

Chapter 1

Aesthetics

Sensation and Thinking Reconsidered

On March 22, 1801, Heinrich von Kleist wrote a famous letter to his fiancée Wilhelmine von Zenge, telling her of his shocking encounter with Kantian philosophy: “I recently became familiar with the more recent so-called Kantian philosophy, and I may impart one of its leading ideas to you without fear of its shattering you as deeply, as painfully as it has me.”¹ Kleist-criticism has read these and the ensuing lines to Wilhelmine—together with the letter written to his sister Ulrike the following day (*ADE*, 97–98/*SW IV/1*, 512)—as markers of an intellectual crisis, provoked by the encounter with Kant: an encounter that crushed Kleist, the young officer, and out of which Kleist, the writer, emerged in 1802 with his first literary work, *Die Familie Schroffenstein*. Much has been written about this crisis and the potential texts by Kant to which Kleist reacted so strongly. Despite differing suggestions to which of Kant’s texts the “crisis-letters” of March 1801 refer,² the often held conviction is that the letters give evidence of the experience of a tremendous loss due to reading Kant. Kleist is seen to have lost his formerly held naïve Enlightenment belief in progress and transparency, in the possibility to perfect one’s life and mind through education, and to acquire objective truth and lasting knowledge. With this ideal gone, Kleist-criticism largely saw Kleist emerging as the melancholic poet of the Fall.³ Friedrich Cramer articulates this in his preface to Christian-Paul Berger’s study on Kleist’s *On the Puppet Theater*. Seeing Kleist’s oeuvre as articulating this experience of loss, Cramer notes that Kleist’s essay *On the Puppet Theater* symptomatically marks a decisive turn in the larger European history of thought: from the static, closed-off Leibnizian system that described nature as a continuum—*natura non facit saltus*—of the material and spiritual world, hierarchically organized by monads, in view of perfection, to a Kantian limitation of reason and a system of critique. “At the turn from the Enlightenment to modernity stands Kleist.”⁴ This epochal turn from an ideal and enclosed Enlightenment world labeled as Leibnizian to a modern world—from Leibniz’s continuous and hierarchical world of monads, in which increasing perfectibility was possible and desired, to Kant’s contention that we cannot know anything beyond our senses (except for

the reflective knowledge of this finitude of our knowledge and our incapacity to conceive of the things in and of themselves)—Cramer sees exemplarily marked by Kleist's work. Although Kant argues that we nonetheless have to strive—within those limits—to purify philosophical thinking from all empirical residues in order to attain transcendental a priori knowledge, Kleist is generally thought to have lost his “highest goal” (*ADE*, 95/*SW IV/1*, 505), as he himself declared at one point. And in fact, as his letter of March 22, 1801, to Wilhelmine von Zenge confirms, he was familiar with Leibniz before becoming acquainted with Kantian philosophy. The letter notes that he “already as a lad (I think by the Rhine, while reading Wieland) adopted the idea that Perfection is the goal of creation” (*ADE*, 95), probably referring to Wieland's poem *Die Natur der Dinge oder Die vollkommene Welt*, which considers the concepts of perfection and truth as presented in Leibniz's *Theodicy*. It encouraged him to believe, Kleist notes, “that after death we should progress from the level of perfection achieved on this planet to a higher one beyond, and that we should be able there to make use of the trove of truths collected here” (*ADE*, 95).⁵ Familiar with Leibniz's philosophy, as can be expected at the end of the eighteenth century, which still stood under its influence, Kleist then also read Kant. He tries to convey the new insights to Wilhelmine—hoping that an account of Kant's central positions will not shock her as much as they had shocked him—in said letter of March 22, 1801.

If everyone saw the world through green glasses, they would be forced to judge that everything they saw *was* green, and could never be sure whether their eye saw things as they really are, or did not add something of their own to what they saw. And so it is with our intellect. We can never be certain that what we call Truth is really Truth, or whether it does not merely appear so to us. If the latter, the Truth that we acquire here is *not* Truth after our death, and it is all a vain striving for a possession that may never follow us into the grave. Ah, Wilhelmine ... my one, my highest goal has sunk from sight, and I have no other. (*ADE*, 95)⁶

These letters have been read as indicators that—due to gaining from Kant the devastating insight that reason cannot penetrate beyond what our senses give us and that truth is therefore only finite, preliminary, and not to outlast death—Kleist's Leibnizian, rationalist worldview collapsed. But was it Kant's limitation of reason that Kleist was so shaken by? Was he disturbed by the screen of sensibility that Kant slid between the world and our reasonable assessment of it? Did he, in other words, accept Kant's philosophical assumptions and work out the dismay they caused him in his literary writings? This book pursues these questions and argues that if we consider the unusual twist that Kleist's work gives to one of Kant's main assumptions, namely to the relation between reason and sensibility, the thesis of an acceptance of and

suffering from Kantian philosophy might need to be revised. Kleist's characters opt neither for rational, conceptual thinking, nor for its romanticized flip side of sensitivity and irrationality. They instead display a peculiar steadfastness in what they do, a steadfastness that does not rest upon rational choices or articulable convictions, and we can, thus, not say that its reasons are "known" to them. But simultaneously, they operate with a "knowledge" that is surprisingly apt to the situations they are in, and that grants them more adequate assessments of these situation than mere feeling could. This makes one wonder if the strong reaction to Kant was really due to a disillusionment with the scope of rationality and rationally acquired knowledge. Reading Kleist's texts, it seems that they struggle less with the finitude of knowledge, but rather with another moment of Kant's philosophy, related to the former. As this book suggests, what Kleist cannot agree to and what his own work works out differently than Kant, is the strict separation of sensibility and understanding, by which Kant discarded the idea of a complex continuity between sensibility and thinking present in Leibniz and thinkers indebted to him. Not the question of perfectibility but rather the question of continuity is decisive, as I would like to suggest, in understanding not only Kleist's encounter with Kant, but also the aesthetic claims Kleist made on that basis. The effects of Kant in Kleist's oeuvre are underestimated, if they are read as the disillusionment of a formerly naïve (Enlightenment) belief in reason, and I agree with Carol Jacobs that one "is tempted . . . to call this confrontation Kant's Kleist crisis—at the risk of disrupting our conventional concept of time-order."⁷ Instead of assuming a unidirectional reaction, Jacobs continues that "Kleist's text is not that which necessarily follows from Kant's, although, it might be heard as a kind of repetition, an echo of the voice of philosophy, with results that are incalculable."⁸ What is at stake here is the incalculability of these results, the observation that Kleist's texts echo the voice of philosophy and throw it back in a productively distorted—that is, in this case: literary—form. Kantian philosophy did not so much devastate Heinrich von Kleist's worldview—at least that is of lesser interest—but it triggered Kleist's literary texts, which echo the voice of philosophy, and by repeating philosophical concerns in a different voice these texts produce something unforeseen, something that is missed, if we assume a straightforward causal relation to Kant. A predominant concern that Kleist's texts—much like Melville's, as we will see momentarily—take up from Kant is the question of thinking and its relation to sensation and sensibility. The responses given to it, however, are different from Kant's. Throughout the preceding century, this question of the relation of thinking and sensibility had driven a field of inquiry that became known shortly before Kant as aesthetics, a field forming in the wake of Baumgarten and Kant as a branch of philosophy that investigates the relation of the senses, sensibility, pleasure, and desire to thinking. By taking up this concern in his texts, Kleist along with many others firmly asserts a position within this field—however, as we heard from Jacobs, with

