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Ancient or Modern? Alexander G. Baumgarten and the Coming of Age of Aesthetics

Abstract *The aim of this essay is to examine Baumgarten's conception on the history of aesthetics and on his role in it. In the first part, I analyze the way in which Baumgarten's aesthetic innovation has been perceived by two of his disciples, namely Georg Conrad Winckelmann and Georg Andreas Will. While the former puts the emphasis on the modernity of aesthetics, Will seems more inclined to attribute the birth of aesthetics to ancient philosophers. Despite this apparent disagreement, my thesis is that the basic positions of the two authors are very similar and find their rationale in Baumgarten's peculiar treatment of the issue. Consequently, I set out to inquire into Baumgarten's theory, in the attempt to better understand his reconstruction of the empirical history of aesthetics. My purpose is to see how this empirical history is framed within a more systematic history which establishes its guidelines and marks its turning points. Eventually, I take into account the possible implications of this position with regard to the question of the origin of aesthetics.*

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Keywords: *Alexander G. Baumgarten; origin of aesthetics; history of aesthetics; 18th century aesthetics; German aesthetics; German Enlightenment; Enlightenment aesthetics; Georg A. Will; Georg C. Winckelmann*

I.

The debate on how to conceptualize the possible discontinuity occurred in the history of aesthetics in the middle of the eighteenth century is in full swing. The crucial question revolves around the status of this discontinuity: is it a real watershed, beyond which lies an unexplored region of the philosophical domain, or is it only a parallax effect – a different way to deal with much more ancient issues according to modern philosophical ideals?

The answer to this interrogation is controversial, as it changes depending on what we mean by aesthetics. The problem has recently been brought to the fore by Porter (Porter 2009) in an article where the author took issue with Kristeller's notorious essay *The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics* (Kristeller 1951-1952). One of the main tenets rejected by Porter is that aesthetics – as Kristeller seemed to purport – becomes possible only through the systematization of the fine arts achieved by Batteux in the eighteenth century (Porter 2009a: 14-5). Porter

presents this thesis as a sort of dogma, that has deeply influenced cultural and philosophical history since the mid-20th century. Confronting such an established orthodoxy directly, Porter sets out to prove that Kristeller's narration does not hold up to any serious scrutiny from both a historical and a theoretical point of view. Once called into question Kristeller's assumptions, Porter can finally make his point, by arguing that aesthetics has its roots in classical antiquity, and thus cannot be deemed as a modern invention.

630 It is impossible for us to do justice to the arguments of the two parties nor can we take into account the continuation of the discussion with the interventions of Larry Shiner (Shiner 2009; see also Porter 2009b), who raises some objections to Porter's position, and of James Young (Young 2015), who elaborates further this latter's critique. The present debate, nonetheless, gives us the opportunity to ask a similar question for the German context of that age, with the difference that in this case the alleged breakthrough would be due to the coinage of the word "aesthetics" rather than to the systematization of the fine arts.

To put it bluntly, does Baumgarten's onomaturgic act stand for a birth certificate, or is it more similar to an "adult baptism" (Guyer 2007: 353) that ends up with merely imparting a new name to old problems? In the face of these huge questions, my purpose in this essay is rather modest: it does not consist in collecting evidence to bring grist to the mill of one hypothesis or the other, but only in reconstructing Baumgarten's (and some of his disciples') view on this subject. In sum, I do not intend to determine from above what Baumgarten's innovation has entailed for the history of aesthetics, but how this innovation was perceived and evaluated by Baumgarten himself.

To do this, I start with a brief presentation where I sum up the way in which Baumgarten justifies the need for a new branch of philosophy called aesthetics; secondly, I turn to a comparison between two almost-forgotten Baumgarten's followers, Georg Conrad Winckelmann and Georg Andreas Will, both concerned with making sense of their master's contribution to the history of aesthetics from apparently opposite standpoints. In the last part, I return to Baumgarten, in the attempt to examine his conception on the development of aesthetics from antiquity to modernity as well as on his own role in it.

As is already evident, my approach here will be more historical than theoretical, although there is not too great a distance between the two.

Indeed, it is undeniable that the prerequisite for moving forward the current debate on the vexed question of the origins of aesthetics demands an in-depth and possibly unprejudiced investigation of the primary sources, which may serve as a litmus test for the different positions. With the present article, I try to give my contribution to this undertaking.

II.

When Baumgarten introduces for the first time the term “aesthetica” in 1735 (Baumgarten 1954), his main purpose is to confer a systematic status to the philosophy of poetry, although he seems to be well aware of the more general potentialities of this project. In § 9 of his *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poëma pertinentibus*, after defining poetics as the “the body of rules to which a poem conforms”, Baumgarten claims that the science of poetics is called “philosophy of poetry”. Since a poem is a perfect sensitive discourse, philosophy of poetry – Baumgarten concludes in § 115 – is the science that leads a sensitive discourse to perfection.

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Every sensitive discourse communicates a series of sensitive representations which have their source in the lower cognitive faculty, that is, sensibility. Hence, in order to guide a sensitive discourse, philosophy of poetry must guide the lower cognitive faculty. Actually, this task should be performed by logic in its broader sense; yet, current logic – Baumgarten complains – is concerned solely with the guide of the higher cognitive faculty (see also Baumgarten 1907: § 1). Therefore, something else is needed to perform this office. To the extent that psychology provides firm principles (see also Baumgarten 2013: § 502; Baumgarten 1750-1758, § 10), this “something else” in charge of the lower cognitive faculty may be considered as a science – the science of sensitive knowledge.

In this way, Baumgarten works out a definition for a new discipline, but not yet a name. From the former to the latter, however, is but a short step. The Greek philosophers and the Church Fathers – Baumgarten argues (Baumgarten 1954: § 116) – have already carefully distinguished between *αἰσθητά* and *νοητά*; since *αἰσθητά* do not include only things perceptible by the senses, but all that can be referred to the lower cognitive faculty, the science of sensitive knowledge can be regarded as the science of *αἰσθητά*; and the science of *αἰσθητά*, in Greek *ἐπιστήμη αἰσθητικῆ*, well deserves the name of “aesthetics”.

