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Baumgarten the Beautician. The Origins of Cosmetics as an Aesthetic Discourse

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Abstract
In this essay, I intend to reconstruct the first encounter between the cosmetic discourse and the newly born aesthetic discipline in the German mid-eighteenth century. Examining the new aesthetic conceptualization of cosmetics, I aim to investigate both its significance within the cosmetic tradition and its implications for the rise of philosophical aesthetics with regard to the relationship with corporeal beauty.

Keywords
Cosmetics; *Aisthesis*; Beauty Care; Baumgarten; Enlightenment Aesthetics.

1. *Introduction*

It is common experience to see the banners of Beauty Centers in our cities. One need not be a philosopher to realize that they are not advertising research centers (or at least theoretical research centers), but places in which cosmetic practices are carried out. While up to few years ago the linguistic ambiguity provided a good *captatio benevolentiae* for courses of aesthetics at universities, today this polysemy is taken much more seriously. In fact, with the growing interest in everyday aesthetics, cosmetics has gained acceptance also from the point of view of philosophical aesthetics.[1] To be sure, cosmetics has always had an aesthetic background, not least for its etymological reference to *kosmos*, order, which was the hinge of the ancient thought about beauty. The question I intend to answer in this paper is more specific, and concerns a blind spot in the history of both cosmetics and aesthetics: when and how does the cosmetic discourse approach the discipline of aesthetics? The hypothesis I aim to advance is that this convergence is not the fruit of the last few decades, but is rooted in the invention of aesthetics as an independent branch

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[1] See, for example, Di Stefano 2018. For the contemporary relationship between aesthetics and cosmetic surgery, see also Tambone *et al.* 2015; Persichetti *et al.* 2021.

of philosophy. The reconstruction I propose here deals in particular with the philosophers Christian Wolff (1679-1754), Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762), Georg Friedrich Meier (1718-1777), the physician Ernst Anton Nicolai (1722-1802), and the anonymous treatise *Leibdiener der Schönheit* (1747), pointing out the relationship between nascent aesthetics and the enhancement of bodily beauty. More generally, my paper offers an insight into the neglected status of everyday aesthetics at the beginning of modern aesthetics.

In what follows, I will first of all outline the issue of bodily beauty in Baumgarten's time, making reference in particular to Wolff and to Ernst Anton Nicolai, who devotes a volume to this theme. In the third section, I will briefly look at the history of cosmetics, pointing out the medical and theological condemnation it underwent from antiquity up to the eighteenth century. In this way, it will be possible to better understand the role of cosmetics in the historical context in which Baumgarten introduced the discipline of aesthetics. In the fourth section, I will directly look at Baumgarten's treatment of cosmetics within the new framework of aesthetics, pinpointing the novelty of his approach. In the conclusion, I will highlight the consequences of Baumgarten's approach both for aesthetics and for cosmetics.

2. *Bodily Beauty in Baumgarten's Context*

The problem of corporeal beauty was a common theme in Baumgarten's philosophical milieu. In his *Deutsche Physiologie* (1725), Wolff explained that the human body is made in a way that its non-paired parts are in the middle and look like each other at their extremities; its side parts, instead, are double and similar to each other (Wolff 1725, §§ 15-16). Since these rules comply with the concept of eurythmy (*Wohlgereimheit*), which Wolff had used in his treatise on civil architecture (Wolff 1725, § 26; see also Wolff 1715, § 29), it is legitimate to conclude that the external form of the body is made in a eurythmic manner. Since eurythmy contributes to the beauty of a body in general, the eurythmy of the human body, along with the proportions of the parts of the body to one another and to the body as a whole, will promote its beauty.