incalculable results. Howard Caygill phrases these various incalculable effects in his *Kant Dictionary*—significantly in the section entitled “Aesthetics”—and notes that the dissatisfaction by Kant’s critics “was almost immediately apparent in the emergence of new forms of philosophical and para-philosophical writing in the field of aesthetics. These ranged from Schiller’s edifying letters on aesthetic education, to Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel’s fragments, to Kleist’s short stories, Jean Paul’s ironic manual for beginners in aesthetics and to Schelling’s and Hegel’s historical narratives.”⁹ Although Caygill lists Kleist’s short stories among a whole list of responses to a dissatisfaction with Kant’s answer for the “aesthetic problem,” my aim here is to carve out one specific aesthetic response: one that answers in the form of short stories (as opposed to responding, for example, by ironic manuals, historical accounts, or the logic of the fragment), and that answers specifically to Kant’s separation of sensation and thinking by experimenting with the continuity between them and sketching a type of thinking we could call *sensate*, or affective thinking. In order to better carve out this specific response, this book couples two writers, whose responses are strikingly similar and whose conjunction helps to contour the affective thinking their texts engage with. As the following chapters will show, both Kleist and Melville expose a similar discontent with the transcendental settlement of the question of thinking as reason and conceptual thought, and devise figures of simplicity, which offer a more complex approach to the relation of sensation and thinking and claim their continuity. On this account, their figures have also allowed contemporary thinkers—prominent among them Gilles Deleuze with his philosophical concern for this question and his frequent recourse to both Kleist and Melville—to approach affectivity as a mode of thinking. In tracing these figures, this book wishes therefore not only to engage with affective thinking, its operations, its dilemmas, and its potentials, but also to challenge the disciplinary demarcations of the field of aesthetics.

While Kleist read of Leibniz’s philosophy in a poem on the banks of the river Rhine, Melville learned of Kant’s philosophy crossing the Atlantic in October 1849. Exhausted by the many books he has written, but also by their waning success over the course of their publication, Melville took this first literary “business trip” to England—after he had sailed for years as a common sailor on whalers and navy vessels.¹⁰ On October 12, 1849, he notes in his travel journal: “Have tried to read, but found it hard work. However, there are some very pleasant [*sic*] passengers on board, with whom to converse. Chief among these is a Mr Adler, a German scholar, to whom Duyckinck introduced me.”¹¹ George J. Adler, professor of German at New York University, was to remain Melville’s friend and interlocutor on philosophy until Adler’s death in 1868. The journal introduces Adler as being “full of the German metaphysics, & discourses of Kant, Swedenborg &c” (*J*, 4) and tells of Melville’s increasing acquaintance with him, and with what he calls “metaphysics” during the four weeks of his sea journey. On October 22, he notes: “Clear & cold; wind not favorable. . . . [L]ast night about 9½ P.M. Adler &

Taylor came into my room, & it was proposed to have whiskey punches, which we did have, accordingly” (*J*, 8). They had an “extraordinary time” and “talked metaphysics continually, & Hegel, Schlegel, Kant &c were discussed under the influence of the whiskey” (*J*, 8). We have to note that “talking metaphysics” with Adler and Taylor was no more a first encounter with it for Melville than had been the case for Kleist, as we saw in his “crisis-letters.” In Melville’s case, Kant has already appeared in *Mardi* (1849). Neither, of course, are his conversations with Adler Melville’s only known encounter with philosophy, and Melville-criticism has meticulously traced his extensive readings and intellectual stimulations.¹² But what the entry shows—also, when we hear that five days later, they were “riding on the German horse again” (*J*, 9)—is that Melville’s encounter with philosophy was from the start more humorous than Kleist’s. Melville was not shaken by it, but rather seems somewhat stoically amused, much the way his characters are a little more stoic than Kleist’s stouthearted and rash ones. The appearances of Kant in Melville’s texts are not dramatized by Melville—nor by Melville-criticism—as effecting a crisis, or an enlightenment. Familiar with idealist and Kantian philosophical positions, as much as with the American transcendentalist philosophy associated with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Melville distances himself from these by satirizing them: Emerson most notably in *The Confidence-Man* of 1857,¹³ and Kant most pointedly in *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale and Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, which were both written after returning from his journey to England in 1849, and immediately preceded his turn to tales. When we come to Melville’s tales in chapter 2, we will see that the tales move away from the explicit satire of philosophical positions in these earlier novels and transform their critique into the presentation of an alternative to the problem: the tales no longer express the dissatisfaction with Kantian, idealist, and transcendentalist parameters by way of satire, but their form, language, and characters perform a relation of sensibility and thinking that significantly differs from Kantian, idealist, and transcendentalist convictions. Thereby, they truly become “para-philosophical writings” in Caygill’s sense: next to philosophy, their echo distortedly repeats and produces something new in the repetition, something the “simpletons” that predominate the tales under scrutiny in this book allow to emerge. But we must not rush ahead of things. Let us briefly stay with *Moby-Dick*, where Kant makes his most frequent and most commonly known appearance. Here, Kant figures alongside Locke, when both philosophers are likened to the heads of different whale-types. During Ahab’s chase of the white whale, halfway through the novel, a sperm whale is killed and hoisted alongside the *Pequod*. The order is given, “if opportunity offered,”¹⁴ to also hunt a right whale, and when opportunity indeed offers, a right whale is killed.

