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LEONARD P. WESSELL, JR.

Alexander Baumgarten's Contribution to the Development of Aesthetics

AESTHETICS, conceived as an autonomous science of the beautiful in which the object of investigation plays the major role in determining the ordering process of aesthetic theory, was not known in Germany before the eighteenth century. Indeed, prior to this time there was no general theory of aesthetics distinct from inquiries limited in scope to specific problems, e.g., the "correct" manner of rhyming. It was not until the development of philosophical thinking by Leibniz (1646–1714) and particularly Christian Wolff (1679–1754) that enterprising thinkers in the early eighteenth century, e.g., J. Chr. Gottsched (1700–1766)¹, attempted a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the aesthetic phenomenon. Paradoxically, however, the very philosophical premises that inspired thinkers to analyze the phenomenon of beauty tended to inhibit the establishment of aesthetics as an autonomous field of study. Recent investigators of the period, such as Benedetto Croce (1866–1952)², have noted that the reasons for this fact are located in the rationalistic roots of much of early eighteenth-century German thought.

Leibnizian inspired rationalism tended to view reality as basically homogeneous in na-

ture. There is, according to this view, one fundamental realm of being relative to which all other "realms" lose their autonomy and are reducible. Thus, for instance, Leibniz reminds his readers that "besides the *sensible* and the *imageable*, there is that which is purely *intelligible*, as being the *object of the understanding alone*."³ The truly and primarily "real" for Leibniz was the realm of the intelligible, and this realm was attainable by the intellect. Since reality is fundamentally of one nature, then knowledge, too, must be of one basic type, namely intellectual. Furthermore, since intellectual knowledge consists of clear and distinct ideas, the reality known must be of such a nature in order to be so known. If that which appears in consciousness is not immediately apprehensible in a clear and distinct manner, it must (1) be reduced to clear and distinct ideas mediately, (2) be rejected as in some way unreal, or (3) be an embarrassment to the logical consistency of the system. Because Leibniz believed that all reality was essentially one and that all differences were a matter of degrees not of radical otherness, he was able to integrate sensate or contingent truths into his system by assuming that individual facts are similar to mathematical surds, i.e., they require an infinite analysis but are, nevertheless, reducible mediately to the demands of the understanding. Thus, while Leibniz was willing to grant that sensations are a practical ultimate for the human mind, they are still

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theoretically reducible to clear and distinct notions and hence can be rendered "more intelligible."⁴ For instance, he asserts: "What is more, even sensuous pleasures are really confusedly known intellectual pleasures."⁵

Leibniz's principle of continuity made it possible for him to integrate sensation into his system. This *lex continui*, however, also made it difficult for him and his immediate followers to construct an aesthetics upon an autonomous basis. This is so because, according to Leibniz, anything about aesthetics (and aesthetic experience always involves sensation of some sort), if it is not immediately clear and distinct itself, must be theoretically reducible to an intellectual cognition. Concerning such a reduction, Croce comments: "To admit that artists judge with confused perceptions, clear but not distinct, does not involve denying that these perceptions may be capable of being connected and verified by intellectual consciousness. The self-same object that is confusedly though clearly recognized by imagination is recognized clearly and distinctly by the intellect; which amounts to saying that a work of art may be perfected by being determined by thought."⁶ It is obvious that an aesthetic experience fully reduced to conceptual knowledge is no longer aesthetic.

Credit has usually been given to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762)⁷ for the establishment of aesthetics as an independent branch of philosophical inquiry.⁸ This assertion has, of course, been denied.⁹ The reason for this denial is that Baumgarten was one of the most brilliant of the rationalists of his time. Thus critics such as Croce charge Baumgarten with the "sin" of having surrendered the independence and uniqueness of aesthetics to the claims of the law of continuity. Baumgarten allegedly did not free himself from the chains of Leibnizian intellectualism. The fact that Baumgarten viewed aesthetic experience as entailing a type of truth that is an inferior form of intellectual truth was one proof of this for Croce, since such an attitude on Baumgarten's part certainly presupposes the principle of continuity. The charge, then, against Baumgarten is that he was not

able to maintain the *qua talis* of aesthetics against the *lex continui* of rationalism.¹⁰

The task of my investigation will be to assess Baumgarten's contribution to the development of aesthetics as an independent science. I will contend that Baumgarten did "liberate" aesthetic theory from the confines of rationalistic intellectualism but only at the cost of consistency within the totality of his thought. The procedure to be followed will be (1) an examination of Baumgarten's metaphysics and his corresponding treatment of sensation and (2) an examination of his *psychologia empirica* (as opposed to rational psychology). From this it will become apparent how Baumgarten isolates the constituent elements of aesthetic experience and how he explains their mode of combination in such a way as to liberate aesthetics from intellectualism sufficiently to justify our designating him as the "father" of modern aesthetics.