Building on Wolff's reflections, the physician Ernst Anton Nicolai, one of Georg Friedrich Meier's pupils and colleagues at the university of Halle, devotes a whole essay to the beauty of the hu-

man body (Nicolai 1746).[2] Ironically taking exception to another physician, a friend of his, who had written his inaugural dissertation on the problem of defecation and laxative methods (Büchner & Truppel 1746), Nicolai intends to demonstrate that these aspects do not run against bodily beauty, not least because divine wisdom has placed the anal orifice far away from the sense organs, which are in the forefront and higher part of the body.[3] Starting from the definition of beauty as a perfection accessible to the senses, which directly refers the reader to Wolff and Baumgarten (Nicolai 1746, § 1), Nicolai enumerates a series of precepts concerning the beauty of each part of the body; thus, a beautiful head must be slightly rounded (Nicolai 1746, § 27), while eyebrows must be relatively bushy, but not too thick, and curved (Nicolai 1746, § 28). For all the normativity of the proposal, Nicolai acknowledges the relativity of the concept of beauty: the Native Americans, for example, find squared heads beautiful, while in China women go as far as to deform their feet to obtain the small size imposed by their aesthetic canon (Nicolai 1746, § 27).

As for skin, its color is believed to depend on climate and temperamental factors (Nicolai 1746, § 21). The beauty of the skin is particularly important, because its aesthetic quality also entails information about health. If, for example, a person with a pleasant ruddy complexion suddenly becomes pale and cyanotic, in particular in the rings around the eyes, one can guess that an alteration of the mixture of juices is taking place (Nicolai 1746, § 23). Since health is perfection, in the color of the skin health becomes visible as beauty (Nicolai 1746, § 22; see also [Anonymous] 1747, pp. 107-108).

Through perspiration, the skin expels the impurities along with the anal orifice and urethra (Nicolai 1746, §§ 10-11); this seems to disagree with Nicolai's hypothesis that the parts tasked with disposing the waste of the body are placed in a less visible position, so as not to lessen the beauty of the body. Yet, Nicolai retorts, sweat pores in the skin are not visible to the naked eye, but only through microscopes such as those which enabled Leeuwenhoek to ascertain the presence, in his opinion, of 125,000 pores in the space of a grain of sand (Nicolai 1746, § 10). In other words, the beauty of the skin is due to its clear and confused perception through which

[2] To contextualize the subject of his treatise, Nicolai mentions an essay by a friend of his, the physician Christian Friedrich Daniel (1714-1771): *Klugheit im Heyrathen aus Erklärung des Sprichworts: Schöne Jungfern garstige Weiber, garstige Jungfern schöne Weiber*. This occasional writing is not recorded in the main library catalogues across Europe and might well be lost.

[3] The argument was already present in Cicero, *De Officiis*, 35.

we grasp its sensuous appearance at a glance: "The beauty of the skin only relies on the confused representations of the soft saucers it consists of" (Nicolai 1746, § 20).

The beauty of the skin thus becomes an example of beauty as such, insofar as the sense perception of its perfection cannot be verified or rejected on the basis of the distinct perception of such a perfection (see Nannini 2021, pp. 208-209). It is no chance that Meier, at the beginning of his three-volume aesthetics, takes up Nicolai's example, making of it the paradigm of aesthetic perception as such:

> The cheeks of a beautiful person […] are beautiful to the extent that one looks at them with the naked eye. Let's observe them through a magnifying glass. Where is its beauty? One will hardly believe that such a disgusting surface, covered by a coarse tissue, full of mountains and valleys, whose sweat pores are full of waste, on which hair grows everywhere, is the seat of the love instinct which wounds hearts (Meier 1748, § 23).[4]

The unpleasant metamorphosis, Meier claims, is due to the intervention of the magnifying glass, which, turning the confused perception into a distinct one, leads to the destruction of beauty itself (*Ibid.*).

If magnification is not the correct way to enhance the beauty of the skin, what about cosmetic practices? In fact, Nicolai takes a critical stance against artful makeup (Nicolai 1746, §§ 4; 24). The use of ointments, rouge, face powder, etc., Nicolai warns, generate a "fake beauty" and only work well from afar. Even when someone is so skilled to deceive a close eye, a modest increase in temperature is sufficient to sweat off the makeup. In addition, an excessive use of these artifices will make the skin wrinkly, which Nicolai considers as the right punishment for such a dare (Nicolai 1746, § 24).

