Baumgarten's aesthetics was thus based on the ancient definition of the beautiful in terms of conformity to the structure of perception and consciousness. Sublimity in its modern form, however, is a crucial variant of, and departure from, the ideas I have traced. Edmund Burke retained the idea of the proportion between physical sense and stimulus in his definition of the beautiful, but the sublime was based on a disproportion in the same terms, and the aesthetic ideal of sublimity, embracing the fine arts and the feats of technology, has been crucial for modernity. The ancient assumption of the conformity of perception or consciousness to structure in the larger world is lost, although Kant might be seen to have reintegrated the sublime with the traditional scheme by pointing out the mind's capacity to think and then transcend the sublime, if not to imagine it, and by replacing the classical idea of the soul as rational with the Christian idea of the soul as radically free, defining art as the expression and symbol of that freedom. In general, the old scheme of the particular intellect, of imagination and memory, so intimately related to the emergence of the aesthetic, might be seen as an armature for the development of modern subjectivity in all its forms, a development to which aesthetics has also been central.

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**David Summers**

**Theological Origins of Aesthetics**

The emergence of modern aesthetic theories in early-eighteenth-century Europe—whether the essential attributes of such theories are taken to include reference to the arts as a system, analysis of sensate cognition and the pleasures it affords, anticipation of ideas of autonomous aesthetic judgment and experience as articulated later by Kant and others, or simply coherent theoretical discussion of a variety of subjects (e.g., beauty, art, taste, etc.) now comprehended within a single philosophical subdiscipline—can be explained historically as an outgrowth of contemporary debates about moral education and the role of beauty and art in it. These debates themselves grew out of religious and theological developments of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, observable throughout the Western world and now conventionally associated with the birth of Enlightenment religion.

Chief among these developments was a growing resistance to parts of the Augustinian legacy of early modern Christianity. This resistance appeared amidst what can be described, broadly speaking, as seventeenth-century restagings of the famous pamphlet debate in the 1520s between Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) and Martin Luther (1483–1546) about the freedom of the human will, in which one of the chief points of conflict had been the extent to which post-lapsarian man is naturally capable of acting in a way that helps his prospects for salvation. Does God's supreme and manifest justice necessitate the possibility of virtuous action (Erasmus) or must salvation be regarded as an utterly unmerited gift bestowed on sinful man by a merciful and inescapable God (Luther)? By the turn of the eighteenth century, following the lead of such theologians as Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) in the Netherlands, resurgent partisans of Erasmus within Europe's established churches as well as among a variety of dissenting groups were vigorously rejecting or qualifying the mainstream Protestant teaching that human beings are by nature radically depraved and therefore utterly incapable of doing good in this life without the supernatural assistance of divine grace. The dynamics of this debate can be observed in the places best known for their contributions to the emergence of aesthetic theory: England and Scotland, Germany, and even France, where the position more akin to Luther's tended to be represented among Catholics by Jansenists, such as Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) and Pierre Nicole (1625–1695), and criticized by, among others, François-Emmanuel de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon (1651–1715), the archbishop of Cambrai.

By the early eighteenth century, within the university-taught subjects of moral philosophy and natural jurisprudence the subject of this debate had acquired a generic name: the "foundation of morality" or, in the German-speaking world, *Grundlage der Moral*. At issue, in general terms, was the extent to which human beings can become genuinely virtuous by exercising faculties they naturally possess. Crucial subquestions
included (1) the identity of the natural faculties that needed to be exercised, and (2) the extent to which the successful exercise of those faculties must involve discovering God's existence and understanding divine law. In the Protestant versions of this debate, where the connections with the origins of aesthetic theory have been most closely studied, two basic positions tended to be represented.

One position, characteristic of many Lutheran and Calvinist theologies, held that human beings in their natural state are simply incapable of acting in accordance with moral principles, including those contained in divine law, with any motivation other than a crass self-interest constituted by fear of the pain of divine punishments and desire for the pleasure of divine rewards. Genuine virtue, on this view, requires a fundamental change or "regeneration" of the human soul by God, intervening supernaturally at a particular moment in the course of a person's life, such that the person's motivation to act in accordance with moral principles ceases to be exclusively a desire for reward and fear of punishment and incorporates instead a disinterested love of God and neighbor. Key elements of this view—especially the assumption that human beings are naturally motivated only by crass self-interest—could be found in widely known works of political philosophy, natural jurisprudence, and social commentary by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), and Bernard Mandeville (bap. 1670–1733).