The boats were here hailed, to tow the whale on the larboard side, where fluke chains and other necessities were already prepared for securing him. “Didn’t I tell you so?” said Flask; “yes, you’ll soon see

this Right Whale's head hoisted up opposite that parmaceti's." In good time, Flask's saying proved true. As before, the Pequod steeply leaned over towards the Sperm Whale's head, now, by the counterpoise of both heads, she regained her even keel; though sorely strained, you may well believe. So, when on one side you hoist in Locke's head, you go over that way; but now, on the other side, hoist in Kant's and you come back again; but in poor plight. Thus, some minds for ever keep trimming boat. Oh, ye foolish! throw all these thunderheads overboard, and then you will float light and right.¹⁵

Humorously fitted into the cetological section of the novel, which gives meticulous details of the art of whaling, Kant appears as the counterpoise to Locke, both equally weighing down on the vessel. This is no unusual pairing, as Ralph Waldo Emerson for example had suggested the same in his essay *The Transcendentalist* in 1842.¹⁶ Conceiving the difference between materialists and idealists, into which thinkers have generally divided themselves, along the lines of Locke on the one side, and Kant on the other, Emerson in his essay clearly leans toward Kantian positions. Melville's suggestion, on the other hand, is to throw both overboard; or, to be more precise and in line with the text: to just keep them hoisted alongside, as they are bound go down anyway: "Look your last, now, on these venerable hooded heads, while they yet lie together; for one will soon sink, unrecorded, in the sea; the other will not be very long in following."¹⁷ Both Lockean and Kantian philosophy, the passage suggests, unduly and one-sidedly tilt the vessel, either toward sensuality (Locke) or toward rationality (Kant). It would be too precipitous—given Melville's pronounced interest in philosophical questions—to conclude that the passage suggests throwing philosophical concerns at large overboard. Rather, it seems to recommend refraining from a too one-sided valorization of one of the two sides and perhaps consider the problem from a different angle.

In order to see what Melville's and Kleist's "para-philosophical" writings propose, we nevertheless need to first look at what they reacted to, and when we consider the recurring confrontation of Kant as a philosophical persona in their writings, we can suspect—with Anselm Haverkamp—that it was the "precariously limited construction of Kant's transcendental aesthetics."¹⁸ In this chapter, we will therefore first look at the scenario of Kant's construction: at what it turned away from itself, at what it buried in this turn, and at the mortgage it carried, upon which the dissatisfied reactions were in turn able to build. Considering this scenario will allow us to appreciate the figures of simplicity in Kleist's and Melville's tales as genuine interventions into an aesthetic debate, as the re-turn (under modern conditions) to an aesthetics that was not so much concerned with the nature of beauty and the assessment of art, but rather with questions of perception, thinking, and their relation to sensation. It is by way of this re-turn that Kleist and Melville have become two of the most

prominent writers for Deleuze, as their writings allow him—and others thinking about a revised relation of thinking to sensation¹⁹—to reassess aesthetic debates and revive—in a still largely post-Kantian setting²⁰—their untapped *aesthetic* potentials.

The Copernican Turn

In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant's project of transcendental philosophy had demarcated the lines along which aesthetics was to be thought, and his *Critique of Judgment* (1790) developed aesthetics—within these limits—along the notions of the beautiful and the sublime as “subjective” aesthetics.²¹ In order to follow the scenario of its—however precariously limited—construction, we must take note of the fact that Kant's aesthetics, both of the first and the third Critique, resulted from a dissatisfaction that Kant himself felt with his precursor Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in regard to the field of aesthetics. The first footnote in the *Critique of Pure Reason*—setting off Kant's own transcendental aesthetics—values Baumgarten as a superb analyst, but dismisses his aesthetic project as a disappointed hope.

At the foundation of this term [aesthetics] lies the disappointed hope, which the eminent analyst, Baumgarten, conceived, of subjecting the criticism of the beautiful to principles of reason, and so of elevating its rules into a science. But his endeavors were vain. For the said rules or criteria are, in respect to their chief sources, merely empirical, consequently never can serve as determinate laws à priori, by which our judgment in matters of taste is to be directed. (*CPR*, 22)

Dismissing Baumgarten's aesthetics as a vain attempt amounts, as Caygill has argued in his reassessment of the Baumgarten-Kant relationship, to nothing less than a reinvention of aesthetics under transcendental parameters that were never Baumgarten's: “Kant's aesthetics, which determined the later [aesthetic] debates, were themselves a re-invention of the Baumgartian original and in many respects reduced the latter's complexity.”²² Before we turn to these complexities—complexities that echo in the “para-philosophical” reactions under scrutiny in this book—let us stay for the moment with the reversal, or reinvention, which Kant's disappointment provoked him to conduct.

Since philosophy for Kant had to be transcendental philosophy, and the rules for the judgment of the beautiful specified by Baumgarten remain only empirical, they cannot provide the a priori that Kant's philosophy was after. According to Kant, Baumgarten tried to subsume the empirical realm of sensibility under the rules of reason—a judgment that was to dominate most of the reception of Baumgarten until recently.²³ The *Critique of Pure Reason* outlines

what Kant instead envisioned as transcendental aesthetics. The introduction demands that

[t]he principal thing we must attend to, in the division of the parts of a science like this, is that no conceptions must enter it which contain aught empirical; in other words, that the knowledge a priori must be completely pure. . . . Transcendental philosophy is consequently a philosophy of the pure and merely speculative reason. For all that is practical, so far as it contains motives, relates to feelings, and these belong to empirical sources of cognition. (*CPR*, 17–18)

Although we can hear Kant attribute feelings to empirical sources of cognition, and thus suggest a cognitive aspect of feeling, the introduction ends on a summary remark that clearly distinguishes them from each other as receptivity on the one hand (sensibility) and thinking on the other (understanding). “Only so much seems necessary, by way of introduction or premonition, that there are two sources of human knowledge (which probably spring from a common, but to us unknown root), namely, sense and understanding. By the former, objects are given to us; by the latter, thought” (*CPR*, 18).²⁴ Thinking is only conducted by the faculty of the understanding, while sensibility is the reception of impressions and representations of objects. Consequentially, in order to achieve the desired transcendental purity, the first part of the first Critique begins by announcing that

