

# Aesthetic Investigations

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## Critical Aesthetics. Baumgarten and the Logic of Taste

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**Abstract:** In this essay, I discuss Baumgarten's neglected doctrine of taste. In particular I investigate his definition of taste as the judgment of the senses against the backdrop of the philosophical debate of his day (Muratori, Du Bos), pointing out the biblical and classical sources of the idea of a judging *aisthesis*. In addition, I analyse the radical change that the definition of taste as the judgment of the senses brings about in the idea of both taste and the judgment of the senses with regard to Wolff. Highlighting the link with the issue of *analogon rationis* and beauty, I conclude that the concept of taste is at the core of Baumgarten's new aesthetic project.

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### I. AESTHETICS OF CRISIS, CRISIS OF AESTHETICS

At least etymologically, the relationship between aesthetics and critique boasts a long history. In *De Anima* II, 5-6, Aristotle speaks of proper sensibles as of sensibles (*aisthetà*) that act upon a single sense (*αἰσθησις*, a term also referring to a single perceptual act) and bring it into actuality. Thus, each sense judges (*krinein*) the differences in the corresponding sensible, for example sight discriminates white from black, and is not deceived about these perceptions, although it can be deceived about what the coloured object is or where it lies.<sup>1</sup> On these bases, an author like Alexander of Aphrodisias could trenchantly claim in his commentary on Aristotle's *Sense and Sensibilia* that sensation is a judgement (*ἡ αἰσθησις . . . γε κρίσις ἐστίν*), not an affection (*pathos*) (In *De Sensu*, 167, 21-22).

While the link between *aisthesis* and *krisis* had thus been established since antiquity, it is not until the eighteenth century that the link between aesthetics and critique was clearly made. It is indeed during this period that critique famously moves from the philological practice of athetesis (the expunction of spurious interpolations in a text) to the aesthetic practice of art criticism. This transition brings along an increasing investigation of taste as the power of judging in matters of art and beauty, which aims to establish the conditions of validity of this kind of judgements as well as their scope. As is well known, such a development finds one of its theoretical peaks in Kant. In his third Critique, Kant famously contends that aesthetic judgements depend on a peculiar, non-cognitive, mode of a higher power of the mind, the power of judgement, rather than on aisthesis and sensibility.

The fact that the judgement on beauty rests with a higher faculty goes hand in hand with a deep reinterpretation of the link between aisthesis and krisis. As Kant puts it in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*: ‘If we regard . . . sensations as judgements, we fall into sheer fanaticism.’<sup>2</sup> Here, the point is not that the senses cannot be trusted, because, for instance, they can be deceiving as in Descartes; indeed, for Kant the senses never err, for the simple reason that they cannot judge.<sup>3</sup> The price of the transcendental revolution is, as it were, the stultification of the senses, which are considered as merely receptive. Rather paradoxically, precisely in the *Zeitalter der Kritik* (Cassirer), when aesthetics and criticism converge, *aisthesis* and *krisis* seem to part ways. The link between the two pairs of terms thus seems to be only etymological.

The thesis that the relationship between aesthetics and critique may rest upon the link between *aisthesis* and *krisis* is all but a logical absurdity in the eighteenth century, however. In the present article, I argue that in truth this very thesis had been a characterising feature of aesthetics in its philosophical foundation promoted by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762). My goal here is thus to reconstruct Baumgarten’s theory of taste, which scholarship has hitherto widely neglected.<sup>4</sup> In this way, I intend to shed new light upon Baumgarten’s connection between judging *aisthesis*, hence perceptual judgement, and judging (or ‘critical’) aesthetics, hence aesthetic judgement, making a contribution to a better understanding of aesthetics as the science of sensible knowledge, both in its remote roots and in the intersections with the philosophy of its age. If it is at least partially true that the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* is a reply to Baumgarten just as the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a reply to Hume, my essay could finally help to assess better the consistency and scope of the ‘aesthetic’ project rejected by Kant, which the crisis of modern aesthetics has brought back to the center of scholarly debate.<sup>5</sup>

## II. CAN THE SENSES JUDGE?

Baumgarten already discusses the issue of taste in his *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (1735), at the end of which he first introduces the proposal for the new discipline of aesthetics as the science of sensibly knowing something.<sup>6</sup> Baumgarten claims in the beginning that the poem is a perfect sensible discourse, adding that the elements that can contribute to that perfection are sensible representations, their nexus, and words. In discussing the last aspect, Baumgarten assumes that the words making up a poem are articulate sounds, hence belong to the audible and elicit sensuous ideas (*ideae sensuales*).<sup>7</sup> Their perfection in this sense is the perfection of their audible sensations. The relevant judgement can therefore be pronounced only by the organ moved by the corresponding perceptions, hence by the ears. In Baumgarten's terms: 'A confused judgement about the perfection of the perceived things (*sensorum*) is called a judgement of the senses, and is ascribed to the sense organ affected by the perceived thing (*sensu*).'<sup>8</sup> In the scholium, Baumgarten adds:

It will be allowed to express in this way *le goût* of the French as applied solely to the perceived things (*sensa*). That the judgement is to be ascribed to the senses is, on the other hand, clear from this very expression of the French, from the expressions of the Jews *ta'am* and *reyach*, from the expression of the Latins *loquere ut te videam* and from the Society *del buon gusto* of the Italians, to the point that some of these ways of saying may also apply to those who speak about distinct knowledge; yet, we do not wish to deal with this issue now. It is sufficient that it is not contrary to usage to attribute a confused judgement to the senses – a judgement about the perceived things.