Since my purpose here is not to follow the evolution of the concept of aesthetics in Baumgarten’s thought, I will not focus on the different

stages of its development. Suffice it to say that the definition of aesthetics as the science of sensitive knowledge will hold true until Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750). It is on this definition that every other specification of the discipline rests; and it is with this definition that Baumgarten as well as his disciples will have to deal, in order to weigh up the significance of its innovation in the history of aesthetics.

III.

632 One of the first authors who explicitly sets himself this problem is Georg Conrad Winckelmann. Born in Neugattersleben in 1723, Winckelmann attended classes at the Latin School (1735-1738) and at the Waisenhaus (1738-1742) in Halle, before becoming an inspector at the Latin and German School (1743), and eventually a preceptor at Halle's Pädagogium (1747). His experience in these institutions was crucial for his appointment as co-rector (1750), and then as rector (1751), of the city school in Sorau, a post which he held until his premature death in 1753.¹ Although external to the academic world, rector Winckelmann had the possibility to take a stance on substantial scholarly issues in the traditional annual proslution of the school. In 1752, he decided to deliver a speech entitled *De aesthetica nuper inventa*, that is, "Of the newly-invented aesthetics", which seems to answer the question as to whether aesthetics is ancient or modern (Winckelmann 1752; see also Winckelmann 1754).

Winckelmann approaches the problem in a systematic way, by arguing for the duplicity of the genres of cognitive faculties of the human mind, the lower and the higher, depending on the kind of clarity (respectively, vividness and distinctness) of the representations we can know through them (Winckelmann 1752: 5-6).² If both of these faculties need to be perfected and polished, special care must be observed in the training of the inferior faculty, as it is more exposed to errors and more frequently employed. Looking back to the past, Winckelmann remarks that many efforts have been made to improve the human intellect; however, little has been done to emendate the lower faculty. Whereas in the first case

¹ See the following documents in the archive of the Franckesche Stiftungen (Halle): AFSt/S L3; AFSt/S B I 93 Album der Knabenwaisenanstalt Bl. 108, Nr. 1202; AFSt/H D24a; AFSt/S A I 194.

² Actually, the lower cognitive faculty is not a single faculty, but rather a set of faculties, whose collective name is precisely that of *analogon rationis*. As Buchenau notes, Baumgarten no longer discusses the *analogon rationis* as an empirical substitute for reason, but as its symmetrical counterpart within the human mind, see Buchenau 2013: 168-9.

philosophers have tried hard, though not always successfully, to detect the rules according to which the truth is known, whence the early birth of logic, in the second case they were unable to overpass the empirical level. They simply used to draw rules from the best works of each art. This is true in particular of the ancients (Winckelmann 1752: 6).³ Although there were many excellent orators, poets, painters and sculptors among them, their greatness depended more on their genius than on a solid knowledge of their art.

In the Modern Age, the attempts to find out new rules and to clear up the old ones – Winckelmann argues – have hugely increased, in the way it is witnessed by French and German works on beauty (Winckelmann 1752: 6-7). Once reached a critical mass, these efforts started to strive for a common bond. Differently from Batteux, however, this common bond does not concern specifically the fine arts, but all the arts pertaining to humanity.⁴ In this way, Winckelmann is able, on the one hand, to acknowledge a caesura in the history of aesthetics and, on the other hand, to ascribe it to Baumgarten's innovation.

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The novelty of aesthetics precisely consists in the identification and conceptualization of the set of principles which found the laws of beauty in a consistent way. It is on the grounds of these principles that the theorists of the different arts are then allowed to prescribe more specific rules to artists (Winckelmann 1752: 5). This goal, however, can be achieved only by gathering the noteworthy teachings on beautiful knowledge which have been delivered since antiquity, and by connecting them coherently, in much the same way as John of Damascus or Boetius gleaned Christian doctrines from different sources, in order to form a unique canon (Winckelmann 1752: 4).⁵

In sum, although aesthetics is not born fully grown as was the goddess Athena from Zeus' head, its systematic body differentiates it from its forbearers. Such a systematization had already been preconized by Georg

3 This aspect, as we shall see below, corresponds to the "ars erudita" in Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*.

4 On the relationship between rising aesthetics and humanities, see Hernández Marcos 2003: 81-121.

5 It is most likely that Winckelmann is here commenting on a passage of Meier 1748-1750: I, § 6: "Wer die philosophische Historie versteht, dem kan nicht unbekant seyn, daß jederzeit die Ausübung einer Wissenschaft das erste ist, welches von derselben bekant wird. Alsdenn finden sich geschickte Köpfe, welche diese und jene einzeln Stücke der Theorie nach und nach erfinden, bis endlich ein systematischer Kopf die zerstreuten Glieder samlet, und eine eigene und besondere Wissenschaft aus denselben bildet."

Bernhard Bilfinger (Winckelmann 1752: 7), who had advanced the hypothesis of an “organon” for the lower faculties similar to the one conceived by Aristotle for the intellect. While, though, Bilfinger did not go beyond a mere announcement (Bilfinger 1725, § 268), Baumgarten – in Winckelmann’s eyes – finally took on the charge to elaborate the organic philosophy of sensibility under the name of aesthetics. In directing the inferior faculties, that is, the *analogon rationis*, aesthetics proves to be a peculiar logic applying to all the activities with a common ground in sensitive knowledge. By means of this logic, sensitive knowledge is not only preserved from further errors and deviations, but also emended and developed, until attaining its utmost perfection which is beauty (Winckelmann 1752: 7-8).

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It is through this dimension that aesthetics manages to satisfy the need for unity which critics and philosophers have been experiencing for ages. This is the ultimate reason why aesthetics, according to Winckelmann, must be considered as a modern discipline and cannot be confused with poetics and rhetoric, in the way its detractors allege (Winckelmann 1752: 8). Such a conclusion justifies the triumphal opening of the dissertation: “Our age has witnessed a widening of the borders of the learned world, in that the science of humanities, which the guardians of arts have left completely uncultivated and abandoned so far, begins not only to be diligently cultivated, but also to be endowed with foundations on which it seems that a new building can be erected safely” (Winckelmann 1752: 3).

Seen from this standpoint, the title of Georg Andreas Will’s dissertation, *De aethetica veterum*, should appear as a non-sense. If aesthetics has just been invented (*nuper inventa*), as Winckelmann’s prolusion reads, something like an *aethetica veterum*, that is, an aesthetics of the ancients, in the strict sense of the term, cannot exist. Yet, their juxtaposition is far from being useless or meaningless. Rather, it is precisely from the comparison between these two poles-apart views that a better understanding of the point at issue can be achieved.

