate in the Zentralbibliothek Zürich display the enormous thematic variety produced during a remarkable forty years of correspondence. This unique source material is now being published for the first time. IDC Publishers makes this collection available for research to such various disciplines as theology, history, literature, arts, humanities and above all, the history of eighteenth century culture.

Encounter on paper

Lavater was at his best when meeting others face to face to discuss topics of mutual interest. His charismatic personality is said to have been irresistible. Lavater's need to foster close personal relationships despite physical distance made him one of the most prolific correspondents of his time, a period itself characterized by a great fondness for writing. According to the principle of "allen alles zu sein" borrowed from Paul (1 Cor. 9:22), he attuned himself to each of his correspondents.

Lavater was prominent in his efforts to create the impression of a spontaneous meeting on paper. He achieved this spontaneity through his writing style, using colloquial language, as well as the liberal use of punctuation marks: dashes, colons, question marks, and exclamation points. These punctuation marks symbolized that which could not be expressed through the mere literal meaning of the words. This practice of "lavaterisieren" became fashionable among his contemporaries.

Fascinating variety

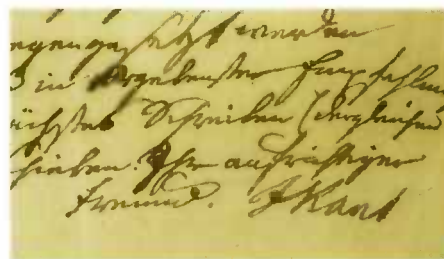
Lavater's extensive, pan-European correspondence features a fascinating variety of topics. It is indisputably dominated by religious matters in the broadest sense, at the center of which lies the inquiry into manifest transcendental experience in immanence. In his *Promemoria zur Lebensgeschichte* (Memorandum on My Life Story), Lavater declares that the goal and purpose of his life has been "mit Jesus Christus in eine reelle, correspondenzmäßige Connexion zu kommen".

Other topics that have a strong focus in Lavater's correspondence were verse and poetry, pedagogical issues and

painting, especially portrait art which was in many ways related to his best known work, the monumental *Essays on Physiognomy*.

On these topics, Lavater corresponded with nearly all leading figures of intellectual and spiritual German-speaking Europe, such as Wieland, Kant, Klopstock, Herder, Goethe, Gleim and Claudius. Pedagogical issues were discussed with Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Basedow and Campe. Besides corresponding on pedagogy, Lavater wrote a series of children's and young adult books.

Last but not least, Lavater had a keen interest in social and political issues. Especially the French Revolution and the Helvetian Republic, imposed by the French in Switzerland, are extensively discussed in his correspondence.



Immanuel Kant to Lavater. Königsberg, 28.4.1775
FA Lav. Ms. 516.24

Intimate insights

Apart from above mentioned various topics, Lavater's correspondence reveals much details on personal lives, both on his own and that of others. Intimate insights into the life of Lavater are, amongst others, provided by his letters to his parents, his wife Anna and his children, his close friends (Johann Georg Zimmermann and Johann Jacob Hess, among others), and to his Zurich teachers (Bodmer and Breitinger).

Lavater frequently had to intervene in

difficult situations, often associated with great poverty. Much of what was put into words was related to embarrassing personal life circumstances, such as unwanted pregnancies, and had to remain protected by secrecy.

Lavater's estate

Lavater's estate includes manuscripts, documentation on his most important works, autobiographical material and diaries, travelogues, political material, theological treatises, songs, odes, poetry and decorated cards. Since boundaries cannot be easily drawn, filming proceeded broad-minded. Many items from the estate and other collections of the manuscript department besides the actual correspondence have been included in order to offer a complete overview of his correspondence and extensive network.

Index

An alphabetical index of the letters to and from Lavater offers an overview as well as a convenient introduction to his correspondence. It contains additional articles, providing background information on the filmed materials. As this is the first time that Lavater's correspondence is being published, the collection is indispensable for institutes and libraries performing research on any of the wide variety of topics that found their way to Lavater's letters.