The purpose of the scholium is twofold. Firstly, Baumgarten intends to equate the definition provided in the main text to *le goût* of the French. This is to say that *le goût* of the French, namely taste in a broad sense, can judge, and that this judgement is confused, concerns the perfection of the perceived things, and is to be applied to the sensibles, although sometimes taste also refers to distinct knowledge in common usage. Yet, the point here is not simply to endorse a specific definition of taste discussed in the French milieu. Rather, Baumgarten is arguing that the definition he has just proposed rightfully amounts to the definition of taste in the broad sense. We shall see in the next section the momentous innovation that this inconspicuous equipollence implies with regard to Christian Wolff.

For the moment, let's consider the second aspect of the scholium, that is, Baumgarten's search for support for his thesis that the senses can judge. As is clear, this issue is in itself rather independent of the first one. One could admit that the senses judge, without thereby saying anything about taste as such. Thus, Baumgarten can mention the apothegm *loquere ut te*

*videam* (speak that I may see you) that has not much to do with taste. The Latin adagio, which actually dates back to Plato, in the spirit if not in the letter (*Charmides* 154d-155a), was made known by Apuleius (*Florida* II, 1) and Erasmus (*Apophthegmata* III, 70), asserting itself as a sort of refrain in the German Enlightenment.<sup>9</sup> While the purpose of the dictum was usually to show that the character of a person can be easily detected from the manner of speaking, Baumgarten here draws attention to the implicit judgement of the senses that this connection entails.

The thesis that the senses, and in particular the ears, could judge, was in any case not unusual. Subsequently to Aristotle, this tenet enjoyed recurrent success in different contexts, from Cicero (*De natura deorum*, 145-146; *Orator*, 150) to Augustin (*De musica*, III, 3.5), from Luther (*Tischreden*, n. 2735) to Sforza Pallavicino, who spoke of a ‘Tribunal dell’orecchio’ (tribunal of the ear).<sup>10</sup> Yet, Baumgarten here intends to use such a tenet to specifically argue that taste in a broad sense can judge, as is apparent in the other three sources cited. Two of them are contemporary with Baumgarten: the Italian society ‘del buon gusto’ and the way in which the French use the term ‘le goût’.

For the first case, it is likely that Baumgarten alludes to Lodovico Antonio Muratori’s reflections about the constitution of a literary republic in Italy in terms of a society for good taste. In his *Primi disegni della repubblica letteraria d’Italia* (1703), Muratori, under the Arcadian pseudonym of Lamindo Pritanio, had encouraged the Italian intelligentsia to found a literary republic as a national community of scholars engaged in both the humanities and the natural sciences. As is evident in his *Riflessioni sopra il buon gusto intorno le scienze e le arti* (1708), Muratori grounds this republic on the notion of ‘buon gusto’ as ‘the understanding and the power to judge that which is defective, imperfect and mediocre in the sciences and arts, so as to avoid it, and that which is better and perfect, so as to follow it with the maximum strength’.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this ‘società’ is the restoration, preservation and refinement of ‘buon gusto’.<sup>12</sup> Although ‘buon gusto’ serves as a ‘preceptor’ to the powers of the rational soul – understanding, memory and will – Muratori does not regard it as a separate faculty, but attributes it to the intellect itself in its discriminating function. Such a conception of ‘buon gusto’ could thus justify Baumgarten’s remark that taste is sometimes also applied to distinct knowledge.

More proximate to Baumgarten’s attempt to make of taste a judgement of the senses is the reference to the ‘goût’ of the French. Baumgarten may well think of Jean-Baptiste Du Bos’s well-known *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719), where sentiment acts as the deciding authority about the merit of a work of wit.<sup>13</sup> At § 23 of the second part of his treatise, Du Bos writes that the recipients judge a poem or a painting ‘by means of their sentiment and according to the impression the poem and painting arouse in them’ (305). Reason in this case can only explain the decision of sentiment; in fact, ‘it is not up to reasoning to rule on the issue. It must

submit to the judgement pronounced by sentiment, which is the competent judge' (306-307). Sentiment is here a sense without any specific organ 'that judges according to the impression perceived' (308):

This sense is the same that would judge the thing that the painter, the poet or the musician have imitated: it is the eye, when it is a painting. It is the ear when one has to judge whether the accents of a story are moving or whether they fit with the words and whether the singing is melodious (307).