The more "Erasmian" position in the debate, by contrast, held that human beings are indeed capable of reaching a substantial degree of genuine virtue without paying attention to the rewards and punishments attached to divine law, simply by cultivating and exercising a naturally inborn, instinctive desire for virtue itself. Moral education, on this view, is a progressive process of character-formation from which, to some extent, even atheists can benefit and to which philosophical instruction can contribute even in the absence of exposure to the revealed word of God. Elements of this view have been traced by both modern and early modern scholars not only to Erasmus and Arminius, but also to ancient and medieval accounts of synergesis as a natural human inclination to the good, such as that of Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274); to the "federal ideology" of Reformed theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669); and to the well-known argument by Grotius that natural law would retain obligatory force even if it were conceded that God did not exist.

Many early-eighteenth-century aesthetic theories grew directly or indirectly out of this theologically inflected debate about the foundation of morality. Some of the best-known advocates of the view that genuinely moral motivation (or, in the standard philosophical vocabulary of the time, "internal obligation") could be instilled in human beings by an educational process that had little or no recourse to divine law turned to the experience of beauty as a crucial instrument in such an education, thereby becoming what later generations would refer to as aesthetic theorists. With several notable exceptions, they drew on the idea, well known since antiquity, that beauty is the affect-arousing aspect of perfection or goodness, and they argued that contemplating beauty with the senses perceptual faculties of the human mind can produce a motivation to act that supports or complements internal moral obligation. Explaining the details of this process involved developing criteria for assessing the beauty of, among other objects, works of art. As a result, theories of art often functioned as sites for implicit or explicit debate about the foundation of morality, even as they coalesced into a self-contained philosophical genre distinct from moral philosophy.

**German Contributions.** The theological and moral-philosophical origins of aesthetic theory in Brandenburg-Prussia, where, in 1735, Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762) coined *aesthetica* to denote a new philosophical subdiscipline, can be found in the emergence of German Pietism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. To the extent that Pietism constituted a coherent movement, the ministers and theologians at its vanguard in the eighteenth century, including especially those in the city of Halle, presented themselves as reformers of established territorial churches mired in the "Scholasticism" of what has come to be known as Lutheran late orthodoxy. Objecting to the "sterile" orthodox teaching that faith constitutes publicly confessed assent to sound doctrine and is acquired by hearing God's word and receiving the sacraments, Pietists insisted that faith be understood as an inner renewal of the human soul, produced by the morally regenerative effect of the Holy Spirit inhabiting the individual reader of God's word and experienced by that individual as a moment of rebirth. Citing Philippians 1:9, they referred to this experience of the Holy Spirit as *aisthesis* and argued, against their orthodox critics, that only those faithful who possessed it in common with the Bible's inspired human authors could truly grasp the Bible's spiritual truths. This argument, characteristic of the first two generations of Pietist theology in Halle, served also as a bulwark against such biblical critics as Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736), who had seized upon inaccuracies and incoherence within the text to question the Bible's divine authority and to whom Pietists replied by defending suspect passages as the sublime products of divinely inspired authors whose occasional incoherence and unreliability should be taken as a sign of the Holy Spirit's overpowering effect on their affects.

With regard to the foundation of morality and, more broadly, the ability of human beings to contribute meaningfully to their own salvation, Pietists took a position closer to Luther than to Erasmus. On the one hand, by contrast with Lutheran late orthodoxy, they accepted that moral education was a progressive process requiring individuals to attempt to transform their own character by various techniques of habituation that made full use of the power of the senses to arouse affects, including singing, journal-keeping, contemplation of the wounds of Christ, and meditation on the text of the Bible.
But they also considered awareness of divine law and, more specifically, the experience of despair at one's own inability to conform to that law to be a crucial tool for the correction of one's sinful desires with the Holy Spirit's help. At the University of Halle, this position on the foundation of morality became a major point of controversy between members of the Pietist theology faculty and their colleague in the philosophy faculty, Christian Wolff (1679–1754).

