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DETLEF MERTINS

BAUMGARTEN, ALEXANDER GOTTLIEB

(1714–1762), German philosopher who was influential as the author of the textbooks on metaphysics and ethics on which Immanuel Kant lectured. Baumgarten's significance for aesthetics lies not only in his coinage of the term aesthetics for the philosophy of art but also in his creation of a paradigm for understanding art that was profoundly influential in his own time and has continued to be so, although indirectly, down to the present.

Born in Berlin and educated in the Pietist orphanage and university of Halle, Baumgarten studied the philosophy of Christian Wolff after the banishment of its author, and left Halle for a professorship in Frankfurt an der Oder in 1740, the year of Wolff's rehabilitation and return; thus, he cannot be considered a personal disciple of Wolff. Yet, through his *Metaphysica* (1739) and *Ethica* (1740), he was a major transmitter of Wolffianism to subsequent generations, while through his two works in aesthetics, the 1735 dissertation *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (Philosophical meditations on some matters pertaining to poetry) and the two volumes of his incomplete *Aesthetica,* published in 1750 and 1758, he was also the major revisionist in the Wolffian tradition.

Baumgarten first defined *aesthetics* in 1735 as "the science of how things are to be cognized by means of the senses," a definition amplified in 1750 as "the theory of the liberal arts, the logic of the lower faculty of cognition, the art of thinking beautifully, the art of the analogue of reason." Passing comments in other works suggest that he sometimes envisioned an "empirical aesthetics" or a logic of empirical data as a propaedeutic for logic in the traditional sense, but in his aesthetic writings he had in mind a study of the perfection of sensibility for its own sake, as manifested in the production of works of artistic beauty. Thus, whereas Wolff had associated beauty with the sensory perception of perfection (a definition reiterated in Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*), sensory perception being viewed as a confused and inferior form of intellection, in his aesthetics Baumgarten subtly but crucially redefined beauty as "the perfection of cognition by means of the senses as such," or as the perfectly realized potential of sensory representation rather than a merely imperfectly realized form of conceptualization. The subtlety of Baumgarten's revision escaped many readers of the time, including his own disciple Georg Friedrich Meier and perhaps Kant as well, who may have relied on Meier's German popularizations rather than Baumgarten's own intricate and lengthy Latin magnum opus.

In the *Meditationes,* Baumgarten restricts himself to the case of poetry, which he defines as "perfect sensate discourse" (*oratio sensitiva perfecta*). The special perfection of sensitive, as contrasted to intellectual, discourse consists in the poem's manifestation of "extensive" rather than "intensive clarity," or in its suggestion of a wealth of striking but densely packed imagery and ideas—the perfection of sensibility as clear but confused perception—rather than in the abstract analysis of ideas sought in ordinary logical and scientific discourse. Extensive clarity is optimally realized through the presentation of individuals in all of their determinacy rather than through abstract ideas.

The extant portion of the *Aesthetica* amplifies this approach in tremendous detail. The work was originally supposed to consist of two halves, dealing with theoretical and practical aesthetics, the first of which was in turn to be divided into three parts—heuristics, methodology, and semiotics—dealing, respectively, with the content or materials, the order and arrangement, and the means of expression in works of art in general (although still largely illustrated by poetry). Of this grand plan, only five of the six intended chapters of the heuristics were produced. Nevertheless, in these chapters, Baumgarten illuminates the original idea of extensive clarity as the basis of artistic beauty by developing the categories of aesthetic richness (*ubertas*), magnitude or gravity (*magnitudo*), truth (*veritas*), clarity (*claritas, lux*), and certainty (*persuasio, certitudo*); the sixth chapter was to have dealt with *vita cognitionis,* or the moving effects of art. These categories are by no means all original to Baumgarten, often deriving from the humanist tradition of rhetoric; but Baumgarten exploits them with great skill to provide a sense of the very different sort of knowledge of human experience that can be afforded by art rather than science.

