



*Alexander G. Baumgarten and the Lost Letters of  
Aletheophilus. Notes on a Mystery at the Origins  
of Modern Aesthetics\**

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**ABSTRACT.** In this essay, I attempt to provide new insight into the last two *Philosophische Briefe von Aletheophilus*, a moral journal edited by Alexander G. Baumgarten. My primary aim is to show that the journal, contrary to what has been hitherto unanimously stated by scholarship, comes to an end not in 1741, but in 1744. In the light of this new dating, I analyse the journal's relationship with Baumgarten's first *collegium aestheticum* (1742/43), some elements of which I try to recover indirectly. Lastly, I advance some hypotheses about the topic of the last letter of the journal, which is as yet completely unknown.

**KEYWORDS.** Aletheophilus; Alexander G. Baumgarten; Moral journals; Aesthetics; Georg Fr. Meier.

If aesthetics did not originate with Baumgarten, certainly Baumgarten played a significant role in the determination of the identity of this discipline. As is widely known, the project of aesthetics was firstly outlined at the end of his habilitation thesis, the *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poëma pertinentibus* (1735), and was then developed in a number of writings culminating with the unfinished *Aesthetica* (1750/58). Although Baumgarten preferred to write in Latin, he did not completely renounce his mother tongue. Once appointed ordinary professor of philosophy in Frankfurt on the Oder in 1740, he released the only two writings in German published during his lifetime<sup>1</sup>. The first one is a reflection on ac-

\* This research was developed as a part of a project supported by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation (grant Az. 40. 15.0.035PH).

<sup>1</sup> See D. Mirbach, A. Allerkamp, «Ale.theophilus Baumgarten/Wenn die Magd in den Brunnen fällt», in A. Allerkamp, D. Mirbach (eds.), *Schönes Denken, A.G. Baum-*

ademic success, written on the occasion of his instalment in Frankfurt<sup>2</sup>. Here, though, I will focus on the second one. It is a weekly epistolary journal dealing with philosophical topics, the *Philosophische Brieffe von Aletheophilus* (1741), where the writer of treatises Baumgarten turns to the essayistic style under the pseudonym, suggested by the title, of Aletheophilus. Looking at the editorial results, the experiment does not seem to have enjoyed great success: already in the course of 1741, after 26 issues (*Stücke*), corresponding to 34 letters (*Briefe* or *Schreiben*) and to 108 printed pages, Baumgarten was obliged to put a definitive end to the publication of the journal. This is, at least, the official version of the story<sup>3</sup>.

That something is wrong with such a reconstruction is immediately apparent from the fact that Meier, in his defence (1746) of Baumgarten's *Meditationes* against the rude attack of the Gottschedianer Quistorp, refers the reader to a series of Aletheophilus' aesthetic letters, two of which do not exist in the published collection: namely, letters 36 and 37<sup>4</sup>. A wrong indication from Meier is, however, to be excluded, at least because this reference is repeated by Meier himself in the first volume of his *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften* (1748)<sup>5</sup>, and taken up for example by Georg Andreas Will in his *Oratio sollemnis de aethetica veterum* (1756)<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, the publication leaves no room for doubt as to the conclusive character of issue 26, entitled *Beschluß dieser Wochen-Blätter*<sup>7</sup>, in which Aletheophilus bids farewell to his readers<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, Meier will no longer mention these letters in the index of Baum-

*garten im Spannungsfeld zwischen Ästhetik, Logik und Ethik*, Meiner, Hamburg 2016, pp. 317-340, here p. 317, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> A.G. Baumgarten, *Vom Vernünftigen Beyfall auf Academien*, Alexen., Franckfurth an der Oder 1740; Hemmerde, Halle 1741<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Such a version, as we will soon see, is confirmed by Baumgarten's biographers.

<sup>4</sup> G.F. Meier, *Verteidigung der Baumgartischen Erklärung eines Gedichtes*, Hemmerde, Halle 1746, § 3. In addition to the two mentioned letters, Meier makes reference here to letters 2 and 11. The *Verteidigung* is published also in the «*Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache*», 15. Stück, 1746, pp. 234-267.