IV.

Will was born in Obermichelbach in 1727 into a learned family with illustrious forefathers.⁶ He studied at the university of Altdorf under the aegis of Johann Wilhelm Schaubert, who introduced him to Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica* (1739¹; 1743²) in 1744. Will then moved to Halle, where

6 These biographical data can be found in Kiefhaber 1799.

he attended Meier's classes, and started to lecture on Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* and Wolff's ethics. After a brief stay in Leipzig, Will settled in Altdorf in 1748, where he taught at the local university until his death (1798). Although in his maturity Will became a renowned historian, his commitment to philosophy and humanities never faded. In this field, his philosophical North Star, as for Winckelmann, was Baumgarten.⁷ It is not surprising then that Will decided to consecrate his prolusion for his installation as extraordinary Professor in Altdorf to the discipline inaugurated by his master. What could at first shock is the attempt to inquire into the aesthetics of the ancients, thereby seemingly downplaying Baumgarten's innovation. Yet, Will never ceased to regard himself as a loyal follower of Baumgarten. As he wrote shortly before his death: "At my age I still consider Baumgarten as the deepest and most rigorous philosopher, no offense to Kant" (Kiefhaber 1799: 37). The title of the prolusion, solemnly delivered at the Alma Noricorum Altorphina on 9 December 1755, should therefore not be immediately understood as a provocation, but rather as a different way to sound out the theoretical potentialities lying latent in Baumgarten's philosophy.

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Odd as it may be, Will begins his discourse with a praise for his own age, the reason of the praise being the number of new philosophical disciplines invented for humankind's sake (Will 1756a [1-4]).⁸ His long list of examples includes among other things cosmology, the science of the world and of created things, which was introduced by Wolff as a part of metaphysics, and general hermeneutics, whose inventor Georg Friedrich Meier had been Will's teacher at the University of Halle (Will 1756a: [3-4]). In the program of lectures announced on the day before this prolusion, Will himself had presented a new branch of philosophy, transcendental physics, a science committed to the nature of all things, both theoretical and practical (Will 1756b). What Will now aims to do through the survey of the latest innovations in the philosophical field is to exalt the merits of the moderns against any short-sighted critique. The core of the argument lies in the thesis that also the eighteenth century is indeed a golden age for philosophy. To this golden age – Will states – contributes greatly also the recent emergence of aesthetics.

⁷ See the *Praefatiuncula* in Will 1756c: 7, where Will praises Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*. Besides, Piselli reports the presence of the following manuscript in the Universitätsbibliothek München: Georg A. Will, *Comentariolus in Metaphysicam Baumgartenii*, see Piselli 1989: 259-60.

⁸ The dissertation does not have page numbers. In square parentheses, I give the corresponding page number, where p. [1] is the first page of the *Oratio*.

After congratulating Baumgarten and Meier for their efforts, though, Will reminds that it is very difficult in general to say something that has not been said yet. This, one may guess, is the case of aesthetics (Will 1756a: [4]). In order to show that this observation is not intended to debase the moderns' achievements, Will goes over the various stages of the "invention": Baumgarten's *Meditationes* (1735), where he originally set out the idea of a science of sensitive knowledge; the first public course of aesthetics held by Baumgarten in Frankfurt on the Oder (1742); and eventually the publication of Meier's *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften* (in three volumes, 1748-1750) and Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750). The conclusion drawn by Will is that the undertaking of this "duumvirate" is unequivocally modern; but this does not imply that aesthetics is modern as well (Will 1756a: [6-7]).

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To prove this, Will delves into the etymology of the term "aesthetics", and then focuses on the thing itself. As for the first point, Will maintains that the term "aesthetics" derives from the Greek verb αἰσθῶ⁹ or αἰσθάνομαι, a term with a double meaning since antiquity (Will 1756a: [8-9]). On the one hand, it usually means *sentio*, to feel; on the other hand, it can be also rendered with *scio*, to know. The aesthetic science has a link with both of these meanings: insofar as it guides the sensitive faculty, it takes its name from *sentio*; insofar as it is a science, it takes its name from *scio*.

As already claimed by Baumgarten, Will remarks the fact that also the ancients carefully distinguished between αἰσθητά and νοητά. While νοητά are the objects of logic, which guides the νοῦς, αἰσθητά include both things of sense and things currently removed from sense, that is, *phantasmata*. In the attempt to trace back the origin of the noun "aesthetics", Will cites Galen, in which the very term αἰσθητική occurs in the phrase αἰσθητικὴ δύναμις (Will 1756a: [9-10]). Now, Will argues, the αἰσθητικὴ δύναμις, understood as the faculty to correctly use sensitive representations, is but the αἰσθητικὴ ἐπιστήμη taken in a subjective sense. From this point of view, the objections founded on a nominalistic basis are therefore debunked, in that things do not need to have a name to exist: the Copernican system, Will maintains, existed (and was occasionally known) well before being named after the famous Polish astronomer (Will 1756a: [10]). And yet, the name remains a crucial symptom of the thing it designates. Whereas it is not permitted to draw the

9 In this case, Will relies on the wrong etymology αἰσθῶ put forward by Meier. The mistake will be ridiculed in Gesner 17742: 219.

modernity of the thing from the modernity of the name, it is absolutely legitimate to draw the antiquity of the thing from the antiquity of the name; and since the name of aesthetics is most ancient, aesthetics itself can be undoubtedly attributed to the Greeks and the Romans.

Will, though, does not insist only on the terminological aspect. Quoting a long passage from Soner's commentary on Aristotle's metaphysics (Will 1756a: [11-2]; see Soner 1657: 41), he distills three theoretical points already present in the Stagirite's philosophy. First, the appreciation of the senses; second, their consideration as efficacious instruments to attain intellectual knowledge; and third, the possibility to learn the principles of arts and sciences by means of the senses. Now, Will remarks, these three points constitute the very pillars of Baumgarten's aesthetics (Will 1756a: [12-3]). Moreover, nobody can cast doubts on the fact that the ancients, as well as the moderns prior to Baumgarten, widely debated on the concept of beauty and set the philosophical principles of poetry (Will 1756a: [13-5]).