Baumgarten's ontology is what Etienne Gilson has designated a metaphysics of essentialism,¹¹ according to which *to be* is to be open to the conceptual power of the intellect which expresses itself by ascribing predicates to a subject. Thus Baumgarten defines ontology as the "science of all the more general predicates of being."¹² Primary for the predicates of being is the feature by which they become intelligible, namely their "what-ness": i.e., essentialism identifies being with whatever answers the question what (*quid*) something (*aliquid*) is. That which gives intelligibility to a being (and, indeed, the being is really not distinct from its intelligibility) was called the *ratio* (§14). Between any two predicates asserted of any subject there is, furthermore, a relationship of *ratio* and *rationatum* (i.e., foundation or ground and consequence) connected by a *nexus*.

In imitation of Leibniz, Baumgarten maintained (1) that all predicates have their ground in an adequate conception of a subject, and (2) that they stand together as ground and consequence. This is so because within any specific being there is a hierarchal relationship of determinations. Those determinations which are not determined (i.e., that do not have a *ratio* in another) are the basis for further less basic

determinations called *essentialia* (§39). A complex of these essentials constitutes the essence of a thing: i.e., from its essence all its properties can be deduced. For instance, a triangle consists of lines, a plane, angles, etc. These are the essentials from which the essence of a triangle is determined. From the essence there follows the less primary and more specific determinations or properties (called *affectiones* by Baumgarten [§41]) of a thing. These lesser determinations form a descending series from general to more specific attributes and modes. There is no aspect of a being that is isolated, i.e., that does not have a *ratio* that unites it with all the other aspects. Therefore, every aspect of a being that is not in the essence of the being (i.e., is a *ratio*) is a *rationatum*. This means that Baumgarten could not allow anything to be both ultimately given and irreducible to more primary reasons. For instance, the very individuality of any specific being would, of all things, seem most likely to transcend the plight of its being a consequent, no matter how far removed, of a primitive axiom. But Baumgarten does not allow this. Individuality is but the most determinate type of essence in a descending series of classes of categories. There is the genus, the generic difference, the specific difference (or species), and finally the numerical difference. The individual is found in the category of numerical difference. To this category belongs the "this-ness, or the principle of individuation [*haecceitas, principium individuationis*]" (§151). The *haecceitas* is reached when all the determinations possible to a being are made. What is of importance here is that Baumgarten, like Leibniz before him, has been forced, in his efforts to reduce all knowledge to a conceptual kind, to interpret that very aspect of any being that would most likely seem to escape from or transcend the categories of essence as only the lowest form of essence, i.e., the *haecceitas*. The abstract Latin suffix *-tas* shows that Baumgarten was seeking to reduce that which is incommunicable and private about every individual thing to that which is communicable and in some way general, and thereby to bring essentialism to its logical conclusion.

What else could be expected of Baumgarten, given his rationalistic premises? If all knowledge about reality is of one type and if this type is exhaustive of the nature of reality, the individual has to have the characteristics of a concept if it were to find a deductive niche in Baumgarten's dream of a logically interconnected reality. This meant of course that that which is individual (indeed, any aspect of reality) could be traced to the *essentialia* and then deductively inferred. Baumgarten has apparently presented his followers with a Leibnizian universe in which the law of continuity (about which Croce has made such a fuss) reigns. It is quite obvious that Baumgarten can integrate sensation into his system in the same way Leibniz did. But at the same time, it would seem that sensation would be limited to the same problems that it had in Leibniz's theory. It would seem to follow, as Croce has contended, that any cognitive determination by sensation could be understood in intellectual terms. In short, sensuous experience would appear to have nothing about it that is irreducible and that could be the subject of an autonomous science called aesthetics.

