

How is it possible to go from perceptual cognition to beauty?-Perfection as the basis of judgment of appreciation

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Abstract: This paper is based on two questions about Baumgarten's aesthetics-how is it possible to go from perceptual cognition to beauty and how does perfection serve as a basis for judgement of appreciation. Firstly, this paper reanalyzes Baumgarten's definition of aesthetics, and concludes that the real research field of aesthetics is "free art" that can provide pleasure to people's emotions. "Free art" as the object of appreciation has its own kind of perfection. Secondly, this paper focuses on the consummation of perceptual cognitive ability of the appreciative subject, and restores the logical reasoning process from perceptual cognition to the possibility of beauty by analyzing three directions of consummation. Thirdly, combining with the historical evolution of the theory of perfection, this paper discusses the basis of perfection as the judgment of appreciation from two aspects of quality and quantity respectively. Finally, this paper combs the concept of clarity of extension proposed by Baumgarten, and makes some attempts to solve the universality problem in the judgment of appreciation.

Keywords: perfection, free art, pleasure, appreciation judgment, perceptual cognition

1. Introduction

In Baumgarten's aesthetic system, beauty is considered as the fullness of perceptual cognition. But there are at least two doubts about this crucial assertion. One is how is it possible to go from perceptual cognition to beauty? He did not give a rigorous logical reasoning process, so far few people deduce in depth. As a result, scholars of later generations simply summed up his definition of beauty as the completeness of perceptual cognition, ignoring its profound insight. The second is whether completeness can be used as a basis for judgment of appreciation? Since Kant proposed that the judgment of appreciation does not depend on the concept of perfection, the theory of perfection has been completely covered by the academic giant and banished from the field of aesthetics. However, in the daily activities of aesthetic appreciation, the theory of completeness or the completeness of perceptual cognition seems to have a profound impact on us. Therefore, whether completeness plays a role in the judgment of appreciation is still a question to be discussed.

2. The Research Field of Aesthetics: "Free Art"

In order to deduce how to go from perceptual cognition to beauty, it is necessary to clarify a premise: what is the field of study of the new discipline of "aesthetics"?

In the introduction of the first volume of Aesthetics, Baumgarten said, "Aesthetics [the theory of free art, the lower cognitive theory, the art of aesthetic thinking, and the art like reason (Analogon Rationis)] is the science of perceptual cognition. (cognitio sensitivae)" [1] Here, Baumgarten laid down a classic definition for aesthetics, clearly put forward that aesthetics is the study of perceptual cognition discipline. It is worth noting that after Baumgarten has defined aesthetics, he adds multiple annotations to this definition. It is this multiple annotation that determines the field of aesthetic study in the field of poetry and art.

The "Theory of free art" in the commentary defines the field of aesthetic research- "free art". What is "free art"? In another of his books, Baumgarten writes: "The arts most in demand of human life are agriculture, commerce, handicraft, and workshops; the arts that bring the greatest honor to the understanding are geometry, philosophy, astronomy; besides, oratory, poetry, painting and music,

sculpture, architecture, bronze, etc., which are usually considered the arts of beauty and freedom." [2]

Baumgarten's inclusion of "free art" into the research field of aesthetics indicates that he believes that the main object of aesthetic research is the theory of "free art". The subject of "FREE ART" includes: linguistics, interpretation, annotation, rhetoric, preaching, poetics, music seven categories. Baumgarten, in *Aesthetics*, talks about the seven types of "free art" with "that rich, noble style and moving light of truth, all of which delight us" [2].

In his opinion, as the object of appreciation, "free art" itself has a kind of "refined elegance", that is, rich and varied or lofty forms and harmony that contains more than unity. The excellent perceptual cognition can obtain the pleasure and satisfaction of the free emotion when intuitively perceiving the "refined elegance" of the object itself. Although some people doubt that Baumgarten's aesthetics does not go beyond poetics and rhetoric, he makes it clear in his lectures that "aesthetics goes further than rhetoric and poetry..." [3]. His original plan was to expand the new discipline to include almost all "free art", and his aim was to philosophize, idealize "the theory of free art". At the beginning of his book *Aesthetics*, Baumgarten called this new discipline the science of perceptual cognition, mainly because "free art" such as poetry, music and painting must be grasped through human perceptual cognition. The other parts of the commentary, such as "lower cognitive theory", "Art of Beautiful thinking" and "Art of rational-like", are the qualitative objects of their study, which we will not repeat here.

