

## Maria Theresa's plans for a new university building

Ever since 1752 Maria Theresa had planned to give the university, which suffered from a deplorable lack of space, more dignified premises. On 26 February 1753 she gave orders to “[...] find a suitable location for a university building to be erected, affording sufficient residences for all professores Juris and Medicinae, but first and foremost providing the juridical and medical faculties with the required rooms and halls for their lectures and actibus publicis as well as other requirements [...]”. In a lengthy submission on 15 March 1753 to the Empress, the “Directorium in publicis et cameralibus” – formed in 1749 in the course of Maria Theresa’s administrative reforms by the merger of all but two departments of the “Hofkammer” with the “Hofkanzlei” – for the first time described in detail the requirements regarding the construction, uses and equipment of a university building. The original idea to provide residential quarters for all professors of the juridical and medical faculties was mainly due to the wish to give preferential treatment to the faculties most affected by the university reform. Ultimately it was, however, decided that the new university building should accommodate all four faculties even if this meant that not all space requirements could be met.



A. HERTZOG,  
FRESCO IN THE  
JESUIT LIBRARY,  
CA. 1735  
(FIG. 6)

By February 1754 the decision to accommodate the four faculties in one new building had become the official policy, stressing the inseparability of all academic disciplines – a point of view that is convincingly reflected in the first sketches for the frescoes that were to decorate the Great Hall (and which had already been anticipated in the programme for Anton Hertzog’s fresco for the library of the Jesuit College [around 1735] [Fig. 6]). The new university building can be considered to be representative of Maria Theresa’s energetic reorganisation of academic life, which aimed at giving the sciences, with their increasingly rational basis, a more practical orientation. The sciences “serving the public good” (Friederich Colland) thus gained greater significance among the academic disciplines.