Taking exception to the 'geometric critics' such as de Chambray and Terrasson, who advocated the prominent role of reason in the arts, Du Bos's conception caused quite a stir among the intellectuals of his day. In a long review of Du Bos's book, for example, Jean-Jacques Bel asks in a provocative way: 'Does the eye really judge a painting? Does the ear rule on the beauty of a sound?'<sup>14</sup>

Well aware of the ongoing controversy, Baumgarten finds a firmer support in two Hebrew terms, hence in scriptural authority. The twenty-one-year-old Baumgarten, who had already held a disputation in biblical philology in February 1735, was certainly well versed in Hebrew, to the point that he will already teach a course on the Hebrew grammar, and a course on Isaiah in the winter semester 1735/1736.<sup>15</sup>

The noun *ta'am*, taste, was widely spread in the theological debate of Baumgarten's time. As Joachim Lange, one of Baumgarten's professors in theology, puts it: '*Ta'am* does not only mean to taste with the tongue or palate, but also with the mind.'<sup>16</sup> This metaphorical extension of *ta'am* was customarily used in Halle Pietism, where Baumgarten was educated, to justify its link with the matters of faith. In particular, *ta'am* is the essential Old Testament lexical reference for the doctrine of spiritual taste, namely the sensible experience (*aisthesis*) of the divine things aroused by the Holy Spirit that is necessary to get to the core of Scripture according to the forefather of Pietism in Halle August Hermann Francke.<sup>17</sup> Baumgarten himself will evoke this theological sense mentioning an abridged version of Ps 34:9 (*gustate et videte quam bonus est dominus*) in his *Ethica philosophica* as an appeal to the reader to internally relish the perfections of God.<sup>18</sup> If therefore it was not unusual to make reference to *ta'am* in theology, Baumgarten's move extends its application in the direction of philosophy.<sup>19</sup> In its sensible judging, *ta'am* is not only the basis of spiritual taste, but can also serve as the root of aesthetic taste.<sup>20</sup>

In this picture, the occurrence of the second Hebrew term, *reyach*, smell, is only apparently less relevant. Suffice it to say that *nasus* will count in Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* as synonymous with taste.<sup>21</sup> While *reyach* could be referred to different passages linked to the judgement of the nose in the Old Testament (e.g. Job 39:25; Judg 16:9), it is likely that Baumgarten mainly thinks of Isaiah 11, where the 'aesthetic' dimension is particularly apparent.

Isaiah 11 contains the famous prophecy where the Messiah is presented as a shoot that will come up from the stump of Jesse. According to the New International Version, verse 3 of this chapter reads: ‘And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. / He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, / or decide by what he hears with his ears.’ The verb of the first line, though, is translated rather freely; a much more literal translation would be: ‘and his smelling [will be] in the fear of the Lord’, insofar as the verb *waharihov* (a *hiphil* infinitive construct with pronominal suffix) stems from *reyach*, and is halfway between a passive and an active act.<sup>22</sup>

Possible evidence as to how Baumgarten could have understood this passage can be found in his brother Siegmund Jakob, who had given a sermon precisely on Is 11:1-10 on the first day of the year 1735, just shortly before Alexander wrote his *Meditationes*. According to Siegmund J. Baumgarten’s interpretation, the Messiah will have an unerring nose (*untrieglicher Geruch*) for the good, hence a feeling or an intuitive knowledge of it. The image rests on the reliability of smelling, probably owing to its immediacy in discriminating what is pleasant and unpleasant.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, sight and hearing are linked with the judgement according to appearances and hearsay, which is typical of the ‘dysesthesia’ of the fallen humanity. In fact, our natural senses are corrupted in their judgements because of the lack of the fear of God, through which alone we can attain the senses trained to discern the good and evil (αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα [...] πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ, Hb 5:14). It is precisely the advent of the Messiah that, on the grounds of his perfect compliance with God’s will, is going to also ‘improve our capacity of perceiving and judging (*unsere Empfindungs- und Beurtheilungs-Krafft bessern*)’.<sup>24</sup>

Like *ta’am*, *reyach* too can therefore serve as a scriptural reference for legitimising the discriminating power of the senses, both in the strict and in the broad meaning. While Siegmund uses this broader acceptation to allude to the *aistheteria gegymnasmena* in a spiritual sense, however, Alexander views it as a prop for taste in an aesthetic sense.<sup>25</sup> If we take this as a hint about the way sensibility is regarded here, it is clear that it cannot be reduced to mere passivity and receptivity as in Kant, but has an undeniable epistemic value. Both the Aristotelian and the biblical tradition thus converge in bequeathing to nascent aesthetics a concept of *aisthesis* that is knowing and judging.

### III. JUDGING ‘AISTHETÀ’

Thanks to the sources quoted in the scholium of § 92, Baumgarten has finally made clear that it is not uncommon to claim that the senses can judge, hence that his thesis that this judgement amounts to taste in a broad sense is not arbitrary. What is the philosophical stake? Why does Baumgarten need such

a diverse variety of authorities for applying the judgement of the senses to taste or, better, for proposing his definition of taste as a judgement of the senses?