By contrast with his Pietist colleagues, Wolff taught that human beings' natural capacity for virtue resides fundamentally in their "rational appetite": an instinctive desire for "perfection" glossed by Wolff as a "natural internal obligation" to live in accordance with human nature. Drawing on Aquinas, Wolff defined perfection as the harmonious functioning of parts for the good of the whole, which, in the case of human beings, meant the greatest possible health of the body and soul. What conduces to the perfection of a human being, Wolff asserted, is discoverable even by atheists, who can increase the effectiveness of their own rational appetite vis-à-vis their otherwise overpowering and distracting affects by learning how to let their actions be guided as exclusively as possible by moral syllogisms whose terms are as distinct (i.e., precisely defined) as possible. This program of moral education ran into heavy criticism by Wolff's theological colleagues and their allies in the law faculty, including especially followers of Pufendorf, who argued that human beings' natural depravity made the rational appetite unreliable and the affects insuppressible and that recognizing the external obligation created by divine law was the only way to curb anti-social behavior, prompt human beings to question their own selfish desires, and begin the process that would end in the requisite act of regenerative grace by God.

Arriving in Halle in 1727, several years after the quarrel between Wolff and his critics had resulted in Wolff's banishment from Brandenburg-Prussia, Alexander Baumgarten appears to have joined a generation of Halle theology and philosophy students, including his own brother Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten (1706–1757), who found Wolff's philosophical system profoundly appealing but who, probably under Pietist influence, came to recognize the limitations of Wolff's rationalistic approach to moral education. The 1735 dissertation on poetry in which Baumgarten first called for the study of aesthetic philosophy registers this recognition. From a definition of poetry as "perfect sensate discourse," Baumgarten extrapolates that poems are perfect in proportion to the "extensive clarity," not the distinctness, of the ideas they convey, from which he concludes that the best poetry arouses as many affects as possible. This line of argument functioned not only as an implicit defense of the divine inspiration of highly emotional prophetic utterances in the poetic books of the Bible, much like a standard Pietist response to biblical critics such as Lé Clerc, but also as an implicit critique of Wolff, who had urged the suppression of affects for the sake of the unimpeded exercise of the rational appetite. Baumgarten continued to develop this critique in his later works, including his textbooks on metaphysics (1739), ethics (1740), and aesthetics (1750–1758). He allowed, with Wolff, that atheists are capable of a certain degree of genuine virtue, motivated by "natural internal obligation," but he systematically denied that distinct ideas are the only source of such obligation and that the cultivation of the rational appetite is therefore the principal foundation of morality. Extensively clear ideas (i.e., sensate ideas of concrete, particular things that can be distinguished from other things but do not admit of precise definition in abstract terms) are on Baumgarten's account capable of producing at least as much motivating "force"—which is to say, they are at least as "living"—as abstract ideas that engage the rational appetite. Pursuing perfection, the highest ethical imperative, therefore requires human beings to cultivate the sensate cognitive faculties responsible for generating extensively clear ideas. Explaining how to arrive at the perfect functioning of these faculties, which Baumgarten calls "beautiful thinking," is the explicit purpose of Baumgarten's aesthetics. The issues of moral education addressed by Baumgarten, which had direct ramifications for the study of homiletics and biblical exegesis, among other subjects, were also debated by Baumgarten's students, above all Georg Friedrich Meier (1718–1777), and by other contemporaries, including Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766), Johann Jacob Bodmer (1698–1783), and Johann Jacob Breitinger (1701–1776), who articulated positions on those issues in aesthetic theories of their own.