3. *Cosmetics between Disfiguration and Enhancement of Beauty*

The condemnation of cosmetics has a long history. In his *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos*, Galen (129-201 ca.) drew a distinction between *ars comptoria* or *com(m)otica*, devoted to the artful and mendacious care for beauty, and *ars exornato-*

[4] Jonathan Swift had already brought to the fore the disgust that the skin can arouse when regarded from a magnified point of view in Gulliver's stay among the giants at Brobdingnagian court (*Gulliver's Travels*, pt. 2, ch. 5: "Their skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously coloured, when I saw them near, with a mole here and there as broad as a trencher, and hairs hanging from it thicker than packthreads; to say nothing farther concerning the rest of their persons"), see Miller 1997, pp. 56-57.

ria or *cosmetica* which has medical goals and is based on nature (Galenus 1826, p. 434). A physician is therefore allowed to take action on the looks of a person, when certain diseases, in particular dermatological – from alopecia to scabies, from impetigo to leprosy – damage its surface and natural beauty, but should not be concerned, for example, with making the color of the face shinier or ruddier. Such remedies are "comptorii maleficii" rather than "medicae artis opera".

From the theological point of view, female elegance was also harshly criticized by an author contemporaneous with Galen, Tertullian (ca. 155-220). In his *De cultu feminarum*, Tertullian rejects the female *cultus* (jewels, pearls and luxurious clothing) and *ornatus* (the care of one's hair and skin), as they are based on concupiscence and a connate disposition to libido. To justify the prohibition of female luxury for Christian women, Tertullian refers to the book of Enoch, an apocryphal writing of the Ancient Testament where the introduction of female ornaments is attributed to the fallen angels (Enoch 8:1), who showed to women bracelets, ornaments, tincts for their eyelashes and so on. In this conception, if the bodily embellishment is rejected, it is because Satan himself was the first beautician (Tertulliano 1986, pp. 65-69).[5]

The distinction between *ars ornatoria* or *exornatoria*, legitimate on medical grounds, and *ars comptoria*, which falsifies natural beauty, is still present in the medicine of the early modern period. Girolamo Mercuriale, the author of the momentous *De decoratione* (1587), briefly outlines *ars comptoria*, identifying its content in the care of the body's hair covering (in particular hair, eyebrows and beard) and the color of the skin. To be sure, medicine should not deal with this matter as such, but the apparent similarity with *ars cosmetica* obliges the physician to discuss some of its themes "per accidens", as Galen had already stated (Mercuriale 1587, pp. 3-11; 82ff.).

This subdivision still emerges in the sixth volume (1733) of Zedler's grand dictionary, which, in the 1730s, doubles the cosmetic entries, distinguishing "Cosmetica medicamenta" from "Comotica ars; Ars comptoria furatrix". While "cosmetica medicamenta" include those medicines devoted to the purification of the skin as well as to the removal of skin spots and freckles, "ars comotica" or makeup artistry is considered as a technique to conceal natural defects (Zedler 1733, col. 856 and col. 1415), thus producing a "borrowed" beauty.

[5] The name of the specific demon is Azazel.

The suspicion against *ars comptoria*, in any case, is no longer self-evident. Although an essay, published a year after Nicolai's treatise, the anonymous *Leibdiener der Schönheit* (1747), devoted to beauty care, still mentions the distinction between cosmetics and *commotica* ([Anonymous] 1747, p. 130),[6] the author is eager to take a stand in favor of the latter. Ultimately, he argues, precisely because man is the imprint of the divine image, it is necessary to make sure that such an imprint is not altered owing to neglect or to a bad-applied makeup. The argument used by Tertullian against female ornaments *tout court* here becomes an argument against the inability to adorn oneself, to which precisely *commotica* can remedy ([Anonymous] 1747, p. 132). Likewise, Scripture is still cited as an authoritative source in cosmetic matters; the passages, though, are no longer drawn from Paul's or Peter's epistles nor from the book of Enoch, but from Judith and Esther, where cosmetics is regarded in positive terms ([Anonymous] 1747, p. 133). Such a change from the medical point of view finds an essential ally in the philosophy of the period.