In the following sections of the *Meditationes*, Baumgarten develops his doctrine by claiming that the judgement of the ear is either positive or negative; when positive, it produces pleasure in the ear, when negative, displeasure.<sup>26</sup> The more sounds are perceived as harmonious or discordant, the more intense the pleasure or displeasure (§ 94).

The background of these statements is Wolff's doctrine of pleasure.<sup>27</sup> Assuming that the perfection is true when it inheres in the object, while it is apparent when we assign it to the object by mistake, Wolff argues in his *Psychologia empirica* (§ 510) that pleasure (*voluptas*) is the intuitive knowledge of a perfection (§ 511).<sup>28</sup> Now, what pleases is called beautiful (§ 543); beauty therefore consists in the perfection of a thing, to the extent that it is apt to arouse pleasure in us. Since pleasure requires clear (and confused), but not distinct knowledge (§ 536), Wolff introduces a notion that can grant clarity without distinctness in beauty, that of observability. Therefore, beauty is the observability of a perfection, or the aptitude of a thing to elicit pleasure in us, observability being this very aptitude (§ 545). This clarity without distinctness, though, means that pleasure, hence also beauty, can be true or apparent (§§ 511; 546), depending on the inherence of perfection in the thing which provokes pleasure.<sup>29</sup> It is only the investigation of the distinct notion of the supposed perfection that enables one to distinguish true and apparent pleasures (§ 538).

In this context, Wolff mentions a subcategory of pleasure, namely the pleasures of the senses (or sensuous delights), which include pleasures arising from sensations.<sup>30</sup> The pleasures of the senses imply that we judge the sensible thing (§ 77) as a good (§ 558, scholium), that is, as something that perfects our own state (§ 554). The acknowledgment of the perfection in the sensible qualities of the food and drinks that prompt pleasure therefore depends on the judgement of the senses, or better, as Wolff will claim in his *Philosophia moralis*, first of all on 'the judgement of taste' (*gustus judicium*).<sup>31</sup> Rather than insisting on the peculiarity of the perceived as the object of judgement, Wolff draws attention to the practical consequences of the judgement of taste and touch, hence especially gluttony and libido. If we continue to desire a food or a drink that tastes good, it is because we uniquely rely on the 'judgement of the senses' (*sensuum judicium*).<sup>32</sup> In fact, 'those who rely on the judgement of the senses (*homines sensuum judicio stantes*) judge the good by the pleasure they are pervaded with; and the evil by the displeasure they are troubled with'.<sup>33</sup> Since these people rely on their senses, hence on present things, they tend to prefer transient over long-lasting goods, that is, an apparent over a true perfection.

As is clear, the judgements of the senses turn out to be unreliable as guides for human deeds. They may well be typical of children as a compass for their

self-preservation before they develop their intellect; yet, if these judgements are still predominant during adulthood, people remain slaves of their sensible desires.<sup>34</sup> Only the intervention of the intellect can point to the true goods (the preservation of one's health) lying well beyond the scope of the senses, which judge positively only the perfection of the things being immediately sensed (the taste of the beer). For all Wolff's cogency, it is quite obvious that the perfection of the *aistheton* steps out of the picture in this line of argument. A different theoretical approach is needed to focus on this element and develop its theoretical potentiality. This is what Baumgarten will do in the *Meditationes*.

As we have seen, Baumgarten does not connect the judgement of the senses solely with touch and taste; rather, he regards it as the judgement of the perfection of all *aisthetà*; and, what is more, he equates it to the 'goût Gallorum'. In this way, Baumgarten enlarges the frame of reference from taste in the strict sense, as was the case in Wolff, to taste in the broad sense. This extension leads to a recasting of the doctrine, insofar as the discussion about the judgement of the senses no longer revolves around its effects for our actions, but narrows down on *aisthetà* themselves. Hence, while Wolff mentions the judgements of the senses at the beginning of his practical philosophy as a threat to the exercise of our freedom, Baumgarten places them at the core of nascent aesthetics.

The consequences of this approach will be drawn in Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* (1739; 1743, 2nd.) and *Acroasis logica* (1761, but developed from the 1730s). In the *Metaphysica*, Baumgarten gets back to the idea of *perfectio sensorum* and reworks it. If perfection belongs to the *aistheton*, then that perfection, whenever present, is always apparent to the senses. Now, what we can know through the senses is a phenomenon.<sup>35</sup> It follows that phenomenal perfection is beauty, which gives pleasure to the one who intuits it.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the perfection of the perceived takes on the form of phenomenal perfection – a perfection as being observable to taste in the broad sense (§ 662).<sup>37</sup> The connection between the judgement of the senses and the perfection of the perceived at § 92 of the *Meditationes* thus becomes a connection between taste and beauty. This makes it possible to reinterpret the very notion of beauty, which is the object of the judgement of the senses as a judgement of taste.