**English and Scottish Contributions.** The aesthetic theories of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), and several of Hutcheson's contemporaries emerged out of debates about the foundation of morality with roots in theological controversies akin in some respects to those in the Brandenburg-Prussia of Baumgarten. At the center of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) runs a line of argument designed to challenge the political power of the established church by denying the natural depravity of human beings. In reaction to well-known arguments by his tutor John Locke (1632–1704) and, more distantly, by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Shaftesbury argued that divine law is not the only moral touchstone. Rather, the natural predilection of human beings to take pleasure in virtue, when properly cultivated, can lead them to become genuinely virtuous without any need for guidance by revealed truths or for motivation by the threat of divine punishments and promise of divine rewards. What has come to be known as Shaftesbury's aesthetic theory constitutes an elaboration and defense of this position. Moral education, in Shaftesbury's view, is a gradual process of finding the pleasure in contemplating ever greater degrees of beauty, which Shaftesbury describes as essentially the orderly, harmonious functioning of parts to serve the purpose of a greater whole.
beautiful works of art, from which we progress to the contemplation of a still-greater orderliness in the virtuous mind, then to communities of minds, and ultimately to the divine mind that governs the universe.

By the mid-1720s, Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics* found a warm welcome among reformers within Scotland’s Presbyterian Church, including such aesthetic theorists as Hutcheson and George Turnbull (1698–1748), who were seeking to revise several traditional Presbyterian teachings related to the foundation of morality, especially (1) that original sin had left human beings naturally incapable of transcending their own depravity without help from a divine act of re-generative grace, and (2) that the only reliable instrument for promoting virtue among the unregenerated was knowledge of divine law and of the rewards and punishments attached to its observance or transgression. In sympathy with Shaftesbury, and in opposition to defenders of self-interest as the only reliable psychological foundation of a flourishing economy, such as Mandeville, these reformers asserted that human beings naturally contain within themselves the capacity for virtue, granted to them by God in order that they may find happiness in this world. They assigned the task of cultivating this natural capacity for virtue to the two institutions they wished to reform: the church and the university, where under their influence Shaftesbury became a staple of the moral philosophy curriculum.

Like Shaftesbury, several of these reformers published aesthetic theories in conjunction with arguments about the foundation of morality. The best known and most influential was Hutcheson, who designed his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) to affirm that human beings are naturally capable of virtue: We possess an irreducible “moral sense” that identifies benevolence (the supreme virtue, on Hutcheson’s account), plus an instinctive motivation to act benevolently without regard to the “concomitant” pleasures of such action. Hutcheson thereby deviated from Shaftesbury’s presupposition that virtue must be motivated by desire for the pleasure afforded by contemplating beauty. Accordingly, he offered a slightly different account of beauty as “uniformity amidst variety,” without emphasizing the suitability of parts to serve the purpose of a greater whole, and he explicitly cast his argument affirming the existence of an innate sense of beauty as merely a buttress for his more consequential argument in favor of the existence of the moral sense. In this regard, Hutcheson appears not to have been representative of the mainstream, even among his fellow Presbyterian reformers. As Hutcheson weathered criticism from David Hume (1711–1776), among others, for his rigid insistence that instinctive benevolence utterly un别墅ared by self-interest can be the only true motivation for any virtue, including even justice (the principle of cohesion within large human societies), several of his younger colleagues at the university of Edinburgh, such as Hugh Blair (1718–1800) and William Cleghorn (1719–1754), embraced a model of moral education more like Shaftesbury’s. Other authors of aesthetic theories, such as Adam Smith (1723–1790), even as they kept their distance from both Shaftesbury’s and Hutcheson’s moral educational programs—or, as in the case of the American minister and philosopher Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), treated the very project of promoting natural morality with deep suspicion—nonetheless continued to engage in debate about the foundation of morality and about the relationship between the experience of beauty and moral education and regarded establishing sound criteria of good literature and art as a means of taking a position in these debates.

[See also Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb; Blair, Hugh; Cooper, Anthony Ashley; Gottsched, Johann Christoph; Hume, David; Hutcheson, Francis; Meier, Georg Friedrich; Smith, Adam; and Taste.]

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**SIMON GROTE**

**ORNAMENT.** Within the Western artistic context, “ornament” is commonly thought of as a visual, decorative element that appears on an eclectic variety of objects. At the simplest