<sup>5</sup> G.F. Meier, *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften*, vol. I, Hemmerde, Halle 1748, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> G.A. Will, *Oratio sollemnis de aethetica veterum*, Schupfelius, Altorphii 1756, p. C3.

<sup>7</sup> *Philosophische Brieffe von Aletheophilus*, without ed., Frankfurth und Leipzig 1741, p. 108.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 101.

garten's publications (1763)<sup>9</sup>, where it is stated that the Aletheophilus comes to an end with issue 26 (corresponding to letter 34)<sup>10</sup>. The same will be confirmed by Abbt in his biography of Baumgarten<sup>11</sup>. From this moment onwards, *Briefe* 36 and 37 disappear from Baumgarten's official bibliography. What about the ghost letters on aesthetics?

## I.

An initial response is offered in 2002 by Dieter Kliche, who reports the enthralling discovery of a Baumgartenian text up to then unknown to scholarship<sup>12</sup>. Kliche tells of how he has found a four-page typescript in a file belonging to Romance philologist Werner Krauss's legacy, held at that time in the Villa Siemens in Potsdam, the former Forschungszentrum für Europäische Aufklärung. The header of the document reads: «XXVII. Stück. 36. Schreiben. Von der Aesthetik nach Hamburg», while at the bottom we can find the indication of the source: «Philosophische Briefe von Aletheophilus, 1741, Seite 109-112».

On the basis of this data, Kliche confirms it is indeed issue 27, corresponding to letter 36, whose text the German scholar publishes correcting typing mistakes. It is an extraordinary document on the genesis of modern aesthetics, in which Baumgarten makes a complete synthesis of the new discipline, which is quite distinct from the encyclopaedic program<sup>13</sup> of the *Sciagraphia encyclopaediae philosophicae*<sup>14</sup> (1739/40) and the

<sup>9</sup> G.F. Meier, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgartens Leben*, Hemmerde, Halle 1763, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Th. Abbt, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgartens Leben und Charakter* (1763), Hemmerde, Halle 1765, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> See D. Kliche, «*Ich glaube selbst Engel können nicht ohne Sinnlichkeit sein*». Über einen Fund aus der Frühgeschichte der Ästhetik im Werner-Krauss-Archiv, in W. Klein, E. Müller (hrsgg.), *Genuß und Egoismus. Zur Kritik ihrer geschichtlichen Verknüpfung*, Akademie Verl., Berlin 2002, pp. 54-65.

<sup>13</sup> See S. Tedesco, *L'estetica di Baumgarten*, Aesthetica, Palermo 2000, pp. 66 and ff.

<sup>14</sup> «Wöchentliche Hallische Anzeigen», 6. April 1739, col. 228 (where the lectures on «philosophische Encyclopädie» are announced for the summer semester of 1739 at the university of Halle); *ibidem*, 28. September 1739, col. 643 (where the continuation of the class is announced for the winter semester of 1739/40). See

*Philosophia generalis*<sup>15</sup> (1740/41), and already congruent with the definitive plan of his *Aesthetica*. The mystery, however, is far from being dispelled. Kliche himself explicitly asks other scholars for help, in order to find new information about the lost issues<sup>16</sup>. So far, his call has fallen on deaf ears.

In fact, the *Brieffe von Aletheophilus* have received scant attention from scholarship, whose interest has focused rather on the content of some specific letters than on the work as such. Only in 2016 did Dagmar Mirbach's and Andrea Allerkamp's excellent essay put the emphasis on Baumgarten's publication in a more systematic way<sup>17</sup>. While Allerkamp discusses the metaphor of the source of truth in letters 10, 13, and 14<sup>18</sup>, Mirbach's intervention delves into the core issues of the journal, from the question of Wolffianism to the value of vividness in exposition<sup>19</sup>. Particular attention is given to the possible implications of the pseudonym Aletheophilus<sup>20</sup>, which could conceal Baumgarten's first and middle name in Latin (*Alexander Theophilus*) as well as his possible relation to the *Societas Alethophilorum*, founded by Ernst Christoph von Manteuf-

A.G. Baumgarten, *Sciagraphia encyclopaediae philosophicae*, hrsg. v. J.C. Förster, Hemmerde, Halae 1769.