[i]n the science of transcendental aesthetic accordingly, we shall first isolate sensibility or the sensuous faculty, by separating from it all that is annexed to its perceptions by the conceptions of understanding, so that nothing be left but empirical intuition. In the next place we shall take away from this intuition all that belongs to sensation, so that nothing may remain but pure intuition, and the mere form of phenomena, which is all that the sensibility can afford a priori. (*CPR* 22)

And the mere form of phenomena—“mere” in the sense that they contain nothing of what pertains to the empirical or sensibility²⁵—comes in but two dimensions: space and time, which the transcendental aesthetics of the first Critique establishes. By a clear separation, transcendental aesthetics hopes to evade the philosophical ambiguity or imprecision that Kant saw in the eighteenth-century tradition of a critique of taste, which had hoped in vain to subject the critique of the beautiful to principles of reason. Far from providing rules for taste or judgment, transcendental aesthetics was merely to purify or isolate sensibility in a way that nothing remained but what can be thought of it a priori. It thereby, as Jacques Derrida remarks, excludes all “that

is not theoretical knowledge: the affect (*Gefühl*) in its two principal values (pleasure/unpleasure) and the power to desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*). It cuts out its field only by cutting itself off from the interest in desire, by losing interest in desire.²⁶ After the founding act of positing a separation of sensibility and understanding, after the faculties of reason, understanding, and imagination had been clearly separated and a transcendental difference had been proclaimed between intuition and concept, Kant's third—and more commonly considered aesthetic—*Critique of Judgment* responds to this separation. While the different faculties had been subjected in the *Critique of Pure Reason* under the rule of the understanding, and in the *Critique of Practical Reason* under the rule of reason, the *Critique of Judgment* tests the possibility of a free play of the faculties, intending to reconcile the separation between the spheres of the sensible and the intelligible, which the project of transcendental philosophy itself had postulated, by providing reflective judgment as their intermediary member. As Caygill notes, this offers a version of aesthetics “that posits a transcendental difference between sensibility and understanding in the first Critique, only to bridge it in the third Critique under the guise of a harmony amongst intuition and understanding.”²⁷

In exemplary circumstances, Kant knew, there were modes of experience that could neither be accounted for by reason, nor by the understanding: the experience of beauty, for example. Thus, the *Critique of Judgment* inquires after the conditions and processes of a subjective judgment of taste, which can be conducted neither by reason nor by the understanding—as that would unduly subject sentiments or sensations, which do not belong to reason, under its rule, something that Kant held against Baumgarten's aesthetic project. The cases that Kant's third Critique focuses on are a “disinterested pleasure” in the beautiful, on the one hand, and the experience of collapsing synthetical powers of the mind vis-à-vis the sublime, on the other.²⁸ In both cases the exercise of judgment as an a priori faculty is at stake, and its critique is written with the transcendental subject in mind. What is experienced in the sublime, according to Kant, is the collapse of the mind's power to synthesize, its failure of cognition and understanding. Such moments of a loss of power of the mind incite the free play of the faculties, and test the limits of the mind without contributing anything to the understanding. Although Kant confronted these challenges and provided—as Derrida shows—the paradox of both a separable part and a “nondetachable part, since it forms the articulation between two other”²⁹ faculties—a “*Mittelglied* [that . . .] forms the articulation of the theoretical and the practical (in the Kantian sense)”³⁰—he tried to defuse the explosiveness this intermediary member could have implied. Faithful to the transcendental separation between intuition (*Anschauung*) and concept (*Begriff*), reflective judgment could not but be subjectively aesthetic—that is: of no contribution to the understanding, and laying the basis for what we have called subjective aesthetics, which has defined the realm of aesthetics for the next two centuries,

although the paradoxical complexities and potentials of Kant's aesthetics have been noted from early discontents to recent deconstructions, by "Kant's critics from Schiller (1793) and Hegel (1835) to Derrida (1978) and Lyotard (1988)."³¹

Nevertheless, the decisive cuts that his philosophy made for the conception of thinking by severing sensibility from the understanding largely remain determinant for the territorial limits between philosophy and literature, and continue to inform the definition of aesthetics as being of no epistemological import. Caygill is certainly very right to remind us that Kant's take on sensibility and understanding cannot be reduced to a simply oppositional or hierarchical relation, and that Kant was precisely trying to avoid "the idealist Scylla of reducing sense to the 'confused perceptions of reason'" (which Kant criticized Leibniz for), and "the empiricist Charybdis of abstracting reason from sense"³² (which were his discontents with the sensualists and Locke). Accordingly,

Kant argued that both tendencies elided the distinction between sensibility and the understanding, the one by subordinating sensibility to understanding, the other understanding to sensibility. [For Kant, s]ensibility must be distinguished from the understanding, but nevertheless possesses a formal element; the formal element, however, does not subsume the objects of sensibility in the same way as a concept. Similarly, sensibility is receptive, as opposed to the spontaneity of the understanding, but this does not mean that it is a passive *tabula rasa* merely registering impressions. . . . Thus sensibility is neither the confused perception of a rational perfection maintained by the Leibnizian school, nor the immediate receptivity to impressions of Locke, but seems to partake of aspects of both positions, while being fully committed to neither.³³

Given the aspirations of transcendental philosophy, Kant maintained the a priori of the transcendental aesthetic of the first Critique, and tried to combine or balance the rational character of idealist accounts of sensibility with the receptive character of empiricist accounts. The crucial point, which these rough outlines of Kantian aesthetics were meant to lay out, is that albeit designing transcendental philosophy as neither idealist nor empiricist, it proclaims a separation between sensibility and the understanding, which deprived the former of epistemological import and cognitive value. Against this background, we can again take up our question after what it was that in turn sparked the dissatisfactions with Kant, and called forth the "para-philosophical" writings Caygill had listed before. The bone of contention was the same Kant had struggled with: the relation of sensibility and reason and the exigencies of thinking. This not only incited the later reactions to Kant, but it had already provoked Kant's disappointment with Baumgarten, and his reinvention of the precursor's aesthetics. Nearly every introductory text on the history of aesthetics cites