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Will's predictable conclusion is that aesthetics has existed since antiquity also in this sense (Will 1756a: [16]). The big question now is to understand how it is supposed to have existed, so as to determine both the distance from Winckelmann's conception and the possible compliance with Baumgarten's assumptions.

V.

As above said, Winckelmann contends that aesthetics has been invented as a science by Baumgarten. In the first part of his proslution, Will seems to hold the very opposite opinion: aesthetics – he claims – is a science not unknown to the ancients (Will 1756a: [9]); in the second part, though, he tempers his position and adopts a more balanced view. Will still makes reference to Aristotle and credits him for founding the “aesthetic art” (*ars aesthetica*) itself, though remarking its deficiency or, at least, its incompleteness with regard to the modern achievements in this field: “As the ancients built houses made of straw, thatch-roofed huts, and small shacks on the same ground and basis as that on which we erect palaces supplied with all kinds of things, possessing plastered columns, courtyards, women's apartments, adjoining bedrooms, and suchlike appurtenances, so did the Stagirite leader found and erect aesthetics, while we have given it a beautiful form, appearance and look” (Will 1756a: [12-3]). In sum, provided that Aristotle is the real founder of the discipline, in his age aesthetics was an art *in statu nascendi* and resembled primitive peoples' ramshackle dwellings, which still need to

be rendered safer and more solid. And yet, even if it was unstable as a science, it was nonetheless flourishing.

Admittedly, the production of the first masterpieces of an art always precedes the establishment of the rules of that art;¹⁰ the same must hold for aesthetics. Will argues: “From the eternal chronicles of arts and philosophy, we learn that the practice and exercise of any discipline always precedes the moment in which it is reduced to the form of an art and a science. The orator, the poet, the musician, and the painter trained themselves and gained an immortal fame to their name and works before posterity has been concerned with the rules of oratorical, poetical, musical, and pictorial arts as well as with their bond. Moses existed before rhetoric, Homer before poetics, Plato before logic, and certainly the aesthetician before Baumgarten” (Will 1756a: [16]).

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Who is this aesthetician? How should we understand aesthetics at a time when its discipline was only roughly sketched? In what did it consist? Will immediately explains that “the natural degree of the lower cognitive faculties, developed only by its use without the disciplinary doctrine, is called Natural Aesthetics and is something most ancient” (Will 1756a: [16]). Aesthetics – we may argue – was flourishing among the ancients as natural aesthetics.

That natural aesthetics is something most ancient, though, is not rejected by Winckelmann himself, who writes: “It is well-known that a not small part of the things pertaining to the beauty of knowledge were invented many centuries ago and put into practice for human life’s sake with great success; however, nobody before the one I have mentioned, namely Baumgarten, had thought to collect them and reduce them to the form of an art” (Winckelmann 1752: 4). From this point of view, the differences between Will and Winckelmann are almost smoothed out, since the two authors seem to embrace the same basic thesis. Both of them agree that natural aesthetics dates back to the mists of antiquity, whereas scientific aesthetics, at least in its strictest sense, is a recent achievement. What distinguishes their positions is the different emphasis they put on these premises, and consequently the different conclusions they draw from them with regard to the history of aesthetics.

Such conclusions are strongly biased by the meaning of aesthetics considered as more prominent. In Will’s view, the identity of aesthetics is

10 The same thesis, as we shall see, is held by Baumgarten himself, who distinguishes between *archetypa* and *ectypa* of erudite arts, see below.

already posed in its foundations, whence its antiquity; in Winckelmann's view, instead, it is the completion of its building that ratifies its existence, whence its modernity. In sum, while according to Winckelmann the absence of an aesthetic system implies the absence of a full-fledged aesthetics, Will purports that the systematization of aesthetics does not belong to its essence, so that aesthetics can be considered at least as two millennia old. Baumgarten's role, in this sense, is not to give birth to something still *in nuce*, but – as Will summarizes with an apt metaphor – to rejuvenate an aged woman (*vetula*) and give her the look of a young girl (*puella*) (Will 1756a: [8]). As we shall see in what follows, both of these conceptions have their own reasons and find their rationale in Baumgarten's philosophy, to which we now turn.

VI.

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At the beginning of his *Lectures on aesthetics*,¹¹ Baumgarten clearly explains the duplicity of the term: “Aesthetics as a science is still new; to be sure, rules for thinking finely have been repeatedly given, but hitherto the whole body of all rules had not been brought into a systematic order in the form of a science; consequently, also this name can be widely unknown” (Baumgarten 1907: § 1). Shortly after, he returns to the same concept: “This science and the body of its truths is not so new as if nobody had never thought finely before. No, we had practical aestheticians before there were rules for aesthetics and before these rules were reduced to the form of a science” (Baumgarten 1907: § 1; see also Meier 1748-1750: I, § 6). What does Baumgarten mean by this “aesthetics before aesthetics”?

To answer this question, Baumgarten exposes to his students what he considers as an introduction – the first introduction, indeed – to the history of aesthetics.¹² More than a real history of aesthetics, though, Baumgarten gives a brief survey of the whole history of philosophy *sub specie aethetica*. His aim is to demonstrate that also the greatest “champions”

11 Baumgarten's lectures on aesthetics actually derive from the notes taken by one of his students probably in 1750-1751, see Poppe 1907: 62-3.

12 The insightful volume by Salvatore Tedesco (Tedesco 2000) has, among other things, the merit to examine the relationship between Baumgarten's conception of the history of aesthetics and its own aesthetic science in the light of the Wolffian dichotomy between historical and philosophical knowledge (Tedesco 2000: 31ff). Our inquiry into Baumgarten's texts sets out precisely from Tedesco's claim that the historical reconstruction is totally subordinated to the theoretical project (35). For this reason, the value of the history sketched by Baumgarten is to be sought in its theoretical meaning, rather than in its historiographical dimension.

of distinct knowledge have not neglected sensibility, so that they can be viewed as practical aestheticians.