<sup>15</sup> As far as the *Philosophia generalis* is concerned, Baumgarten writes at the end of the *Beyfall* (*Vom Vernünftigen Beyfall auf Academien*, 1740, pp. 13-15) that he will hold an annual class of general philosophy on Theophilus Gale's *Philosophia generalis*, Robinson, London 1676 (summer semester of 1740 and winter semester of 1740/41; see also A.G. Baumgarten, *Scriptis, quae moderator conflictus academici disputavit*, Hemmerde, Halae 1743, § 2). In the second edition of the *Beyfall* (pp. 39-44), Baumgarten records the subdivision of the topics he dealt with in those lectures, a subdivision that corresponded to that of the posthumously published *Philosophia generalis* (see A.G. Baumgarten, *Philosophia generalis, edidit cum dissertatione prooemiali ... J.C Förster*, Hemmerde, Halae 1770).

<sup>16</sup> Kliche, «*Ich glaube selbst Engel können nicht ohne Sinnlichkeit sein*», pp. 55-56.

<sup>17</sup> Mirbach, Allerkamp, *Ale.theophilus Baumgarten / Wenn die Magd in den Brunnen fällt*.

<sup>18</sup> Allerkamp, *Wenn die Magd in den Brunnen fällt*, pp. 330-340.

<sup>19</sup> Mirbach, *Ale.theophilus Baumgarten*, pp. 319-330.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*. I add a further possible suggestion: the theologian Johann Leyser had published a *Polygamia triumphatrix* (1674), adopting the pseudonym of Theophilus Aletheus. This book was in Baumgarten's library, see *Catalogus librorum a viro ... Alexandro Gottlieb Baumgarten*, Winterus, Francofurti ad Viadrum 1762, p. 43, n. 52.

fel in 1736 in defence of Wolffian philosophy<sup>21</sup>. The problem of the lost letters remains nonetheless unsolved. We shall turn to this in what follows.

## II.

Let's start from an assumption of Kliche's. The latter declares that the *Brieffe von Aletheophilus* end with letter 33. Since Meier quotes letter 37, Kliche concludes that there are at least four lost letters. Now, it is true that the *Beschluß* is not associated with the number of an issue in the final index, but the phrase «34. Schreiben» in the header of the issue leaves little doubt as to the presence of this letter in the published text<sup>22</sup>. There are therefore at least three unfiled letters and not at least four, as Kliche suggests. Let's gloss over the question of whether or not there are only three. For the moment it is sufficient to notice that this clarification would lead to the hypothesis that issue 27 contains two letters: namely, 35 and 36, and that only 36 is apparently still extant. It is not impossible that a *Stück* contains more than one letter<sup>23</sup>, but the circumstances of the finding do not seem favourable to this conclusion. We will return to it later.

There is another doubtful element in letter 36 published by Kliche. At the beginning of the letter, Aletheophilus writes about the necessity of dealing with aesthetics again, after having already discussed it in letter 2. The fact is that letter 2 relied only on the content of some notes<sup>24</sup>. For this reason, the account was not very detailed. From this moment onwards, though, Aletheophilus claims he has acquired better knowledge

<sup>21</sup> It is impossible here to provide a list of the studies on this society. For our purposes, see A.G. Baumgarten, *Vorreden zur Metaphysik*, hrsg. v. U. Niggli, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1998, pp. XXXIX-XLI; on the slight, but significant difference between Alethophili and Aletheophilus, see E. Müller, *Ästhetische Religiosität und Kunstreligion*, Akademie Verl., Berlin 2004, p. 49, note 145; see also C. Schwaiger, *Baumgartens Ansatz einer philosophischen Ethikbegründung*, in A. Aichele, D. Mirbach (hrsgg.), *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten: Sinnliche Erkenntnis in der Philosophie des Rationalismus*, «Aufklärung», 20, 2008, pp. 219-237, here pp. 235-236.

<sup>22</sup> *Philosophische Brieffe von Aletheophilus*, p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> The fourth *Stück*, for example, includes the letters 4-7.