Baumgarten as the founder of the discipline.³⁴ As the disciplinary narration of aesthetics goes, Baumgarten's aesthetics attempted to recuperate sensibility to its due status in philosophical thinking, but remained—in the formation of the discipline—a mere precursor of Kant. Presuming that Baumgarten's aesthetics unduly mixed the realms of sensibility and reason, Kant severed the two in accordance with his own transcendental project, as we saw, and rejected the continuity between them, upon which Baumgarten's whole notion of aesthetics had, as Kant judged, erroneously, rested. Most of nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetic debates subscribed to the separation Kant had posited, and aesthetics became the philosophy of art, approaching art as the realm of subjective experience, and the test site of processes of cognition, of the play of the faculties, but of no cognitive value itself. Recently, a far greater complexity to the history of aesthetics—and with this, the potentials of aesthetics—has come into view, and it becomes increasingly evident that Baumgarten cannot seamlessly be discarded as a Kantian antecedent, and that his work “instead of being history, continued to break ground and take effects that by-passed Kant.”³⁵ The transition from Baumgarten to Kant did not correct certain conceptual shortcomings, but it was a break that set a new course for subsequent aesthetic debates. And as a break, as Haverkamp remarked, this transition entailed an excess that bypassed Kant and continued to resurface in the incalculable results of the “para-philosophical” writings, which expressed a discontent with the Kantian framework. With its specific approach to aesthetics, and its specific historical position immediately before Kant, Baumgarten's work harbored a potential that in philosophy “has been blocked for the longest time by Kant's Copernican revolution,”³⁶ but which had nevertheless incalculable literary, “para-philosophical” effects.

The Folds of Small Perceptions

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten is generally considered the founder of aesthetics. He taught philosophy, ethics, and law at Viadrina University in Frankfurt an der Oder at the Prussian border with Poland, and lectured on a *disciplina aethetica* for the first time in 1742. The notes of these lectures formed the basis for his 1750–58 publication of the two-volume *Aesthetica*. Baumgarten's project, which culminated in the *Aesthetica*, was to develop aesthetics as a *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*, and to make it the sibling of rational thinking and philosophy—or more precisely its younger sister, “like her elder sister logic.”³⁷ Although the main goal of his aesthetics was and is generally seen as the attempt to emancipate sensibility from its “expulsion” from thinking by a too narrowly framed logic, the precise manner of this emancipation has always been under contention. Baumgarten's claim of a *cognitio sensitiva*, translated perhaps best as *sensate thinking*, stresses the epistemological dimension of the sensate and aesthetics as the field of inquiry into such a widened concept of thinking. Rather

than seeing aesthetics as a philosophizing on art as subjective experience, and on the mind's limits demarcated in this experience, Baumgarten's aesthetics inquired into the relation of sensate to strictly logical thinking, and proposed a modality of their relation different from the one Kantian aesthetics later very effectively solidified. The opening of the *Aesthetica* asserts: "§ 1 Aesthetics (as a theory of the liberal arts, as doctrine of lower cognition, as the art of beautiful thinking, and as the art of thinking analogous to rational thinking [*ars analogi rationis*]) is the science of sensate thinking" (Ä, 2). Such a program for the discipline implies—and this was one of Baumgarten's main contentions—that sensate thinking is analyzable, that is does not merely function as an indefinable *je ne sais quoi* that marks the outside of understanding (as Descartes had posited it),³⁸ and of which we can only know that we cannot know, that is, define, it. Baumgarten's aesthetics instead proclaimed that we can analyze it—just like its older sister logic, but according to its own terms. In view of this more general epistemological relevance of the "lower faculties," the *Aesthetica* proclaims aesthetics, among other things, "as doctrine of lower cognition" (Ä, 2), something that Baumgarten takes, as we will see momentarily, from Leibniz's theory of perception. The exemplary field to study the epistemological processes specific to the "lower faculties" is art, because the cognitive processes set off by art do not operate according to demonstration and analyses, as logical thinking would, but in a sudden grasping of the vivid impression of the whole. In view of this, art is exemplary for the cognitive process that can be linked to sensate thinking in the wider sense, and to that extent Baumgarten proclaims aesthetics to be equally "a theory of the liberal arts" (Ä, 2); to that extent, Baumgarten's aesthetics expresses "an interest in the thinking [*Erkenntnis*] of art—a thinking in and about art (genitivus subjectivus and objectivus)."³⁹

Throughout the history of reception of Baumgarten, however, his labeling of sensate thinking as an *analogon rationis* has provoked confusion. Proclaiming it as *analogous* to rational thinking led to its dismissal as being modeled *according to* rational thinking, and thus as an eventually rationalist subsumption of the sensate under principles of reason, which was judged to be in line with the Wolffian-Leibnizian tradition, under which Baumgarten was largely subsumed. Reading his *analogon* in this vein is misleading, as it continues to model sensate thinking according to rationality, without considering that a completely different conception of rationality itself is required, if the analogy is supposed to gain plausibility. In other words, such readings misconstrue the process of analogy as a unidirectional assimilation, and not as a reciprocal relation that is in itself not a logic but an analogic relation, that is, a relation that is not predetermined by or subsumable under the rule of reason. Baumgarten's aesthetic propositions run counter to this very model.

In the weekly philosophical letters *Philosophische Briefe von Aletheophilus*, which Baumgarten published in 1741 in German, their fictive author Aletheophilus laments—most markedly in the second letter—the reductive

equation of philosophy with logic. He notes that if philosophy is the science of the enhancement of thinking (*Erkenntnis*), and logic “has as its subject only understanding in the narrow sense and reason . . . , but we possess far more faculties of the soul that serve understanding than those attributed to understanding or reason,”⁴⁰ then one has to conclude that “logic, when claiming to improve our thinking as such, and in the end attending only to distinct insight and its rectification, appears to promise more than it keeps” (*PB*, 6). The reproach that philosophy promises too much, if it restricts its attention to distinct ideas, echoes the debate of the categories of ideas, which Descartes had established in his *Discourse on Method*. Lamenting its narrow scope and wanting to account for a wider approach to the faculties, the friend of truth Aletheophilus directs the reader’s attention to the work of an allegedly unknown author (Baumgarten himself), whose undertaking is said to stand in line with that of the “baron Leibniz, whose expanse of thorough insight has consistently been most admired” (*PB*, 6). Both Leibniz and Baumgarten, the letter suggests, welcome the revision of a too narrowly conceived philosophy, and wish to broaden it by considering forms of thinking that are other than purely “distinct.” Baumgarten, “thus, envisages it [logic in the narrow sense] as a science of the cognition of the understanding or of distinct insight, and reserves the laws of sensate and vivid thinking, even if it should not rise to distinctness in its most precise sense, for a separate science” (*PB*, 7). This latter has been named “aesthetics . . . [dividing] the science for the enhancement of sensate thinking into the arts that attend to thinking itself and into those that attend mainly to vivid representation” (*PB*, 7). We find here already the two dimensions of aesthetic concern that Baumgarten will later include in his first paragraph of the *Aesthetica*, making aesthetics a doctrine of lower cognition and a theory of the liberal arts. In pointing to the name of this separate science, the letter refers to an even earlier coining of the term *aesthetics*, which had already appeared in Baumgarten’s dissertation *Meditationes Philosophicae de Nonnullis ad Poema Pertinentibus* (1735). The dissertation was the first moment of envisioning a science that should guide the “lower” faculties to think in a sensate manner, making it “the task of logic *in its broader sense* to guide this faculty in the sensate cognition of things.”⁴¹ Such logic in a broader sense encompasses more than what the narrowly outlined field of logic—according to Baumgarten and Leibniz too strictly demarcated by both Descartes and Wolff—permits,⁴² and since logic in the narrow sense concerned itself with ideas (*noeta*) or all things thought, it had to be assisted by a logic that concerned itself with phenomena (*aistheta*) or all things perceived. And this logic of the *aistheta* is coined in the penultimate paragraph of the *Meditationes* (§116) as aesthetics:

The Greek philosophers and the Church fathers have already carefully distinguished between *things perceived* [*αἰσθητά*] and *things known* [*νοητά*]. . . . Therefore, *things known* are to be known by the

superior faculty as the object of logic; *things perceived* [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or **aesthetic**.⁴³

While this early prospect of 1735 still envisioned the new science as supplement to conceptual logic, Baumgarten gradually transformed it over the course of his writings into a logic in its own right: a logic of sensate thinking.⁴⁴ But from the start, aesthetics was for Baumgarten *aisthetics*, a reconsideration of the perceptive and sensate dimensions of thinking and cognition, of the cognitive dimensions of perception and sensation. He drew not only the support, but also the philosophical tools for such a revision of philosophy from Leibniz, in particular from the latter's work on perception. In distinction to Wolff, who based his own hierarchical conception of the lower faculties—and their disavowal as unruly, unenlightened, and of no epistemological import—on his influential rationalist reading of Leibniz, Baumgarten read Leibniz different than Wolff and argued for the careful consideration of the complex relation of the lower faculties to the understanding and of their contribution to thinking. Asserting a logic of sensate thinking that operates differently from conceptualization, Baumgarten called such *cognitio sensitiva* “confused” thinking in line with Descartes' fourfold categories of ideas. In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes had introduced a fourfold categorization of ideas comprising obscure, clear, confused, and distinct ideas, categories that were taken up and significantly modified by Leibniz and later by Wolff. According to Descartes, only clear and distinct ideas are true, for as long as there is “something confused and obscure about them,” ideas contain some falsity, “because in this they participate in nothing.”⁴⁵ This momentous identification of conceptual, rational thinking with truth, of thinking with clarity and distinctness, and of sensation with confusion and nothingness, provoked Leibniz to revise Descartes' categorization, and to claim not only a positive status for confusion, but also a continuity between the different kinds of ideas. Leibniz's *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas* note that an idea is obscure if it “does not suffice for recognizing the thing represented” and it is clear “when it makes it possible for me to recognize the thing represented.”⁴⁶ Obscure ideas do not allow the recollection of an object, or its recognition as something that one has seen or known before, nor to relate the object to anything else. Clear ideas, on the other hand, allow the recognition of an object. Such clarity, however, and this is Leibniz's crucial point, is a feature of both confused and distinct ideas. Our ideas are clear-confused (or short: confused), if we (re)cognize or know something, but are unable to enumerate the marks of this object in respect to others. “Thus we know colors, odors, flavors, and other particular objects of the senses clearly enough and discern them from each other but only by the simple evidence of the senses and not by marks that can be expressed.”⁴⁷ Ideas are, on the contrary, clear-distinct (or short: distinct), if we recognize something, *and* are able to enumerate its marks.

The decisive point is that these kinds of ideas are not attributed to realms that are severed from each other, but are part of a continual transformation from the perception of confused wholes to the apperception of more distinct, but less marks. As Leibniz notes in *The Principles of Nature and of Grace*,

It does not cease to be true that at bottom confused thoughts are nothing else than a multitude of thoughts which are in themselves like the distinct, but which are so small that each separately does not excite our attention and cause itself to be distinguished. We can even say that there is all at once a virtually infinite number of them contained in our sensations. It is in this that the great difference between confused and distinct thought really consists.⁴⁸

Every concept or clear-distinct idea is the conscious enumeration of the distinct marks of an object. These marks, Leibniz confirms, can be differentiated again into an infinite number of confused ideas, so that “no concept is ever wholly free of a residual confusion from its sensuous origin.”⁴⁹ Contrary to Leibniz, Descartes had not only argued that to the extent to which they contain anything confused, ideas “participate in nothingness,” but Descartes also—as Deleuze observes, and he marks a crucial difference between Descartes and Leibniz here, crucial for our reading of Baumgarten’s reception of Leibniz in opposition to Wolff—“believed that the real distinction between parts entailed separability” (F, 5). From this followed not only the Cartesian separation of two realms—that of reason, the understanding, and thinking from that of sensation, the senses, and the passions—but also the establishment of their relation as one of opposition and hierarchy, and in this Wolff was to follow Descartes more than Leibniz. Leibniz challenged precisely their hierarchical relation when arguing “that at bottom confused thoughts are nothing else than a multitude of thoughts which are in themselves like the distinct,” as we read above. Already in *terminological* distinction to Descartes Leibniz speaks of *perception* and *apperception*: That which confusedly represents a rich multiplicity of marks he calls perception, and its transformation into a conscious enumeration of these (abstracted) marks apperception. The *Monadology* (1714) states (§14): “The passing condition, which involves and represents a multiplicity in the unit or in the simple substance, is nothing but what is called Perception, which is to be distinguished from Apperception or Consciousness...”⁵⁰ By arguing for their difference, yet also for a relation—a movement of endless passing, evolving, and enfolding—between them, Leibniz distances his notion of perception from Cartesian rationalism. The *Monadology* contends that “[i]n this matter the Cartesian view is extremely defective, for it treats as non-existent those perceptions of which we are not consciously aware.”⁵¹ Leibniz makes his own “rationality of the relative”⁵² part of the philosophical endeavor to open alternatives to the