640 Following the periodization of the history of philosophy employed by Johann Franz Buddeus, whose textbook he had already used for his lectures as soon as 1738-1739,¹³ and by Johann Jacob Brucker in his *Historia critica philosophiae* (1742-1744), Baumgarten claims that the deepest philosophical minds have always made use of sensitive knowledge and exposition, with the sole regrettable exception of the medieval Schoolmen. Without approaching the problem theoretically, even the learned barbarians such as the ancient Egyptians, who used to express themselves through hieroglyphics, or the Celts, whose Druids presented their knowledge in the form of poems, actively cultivated the lower cognitive faculties. The same can be said of Greek and Roman cultures, not only in their inception, but also in their most important thinkers like Plato, whose dialectics was not exempted from sensitive knowledge, or Cicero, more esteemed as an aesthetician than as a philosopher. After the obscure medieval period, the only age during which the figure of the aesthetician was ignored, if not overtly condemned, Baumgarten grapples with the moderns, among whom the very harbinger of distinct knowledge, Descartes, did not despise beautiful knowledge (Baumgarten 1907: 1907: § 1).¹⁴

Beside practical aesthetics, Baumgarten hints at two other modes of the presence of aesthetics in previous history. On the one hand, he mentions what we could conceive of as a history of poetics in its broadest sense, that is, “all the history of painters, sculptors, musicians, poets, and orators, because all these parts have their general rules in aesthetics” (Baumgarten 1907: § 1; Tedesco 2000: 34).¹⁵ On the other hand, Baumgarten lists some philosophical works which are not necessarily “beautiful” as are Descartes’s physics and Leibniz’s *Essays on theodicy*, but tackle some relevant issues of the theory of beauty. These works, among which Baumgarten cites for example Crousaz’s *Traité du beau* and König’s *Abhandlung vom Geschmack*, treat beauty in general terms, but do not exhaust the problem, because they lack demonstrative certainty.

13 See “Wöchentliche Hallische Anzeigen”, April 1738, col. 250.

14 Beside Descartes, Baumgarten mentions Leibniz, Wolff, and Bilfinger. This latter, as above noted, provided valuable input to Baumgarten for the concept of an “organon” of the lower faculties. More surprising is the mention of Wolff, who admittedly did not love much aesthetics. Shortly before his death, he even defined Baumgarten’s (and Meier’s) aesthetics as a “paltry thing” (*elendes Zeug*), see J.K.K. Oelrichs 1782: 62.

15 Also this history belongs in a sense to practical aesthetics, see below.

All in all, Baumgarten indicates three pre-scientific domains of aesthetics: the beautiful knowledge and expression embedded within philosophical works; poetics (of different arts and genres); and the philosophical reflection on beauty and taste. Hence, Baumgarten does not claim to have invented *sic et simpliciter* aesthetics simply because he has coined its name.¹⁶ Nor does he assert to have invented artificial aesthetics as such. Poetics on the applicative side and the attempts, albeit tentative, to generalize the rules of beauty on the theoretical side, are tokens of artificial aesthetics, imperfect as it may have been, well before Baumgarten.¹⁷

That on which Baumgarten thinks he has a paternity right is the aesthetic science. According to Baumgarten, science is “*cognitio certa ex certis*” (Baumgarten 1761: § 2; Baumgarten 1770: § 31). In order for the aesthetic art to be promoted to the rank of aesthetic science, it is necessary to found it on sound principles, so that it may be subject to demonstration (Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 70-1). These firm principles, as above seen, are provided in particular by empirical psychology, which explores the foundations of sensibility, connecting them with the whole metaphysical system. Consequently, at the end of his excursus on the history of aesthetics, Baumgarten can triumphantly conclude that “we know aesthetics in the form of a science” (Baumgarten 1907: § 1) in a way that was not possible before. As a science of sensitive knowledge, aesthetics is therefore entitled to become the “organon” of the lower cognitive faculties that Bilfinger had only dreamt of, without being able to achieve it. Thus, aesthetics is eventually bestowed the title of “instrumental philosophy”, breaking the relation of synonymy between logic and *philosophia instrumentalis* (Baumgarten 1907: § 1).¹⁸ Such is Baumgarten’s main source of pride in his reconstruction of the genesis of aesthetics.

In this way, the turning point of the history of aesthetics is put down to a systematic dichotomy (roughly, the opposition between pre-scientific

16 As evident from Baumgarten’s examples, sensitive knowledge precedes the rising of distinct representations not only from a systematic, but also from a historical point of view. Regrettably, we cannot analyze here Herder’s considerations on this point.

17 Whereas poetics has existed since antiquity, the generalization necessary for the rising of the aesthetic art (Baumgarten 1907: § 70) seems to be a modern prerogative (“Bouhours, Crousaz in his *Traité du beau*, the *Discourse der Mahler*, the *Abhandlung vom Geschmack* deal with many general things on beauty”, Baumgarten 1907: § 1). If therefore the aesthetic art does not designate only its highest accomplishment, it is possible to apply the term, at least in an inchoative form, also to these philosophers’ achievements.

18 Baumgarten returns several times to this notion in his works, but we cannot dwell on that here. In any case, see at least the classic volume Franke 1972: 15-36.

and scientific aesthetics). But how shall we understand the discrepancy between these two kinds of aesthetics? What is the systematic difference underlying this historical caesura? In sum, what is the relationship between the system and the history of aesthetics?

VII.

642 The whole system of aesthetics, as Baumgarten presents it in the first paragraphs of his *Aesthetica*, is featured by three seminal distinctions drawn from logic (Baumgarten 1761: §§ 9-14), the elder sister of aesthetics (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 13).¹⁹ The fundamental subdivision is that between natural and artificial aesthetics. Natural aesthetics deals with the “natural degree of the lower cognitive faculties, as developed only by its use without disciplinary knowledge (*citra disciplinalem culturam*)” (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 2),²⁰ and bifurcates into two: connatal aesthetics and acquired natural aesthetics. The former encompasses the lower cognitive and appetitive faculties without excluding the superior faculties; the latter is divided in turn into a theoretical and a practical part. Theoretical acquired natural aesthetics is concerned with the perfected theory, obtained exclusively through experience, of the elements that influence the contents and the form of beautiful knowledge (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 62), whereas practical acquired natural aesthetics consists in the habit of fine thinking, acquired through free aesthetic exercises, in particular improvisations.²¹

Artificial aesthetics divides into a theoretical and a practical part as well. Although also in this case the theoretical dimension points to an aesthetic theory about the objects and the form of beautiful knowledge, its status is now explicitly disciplinary (*disciplina aesthetica*). The disciplinary theory of the objects of beautiful knowledge concerns the regions of the learned world able to nourish a *pulcra eruditio* (Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 63ff; Baumgarten 1907: §§ 63ff), while the disciplinary theory of the form of beautiful knowledge regards its rules (*ars aesthetica*) (Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 68ff; Baumgarten 1907: §§ 68ff). To the extent that these rules, demonstratively proven and methodically ordered (Baumgarten

19 As stated in Baumgarten 1907: § 13, logic can be considered the elder sister of aesthetics only from a theoretical point of view. From a practical point of view, instead, the relationship is reversed. See above note 16. On this sororal relationship, see Franke 1972: 26-30.