According to Wolff, beauty is the observability of perfection; in Baumgarten's metaphysics beauty is phenomenal perfection. What seems to be only a minimal shift in focus actually brings about a huge change. In Wolff, the emphasis is on perfection: the point is to establish whether a certain perfection is true as perfection in order to be a true rather than an apparent beauty. For this reason, it is necessary to appeal to the distinct knowledge of that perfection to be sure that what we confusedly perceive as beauty is actually a true beauty. In Baumgarten, the emphasis is on phenomenality:

the point is to establish whether perfection is true insofar as it is observable. Accordingly, appearance here is not the negative horn of the dilemma in alternative to truth, but the domain in which it is necessary to discriminate what is truly perfect from what is only seemingly so.<sup>38</sup> Baumgarten's recourse to the concept of phenomenon in this context thus entails a claim for a neutral acceptance of appearance as an epistemic plane in its own right. Since phenomenality as knowability through the senses is observable to taste in the broad sense, the relevant discrimination is made by taste as the judgement of the senses.<sup>39</sup> Far from being defective in itself as for Wolff, the reliability of this judgement now depends on the degree of proficiency that taste acquires in the phenomenal plane.<sup>40</sup> A mature taste will thereby judge *within* appearances – within the phenomenal plane – but not *according* to appearances – in a deceiving way. From this point of view, the yardstick of a reliable judgement of taste is not provided by the intellect, but by a well-trained judging sensibility, as it were, by *aistheteria gegymnasmena*, which is the goal of 'critical aesthetics' (*aesthetica critica*).<sup>41</sup> Any appeal to distinct knowledge as a higher judge for confirming the truth of a given perfection is therefore excluded: taste as the judgement of the senses will be final in beauty.

The judgement of the senses, in any case, does not only concern what appears to the external senses. As already suggested by the Wolffian Johann Peter Reusch, one of Baumgarten's professors during his study stays in Jena, the judgements of the senses are crucial to the sensuous descriptions of oratory and poetry, where 'one must rely more on the judgement of the senses than on intellectual apprehension and distinct knowledge'.<sup>42</sup> While Reusch does not go into further detail, Baumgarten makes clear in the *Aesthetica* (1750) that the judging instance must also include the inner sense,<sup>43</sup> insofar as taste, along with perspicacity, is 'the lower judge of sensations, images of fancy, fictions, etc., whenever it does not matter to beauty that the single things are judged by the intellect'.<sup>44</sup> As a result, it is not only the articulate sounds that must be sensibly judged in a poem, as stated in the *Meditationes*, but also the sensible images aroused in the mind of the reader. The realm of taste thus expands from *sensa* or *sensualia* into the whole territory of *repraesentationes sensitivae*.<sup>45</sup>

#### IV. THE TRIBUNAL OF THE ANALOGUE OF REASON

In order to fully understand the conceptual shift concerning the judgement of the senses, it is also important to point out the innovations Baumgarten introduces in his *Acroasis logica*. In the chapter about experience or empirical heuristics, Baumgarten maintains that the judgements of the senses are either intuitive, hence never false (strict sense),<sup>46</sup> or conclusions made by the analogue of reason (*analogon rationis*) on the basis of a premise that is an intuitive judgement (broad sense). In case the judgement of the senses is a

conclusion, a mistake is possible, not because of the senses, but because of the analogue of reason that errs either in its quasi-reasoning or in the other omitted premise or in both.<sup>47</sup>

The different approach with regard to Wolff is evident. First of all, while Wolff deals with *iudicia sensuum* rather desultorily in psychology and practical philosophy, Baumgarten discusses them in close connection with intuitive judgements as a technical topic of logic.<sup>48</sup> Even if not directly mentioning the expression, Wolff as well had evoked the judgements of the senses in the corresponding section of his German logic, but with an unsurprisingly negative overtone (the section was tellingly entitled: ‘Wie der Betrug der Sinne zu vermeiden’; How to avoid the fallacies of the senses).<sup>49</sup> Things are not always, Wolff warns, the way they appear to the senses (for example, it seems to the eyes that the sun turns around the Earth). Just as in practical philosophy, the judgements of the senses are unreliable and must therefore be rationally tutored. As is easy to guess, Baumgarten takes distance from this statement: on his view, the judgements of the senses, inasmuch as they are conclusions, are drawn by the analogue of reason, and must be assessed accordingly.

In the wake of Avicenna’s *vis aestimativa* (*wahm* in Arabic, see *De Anima* IV, 3), the analogue of reason was traditionally regarded as an inferential power (like reason) hinged on the knowledge of individuals (unlike reason), which is crucial to the practical life of higher animals and humans.<sup>50</sup> Wolff understands it as the expectation of similar cases on the basis of the senses, imagination and memory.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, Baumgarten, who ascribes the expectation of similar cases to a special faculty (*praesagitio sensitiva*<sup>52</sup>), makes of the analogue of reason a sort of extended *koinè aisthesis*, outspokenly equating it to the collection of the lower powers of the mind that confusedly represent the nexus of things.<sup>53</sup> Hence, the conclusion that the sun turns around the Earth is a deception only in the eyes of reason, but not in those of its analogue, namely of sensibility. Whenever we are interested uniquely in the plane of appearances, the judgement of the *analogon rationis* is consequently legitimate and sufficient.<sup>54</sup>