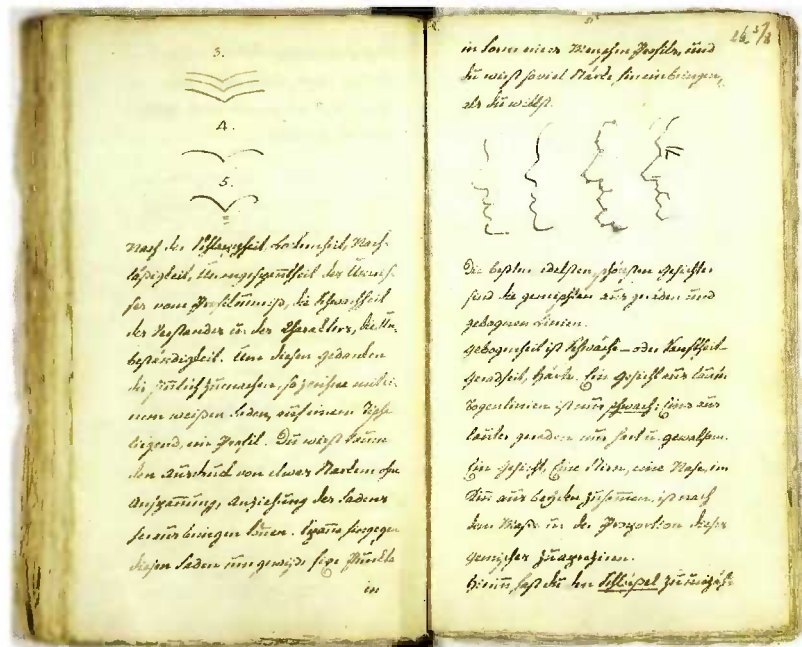
Lavater to Philipp Albert Stapfer: Signature of Lavater. Zürich, 9.5.1798
FA Lav. Ms. 582a.1

General information

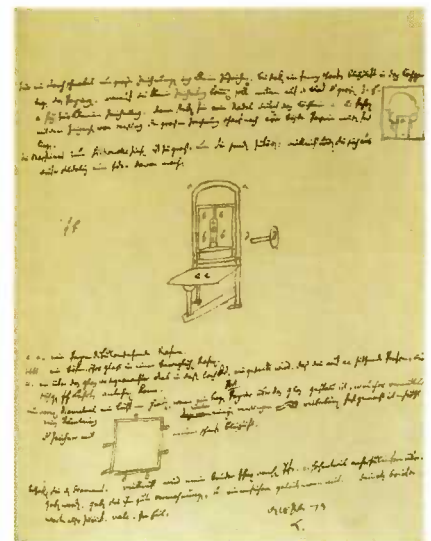
Scope	21,423 letters;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9,121 letters from Lavater • 12,302 letters to Lavater • more than 1,850 correspondents, including over 400 women
Number of fiche	1,843	
Size of fiche	105 x 148 mm	
Film type	Positive silver halide	
Reduction ratio	Varies depending on the size of the original	
Internal finding aids	Eye-legible headers on every fiche	
External finding aids	Printed guide On-line EAD finding aid	



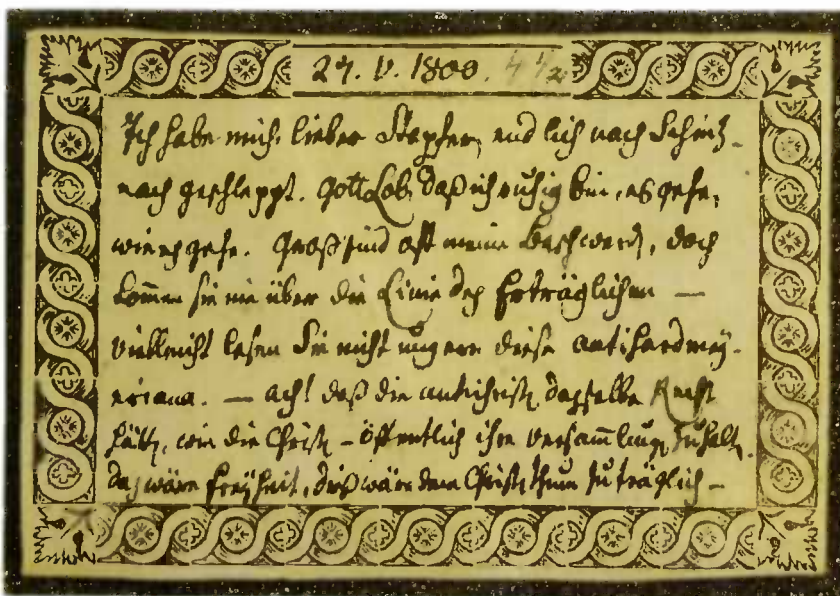
Johann Caspar Pfenninger to Lavater. Letterhead with Wilhelm Tell-Vignette and additions "Freyheit" and "Gleichheit". Zürich, 15.9.1798
FA Lav. Ms. 523.236



Lavater to Johann Georg Zimmermann: Copy by contemporary hand. 7.5.1775
FA Lav. Ms. 587.51



Lavater to Eberhard Gaupp. Drawing of a "Camera Obscura" for making silhouette images. 18.12.1773
FA Lav. Ms. 560.50



Lavater to Philipp Albert Stapfer: Example of notepad often used by Lavater. 27.5.1800
FA Lav. Ms. 582a.4



Lavater to his daughter Luise/Lille. Letter with colored etching signed by P(eter) V(ischer d. Ä.) f(ecit). Basel, 31.7.1789
FA Lav. Ms. 571.139