Although few seem ever to have read the *Aesthetica* firsthand (it did not have a second printing until the twentieth century), its influence has been enormous. Through Moses Mendelssohn, it provided the conceptual framework for Gotthold Efraim Lessing's *Laocoön;* Kant's conception of aesthetic ideas as the paradigm for works of artistic genius is his reconstruction of Baumgarten within his own system;

the emphasis on the richness of individuals as opposed to abstractions was crucial to Friedrich von Schiller's idea of aesthetic education; and Baumgarten's conception of sensitive cognition was vital to the idealist aesthetics of Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, although the latter's subordination of art to philosophy in Absolute Knowing represents a return to Wolffian priorities. More recently, the cognitivist aesthetics of Ernst Cassirer and Susanne Langer, the "concrete universal" of William K. Wimsatt and the New Critics, and especially Nelson Goodman's explorations of semantic and syntactic variety in *Languages of Art* all stand under the aegis of Baumgarten.

[*See also* Kant; *and* Origins of Aesthetics.]

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PAUL GUYER

BAZIN, ANDRÉ (1918–1958), French film critic and theorist. In a life that spanned only forty years, Bazin became the most influential film theorist of his time without ever making, or wanting to make, films, and without a university post. He did so as a full-time critic, writing for daily, weekly, and monthly magazines, attending film festivals, and organizing film clubs. A brilliant student of French literature and philosophy, Bazin in fact had hoped to teach, but a speech impediment cost him that opportunity in 1942, the year he founded a successful *ciné-club* at the Sorbonne. His earliest writings, which are notes from this *ciné-club*, show that he had already worked out a program to study cinema comprehensively, that is, from a variety of organized perspectives. Before the war was over he had composed the essay that launched this project, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." By the time it appeared in print late in 1945, Bazin was making certain that cinema would play a role in the rebuilding of French culture. In the following years, he would operate on two fronts. On the one hand, he helped upgrade the status of cinema, bringing this art into places formerly reserved for painting and literature. With Jean Cocteau, he started "Objectif 48," a rather refined club that met at the elegant Théâtre Champs-Élysées, where such directors as Orson Welles, Roberto Rossellini, and Robert Bresson would screen and discuss their latest work. On the other hand, Bazin, a left-wing Catholic, set up networks of film clubs in labor unions and cultural centers not just in Paris, but throughout France, and even in North Africa. Largely to make a living, but also to do what he could to improve movies by raising the standards and expectations of viewers, he began reviewing films several times a week for the undistinguished newspaper *Le Parisien libéré*, something he continued to do throughout the rest of his life. His larger, more speculative essays initially came out in *L'écran Français*, until 1949 when he found himself fighting tuberculosis as well as an ugly political battle brought on by that journal's Stalinist response to the Marshall Plan. After a year of recuperation, Bazin returned in full strength to Paris, cofounding *Cahiers du cinéma* (first issue, April 1951) and soon writing regularly for such influential new publications as *L'observateur* and *Télérama*. He always reserved his most substantial essays for the Catholic intellectual monthly *Esprit*. All told, Bazin signed close to three thousand pieces in fourteen years, many of them, it is true, ephemeral notes and reviews. To date, his reputation has rested on the approximately two hundred articles that have been kept in circulation.

In the final year of his life, Bazin selected the best of his writing for inclusion in four small volumes bearing the overall rubric *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (What is Cinema?). He lived to see the first of these appear, *Ontologie et langage*. For Bazin the word *ontology* refers to the mode of being of the photographed image, including not only its physical properties but also the psychology of spectators, who can be said to give it its existence in looking at it. *Language* involves both the general way the cinema is capable of making sense and communicating and the specific strategies and codes it has built up in its "evolution" throughout the century. The second of the four French volumes steps outside the medium to define it in its relation to the other arts. The third volume concerns *Cinéma et sociologie*, something Bazin was not alone in recognizing to be crucial to this mass medium. Here he examines genres (the Western, above all)