Cartesian division of body and mind and the attribution of thinking only to reason. Leibniz's notion of the fold designates the endless "passing" and relating, whereupon Leibniz bases his theory of perception and affirms, as Deleuze notes, "the relativity of clarity ..., the inseparability of clarity from obscurity, the effacement of contour—in short, the opposition to Descartes, who remained a man of the Renaissance."⁵³ For Leibniz, Deleuze writes, clarity "endlessly plunges into obscurity. Chiaroscuro fills the monad following a series that can move in either of two directions: at one end is a dark background and at the other is light, sealed" (*F*, 32). The affirmation of a zone of chiaroscuro, from which two series spring forth and come to pass as the differentiated states of a more or less dark background and a more or less lit foreground, is the significant revision that Deleuze attributes to Leibniz. It is this affirmation of two similar series, their analogy yet difference, that Baumgarten—as I would like to suggest here—took from Leibniz.⁵⁴ To point to the fact that the more or less dark background passes into clarity as soon as it is conceptualized, explicated, or defined, means, on the one hand, *not* to attribute it to nothingness, and, on the other hand, to *account for* its different modality: a modality we have to think more as the "insistence" of a dark background, and not so much as an expressible, graspable existence.

The difficult question this poses is how something that is inseparable (and in that sense continuous or gradual), can be or become really distinct (in the sense of different); or, as Deleuze puts it, "the point is one of knowing how we move from minute perceptions to conscious perceptions" (*F*, 87), from perception to apperception. In the *Discourse on Metaphysics* Leibniz gives a well-known example intended to illustrate this paradoxical relation of something inseparable, yet really different. Arguing against the nothingness Descartes attributed to confused idea, Leibniz explains:

[O]ur confused sensations result from a really infinite variety of perceptions. This is somewhat like the confused murmur heard by those who approach the seashore, which comes from the accumulation of innumerable breaking waves. For if out of several perceptions, which do not harmonize so as to make one, there is no single one which surpasses the others, and if these perceptions make impressions that are about equally strong and equally capable of holding the attention of the soul, it can perceive them only confusedly.⁵⁵

As long as none of the many small perceptions stands out from among the others, they receive the same attention and their effect is of equal power. Their perception is confused. However, as soon as at least two waves are perceived as "heterogeneous enough to become part of a relation that can allow the perception of a third, one that 'excels' over the others and comes to consciousness" (*F*, 88)

the differential relation between them allows the third to pass the threshold of attention. In §17 of the *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten accordingly notes that “sensate thinking is, according to its main designation, the entirety of representations remaining below the threshold of logical distinction” (Ä, 10). Or, we could say, the threshold of the excitement of attention. The coming to consciousness—as for example in the case of someone approaching the seashore—is not due to a selection *made by* consciousness. Rather, it is the differential relation that produces the selection, and thereby produces consciousness, or distinct ideas. It is not the conscious mind that selects perceptions and produces understanding, but “[d]ifferential relations always select minute perceptions that play a role in each case, and bring to light or clarify the conscious perception that comes forth” (F, 90). Likewise, this does not imply that by crossing the threshold confused perceptions become distinctly cognizable. Rather, the moment they are distinctly cognized, they have already ceased to be confused. But at the same time, and this is all-decisive, as long as they are confused, they are—albeit not consciously enumerable—not nothing, but rather a different modality of cognition, which Baumgarten calls sensate thinking, and which operates by confused ideas: ideas that are—as Jeffrey Barnouw aptly puts it—“taken simply as they are given in experience; a sensuous idea is an unanalyzed whole that may include a number of undifferentiated elements *fused* together.”⁵⁶ In this sense, they are con-fused, forming blocks, which Barnouw associates with simplicity here. This is where the present study intervenes and from where it begins to pursue an exemplary set of figures of simplicity, whose thinking implies many of the elements discussed here as con-fusion. When speaking of an undifferentiated whole here, we must by no means forget that the relation of small perceptions to apperceptions is not one of parts to a whole, or of a negatively construed opposition. For Leibniz, “the relation of the inconspicuous perceptions to conscious perception does not go from part to whole, but from the ordinary to what is notable or remarkable” (F, 87), from a conglomerate of perceptions beneath the threshold of attention to marks or clear-distinct ideas, which have come to awareness. “Inconspicuous perceptions are . . . not parts of conscious perception, but requisites or genetic elements, ‘differentials of consciousness’” (F, 89). It is this relation of continuity that Baumgarten takes up, and which forms the basis of his *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*.

At the beginning of the *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten thinks of likely objections against this new *scientia cognitionis sensitivae*, one of the main ones being an objection to confusion. He states and begins to refute it as follows:

Against our science it could further be argued that . . . § 7 5) Confusion is the mother of errors. My answer: a) But it is an indispensable prerequisite for the discovery of truth, since nature does not leap from darkness into the clarity of thinking. From night the path only leads through twilight to noon. b) Due to this one precisely

has to trouble oneself with confused knowledge, so that no errors arise, as they do plentifully and in wide range with those, who do not attend to it. c) This is not to recommend confusion, but to improve thinking, in as much as something confused is necessarily admixed to it. (Ä, 4)

In clear lineage with Leibniz, Baumgarten insists here on the *continuity* of confusion and clarity, sensation and reason, and in one of the most insightful recent rereadings of Baumgarten's aesthetics, Caygill repeatedly emphasizes that it was this principle of continuity that Baumgarten stressed throughout his work: "The fundamental principle which Baumgarten developed between 1737 and 1750 was continuity—between sensibility and reason, intuition and concept, sensitive and rational perfection."⁵⁷ Caygill views precisely this as his "rather Leibnizian than Wolffian (or Kantian)"⁵⁸ heritage. With this principle of continuity, Baumgarten's aesthetics, on the one hand, stresses that conscious apperceptions are bound to their grounding in perception, in the indefinable multiplicity of small perceptions. In that sense, aesthetics, far from claiming a return to an originary sensibility or feelings, exposes and discusses the constitutive, engendering relation between small perceptions and apperceptions, and accounts for their continuous *chiaroscuro*—the fact that "[c]larity emerges from obscurity by way of a genetic process, and so too clarity plunges into darkness" (F, 90). In this sense, aesthetics is meant to "improve thinking, in as much as something confused is necessarily admixed to it" (Ä, 4), that is, become the discipline that occupies itself with this logic of a folded relation between perceptions and apperceptions. Such a continuous, folded relation is a prerequisite if we want to conceive of two *analogous* modes of thinking: that is, conceive of them not as a similarity, where one side (sensation) is modeled after the other (privileged) side (rationality), but as an analogy, where "two things can be thought as being really distinct without being separable" (F, 55).