From the above it is quite obvious that Baumgarten's metaphysics makes any autonomy for the field of aesthetics impossible. It is, rather, in Baumgarten's psychology that the roots for his specific contribution to aesthetics are to be found. For Baumgarten psychology is the study of that which is conscious. Now that which is conscious is the soul. Hence, psychology is the study of the soul (§504). I shall not deal with Baumgarten's rational psychology, which is concerned with problems of the metaphysical structure of the soul, e.g., its unity. It will suffice to say that Baumgarten presents his followers with a Leibnizian world of monads. Instead, it is in his *psychologia empirica* that Baumgarten discusses the nature of sensible experience.

The soul is that which is conscious. The objects of consciousness are representations of the universe as they occur in the soul. These representations can be divided into two basic categories. "I think some things distinctly, some confusedly" (§510). Baumgarten posits two faculties in the soul that

enable it to have two types of cognition. They are the *facultas cognoscitiva superior* (§§624 ff.) and the *facultas cognoscitiva inferior* (§§519 ff.). The superior faculty is the intellect. The intellect knows things distinctly. "The representation of a thing by the intellect is its conception. Hence that whose distinct perception can be formed is conceptually (grasped) . . ." (§632). Intellectual knowledge is, therefore, per se conceptual. The ideal realization or perfection of the intellect is intuitive knowledge of adequate and distinct representations. Here Baumgarten follows Leibniz. In such an intuition the mind cognitively obtains the essence of a thing plus its logical relations to its properties.

Besides knowing reality distinctly and conceptually, the soul knows it indistinctly or confusedly. "A non-distinctive representation is called sensitive representation" (§521). Here Leibniz's law of continuity can be seen very clearly. It is not the object as object that is unclear; rather, it is the mind that is the source of unclarity. The object is the same in both cases, but the mind is not, in the sense that, given a superior character, it could clear up the confused perceptions of an object and make them conceptual. Croce seems to have achieved a victory here. It seems that, *on principle*, all knowledge, including aesthetics, would ideally be reducible to the formal logic of distinct cognition.

In the face of all this, Cassirer's contention seems both very odd and false: "[Baumgarten] was not only the outstanding scholastic logician who was master of all aspects of this discipline . . . , but his real intellectual accomplishment consists in the fact that through mastery of the subject he became especially conscious of both the intrinsic and the systematic limitations of formal logic. As a result of his consciousness of these limitations, Baumgarten was able to make his original contribution to the history of thought which lay in the philosophical foundation of aesthetics."¹³ The question that must be answered is, Did Baumgarten effectively recognize any limitations to the domain of formal logic and thereby give an irreducible standing to sensate cognition?

Toward the beginning of his major work on aesthetics Baumgarten wrote: "The end of aesthetics is the perfection of sensitive cognition as such [*qua talis*]." ¹⁴ On the face value of these words it would seem that Baumgarten has recognized that there is something irreducible about the laws of aesthetics (both as a theory of sensitive knowledge and as a theory of beauty). If this is so, he has broken with his own metaphysics and ceased being a pure rationalist. This fact allows Baumgarten to attempt a different type of explanation of sensate order than the one open to rationalists like Leibniz or Spinoza. If a thinker believes that the myriads of particulars of the universe are explainable as deductions from a set of axioms, it follows on principle that the observation of particulars as they occur phenomenologically cannot give adequate knowledge about these particulars and their organization. The ideal would be to discover the relations of the particulars to their ground (or axiomatic principles), not between the particulars themselves. In other words, the relationships between the particulars would only be fully understood by reducing them and their interrelationships to something beyond them (cf. Spinoza in particular). But, if the particulars are viewed as in some way ultimate, and if it is held that there can be knowledge about these particulars *qua talis*, it means that it is not necessary to go beyond the particulars to explain their relationships. In other words, the particulars are *not* to be viewed as "nothing but" an obscure manifestation of that which is totally other in nature. Instead of explaining the particular in the terms of abstract principles, the particulars should be closely observed. As Cassirer writes, "The new science of aesthetics strives for such recognition. It abandons itself to sensory appearance without attempting to go beyond it to something entirely different, to the grounds of all experience. For such a step forward would not explain the aesthetic content of appearance, but destroy it."¹⁵ But Croce has charged that this *qua talis* has no real substance in Baumgarten's thought, but rather that it is allegedly sacrificed to the *lex continui*.¹⁶ Is there any

evidence contradicting Croce? Yes, indeed: some which Croce was very conscious of.