With Wolff, for example, the distinction between artificial and natural beauty, at the basis of the distinction between cosmetics and *commotica*, is reinterpreted as a continuous process. As Wolff affirms in the first book of his *Jus naturae* (1740), not only are we bound to preserve natural beauty, but we must also make up for its defects and increase it through artificial beauty, including the various bodily ornaments, from clothing to accessories (rings, bracelets, wigs, etc.) (Wolff 1740, §§ 476-493). In its agreement with the natural law of self-perfection, beauty care is therefore virtuous (Wolff 1752, § 303: "cura pulchritudinis virtutis est") both for women and for men (Wolff 1752, § 307). In fact, bodily beauty makes sure that people take pleasure in us, thereby making a contribution to the fulfilment of God's requirement that the human minds be joined in a love bond (Wolff 1752, § 305). Unlike the medical dichotomy between *ars cosmetica* and *ars commotica*, the distinction between natural and artificial beauty thus no longer coincides with a moral demarcation, but rather points to a route of self-improvement which also applies to our looks.

[6] See in general Ramsbrock 2015. On the reconfiguration of the bourgeoise woman's body as sexually attractive through the tension towards beauty in the course of the eighteenth century, see Theweleit 1977, ch. 2.

4. *Baumgarten and the Aestheticization of Cosmetics*

It is in this context that Baumgarten develops his reflection upon cosmetics. Introducing the issue of bodily beauty in his *Ethica philosophica* (1740), Baumgarten affirms that the body shape (*forma corporis*; *Leibesgestalt*) is perfection or imperfection of the whole body insofar as it is observable by the eyes (Baumgarten 1740, § 264).[7] In this way, Baumgarten applies to the body the definition of beauty as phenomenal perfection – that is, a perfection observable by taste in the broad sense, hence subjected to the judgment of the senses – that he states in his *Metaphysica* (Baumgarten 2013, § 662).

Baumgarten does not limit himself to taking note of the existence of bodily beauty, but also stresses the importance of its care, at least for the little that depends on our will. To be sure, the pursuit of beauty cannot be given the precedence over higher goals or run against them; however, it is right not to neglect it under the cover of Stoic indifference (Baumgarten 1740, § 265) or alleged religious grounds ([Baumgarten] 1741, 93; Meier 1756, § 695).[8] How can one improve bodily beauty? First of all, by averting superfluous activities which might corrupt it, yet without going as far as Pulcheria, a fictitious character invented ad hoc by Meier: "Pulcheria is a wonder of beauty. […] She has barely learned how to read and write, so as not to damage her eyes and fingers. She cannot cook: for the smoke of the kitchen would be noxious to her beauty. She does not even sew not to harm her fingers" (Meier 1756, § 696). Along with prophylactic measures, one also has to act proactively to increase beauty, through what Baumgarten calls in his *Aesthetica* "disciplina corporis comtioris" (Baumgarten 2020, § 211), the discipline of a well-groomed and adorned body.

As we have seen, this issue is very delicate. In Baumgarten's context, cosmetics was still under attack not only for medical, but also for theological reasons. Pietist theologians such as August Hermann Francke and Joachim Lange, for example, rejected any luxury in clothing as mere vanity (see for example Francke 1881, pp. 16-17; Lange 1714, pp. 366-367). Wolff and then Meier take issue with these severe critics of the morals, who condemned any new fashion as vain and earthly, in the conviction that earlier fashions were more innocent and purer (Wolff 1752, § 303; Meier 1756, § 699). The reaction against the theological condemnation of fashion and cosmetics is also shared by Baumgarten himself, who distinguishes the

[7] On the problem of the body in general in Baumgarten, see Nannini 2022.

[8] In his dogmatic theology, Baumgarten argues for the *topos* of the highest beauty of Jesus' body, according to Psalms 45:2, see Baumgarten 1773, §§ 227; 426.

sinfulness of certain actions *erga omnes* from their unseemliness for some. Thus, it might be unbecoming of a sixty-year lady to darken her hair with powder or to dress in pink with silver laces, but this does not prove the sinfulness of this conduct or of a certain kind of garments ([Baumgarten] 1741, p. 93).