20 As is evident, Will's above-quoted definition of natural aesthetics is taken almost verbatim from here.

21 We will return to this below.

1750-1758: § 70), emanate from the first principles of beauty and radiate their effects to all the singular liberal arts, the aesthetic art attains the status of an outright science (Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 71ff; Baumgarten 1907: §§ 71ff).²² Finally, as for practical artificial aesthetics, Baumgarten never addressed the problem directly, because of the illness that prevented him from finishing the *Aesthetica*. In any case, Baumgarten would have probably treated in this section the particular rules whereby the general principles of beautiful knowledge are applied to the different arts and literary genres.²³

From this cursory summary, it is possible to conclude that the most basic distinction in Baumgarten's aesthetics opposes natural and artificial aesthetics, as a consequence of the general opposition between nature and culture. How is this gap to be bridged? Recalling Luhmann's thesis, Anthony Krupp argues in an excellent essay that the impasse of a paradox can be escaped by temporalizing its terms.²⁴ This is true also of Baumgarten. The categories that the glacial gaze of the system tends to freeze into simultaneous and apparently irreducible dichotomies may be narrated as different moments of the same sequence. Yet, a plot is needed in order for the sequence to be made plausible. To this aim, Baumgarten introduces the figure of the "felix aestheticus", to whose character he devotes Sections 2 to 7 of his *Aesthetica*.²⁵ At the end of the first section of his lectures on aesthetics, Baumgarten explains that the successful aesthetician's character is but the collection of his essential parts (Baumgarten 1907: § 27). If this collection conveys the idea of a juxtaposition, the corresponding paragraph of the *Aesthetica* points to the fact that the analysis of the "pulchre cogitaturus" must begin with its genesis, in particular with its natural bases. In this way, the synchronic juxtaposition

22 The exercises that put into practice scientific knowledge are more rigorous, see for example Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 62; 68. We cannot go into further detail with regard to this classification here. For the difference between art and aesthetic science, see Tedesco 2000: 35ff.

23 Practical aesthetics as such includes any expression of fine thinking, see Baumgarten 1907: § 2; in contrast, practical artificial aesthetics serves as a sort of middle term between aesthetic theory and beautiful knowledge, insofar as it deals with the specific rules of the single arts, see Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 13. See also Meier 1748-1750: III, § 736.

24 Krupp 2006: 525. The essay is a reworking of a chapter of his doctoral thesis: Krupp 2000: 25-45. See also his more comprehensive work on the history of childhood in late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Krupp 2009. I am greatly indebted to Krupp's challenging approach to the first sections of Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*. See also the interesting essay Zirfas 2014: 132-6.

25 Also Sections 5; 6, and 7 of the *Aesthetica* deal with the *felix aestheticus*, but not from a developmental perspective.

is turned into a diachronic narrative, whose plot, as in a *Bildungsroman*, consists in the process of self-cultivation of the *felix aestheticus* up to his adulthood.²⁶ From this standpoint, the *felix aestheticus* embodies not only, as widely acknowledged, the aesthetic prototype of the “whole man”,²⁷ but also the “storification” of the system under the disguise of a “*fictio personae*”.

VIII.

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As rightly indicated by Krupp, it is possible to distinguish several stages in the individual’s development (see Krupp 2000: 41).²⁸ The first stage consists in a mere natural propensity for thinking finely. This propensity constitutes the “*aesthetica naturalis connata*” (Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 28-46), which can be attributed already to the neonate that still lacks an experience of the world. A reference to culture, though, is not absent even in this stage, inasmuch as the enumeration of the lower cognitive faculties “suggests a gradual unfolding of the successful aesthetician’s nature in the direction of culture” (Krupp 2006: 529).²⁹ This unfolding requires first of all an early training of the natural talents, lest these decrease and decay (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 51).

To explain this training, Baumgarten explicitly hints at the infant, whose education draws both on the virtuous examples provided by the teacher and on the first involuntary exercises (improvisations; *αὐτοσχεδιάσματα*), deriving from the expectation of similar cases and from an almost inborn capacity of imitation (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 54). Through these exercises, the infant learns to master his own faculties and gradually prepares for more complex tasks, which are typical of childhood.³⁰ Baumgarten attaches great importance to children’s games and first indiscriminate readings, in that they stimulate the spirit of discovery and engagement

26 For another strategy adopted by Baumgarten to minimize the leap between nature and culture, see Krupp 2006: 528.

27 See the studies cited in Adler 1990: 47, note 342. See also Groß 2001; Borchers, 2011: 136ff.

28 While Krupp distinguishes four phases, the model I propose, usually rather convergent with Krupp’s, distinguishes five phases, provided, of course, that the stages in a continuous process have only an indicative value.

29 For a discussion of the various faculties in this respect, see Krupp 2006: 529-30.

30 Differently from Krupp (Krupp 2000: 41), I treat childhood as a phase distinct both from infancy and from adolescence, in order to account for the specificity of its heuristic exercises. Moreover, such a subdivision enables to better understand the elective affinity between the child’s inventive mind and its equivalent on a “phylogenetic” level; see below. In this sense, natural acquired aesthetics includes both the stage of infancy and the stage of childhood.

which are of the utmost value for a beautiful mind.³¹ Improvisations are here no longer totally extemporaneous, but rather heuristic, insofar as they require a certain autonomy of invention,³² and therefore the ability – as Baumgarten says with Horace’s words – of swimming without a cork.³³

In the following phase, the child, by now an adolescent, performs more rigorous exercises with the aid of the “erudite art” (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 58). Although Baumgarten does not specify its meaning, it is likely that the “ars erudita” simply designates the theory of each art, in particular of each liberal art, thus including the body of rules necessary to achieve a good work of that art.³⁴ In this sense, the reference to the *artes eruditae* already leads to a disciplinary dimension, even if not immediately to the aesthetic discipline in the strict sense of the term, which will mark the entrance into adulthood. Only when the adolescent acquires an ordered *pulcra eruditio* and understands the principles of the various liberal arts in their dependence on a common “ars erudita” called “ars aethetica,”³⁵ he will finally come of age and become a full-grown aesthetician.³⁶ This transition phase (from the *artes eruditae* to the *ars aethetica*; from youth to adulthood) will be entirely completed when the young man gains a “methodic and adult” experience of the aesthetic culture (Baumgarten

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31 This engagement is in sharp contrast with the attitude of the adult who often limits himself to a detached and superficial appreciation of works of art, see Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 56.