In his early work, *Reflections on Poetry* (1735), Baumgarten distinguished between logical (or conceptual) knowledge and sensitive perception and for the first time in modern aesthetic theory used the term *aesthetic*. He writes: "The Greek philosophers and the Church fathers have already carefully distinguished between *things perceived* and *things known*. It is entirely evident that they did not equate *things known* with things of sense, since they honored with this name things also removed from sense (therefore, images). Therefore, *things known* are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of logic; *things perceived* [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or aesthetic."¹⁷ It seems clear from the above quotation that Baumgarten has allowed the subject matter of the cognitive faculty to determine the nature of knowledge. "Things known" (i.e., conceptually intuited) are the proper objects of logic and "things perceived" (i.e., sensitively experienced) are objects for the science of perception which is called "aesthetic." This is a break with rationalistic method. Furthermore, early in the same essay, Baumgarten writes: "Philosophy and poetry are scarcely ever thought able to perform the same office, since philosophy pursues conceptual distinctness above everything else, while poetry does not strive to attain this, as falling outside of its province" (*Reflect.*, §14). How much more clearly can Baumgarten state his position? Conceptual thinking is beyond the providence of aesthetics. It certainly would follow from this that any attempt by the philosopher to reduce aesthetics to conceptual knowledge would destroy the aesthetic experience.¹⁸ Is there a tool, so to speak, that Baumgarten gives to the aesthetician that enables him not to reduce aesthetic experience to conceptual knowledge? Yes, there is. But first it must be made clear just what Baumgarten was seeking to investigate in his theory of aesthetics. Baumgarten was interested in knowledge *about* obscure and confused experience, i.e., sensations. Sensations in perceptual experience are not chaotically perceived. Rather they

are ordered. There must be some *form* that determines this order of perceptual or sensate experience. It is this form that is the object of aesthetics. The method for obtaining this form also reveals Baumgarten's tool to avoid a reduction of aesthetic experience to conceptual thought.

In the section of his *Metaphysica* entitled *Psychologica empirica* Baumgarten defines aesthetics: "The science of sensitively knowing and proposing is aesthetics, the logic of the inferior faculty of knowing, the philosophy of the graces and the muses, the inferior knowledge, the art of thinking beautifully, the art of the analogy of reason" (§533). The revolutionary character of Baumgarten can be seen in his claim that aesthetics is an *ars analogi rationis*. Rationalists, such as Descartes, clearly maintained that the same epistemological method was unequivocally to be applied to different fields without any diminution of the method. The term *analogy* shows Baumgarten's break with rationalism. Analogy implies that there is something the same and something different in the sciences of logic and aesthetics.¹⁹ Aesthetics is the *ars pulchre cogitandi* ("the art of thinking beautifully"), not of logical thinking. I believe that Baumgarten was unconscious of the fact that he had broken with Leibnizian intellectualism and, indeed, with his own *metaphysics* on this point.

Aesthetics is a *gnoselogia inferior* ("inferior knowledge"). The fact that Baumgarten viewed aesthetics as a form of knowledge and as an inferior form certainly demonstrates his roots in rationalism. The rationalist, in order to maintain the unity and homogeneity of his method, was forced to attempt to view all forms of consciousness as degrees of one basic type of consciousness. Thus, emotions, passions, sensations, etc., are treated as cognitive knowledge. Furthermore, the fact that rationalists were intellectualists caused them automatically to value any other form of knowledge as "inferior." Thus far, I must agree with Croce in his criticism of Baumgarten. But Baumgarten widened the concept of knowledge. It is not exhausted by the content of logic. "Yet there is, according to Baumgarten, a field of knowledge where the reduc-

tion of phenomena to their basic substance is subject to a limitation.”²⁰ This field is aesthetics, i.e., sensitive cognition. This is radically new and is, indeed, Baumgarten’s great contribution to aesthetics. Aesthetics is not interested in the distinct causes of sensation, etc. It remains with the phenomenon. Baumgarten writes: “The beauty of sensory cognition will be the universal agreement of the thoughts as long as we abstract from their order and signs down to the last one, which is the phenomenon” (*Aesthetica*, §18). Aesthetics is not interested in anything other than the perfection of phenomena as phenomena. Indeed, this is the definition of beauty. “The perfection of phenomena . . . is beauty” (§662).