The issue is tackled in particular in the course of lectures *Sciagraphia encylopaediae philosophicae*, dating back to the winter semester 1739/40. Here Baumgarten affirms that cosmetics contains the rules concerning the ornaments of the body, including, among others, ceremonial robes and regalia, purpura, byssus, etc. (Baumgarten 1769, § 89). In particular, *ars cosmetica* exhibits through external signs both sociological information, for example the social class to which one belongs, and a certain internal state or mood of the individual person (see also Wolff 1720, §§ 492-494). As is clear, cosmetics is thus linked with the decoration of the human body in its mere phenomenality, including make-up and clothing.[9] With this new approach, Baumgarten achieves a silent revolution in the conception of cosmetics. For insofar as the cosmetized body is regarded from within the plane of appearance, the appropriateness of its ornamentation will no longer be assessed and determined by a medical, ethical or theological judgment, but only by the judgment of taste.

With this move, it is patent that cosmetics is by now considered to belong to the domain of aesthetics, the science of sensitive knowledge (Baumgarten 2020, § 1). In particular, since "ars cosmetica" or "disciplina corporis comptioris" (Baumgarten 2020, § 211) deals with the means to phenomenically, hence sensitively, exhibit the morals of a person, cosmetics will be part of "characteristic aesthetics", the branch of aesthetics dealing with the sensitive nexus between signs and the signified on the basis of the faculty of characterization (*facultas characteristica*) (Baumgarten 1769, § 80).[10] The problem of choosing the wrong attire with regard to certain circumstances is thus no longer a matter of sinfulness, but a matter of aesthetic (in)competence.

Baumgarten adds further details in this regard in his *Ethica philosophica* (Baumgarten 1740, § 266). Here, garments are not only considered in the sense of dietetic heat or in a functional way, but also from a more genuinely aesthetic perspective. In particular,

[9] The action of making up and getting dressed, taken together, are designed by the verb "sich putzen" (see Wolff 1740, § 492), in the same way as the Latin term *habitus* (grooming) in Tertullian indicated both *cultus* and *ornatus*.

[10] See also Baumgarten 2013, § 622. I render "sensuale", related to the senses alone, as sensuous, and "sensitivum", related to the representations of the lower powers of the mind, as sensitive.

Baumgarten writes that one should prefer the garments that hide the weaknesses of one's figure and emphasize its strengths. Thus, clothing serves as an illustrating argument for physical beauty,[11] which, in turn, can exert a great persuasive force.[12] From this point of view, clothes do not necessarily have to be beautiful as such in order to be aesthetically successful, but they should be beautiful in relation to the body they adorn.

In his *Philosophia moralis* Wolff as well will distinguish the beauty linked to the sensory qualities of the robes and the artificial beauty of the body to which clothing should make a contribution and at which it is necessary to ultimately aim (Wolff 1752, § 304). Unlike Wolff, however, Baumgarten points out that it is a *sapor delicatus*, hence a kind of taste able to sensitively judge the details,[13] that is tasked with selecting the right clothes in order to increase one's beauty (Baumgarten 1740, § 266). It does not come as a surprise that in providing an example of taste in his lectures on aesthetics, Baumgarten chooses it from cosmetics: "A woman will groom herself (*putzt sich*) according to her taste when she only shows she likes this or that, without showing distinctly why. If she must be beautiful only, intellect and reason cannot always do the job" (Baumgarten 1907, § 35). Taste, in any case, is not a sort of external and neutral judge with regard to cosmetics, since the cosmetic practice also actively contributes to shaping and refining it through an everyday training: "[The beautiful mind] must train herself in the beautiful. […] This is what a woman does, who grooms herself every day to please and be beautiful, even if she does not always wear her best dresses" (Baumgarten 1907, § 47).

From this passage, we can better understand the aestheticization of cosmetics in all its significance. In fact, if grooming oneself is "an exercise in the beautiful", in the perfection of sensitive knowledge (Baumgarten 2020, § 14), the *kosmos* evoked in the word 'cosmetics' becomes the intensification of an order internal to *aisthesis*. The cosmetic training, then, not only concerns the representational dimension of decoration – the adorned body as a phenomenal object – but also plays a role in the more general cultivation of the sensitive thought of the practitioner. Rather

[11] The relationship between aesthetic light and cosmetics also goes in the other direction. In the chapter of the *Aesthetica* on aesthetic light, the cosmetics-related term *fucus* (namely, affected vividness, see Baumgarten 2020, §§ 688ff.), is used to describe a weakness of sensitive thought, in the wake of a recurring motif in the rhetorical tradition.