Given this network of interlocking concepts, the question for us is whether the judgement of taste is an intuitive judgement or the conclusion of a reasoning of the *analogon rationis*. As is patent, the intuitive judgement of the senses in the *Meditationes* concerns the perception of articulate sounds. Taste is thus certainly based on intuitive judgements. Yet, taste can err, intuitive judgements cannot. Consequently, the confused judgements on the perfection of the perceived are not just judgements of experience (e.g. the sun shines), but also presuppose another element, in relation to which the perfection of the perceived is tacitly considered. The intuitive judgement is thus only the minor premise of an enthymematic reasoning of the *analogon rationis*, while the confused judgement on the perfection of *aisthetà* – the judgement of taste – is the conclusion. What is the major premise? Since the *analogon rationis* deals with individuals, the major and omitted premise, which can be wrong,

can hardly be a general rule of beauty, but is rather the timely recollection of one or more relevant cases (e.g. artistic samples) we have encountered in the past, which provide us with an unspoken touchstone for the current aesthetic judgement. It is in the space between intuitive ('aesthetic') judgement and 'aesthetic' judgement that mistakes can therefore lurk. Hence, it is here that aesthetic education must intervene, by promoting not only the theoretical study of aesthetics, but also a long-standing frequentation with widely accepted masterpieces.<sup>55</sup>

To summarise, on Baumgarten's account the judgements of the senses include both intuitive and discursive judgements, provided that the reasoning is conducted by the *analogon rationis*: while the former are called judgements of the senses in the strict sense, the latter are called judgements of the senses in the broad sense. The judgements arousing pleasure or displeasure, hence also the judgements of taste, must be counted among the latter. Therefore, taste amounts to the sensible faculty that is in charge of drawing the conclusion of the enthymemes concerning phenomenal perfection.<sup>56</sup> In this way, Baumgarten attributes to the *analogon rationis* a new inferential task, the judgement on phenomenal perfection, establishing it as a faculty in its own right.<sup>57</sup> Halfway between Sforza Pallavicino's tribunal of the ear and Kant's tribunal of reason, 'the tribunal of the analogue of reason' is thus the competent jurisdiction for the judgement on beauty.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Considered in all its epistemic assumptions, Baumgarten's theory of taste is much more articulated than it has been regarded so far. Engaging critically, albeit tacitly, with the biblical tradition and with seminal authors of the early Enlightenment such as Muratori and Du Bos, Baumgarten manages to make a series of unspoken adjustments to Wolff's conceptual framework that end up triggering a silent revolution. Intuitive judgements, judgements of the senses, beauty, and analogue of reason are no longer discussed in heterogeneous contexts as in Wolff, but are now originally pieced together in the theorisation of taste as the power of judging beauty. In this way, the power of judging beauty does not reject, but rather assumes the close relationship between *aisthesis* and *krisis*. This is not to say that Baumgarten directly grants the senses the faculty of passing judgement in aesthetic matters; on the contrary, he offers an insightful solution of how perceptual judgements are linked with, yet different from, aesthetic judgements, which depend on a peculiar enthymematic reasoning. While this solution, hitherto neglected by commentators, could lead, among other things, to a closer investigation of the relationship between Baumgarten's and Kant's positions on taste beyond historiographical oversimplifications, it also provides food for thought to the contemporary debate about the continuities and discontinuities between aes-

thetics and ‘aisthetics’. Far from marking a watershed in eighteenth-century reflection alone, Baumgarten’s theory of taste still raises pivotal issues about the identity of aesthetics as such.