Although aesthetic experience is not reducible to logical categories, aesthetic experience is experience and as such it is a manifold within a unity. The ideal of intellectual knowledge is to discover the nature of the manifold and the nature of the ordering principles which cause the unity. The rationalists had tried to apply one type of ordering principle in all cases. Baumgarten followed this spirit in his treatment of conceptual knowledge. This is why his metaphysics rules out any possibility of aesthetics as a distinct science. But Baumgarten broke with Descartes and his heritage in that he recognized that sensitive knowledge which is involved in aesthetic experience has its *own peculiar* type of organization that is definitely *non-conceptual*. The ordering process of aesthetics is not reducible to logical concepts. And since conceptualization is at the root of intellectual knowledge, aesthetics and its type of knowledge are not intellectual. But Baumgarten was a rationalist and aesthetics is an analogy of reason. Thus, the ordering process of aesthetics has corresponding elements to those in logical ordering. In logical ordering, there is the manifold which consists of clear and distinct logical concepts, and this manifold is ordered together by the principle of sufficient reason. There are, therefore, analogous elements in the aesthetic process of organization. These will now be shown.

Logical thinking is twofold: (1) There is the intuition of the elements and (2) there is their combination. Logical thinking is, in

effect, a type of discourse. Indeed, ratiocination can be defined as a rational discourse. Aesthetics, too, is a type of discourse. The aesthetic experience of most objects involves a series of different representations apprehended by the mind in some sort of unity. “By poem we mean the more perfect discourse” (*Reflect.*, §9).²¹ It is the task of the aesthetician to determine what the elements of the poem are and how they are ordered together to form the discourse. That which contributes to this discourse is, obviously enough, aesthetic (*Reflect.*, §11). What then is contained in *sensate* discourse? “By *sensate discourse* we mean discourse involving *sensate* representations” (*Reflect.*, §4). Baumgarten concludes, “*Sensate* representations are parts of the poem and, hence, [are] poetic” (*Reflect.*, §12). Therefore it follows that sensations are the elements of the manifold of the aesthetic experience. This is not enough, however. Sensations are not homogeneous, or at least not as far as the human mind is concerned, “. . . since *sensate* representations may be either obscure or clear, poetic representations are either obscure or clear” (*Reflect.*, §12). Baumgarten goes on to maintain that these two types of sensation are not of equal value for the aesthetic experience. Just as not every clear idea is adequate for rational discourse, so not every sensation is adequate for aesthetic discourse. The type of sensation proper to aesthetics must be more fully examined.

Leibniz distinguished between clear representations which are sensations and clear and distinct ones which are intellectual conceptions. Baumgarten, as shown above, makes the same division, only he makes a more subtle distinction, i.e., he distinguishes between two types of clarity.²² Clarity occurs when the mind can distinguish the object of cognition from another such object. For example, the mind might vaguely perceive a color in a dim light but not be able to say if it is blue or purple. This would be obscure perception (§528). If the representation becomes distinct enough so that the mind can distinguish the object, clarity is reached. For example, imagine that the light is made just bright enough so that the mind can see that the color is blue,

not purple. The clarity would then be minimal (§528). There is still another aspect to clarity. "Posit two cognitions that have equally clear notes, but let there be three notes in the first cognition and six in the second: the second cognition is clearer than the first. Therefore, clarity is increased by the number of notes. Clarity . . . by means of a multitude of notes can be called *extensively clearer*. Extensive clarity is vivid" (§531). What Baumgarten means can be shown with an example. Imagine that the mind has minimal clarity of an object. But it is unable to determine this object any further than to put it in a specific category. For instance, say that the mind sees a house in the distance. This is minimal clarity. But the mind cannot say whether the house is colonial or ranch style. There are not enough distinguishing notes: e.g., the mind cannot see the type of roofing, or the material out of which the walls are made, etc. If the mind knew these notes, it would have a clearer sensate (not logical) cognition of the house. The number of notes contained in the clearer cognition is greater or more extensive than in the less clear cognition. Thus, the second cognition can be said to be extensively clearer. "When, in representation *A*, more is represented than in *B*, *C*, *D*, and so on, but all are confused, *A* will be said to be *extensively clearer* than the rest." The more notes or determinations of an object present to the mind, the clearer the object appears. "The more determined things are, the more their representations embrace. In fact, the more that is gathered together in a confused representation, the more extensive clarity the representation has, and the more poetic it is. Therefore, for things to be determined as far as possible when they are to be represented in a poem is poetic" (*Reflect.*, §18). In short, extensive clarity presents the individual in all his irreducible sensory immediacy.