[12] See Meier 1748, § 155: "The ladies have comparatively the greatest gift of persuading, and frequently they can do that without using other grounds and weapons than their beauty, which possesses a great persuasive force".

[13] In fact, Meier writes later, women and youth are more inclined to wear makeup, because they have finer senses, hence a better taste for details, see Meier 1749, § 479.

than a merely somatic practice, cosmetics is also regarded here as a spiritual exercise. Hence, while Mercuriale neatly distinguished the beauty of the mind, pertaining to the philosopher, and the beauty of the body, pertaining to the physician (Mercuriale 1587, p. 4), in Baumgarten the aesthetic care of the body is already an aesthetic care of the soul, too. The expert who deals with both domains is now the aesthetician.

Such an expertise, however, is not merely theoretical. In fact, cosmetics contributes to the modelling of the very 'persona' of the *aestheticus*, the one who intends to think beautifully (Baumgarten 2020, § 27), compared to the persona of the pedantic logician, who, as Meier notes, refuses to cultivate his lower powers of the mind (Meier 1748, § 5), and of the morose moralizer, who identifies sensibility with sin (Meier 1748, § 22). While the latter is characterized by the misanthropic neglect of his body shape and by austerity in clothing ([Baumgarten] 1741, p. 93),[14] Baumgarten argues that the aesthetician is "more pleasant" in society (Baumgarten 1907, § 3), hence, depending on circumstances, more affable or more attractive, and ultimately more humane (see Meier 1748, § 5).[15] Such a pleasantness is due not least to the fact that the aesthetician embodies the wisdom of *aisthesis* in his own way of living (Baumgarten 2020, § 3), hence also in ornaments and *phaenomena corporis* ("gestures, facial expressions, manners, clothing"[16]) which arouse a moderate sensitive pleasure in the others, thus fostering mutual sociability.[17] Not by chance, the *aestheticus* incarnates, well before Kierkegaard, the model of the seducer.[18]

[14] Baumgarten characterizes the morose lawmaker (*murrischer Gesetzgeber*) with the following features: venerable hair, wrinkled forehead, grim look, withered cheeks, toothless mouth, staid voice, grey beard, stern facial features, dark clothing, hunched back, and weak feet.

[15] "Humanitas" is the habit that designates philanthropy through external signs (Baumgarten 1740, §§ 309-310), hence it depends on the *facultas characteristica* just like the cosmetic practice. "Humanitas" requires suitable ornaments (see also § 337). Cosmetics can therefore contribute to making the ideal of *humanitas* visible in the corporeal dimension itself.

[16] Baumgarten speaks of "phaenomena corporis" (Baumgarten 1769, § 86) to indicate the signs through which we express thoughts, desires, habits and maxims. The list mentioned, similar to that of Baumgarten, comes from Meier (1748, § 17).

[17] The arousal of a modest sensitive pleasure during a conversation depends in general on the actions and omissions which constitute "decorum" (Baumgarten 1740, § 390), hence also the pleasantness of the body shape. The social role of cosmetics is also highlighted in [Anonymous] 1747, p. 132; Wolff 1752, § 305. See in general Di Stefano 2021.

[18] See Meier 1748, § 17, where Meier writes that poets are "the most dangerous people for a woman". By contrast, next to a metaphysician or an algebraist, Meier sarcastically comments, a woman is safe from any danger. It is not possible to develop here the relationship between nascent aesthetics and the coeval erotic poetry of Anacreontism. Suffice it to say that one of these Anacreontic poets, Gleim, will devote a poem to his master Baumgarten. The poem ends with the following verses, certainly playful and ironical, but