3. The perceptual cognition of the appreciative subject

What is perceptual cognition or lower cognitive ability? In fact, the lower cognition is not from Baumgarten, but from Leibniz and Wolff. Leibniz believes that human knowledge can be divided into vague knowledge and clear knowledge, and clear knowledge is divided into the higher part of knowledge (rational cognition) and the lower part of knowledge (perceptual cognition). In the theoretical system of Leibniz's protegee Wolff, the lower levels of cognitive faculties include feeling, imagination, fiction, and memory. Baumgarten believes that the ability of obscure cognition is the lower cognitive abilities, and the human mind has the lower cognitive abilities. He extends Wolff's sequence with imagination, insight, memory, creative ability, foresight, judgment, anticipation, and marking. So, what role do these low-level perceptual cognitive abilities play in the process of appreciation? We need to go back to the works of Baumgarten for the answer.

Baumgarten mentioned in the first part of *Aesthetics* that "the purpose of aesthetics is the perfection of perceptual cognition itself. And that is beauty. What is to be avoided is its own incompleteness. But that's ugly." [4] It can be seen that Baumgarten believes that the purpose of aesthetics is the completeness of perceptual cognition, and the completeness of perceptual cognition of the appreciative subject can lead people to discover and create beauty. But how to realize the completion of the perceptual cognition of the subject? Baumgarten gives us a clear answer later in his argument, namely, a superior perceptual perceiver (artist, poet) must possess the following four abilities to be "complete". (1) have a natural endowment of aesthetics; (2) manipulation and aesthetic exercises; (3) Study aesthetics courses and theories; (4) have the ability of emotional development. The main reason why Baumgarten said that the purpose of aesthetics is the completion of perceptual cognition itself is that the harmony and unity of things can only be perceived by the aesthetic subject. As a layman cannot appreciate fine works of art. Therefore, when we perceive an elegant thing, such as "free art," the elegance of the thing itself will affect our feelings, so that our feelings will constantly perceive harmony. Not only that, but long-term aesthetic training can make our senses more accurate and sensitive. The good performance of these senses will lead to the emotional pleasure of the appreciative subject. In the final analysis, the harmony of things requires the senses of aesthetic subjects to perceive and judge, and Baumgarten called this kind of "perceptual perfection". It should be noted that the pleasure caused by this "perceptual perfection" is different from the "pleasure" which also needs the sensory perception of the subject, because this "pleasure" is only the comfort of animal senses, such as drinking water when thirsty or eating food when hungry. At the very beginning, Baumgarten defined the field of "perceptual perfection"- "free art". The emotion caused by the subject's perception of these "free art" is free spiritual pleasure, which is necessarily different from the pleasure caused by the senses.

4. How is it possible to go from perceptual cognition to beauty?

Baumgarten believes that the purpose of aesthetics is the completion of perceptual cognition, and

the completion of perceptual cognition is beauty. But this crucial assertion is hard to convince us because it lacks rigorous logic. Baumgarten's ambiguous attitude in his own writings may be a fundamental crux that led to the difficulty in connecting perceptual cognition and beauty. Therefore, the inference from perceptual cognition to beauty is crucial and requires many arguments to substantiate it. Baumgarten discovered this and provided us with this argument in one of his lectures. He said, "The chief object of beauty, especially the best and noblest of beauty, is that it wants to please people."^[3]Baumgarten insists that the completion of any unique action leads to and involves pleasure, which is merely the completion of that action. If the purpose of aesthetics is to lead us to the discovery and creation of beauty, then the main purpose of beauty is to create pleasure in the perceiver. He even argues that pleasure is a state of cognition. Pleasure, he argues, is the state of the soul's intuition about completeness, the sense through which we grasp the completeness and imperfection of a thing. I recognize either symbolically or intuitively completeness and imperfection. So either I have an intuitive sense of the completeness of the object and I'm happy with the object, or I have an intuitive sense of the imperfection of the object and I'm unhappy with the object. Another important concept to note here is the purpose of beauty. For Baumgarten the purpose of beauty is to please. When the aesthetic subject carries out the appreciation activity, the "free art" first acts on the perceptual organ of the person, and the emotional pleasure obtained from it makes the person feel the great satisfaction and happiness from the deep heart.