Baumgarten is saying the following: The object of aesthetic (or poetic) cognition is the individual in its immediacy as it is grasped in sensate experience. Indeed, an individual as individual can only be experienced in sensation. When an individual is experienced, all the myriads of determinations that belong to it must be there also.

These determinations, since they are singular, are not subject to abstraction if they are not at the same time to lose their singularity. Therefore, an artist cannot make a sensate (aesthetic) discourse about an individual employing abstract or conceptual representations. For instance, a specific woman to be beautiful must have a specific height, a specific shape, a specific color of hair or eyes, a specific skin color, etc. She cannot be reached in her individuality by means of abstract concepts. Could a poet ever hope to describe the beauty of Helena in the terms of Plato's ideas, particularly of the more generic ones, such as "the Good"? No wonder Baumgarten concluded: "Since specific determinations applied to a genus establish the species, and since generic determinations establish the inferior genus under the superior, the representations of the species and of the inferior genus are more poetic than those, respectively, of the genus and the superior genus" (*Reflect.*, §20). Thus, Baumgarten recommends using examples of things in poetry that are "more determined" (*Reflect.*, §21) than that which they are to clarify. An example might be a poet's comparison of the beauty of his loved one with Helena's beauty rather than an abstract clear and distinct definition of beauty.

Thus far, it is clear that extensively clear sensations are the material elements of aesthetic experience. But these elements do not appear in isolation. Instead they are all parts of aesthetic experience. Rational knowledge is held together by conceptual categories. Aesthetic or sensitive knowledge is held together by something analogous to the conceptual categories. It must be restated that Baumgarten specifically guards against the reduction of aesthetic unity to clear and distinct concepts. When a number of representations is ordered to form a sensate discourse, the aesthetic experience arises. Indeed, it is from the unity that is involved in the sensate discourse that sensations lose their isolation and become parts of an aesthetic whole. The unity of rational discourse is due to the principle of sufficient reason. The analogous principle of unification for sensate discourse is the *theme*. "By *theme* we mean that whose representation

contains the sufficient reason of other representations supplied in the discourse, but which does not have its own sufficient reason in them" (*Reflect.*, §66). The principle of sufficient reason states that, if there is to be an object, all aspects of it cannot exist in isolation from each other—rather that they must have an intrinsic and logical relationship to one another. Indeed, Baumgarten tried to prove that the existence of an aspect without a sufficient reason would be a contradiction. Analogously, if all the sensate parts going into a work of art do not contribute to the work as a whole, there will be no work of art because it is only in the perceived unity that sensations are transformed from isolated and confused perceptions into being parts of an aesthetic object. What Baumgarten is saying certainly should not raise any objections, not even from Croce. After all, Croce did maintain that the lyrical intuition that produces the aesthetic experience involves a union of a specific image and a specific emotion. He certainly would have agreed that the artist must choose the *appropriate* image for any specific emotion if he is to produce lyrical intuition.

Baumgarten models the nature of the aesthetic unity after that of the rationalist's ideal, i.e., unity in variety. This ideal is, of course, nothing but the ideal of perfection. At this point, the importance of Baumgarten's rationalism becomes prominent. The rationalist believed that reality must have a sufficient reason, i.e., its theme. Furthermore, the sufficient reason behind reality ultimately meant that the universe should exhibit perfection. Out of the infinite alternate sets of co-possibles, that set is the best that allows for the greatest amount of reality. Reality is most *perfect* when the greatest amount of variety exists with the greatest degree of order. Similarly, out of the infinite number of combinations of sensate representations involved in any specific theme, that combination is best or most perfect which allows for the greatest possible number of sensations consonant with the theme. For instance, concerning music Baumgarten writes: "The more that is marked as harmonious or discordant, the more intense the pleasure or displeasure.

Every judgment of sense is confused. Therefore, if judgment *A* observes more to be harmonious or discordant than judgment *B*, *A* will be extensively clearer than *B*, hence more poetic" (*Reflect.*, §94). The perfection of an aesthetic work is, therefore, its beauty.²² A work is most perfect when its theme serves as the sole end, so to speak, around and to which all the variety of sensate representations are arranged.