On the other hand—and this is why many readers have rightly pointed to the doubled agenda in Baumgarten's work⁵⁹—aesthetics as Baumgarten envisioned it was to occupy itself with *one* side of this folded relation in particular: with "confused" or sensate thinking. It was to analyze its specificity, its operations on the basis of an ambiguous richness of phenomena that is only given under the condition that their marks cannot be made distinct. It was to be not only the "doctrine of lower cognition"—making a more general epistemological claim for sensation as thinking—but also "a theory of the liberal arts," as we heard earlier. To these two dimensions, Baumgarten adds a third—also in the very first paragraph of the *Aesthetica*: aesthetics was to foster at the same time "the art of beautiful thinking, ... the art of thinking analogous to rational thinking [*ars analogi rationis*]" (Ä, 2). On the basis of Baumgarten's and Leibniz's fundamental claim of a continuous relation between sensation and thinking, it is this "art of thinking analogous to rational thinking" (that is made

possible by *and* demanded by this fundamental epistemological claim) that I pursue in the figures of simplicity sketched by Kleist and Melville. Their figures expose what might come close to such a “thinking analogous to rational thinking” and with them, Kleist and Melville continue, experiment with, and test the assertions made by Leibnizian and Baumgartian aesthetics. Before we can look at the different dimensions of such sensate thinking their figures display, we need to briefly look at how Baumgarten—who is far more explicit in this than Leibniz—sketches such a putting into practice of the continuous relation between sensation and thinking.

Sensate Thinking

When Hannes Böhringer begins his reconsiderations of aesthetics in his 1985 text *Attention im Clair-obscur: Die Avantgarde* with the assertion that “the world is chiaroscuro”⁶⁰ he echoes many of the concerns discussed above. Not only is a reevaluation of the potential of aesthetics at stake in such an assertion, but its relevance to how we approach knowledge and thinking. What Böhringer asserts—prosaic as it may sound—is that “[s]ome things are clear, many are unclear. At closer inspection, what is clear becomes diffuse, the dark by and by a little clearer. . . . Reality is mixed, chiaroscuro.”⁶¹ The challenging problem that arises from such a basic claim, however, is how one can “know” under those circumstances. To account for this chiaroscuro of the world *and* to sketch an *ars*—an art of thinking and acting—vis-à-vis this chiaroscuro was the aim of Baumgarten’s aesthetics, and might be one of the reasons for the recently renewed interest in it. The dimension of his aesthetics that addressed the “art of thinking analogous to rational thinking” was to enhance our thinking of this mixed reality, something philosophy promises (or Baumgarten felt it did or should), only to restrict itself to conceptual-mathematical thinking. His discontent arose from the conviction that distinct enumeration and definition of attributes comes at the cost of losing the multidimensional and rich complexity of the whole. What distinctness establishes is the concept and definition of an object, which only comes about by way of abstraction. “§ 560 . . . But what is abstraction, if not a loss? For similar reasons, one can only carve a marble ball from an irregular block of marble if paying the dues of a loss of material substance. . . .” (Ä, 539) Thus, when attending to the perception of the whole (that is, when we are interested in *phenomena*, as given to the senses), the striving for enumeration of marks in view of distinctness misses the point. Accordingly, Baumgarten saw, a transformed notion of truth is relevant in these cases—an “aestheticologic truth”: “§ 561 Thus, we presuppose that the striving for aestheticological truth first and foremost addresses material perfection (§ 558) and therefore tries to grasp the objects of a *singularly* determined metaphysical truth” (Ä, 539; emphasis added). Such an approach departs from measuring knowledge according to its universal applicability, and speaks for

an assessment of singular phenomena. Without going into the implications for a thought of singularity here, it is crucial in our present context that Baumgarten ascribes a particular force to this type of aestheticological truth, which sensate thinking can arrive at, and thereby expands Leibniz's reevaluation of obscure and confused ideas.⁶² While Leibniz had advanced the possibility that clear-confused ideas can (re)cognize something, without its concept being clear-distinct, Baumgarten claimed not merely that, but attributed a specific force to this aesthetic mode of cognition. What is lost in terms of conceptual distinctness is gained in terms of sensate effect. Already the *Metaphysica* (1742) pointed to the greater effect of confused ideas, which his aesthetics would later turn into one of its crucial aspects. The *Metaphysica* notes that confusion is valued for heightening the force of a perception:

§ 517 The more marks a perception (idea) enfolds, the more powerful it is (§ 23, 515). Thus, an obscure perception including more marks than a clear one is more powerful than this latter, as much as a confused one including more marks than a distinct one is again more powerful than this latter one. PERCEPTIONS (ideas) that include more in themselves are called PREGNANT. Therefore, pregnant perceptions are more powerful.⁶³

Being pregnant with marks or meanings, they have a greater force. They move. Or as Christoph Menke notes in his recent work on force as a central concept of aesthetics: "The sensate-beautiful image is in its ground and content indeterminable, but just in this manner it moves 'the whole world.'"⁶⁴ Baumgarten speaks in this context of the richness (*ubertas aesthetica*) of poetry, works of art, and phenomena in general; a richness due to the confused multiplicity of marks and lost as soon as these are conceptually cleared. Once individual marks are distinctly grasped, consciously enumerated, and the manifold implications conceptually dissolved, the very power and clarity of sensate thinking vanishes. Far from the deficiency attributed to clear-confused ideas by Descartes and Wolff, Baumgarten's aesthetics argues for the specific clarity of sensate thinking as an analogous mode of cognition. Solms points to the slight but significant difference between Baumgarten's notion of a pregnant perception (pointing to the translation of *praegnans* as meaningful),⁶⁵ and Kant's notion of an aesthetic idea as an idea that "occasions much thought, without, however, any definite thought, i.e. any concept, being capable of being adequate to it" (*CJ*, 197). Transcendentally framed, the Kantian aesthetic idea remains tied to intuition (*Anschauung*) and is of no epistemological import. It can only occasion thought. Baumgarten, on the contrary, holds that sensate thinking is, within its own fields, which are primarily art and life, an autonomous form of thinking. This link between art and life is crucial, as it broadens the scope of Baumgarten's aesthetics to a certain condition of thinking in life—a certain