We find that Baumgarten's idea of perfection actually has three directions. The first is the perfection of the object itself, namely the harmony and unity of the "free art" itself. Secondly, it refers to the completeness of the lower perceptual cognitive ability of the subject itself, that is, the richness, intensity and development of the imagination, insight, memory, creative ability, foresight, judgment, anticipation and marking ability of the subject. The third is a state of the soul, expressed as emotional pleasure. As the object of appreciation, the richness of "free art" in its form and its harmony are grasped by the rich low-level cognitive ability of the appreciative subject, thus realizing the soul's intuition of completeness, and beauty lies in the soul's intuition of completeness (emotional pleasure).

As mentioned above, Baumgarten's three directions to perfection are interdependent. As mentioned above, Baumgarten's three directions to perfection are interdependent. The appreciation subject's perception of the completeness of the object itself depends on the subject's perceptual cognitive ability. The appreciation subject's perception of the completeness of the object itself depends on the subject's perceptual cognitive ability. The exquisite elegance of the object itself will stimulate the senses of the subject, making it more accurate and sensitive, so as to constantly tend to the completion of the perceptual cognition of the subject. The exquisite elegance of the object itself will stimulate the senses of the subject, making it more accurate and sensitive, so as to constantly tend to the completion of the perceptual cognition of the subject. In turn, the completeness of perceptual cognition can better guide the appreciation subject to feel the completeness of the object itself, and the manifestation or expression of this completeness to the highest degree is the perceptual pleasure, that is, beauty. In turn, the completeness of perceptual cognition can better guide the appreciation subject to feel the completeness of the object itself, and the manifestation or expression of this completeness to the highest degree is the perceptual pleasure, that is, beauty.

As for the judgment that the completeness of perceptual cognition is beauty put forward by Baumgarten at the beginning of the first volume of *Aesthetics*, it is because Baumgarten, who follows the concept of "predefinite harmony", believes that things themselves exist in maximum perfection, are complete and harmonious. If there is no rich perceptual cognition of the subject, it is impossible to intuitively understand the completeness of things, and there will be no emotional pleasure, and beauty will not exist. Therefore, the completeness of perceptual cognition becomes the criterion of beauty and ugliness. However, how can "perfection" be used as the basis for appreciation and judgment? This question still needs to be discussed in more detail, and we will discuss it in depth with historical clues below.

5. How does "perfection" serve as the basis for appreciation and judgment?

Baumgarten inherited the mantle of continental rationalism, believing that perfection can be used as the basis of appreciation judgment. Perfection as the basis of appreciation and judgment is realized by taste in a broad sense. The so-called broad sense of interest refers to perceptual judgment. The general taste of the sensible, that is, of the felt, is the sensorial judgment, which is ascribed to the sense organ by which the object of judgment is felt. The broad sense of taste as discernitive judgment is realized through the "power of cognition" -the force of mind which represents the universe.

Qualitatively, the existence of completeness makes it possible to distinguish good taste from bad taste. Good taste is the taste of taking pleasure in the completeness of things; Bad taste is the taste of taking pleasure in the imperfection of things. Baumgarten says that completeness is a phenomenon that we can observe in the broad sense of interest, that is beauty. Or incompleteness, which can be observed in the broad sense of interest, is ugliness. So, beautiful things make people who see it happy, ugly things make people who see it hate. The subject of appreciation discriminates beauty from ugliness through a broad sense of taste, which depends on the completeness of human perceptual cognition. When appreciating things, complete perceptual cognition can observe the harmony of things, so as to promote the production of emotional pleasure and make the appreciating subject feel beautiful. Incomplete perceptual cognition can not observe the harmony of things, so as to promote the generation of displeasure, let the appreciation of the subject feel ugly. What feels beautiful pleases those who see it, and what feels ugly annoys those who see it.

Quantitatively speaking, the pleasure that things bring to people is determined by the size and amount of the perfection that they represent. The richer people's perceptual cognitive ability is, the greater and more completeness of things they can accept, the stronger pleasure they bring to people, and the more things make the appreciating subject feel beautiful. The poorer a person's perceptual cognitive ability is, the smaller and less the completeness of the representation of things he can accept, the weaker the pleasure it brings to people, and the more things make the appreciating subject feel unbeautiful. So perfection can serve as a basis for appreciation.