32 See Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 57 and Baumgarten 1907: § 57. As rightly remarked by Krupp (Krupp 2006: 534), this autonomy of invention is the fruit of the interaction between children’s spontaneity and adults’ correction, since “the modern individual is always described as having an educator”. In contrast, the ancients had only Nature as a teacher.

33 Horace, *Sermones*, I, 4, 120.

34 I do not believe that Baumgarten designates a peculiar kind of exercises by the term “ars erudita”, as Krupp contends (Krupp 2000: 41-2). On the contrary, I think that the *ars erudita* is the theoretical presupposition which justifies a peculiar kind of exercises (that is, exercises which are more rigorous and correct than improvisations). In this sense, the *artes eruditae* possess both a theoretical and an applicative dimension, thereby encompassing the domain of poetics. I agree with Krupp’s emendation of *Aesthetica*, § 58, see Krupp 2000: 41, in note.

35 From what we have said in the previous note, it is possible to argue that it is within the domain of the *artes eruditae* that the *ars aethetica* can rise through a process of generalization of their principles.

36 As suggested in note 34, the rigor of the rules is directly proportional to the rigor of the exercises they dictate. One may say that the successful aesthetician’s coming of age is made possible by his gradual self-disciplining, embracing both the disciplining of knowledge into an aesthetic “discipline” and the disciplining of his natural body, which turns the vagueness of the improvisations into the determinateness of strictly defined exercises (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 62). For this aspect, Menke is surely right to claim with Foucault that the disciplining fulfills itself as subjectification, see Menke 2014: 235.

1750-1758: § 66) and is able to demonstrate the rules of the aesthetic art, thus attaining the scientific level of knowledge.³⁷ In this way, the different systematic categories *become* the stages of the successful aesthetician's formation, and can therefore be chronologically ordered.

However, according to Baumgarten the passage from nature to culture does not occur only in the individual. If we return to the historical sketch presented by Baumgarten and his followers Will and Winckelmann, the "aesthetica citra disciplinam" of the ancients is not simply something opposite to, but something prior to scientific aesthetics.³⁸ Similarly, in his reply to the objection that aesthetics is at best an art, but surely not a science, Baumgarten claims that there is no irreconcilable fracture between them, but rather a distance which can be covered by a historical development.³⁹ This amounts to arguing, though, that the individual's unfolding is not the only device to temporalize the nature/culture dichotomy. In other terms, the storification of the system can also take the shape of a history, in particular of a history of aesthetics. If this is true, it does not seem hazardous to see in the process of individual maturation the blueprint for the historical development of aesthetics itself, with the difference that the place of the neonate is taken by the rude and primitive man,⁴⁰ who must follow a similar process of self-cultivation.⁴¹ In this sense, the first exercises of the infant driven by the instinct of imitation aristotelically correspond to the auroral improvisations which originally brought poetry into being (Krupp 2006: 524-5), as Baumgarten exemplifies with the rough Saturnian meter employed by the inhabitants of archaic Latium (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 52).⁴²

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37 We cannot even mention these rules here. We can only say that the theoretical aesthetics should have been divided into three parts: heuristics; methodology and semiotics, see Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 13.

38 In this sense, the "citra" assumes a temporal nuance.

39 Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 10. In Baumgarten 1907: § 10, however, Baumgarten specifies that aesthetics may still be considered an art in a sense. The aesthetic science is different from the aesthetic art solely in relation to the level of certainty of the rules presented (certain rules for science; uncertain rules for art). Yet, the aesthetic science continues to be an (erudite) art in the sense that it is a collection of rules to perfect something. It is for this reason that the logic science itself is usually defined as an *ars cogitandi*.

40 Like the neonate, also the rude man is not explicitly outlined in these passages, but his presence is arguable *ex negativo* from the subsequent phases as well as from some allusions to the rudeness of the uncultivated mind, see Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 51; 53.

41 Krupp interprets this parallel as a sort of recapitulationism, which Baumgarten probably borrowed from Aristotle's *Poetics*, see Krupp 2000: 39; Krupp 2006: 532. In his analysis, though, Krupp considers at length only two stages of this "phylogenetic" development (*archetypa* vs. *ectypa*, see Krupp 2000: 44), and does not explicitly discuss their possible consequences for the history of aesthetics as a whole.

42 The passage makes reference to Horace, *Epistulae*, II, 1, 139ff.

While during infancy exercises are still rudimental, in childhood improvisations assume, as stated above, a new heuristic meaning. The playful inventions of the child (Baumgarten 1750-1758: §§ 55 and 57; Baumgarten 1907: § 57) thus find an equivalent in the “inerudite” minds of Homer and Pindar (Baumgarten 1750-1758: § 53), whose works are neither rude nor examples (*ectypa*) of an “erudite art”, but rather serve as archetypes (*archetypa*) for subsequent poetry, precisely in the heuristic sense that they invent a not-yet-existing genre (respectively, heroic poem and heroic ode) (Baumgarten 1907: § 53). The archetypes of poetry and, in general, of each liberal art, presuppose, as archetypes, a following phase, corresponding to youth, in which rules are drawn from these masterpieces to the advantage of future artists.⁴³ We may suppose that the phase of youth includes also the first attempts to generalize the rules of beauty into a still imperfect aesthetic art.⁴⁴ The theoretical maturity of aesthetics is eventually reached with the reduction of the aesthetic art to the form of a science – a theoretical operation that Baumgarten claims for himself.

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From this point of view, the “tensions” of the self-disciplining process experienced by the adolescent *felix aestheticus* in his passage into adulthood are the same tensions experienced by modern aesthetics in its becoming a science. In this case, though, the image that best suits Baumgarten’s aesthetics from his own perspective is not a birth nor a rejuvenation, but rather a coming of age. In the image of the coming of age concur together the continuity with the past and the novelty of a second beginning, which reflect the amphibious nature of the origin of aesthetics. The reason of this ambiguity is now apparent.