5. *Conclusion*

In the present paper I have reconstructed the first encounter between the cosmetic discourse and the newly born aesthetic discipline in the German mid-eighteenth century. While the medical tradition had split cosmetics into the natural "ars exornatoria" and the artificial "ars commotica", repulsing the latter to the fringes of its domain, aesthetics carves out a new theoretical territory in which the decoration of the body, including fashion, can be seen as a unified domain. This means first of all that bodily beauty is no longer assessed according to a criterion of naturalness, but on the basis of its phenomenality, which rules out the anatomizing eye of the microscope, yet not the enhancement of makeup and clothing. While the 'beautified' body is thus the stage of the aesthetic manifestation of social and private postures of the individual, the cosmetic 'beautification' also entails a training in sensitive thinking itself, given the tight interaction between bodily practices and the lower powers of the mind, in particular taste and the faculty of characterization. In this sense, the body is not only an object of beautiful thinking among others; rather, in the process of its aesthetic treatment it becomes the privileged expression and at the same time the gymnasium of beautiful thinking, thus contributing to fleshing out the well-rounded 'persona' of the aesthetician. From all this, it is clear that Baumgarten plays a key role in the history of cosmetics, as he for the first time connects cosmetics with the discipline of aesthetics, hence with the philosophy of sensitive knowledge, rather than with medicine or with philosophical or theological ethics.

The relevance of Baumgarten's operation is not only limited to cosmetics alone. In fact, the insertion of cosmetics within the domain of aesthetics is also indicative of the scope aesthetics was expected to have in the eyes of its founder. To view cosmetics as an aesthetic issue means that aesthetics as a discipline pointed to

significant for the way the aesthetician is regarded: "Lehrer, wenn du mich es lehrest, / O so will ich Mädchen zwingen, / Daß sie plötzlich schweren müssen, / Mich zu lieben, wenn ich liebe", see Gleim 1745, pp. 35-36. When Baumgarten deals with chastity in his *Ethica philosophica*, he adds: "Ne tamen cum castitate confundatur totalis actionum venerearum omissio" (Baumgarten 1740, § 274), overtly suggesting the importance of the amiable conversation with people of the other sex. On the other hand, eros is explicitly mentioned as a propitious occasion for aesthetic enthusiasm, hence for a concrete act of beautiful thinking (Baumgarten 2020, § 87). This indicates that the sensual and erotogenic dimension of *Sinnlichkeit*, to which Marcuse drew attention (Marcuse 1998, pp. 182ff.), is not rejected by Baumgarten and Meier. For this reason, Shusterman's recent hypohypothesis about the rupture between eros and beauty with the rise of aesthetics seems to be problematic for Baumgarten, see Shusterman 2021, pp. 29 and 394.

everyday aesthetics from its very beginning. The turn to everyday practices is therefore coincident with the very foundation of aesthetics as a discipline rather than with a later, 20th or 21st-century innovation. From this point of view, the rediscovery of everyday aesthetics in the last century looks like a step towards the resumption of aesthetics in its original breadth.

This is all the more significant if we consider that cosmetics itself underwent a process of 'artification' after Baumgarten, in obedience to the reduction of aesthetics to a philosophy of the arts. In a number of textbooks of aesthetics at the turn of the nineteenth century, cosmetics and fashion were discussed in particular in relation to their possible status of fine art. Thus, while Gotthild Samuel Steinbart agreed to include the "art of dressing" (*Bekleidungskunst*) within the domain of the fine arts (Steinbart 1785, §§ 2 and 71), other authors such as Wilhelm Traugott Krug (Krug 1810, pp. 511-513) and Karl E.F. Trahndorff (Trahndorff 1827, p. 196) rejected such a proposal. With regard to this tendency, Baumgarten shows a different approach, which seems to be more useful to today's discussion. In fact, for Baumgarten the aesthetic stake of cosmetics cannot be reduced to a theoretical reflection about the bodily beautification or about its possible artistic status, but also entails a practical engagement for the intensification of the qualitative dimension of *aisthesis*. Hence, cosmetics brings to the fore the meliorative dimension that Baumgarten regarded as key to his aesthetics at large. If cosmetics is thus linked in Baumgarten with the problem of health, it is not in a merely dermatological sense, but as a way to improve the wellbeing of a person in its body and soul (see Nannini, 2022b) as well as in its social relations. In this sense, Baumgarten's approach paves the way for an aesthetics of care.[19]

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