Above, by examining the theory of perfection from both qualitative and quantitative aspects, Baumgarten solved the problem of its use as the basis for appreciation and judgment. Perfection can not only judge the beauty and ugliness of things, but also measure the degree of beauty and ugliness. However, as the basis of the judgment of appreciation, perfection still faces a very important problem: how to ensure the universal validity of the judgment of appreciation as the expression of personal preferences?

6. The universal validity of perfection as a basis for appreciation and judgment

We must return to Baumgarten's first philosophical work, *Meditations on Poetry*, to complete the question of universal validity as a basis for judgment of appreciation. This pamphlet not only condenses the entire program of Baumgarten's aesthetic science, but also provides a basis for the general validity of the judgment of appreciation.

In this book, Baumgarten defines poetry as "perfect emotional discourse." Baumgarten specifies each term in this definition. Talk is "the use of a string of words to express certain appearances that are related to each other". Perceptual talk refers to the talk about "perceptual appearance". Complete perceptual talk consists of the following parts: "(1) perceptual representations, (2) their interrelations, (3) words or distinct voices -- all these elements are directed towards the perception of perceptual representations." [3] According to Baumgarten, the main criterion of perfection is first of all to know things through perceptual representation. He believed that the first requirement of a poem was that it should contain "clear imagery".

This clarity of appearance can fully understand things and distinguish them from other things. "The more clear rather than abstract a poem is, the more complete it is." His second requirement for a poem was that it should contain "vague representations". A vague appearance is different from a definite appearance. Definite appearance is not only through which we can recognize things, distinguish things from other things, but also enumerate and analyze the distinct features of things. The vagueness of appearances is the impossibility of enumerating and analyzing the distinct features of things, because the features of things are mixed together there. According to Baumgarten, the perfect perceptual discourse of a poem does not contain explicit representation, because this representation requires not a low perceptual cognition, but a high rational cognition.

Baumgarten defines this clear ambiguity as broad clarity. According to him, the more things are gathered in a vague representation, the more broad and clear it is, and the more poetic it is. Therefore, the more certain things a poem presents, the more poetic it is. That is, the degree of completeness of a poem depends on the degree of clarity of its extensiveness. In addition, he compares broad clarity with intensive clarity. Different from the broad clarity lies in the breadth, a one-time performance of many things, used to understand perceptual things; The clarity of intensification lies in depth. The analysis of different elements in a representation is mainly used to understand abstract rational things.

Previous thinkers always faced a dilemma when facing the universality of judgment of appreciation: on the one hand, judgment of appreciation, as judgment of taste, is the expression of personal preference. These expressions of personal preference can, at least in principle, be translated into clear concepts that make it possible for judgments of taste to become universal. On the other hand, once personal preferences are transformed into clear concepts, taste judgments lose their unique perceptual qualities. The clarity of extensive concept ingeniously solved the problem, extensive clarity not only saved the unique judgment in appreciation of quality (because the concept is different from rational intensive clarity), at the same time it also keep the universality of appreciation and judgment, because the appreciation judgment is still about the understanding of the perceptual experience judgment, which are also generalized like other judgments of cognition.

7. Conclusion

Through the above analysis, we can conclude that the complete explanation from perceptual cognition to beauty should be that things themselves exist in maximum "perfection". If there is no rich perceptual cognition of the subject, it is impossible to intuitively understand the "perfection" of things, so there will be no emotional pleasure, and beauty will not exist. In the judgment of appreciation, the theory of perfection is mainly used as the judgment of taste to identify things.

The possibility of "perfection" theory as a judgment of appreciation lies in three aspects. First, from the qualitative point of view, the superior perceptual cognitive judge the "perfection" and "imperfection" of object things through interest, that is, the judgment of beautiful things and ugly things; Secondly, from the quantitative point of view, beautiful and more beautiful things are judged by the pleasure they bring to people, that is, by the size and amount of the "completeness" of the appearance of things; Third, from the point of universal necessity, extensive clarity ensures the universal transmission of emotional pleasure. The superior perceptual perceiver can grasp the extensive clarity of things to the greatest extent and perceive beauty. The general perceptual perceiver can grasp the extensive clarity of things to a lesser extent and perceive beauty. Finally, the antinomy of the judgment of appreciation also found a Baumgarten's general answer.

References

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