At first glance, it is all too clear that the coming of age presupposes a growth, i.e., a previous tradition devoted to train and theorize sensitive knowledge, which can be dated back to the ancients. If we ask what lies at the origins of this growth, the answer cannot but be nature, specifically human nature, which endows us with faculties capable of sensitive knowledge along with the first impulse to perfect this knowledge, namely the instinct of imitation.

43 As above seen, this passage will be discussed both by Winckelmann and by Will; according to Meier, the gradual invention of the single parts of the aesthetic theory is the middle term between the mere practice of aesthetics and its systematic elaboration, see Meier 1748-1750: I, § 6.

44 The possible pioneers of the aesthetic art mentioned in Baumgarten 1907: § 1 are Bohours, Crousaz, König, and the Swiss critics; see also Meier 1748-1750: I, § 6. As above noted, Will considers Aristotle as the founder of the “ars aethetica”.

However, there is a second aspect to be taken into account. As we have said, the aesthetic science was invented by Baumgarten. Indeed, his own *Aesthetica*, together with Meier's *Anfangsgründe*, can be considered as the first examples of this science. Yet, by inserting the narration of the successful aesthetician's maturation into his *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten treats the aesthetic science as a single stage of a wider process. What is the status of the other stages? Do they belong to the aesthetic science, in that they are part of the *Aesthetica*, which is the aesthetic science *par excellence*? Or do they not, in that they precede the phase of science? The truth is in the middle.

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The fact is that the *Bildungsroman* of the *felix aestheticus*, and of aesthetics *tout court*, has not an omniscient or a neutral narrator as one might expect, but an internal and "interested" one. More precisely, the narrator is the *felix aestheticus* himself, who, once come of age, reconstructs his own identity in view of what he has become, that is to say, through the scientific values in which he recognizes himself now. It is such a narration that informs the guidelines of Baumgarten's empirical history of aesthetics and gives its three ambits a theoretical justification and a systematic location.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the developmental stages that precede the aesthetic science are not a mere empirical preamble to the systematic tractation of the criteria of perfection of sensitive knowledge, as if this were the only actual scientific core of the project, but rather the genetic unfolding of the science itself.

In this perspective, it seems legitimate to conclude that the history of aesthetics is the history of the aesthetic science in the double sense of the genitive. The aesthetic science, in fact, is not present in the narration solely as an explicit theoretical object, but also, more pervasively, as the organizing principle that governs the succession of the various phases towards its own incarnation in that history. In sum, the aesthetic science serves as the intradiegetic τέλος of the narration insofar as it is its ἀρχή.

If, therefore, scientific aesthetics finds its own objectual ground in natural aesthetics, natural (and, in general, pre-scientific) aesthetics finds in

45 The first ambit, that is, the presence of beautiful knowledge throughout the whole history of philosophy clearly depends on its rooting in nature, which has enabled even the most ancient peoples to think finely. The second domain of pre-scientific aesthetics cited by Baumgarten, that is poetics, can be viewed as an example of the "ars erudite", which belongs to the systematic age of youth; lastly, the philosophical reflection on beauty in general is a form of aesthetic art, an art that manages to acquire a scientific status only with Baumgarten's philosophy.

turn its conceptual ground within the aesthetic science.⁴⁶ It is the possibility to interpret differently this duplicity that could explain the ultimate reason of the difference between Will's and Winckelmann's conceptions, but also of their complementarity. In Baumgarten's eyes, in fact, aesthetics has its origin both in nature and in science, so that the best solution to the problem of its genesis consists precisely in alluding to their indissoluble relationship.

In this sense, Baumgarten's approach does not limit itself to giving a one-sided answer to the question as to whether aesthetics is ancient or modern, but proposes a theoretical framework which permits to account for the legitimacy of the two positions, albeit on different levels. Neither "res antiquissima" nor "res nuper inventa", but rather "res nov-antiqua": such is the "bistable image" of aesthetics suggested by Baumgarten, an image, which, far from being outdated or no longer relevant, seems still able to provide considerable food for thought to the current debate.

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46 We could say that a substantial novelty of the aesthetic science consists precisely in its looking at the past in aesthetic terms. It is not simply a nominalistic issue, but a conceptual one, insofar as only the "storification" of a coherent system could enable to assume the necessary continuity of its object through time, and thereby to open up the possibility of a history, whose internal articulations do not jeopardize the underlying aesthetic identity. In other words, Baumgarten's aesthetics manages to reach the critical mass of aesthetic theory necessary to consider the previous non-systematic aesthetic attempts as part of a specifically aesthetic history. This could be a further, scarcely considered, consequence of the elevation of aesthetics to the degree of instrumental philosophy.

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Alesandro Nanini

Staro ili novo? Aleksander G. Baumgarten i sazrevanje estetike

Apstrakt

Cilj ovog rada je da se Baumgartenova pozicija ispita s obzirom na istoriju estetike i s obzirom na njenu ulogu u njoj. U prvom delu rada analizira se način na koji je inovacija Baumgartenove estetike prihvaćena od strane dva njegova učenika, naime, Georga Konrada Vinkelmana i Georga Andreaa Vila. Prvi od njih naglašava novinu estetike, dok je Vil, čini se, više naklonjen tome da rođenje estetike pripiše antičkim filozofima. Uprkos ovom prividnom razilaženju, moja teza je da su osnovne pozicije ova dva autora vrlo slične i da svoju potvrdu nalaze u naročitom Baumgartenovom odnosu prema ovom problemu. S obzirom na to, želim da istražim Baumgartenovu teoriju kako bi se bolje razumela njegova rekonstrukcija empirijske istorije estetike. Cilj je uočiti kako je ova empirijska istorija uklopljena unutar sistematičnije istorije koja uspostavlja njene smernice i markira njena prelomna mesta. Napokon, razmatraćemo moguće implikacije ove pozicije s obzirom na pitanje o poreklu estetike.

Ključne reči: Aleksander G. Baumgarten, poreklo estetike, istorija estetike, estetika 18. veka, nemačko prosvetiteljstvo, Georg A. Vil, Georg K. Vinkelman