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### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>See Welsch 1987; Volpi 1993.
- <sup>2</sup>AA 7:145. See also the *Critique of Pure Reason*, A294; B350.
- <sup>3</sup>See Schwaiger 2011, 54-56.
- <sup>4</sup>Baeumler already claimed that Baumgarten showed little interest in the problem of taste (Baeumler 1967, 87). An exception is Malinowski-Charles 2006. See also Tedesco 2000, 141-142.
- <sup>5</sup>Reiss 1997, 58. For a reevaluation of aesthetics as rooted in *aisthesis*, see for example Welsch 1995; Ferraris 2012.
- <sup>6</sup>Baumgarten 1954, §§ 115-116.
- <sup>7</sup>§§ 91ff. I render *sensitivum* as sensible (referring to sensibility in general) and *sensuale* as sensuous (referring to the senses alone).
- <sup>8</sup>§ 92, trans. modified. On the judgement of the ears, see the dissertation of Baumgarten’s follower Dommerich 1746.
- <sup>9</sup>See among others Fauser 1986, 110 ff.
- <sup>10</sup>Sforza Pallavicino 1834, 593. See in general Summers 1987; Ferraris 1994.
- <sup>11</sup>Muratori 1708, 13.
- <sup>12</sup>In the wake of Muratori’s plea, an ‘Accademia del Buon Gusto’ was founded in Palermo in 1718, see Verga 1999, 460 ff.
- <sup>13</sup>Du Bos 1719, 305-321. Baumgarten held a copy of Du Bos’s work in his personal library, see *Catalogus* 1762, 23.
- <sup>14</sup>Bel 1726, 230. The debate Du Bos-Bel was mentioned in Johann Ulrich König’s investigation of good taste that Baumgarten certainly knew, see König 1727, 275-276.
- <sup>15</sup>Albeit never recorded by scholarship, the bulk of these lectures might have been published in Decker and Dienemann 1737 (see also Baumgarten’s gratulatory letter, where Dienemann seems to be one of his students, H2), as suggested by Heynatz 1771, 70-71 and Boysen 1795, 133, who claims that Baumgarten authored a work with the same title as that published by Decker and Dienemann. For the course on Isaiah see Meier 1763, 16.
- <sup>16</sup>Lange and Bohnstedt 1710: *Sectio exegetica*, § 23. In his essay on taste (1727), König had mentioned this term in order to argue, among other things, that it was already used in a metaphorical sense among the Jews. Also, the plural *te’amim* is the name of the signs regulating the Hebrew cantillation of the Bible, as if they gave the holy text a pleasant taste, see König 1727:241 and 243, footnote. As for modern commentators, Piselli makes reference to Edward Castell’s *Lexicon Heptaglotton* (1669), held by Baumgarten in his library, to point out that *ta’am* means both *gustare* and *intelligere* (see Baumgarten 1985, 9-10 and Piselli’s comment to § 92). Piselli does not develop further the issue, which remains for Mirbach a desideratum of research, see Mirbach 2002, 609-610.
- <sup>17</sup>Francke 1693, 160; see Grote 2017, ch. 2.
- <sup>18</sup>Baumgarten 1740, § 44.
- <sup>19</sup>Baumgarten strongly believes in the significance of the study of Hebrew to philosophy, in particular for containing the fecund seeds of universal philology and for being an evident example of philosophical philology, see Baumgarten 1743, § 7.
- <sup>20</sup>This posits the problem of the possible

connection between spiritual and aesthetic taste in early eighteenth-century Germany, see Grote 2016; for the importance of this connection outside Germany, see Szécsényi 2014.

<sup>21</sup>Baumgarten 2013, § 607.

<sup>22</sup>For the main exegetical interpretations, see Shifman 2012.

<sup>23</sup>König remarked that smell is much more proximate to taste than sight and hearing, because of its corporeal apprehension of its sensible (König 1727, 247-248).

<sup>24</sup>Baumgarten 1735, 190-191.

<sup>25</sup>Not by chance, the object of the Messiah's judgement – the hidden frame of our mind – goes beyond the 'äusserer Schein', whereas in Alexander the *judicandum* are *aisthetà* themselves. As we shall see, *aistheteria gegymnasmèna* in an aesthetic sense take the shape of a 'mature taste'.

<sup>26</sup>Baumgarten 1954, § 93.

<sup>27</sup>See in general Schwaiger 1995, 93-139.

<sup>28</sup>Wolff 1732. For the aesthetic impact of this doctrine, see Pimpinella 2001, in particular 293-294; see also Schenk 2010, ch. 1.

<sup>29</sup>Pleasure is the greater, the greater is the perfection and the more certain is the judgement whereby we ascribe perfection to a thing (§§ 516-517).

<sup>30</sup>See Pimpinella 1996; Mei 2007, in particular of taste and touch (§ 552). Elsewhere (Wolff 1721, §§ 389-393), Wolff mentions the delectation of all the senses (apart from touch) and claims that such a delectation is permitted if the pleasure is innocent. It is in particular the works of the artists that should please our senses. On the fact that poetry can give pleasure to the ear, see § 391.

<sup>31</sup>Wolff 1751, §§ 47; 50.

<sup>32</sup>Wolff 1738, § 15, scholium; see also Wolff 1720, § 434; Wolff 1732, § 597; Wolff 1752, § 257.

<sup>33</sup>Wolff 1985, 30.

<sup>34</sup>Wolff 1751, §§ 47-48.

<sup>35</sup>Baumgarten 2013, § 425; see also Wolff 1731, § 225.

<sup>36</sup>Baumgarten 2013, § 662.

<sup>37</sup>The perception of a perfection or imperfection in general coincides here with the perception of various aspects of a thing

as harmonising or disharmonising (Baumgarten 2013, § 607).

<sup>38</sup>In fact, Baumgarten confirms the distinction between true and apparent pleasures as respectively stemming from true and apparent goods (Baumgarten 2013, § 655).

<sup>39</sup>Wolff does not link beauty with the judgements, hence with the pleasures, of the senses, not least because he usually relates them to taste and touch and this could hardly match the visual paradigm of beauty endorsed by Wolff, e.g. Wolff 1732, § 544, scholium. The old Wolff was certainly not unaware that taste is often linked with beauty, but he polemically brushes aside the issue: it is no use arguing about the taste for beauty (*de gustu pulchritudinis*), where one is more devout to opinion than to truth, as in the 'idolatrous worship of the fine letters' (Wolff 1750, § 251, scholium).