Thus, despite his granting to aesthetics its own form of unity, Baumgarten still conceives of this form in analogy to rational notions. The joy of the aesthetic experience is derived from the perception of perfection. "The state of my soul derived from the intuition of perfection is pleasure" (§655). Here Baumgarten does not differ from Leibniz. But, and this is important, he means the perfection of sensate representations. It is a perfection the experience of which cannot be reduced to the experience of clear and distinct unity. Here Baumgarten greatly differs from Leibniz. Because of this, Baumgarten justifies the artist's looking at morality in a way different from the philosopher's and a shepherd looking at an eclipse in a way different from that of an astronomer (cf. *Aesthetica*, §§425, 429).

S U M M A R Y

Baumgarten was a rationalist. He honored the ideals of rationalism. Just as in his metaphysics the rationalist wanted to proceed from the general and axiomatic to the specific, Baumgarten wanted to construct an aesthetics by first determining his aesthetic axioms and then making his deductions therefrom. He admitted a specific type of representation into aesthetics only after it had received a deductive sanction. This type of a priori-ism is in direct opposition to the empirical methodology of a theorist like Edmund Burke, who first examined the specific occasions of aesthetic experience and then sought to induce aesthetic laws. Furthermore, Baumgarten, like Leibniz, believed that the object of all cognition was the same. As shown above in the discussion of Baumgarten's metaphysics, the difference in cognitions is rooted in the soul's limitations, not in the object itself. Hence, theoretically the same object con-

fusedly perceived could, given the proper mind, be conceived in a distinct intellectual manner. Also, the very fact that Baumgarten viewed aesthetics as an inferior cognition shows his submission to the Leibnizian principle of continuity. Despite all this, however, the fact remains that Baumgarten did, perhaps at the price of philosophical inconsistency, give the field of aesthetic experience an autonomy of its own. No matter how much this field was conceived in analogy to reason, it was nevertheless *only* an analogy. As is the case of all analogies, there is something different in each of the analogues as well as something the same. It is in this difference that Baumgarten locates the distinctive nature of aesthetics. To be specific, aesthetics differs from logic in two basic ways: (1) The material is different. Logic studies conceptual knowledge while aesthetics studies sensate knowledge. (2) The mode of organization is different. Logic organizes its manifold by means of concepts governed by the principle of sufficient reason. Aesthetics organizes its manifold by means of a non-conceptually felt unity of sensate representations among one another. The principle of unity is called the theme. Inferior as aesthetic knowledge may be, it is autonomous and irreducible to conceptual knowledge. It is the autonomy and irreducibility given to the aesthetic experience that constitutes the essence of Baumgarten's contribution to aesthetics. It was for this reason that he was accepted as a liberating influence by many of his contemporaries.

¹ Gottsched developed a relatively comprehensive and integrated aesthetics in his *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst*, 1st ed. (Leipzig, 1730), and *Erste Gründe der gesamten Weltweisheit* (Leipzig, 1743). I. Gottsched's *Critische Dichtkunst* was very influential in determining aesthetic values in Germany until around 1750.

² *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (London, 1922), pp. 212-19.

³ See *On the Supersensible Element in Knowledge* and *On the Immaterial in Nature* (1702), in *Leibniz: Selections*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York, 1951), p. 358.

⁴ *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*,

ed. and trans. Alfred Gideon Langley (La Salle, Ill., 1949), p. 121.

⁵ *The Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, in *Selections*, p. 532.

⁶ *Aesthetic as Science*, p. 218.

⁷ Baumgarten was not well known during his lifetime. However, those who did read him thought highly of him. No less a figure than Immanuel Kant praised Baumgarten highly and used his works for class room lectures. The following is a chronological listing of the works Baumgarten wrote in Latin: *Metaphysica* (Halle, 1739); *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (Halle, 1735); *Ethica philosophica* (Halle, 1740); *Aesthetica*, 2 vols. (1750-58); *Initia philosophicae practicae primae* (1760); *Acroasis logica in Christ. Wolff* (Halle, 1761); *Jus naturae* (Halle, 1765); *Sciographia encyclopaediae philosophicae* (Halle, 1769); and *Philosophia generalis* (Halle, 1769).