<sup>40</sup>Baumgarten 2013, § 608.

<sup>41</sup>On the exercises needed for this maturation, see Malinowski-Charles 2006, 67-72. Critical aesthetics is 'the art of forming taste or the art concerning judging sensibly and presenting its judgement' (Baumgarten 2013, § 607; Baumgarten 1740, § 219).

<sup>42</sup>See Meier 1763, 12. Reusch 1734, § 321. It is worth noting that Reusch was not the only philosopher in Jena discussing the subject. In ascribing the judgement to the senses, both inner and outer (Lehmann 1723, 94; 125), Jena professor Johann Jakob Lehmann, a disciple of Johann Franz Buddeus, contends: '[...] the musicians with their hearing, by which they understand the judgement of the ears, also argue for this very capacity; and there are also many examples with taste, smelling and touch, when one judges the goodness of the wine, the ingredients of a drug, the goodness of the cloth, etc.' (97). This happens when our *facultas iudicandi*, one of the three faculties of our intellect, works in collaboration with the internal part of our body or with the outer sensory organs.

<sup>43</sup>Through the inner sense, we experience the changes and effects of the other faculties of the soul (Baumgarten 2013, §

535; 1750, § 30). According to Baumgarten, *sensus internus* is consciousness in the strict sense, hence both the self-referential feeling of ourselves through every working of our soul and a unifying power of all our representational activities. See Hernández Marcos 2014. On his part, Wolff claims that our apperception is similar to taste. While taste tests and discriminates savours, apperception is a sort of ‘inner taste’ (*gustus internus*) testing and discriminating pleasures (Wolff 1750, § 152, scholium).

<sup>44</sup>Baumgarten 1750, § 35; Baumgarten 1907, § 29. As well as being the judge of beauty as ‘perfectio phaenomenon’, taste thus monitors the subjective process towards the perfection of sensible knowledge, hence towards the attainment of beautiful knowledge (Baumgarten 1750, § 14). In fact, we can think of a beautiful thing in an ugly way; and of an ugly thing in a beautiful way (§ 18).

<sup>45</sup>This is also true of the expression of these sensible representations. Taste can thus also judge the works of the liberal arts, and more in general all the activities (cosmetics, fashion, etc.) in which beauty is relevant (Baumgarten 1907, § 35; Baumgarten 1740, § 266).

<sup>46</sup>Baumgarten 2013, § 546.

<sup>47</sup>Baumgarten 1761, § 331.

<sup>48</sup>To judge means to take the *res sensa* as the subject and something we immediately perceive in it as the predicate (Baumgarten 1761, § 320). Intuitive judgements are singular judgements (§ 318) known a posteriori (i.e. through experience) (§ 315). Intuitive judgements can be either observations or experiments (§ 329), and are therefore crucial to experimental physics (Baumgarten 1743, § 9). Also, intuitive judgement can be known through internal experience, as in the case of spiritual experience (Baumgarten 1773, §§ 105-106). On intuitive judgements, especially in Wolff, see Holzhey 1970, 91-96; Engfer 1996, 274-283.

<sup>49</sup>Wolff 1713, ch. 5, § 14; see also Wolff

1728, §§ 703-704.

<sup>50</sup>See Ferraris 1994; Buchenau 2004.

<sup>51</sup>For example Wolff 1720, §§ 374; 872.

<sup>52</sup>Baumgarten 2013, § 612.

<sup>53</sup>§ 640. Extended, because *aisthesis* includes here all the sensible powers of the mind. In this way, the inferential power of the *vis aestimativa* is directly ascribed to the common operational whole of sensibility. In the judgement of the senses, the *analogon rationis* therefore infers on the basis of intuitive judgements, hence sense perceptions, rather than of the non-sensible intentions of sensible objects, as was the case with the traditional *vis aestimativa*.

<sup>54</sup>This is crucial for poets who can thereby speak of dawns and sunsets without being blamed for incurring a fallacy of the senses, e.g. Baumgarten 1750, § 429. On the fallacies of the senses, see Schwaiger 2011, 66-69.

<sup>55</sup>Baumgarten 1907, § 56.

<sup>56</sup>Since the premise is an intuitive judgement, taste is ascribed to the senses (Baumgarten 2013, § 608), without thereby being one with them. It is to be noted, though, that taste is not one with the analogue of reason either, since the inference about perfection is just one of the multiple inferences the analogue of reason can carry out. In the aforementioned example of the sun turning around the Earth, the *analogon rationis* judges the truth rather than the perfection of the phenomenon.

<sup>57</sup>This also means that the *analogon rationis* no longer includes only animal or animal-like inferences, but also the capacity of discerning beauty. In turn, the capacity of discerning beauty will be in a sense logicised, see Baeumler 1967, 94. While not investigating further its root, the relationship between taste and *analogon rationis* in Baumgarten was pinpointed by Böhm 1926:234-235; see also Hernández Marcos 2014, 85-88.

<sup>58</sup>Baumgarten 1758, § 863.

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