⁸ See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*. Vol. 6, *Modern Philosophy*, Part 1: *The French Enlightenment to Kant* (Garden City, 1964), p. 139. Compare also Ernst Bergmann, *Die Begründung der deutschen Ästhetik durch Alex. Gottlieb Baumgarten und Georg Friedrich Meier* (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 11-12; Herman Hettner, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*. Vol. 2, *Das Zeitalter Friedrichs des Grossen*, 4th ed. (Braunschweig, 1893), pp. 74-78; Albert Köster, *Die deutsche Literatur der Aufklärungszeit* (Heidelberg, 1925), p. 55; Joh. Schmidt, *Leibniz und Baumgarten, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Aesthetik* (Halle, 1875), p. 48; and Robert Zimmermann, *Geschichte der Aesthetik als philosophischer Wissenschaft* (Vienna, 1858), pp. 166 ff.

⁹ Croce, *Aesthetic as Science*, pp. 212-19; Pierre Grappin, *Le Théorie du Génie dans le Préclassicisme Allemand* (Paris, 1952), p. 69; George Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*. Vol. 3, *Modern Criticism* (London, 1944), pp. 148-50; and René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*. Vol. 1, *The Later Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1955), pp. 144-46.

¹⁰ Some writers who have at least dealt with the kind of problem brought up by Croce are Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics* (New York, 1939), pp. 289-95; Alfred Bäumler, *Kants Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Vol. 1, *Das Irrationalitätsproblem in der Aesthetik und Logik des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zur Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Halle, 1923), pp. 207-31; and Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Boston, 1965), pp. 338-60. Bäumler does a very good job in presenting Baumgarten's views in the light of developing thought in the eighteenth century. Cassirer's discussion of Baumgarten involves an excellent analysis and defense of Baumgarten's achievements.

¹¹ *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2d ed. (Toronto, 1952), pp. 112-21. In the pages given above, Gilson discusses in some detail the metaphysics of Christian Wolff, Baumgarten's mentor. What is true for Wolff is also true for Baumgarten.

¹² See *Metaphysica*, 7th ed. (Halle, 1779; 1st ed.

1739), §1. Hereafter all references to this work will be given in the text according to paragraph number. All translations from Latin into English are mine unless otherwise indicated.

¹³ *Philosophy*, p. 339.

¹⁴ *Aesthetica* (Frankfort, 1750; reprinted as 2 vols. in one, Hildesheim, 1961), §14. Hereafter, all references to this work will be made in the text as *Aesthetica* and paragraph number.

¹⁵ *Philosophy*, pp. 343-44.

¹⁶ Cf. Croce, *Aesthetic as Science*, p. 214.

¹⁷ *Reflections on Poetry*, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Meditationes philosophicae de non-nullo ad poema pertinentibus*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William Holther (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954), §116, p. 78. Hereafter all references to this work will be given in the text as *Reflect.* and paragraph number.

¹⁸ Cassirer himself writes concerning the destructive nature of reductionism: "If, in accordance with the method of exact science, we explain the phenomenon of color by resolving it into a pure process of motion, then we have not only destroyed its sense impression but we have also robbed it of its aesthetic significance. The reduction of color to its physical concept annihilates, as it were with one blow, its whole significance as an artistic means of expression, its whole function in the art of painting." See *Philosophy*, p. 343.

¹⁹ Croce seems oblivious to the implications contained in the term *analogy*. He quotes this same

quotation (*Aesthetic as Science*, pp. 212-13), but makes no comment upon it. If anything, this quotation seems to Croce to be a proof of Baumgarten's surrender to rationalism. Cf. Cassirer, *Philosophy*, p. 346.

²⁰ Cassirer, *Philosophy*, p. 343.

²¹ Although this work was written primarily about poetry, what Baumgarten says about poetics he also believed concerning aesthetics in general as can be seen in his later work *Aesthetica*. Therefore, what is said of poetics is also true for aesthetics. Indeed, Baumgarten tends to use the terms interchangeably. Thus, it is obvious that the definition of a poem as a "perfect sensate discourse" corresponds to the definition of aesthetics as a perfect sensate cognition. The definition of a poem is just a specific application of a more general principle.

²² Concerning Baumgarten's concept of perfection, Bernard Bosanquet writes: "The idea of perfection had played a great part in the speculation of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, and was directly transmitted from Wolff to Baumgarten. It might be generally defined as the character of a whole in so far as this whole is affirmed by its part without counteraction, and thus, perfection became a postulate of everything real, because reality depended upon power to harmonize the greatest number of conditions. . . . Whatever is opposed to the perfection of sensuous knowledge, that is, to the unity of parts in the whole sense-perception, is ugly." See *A History of Aesthetic* (New York, 1960), pp. 184-85.