<sup>24</sup> Kliche, «*Ich glaube selbst Engel können nicht ohne Sinnlichkeit sein*», p. 56.

of the author and he has further reflected on that theoretical attempt. Letter 36 seems therefore to have been written, at least in the epistolary fiction, at a certain temporal distance from letter 2. In confirmation of this time span, Aletheophilus also mentions another event that happened in that period, namely the fact that aesthetics had been presented in the ordinary lectures of a German university with such success as to make the continuation of the class highly desirable<sup>25</sup>.

Now, the first lectures on aesthetics, held by Baumgarten himself, begin in the winter semester of 1742/43 in Frankfurt on the Oder<sup>26</sup>. How to reconcile Baumgarten's affirmation with the dating of the *Brieffe von Aletheophilus* (1741)? Kliche hopes to solve the apparent contradiction by making reference to the *collegia privatisissima* of aesthetics held in Halle by Baumgarten as early as 1737<sup>27</sup>. Although such *collegia* undoubtedly developed the original core of the aesthetics of the *Meditationes*, the lectures were primarily devoted to poetics (Ludovici)<sup>28</sup>, or, rather, to the philosophy of poetry (Pyra)<sup>29</sup>, and certainly could not be considered 'ordinary': it is thus rather unlikely that Baumgarten called them «ordentliche Lesestunden» of aesthetics. Much likelier is the reference to the university of Frankfurt on the Oder, where, despite the *numerus clausus*<sup>30</sup>, the lectures must have been held «more per academias consueto»<sup>31</sup>. To be sure, Kliche does not completely exclude the fact that the hint is directed at the Viadrina in Frankfurt, but seems to dismiss this hypothesis given that the lectures, as just recalled, start here in the winter semester of 1742/43. This dating, however, represents a problem only insofar as we take for granted, as Kliche does, that the *Brieffe von Aletheophilus* come to a definitive end in 1741.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> See Baumgarten, *Scriptis*, § 2.

<sup>27</sup> Kliche, «*Ich glaube selbst Engel können nicht ohne Sinnlichkeit sein*», pp. 56-57, note 6.

<sup>28</sup> C.G. Ludovici, *Neueste Merckwürdigkeiten aus der Leibnitz-Wolffischen Weltweisheit*, without ed., Franckfurt-Leipzig 1738, § 232.

<sup>29</sup> J.I. Pyra, *Fortsetzung des Erweises, daß die G\*ttisch\*dianische Sekte den Geschmack verderbe*, Schütze, Berlin 1744, pp. 20, 39-40. See F.J. Schneider, *Das geistige Leben von Halle im Zeichen des Endkampfes zwischen Pietismus und Rationalismus*, «Sachsen und Anhalt», 14, 1938, pp. 137-166, here pp. 162-163.

<sup>30</sup> Baumgarten, *Scriptis*, § 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, § 15.

In fact, it is not so straightforward as it may seem that Baumgarten wanted to terminate the publication in 1741. The same formula whereby Baumgarten says goodbye to his readers in the *Beschluß* does not sound like a farewell, but leaves open the possibility of a continuation of the journal, however occasional its future issues might be<sup>32</sup>. The uncertainty about the conclusion of the journal is also shared by Johann Peter Uz, a disciple of Baumgarten's and a member of the so-called 'Zweiter Hallescher Dichterkreis'<sup>33</sup>, who writes in a postscript of a letter to Gleim on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1744: «What news have you got of Prof. Baumgarten in Frankfurt? Isn't he going to continue with his Philosophical Letters or to publish his Encyclopaedia?»<sup>34</sup>. All in all, the hypothesis of a continuation of the *Aletheophilus* after letter 34 is not so far-fetched in those years. To be sure, this does not imply that it really happened. And yet, although scholarship has never taken this possibility into account, such could well be the case.

### III.

The first document to support a revision of the dating of the *Brieffe von Aletheophilus* is the *Abriß einer allgemeinen Historie der Gelehrsamkeit* by Johann Andreas Fabricius (1752). In the first volume of this work, Fabricius provides the following reference for the journal at issue: «Philosophische Briefe von Alethophilo, Halle, 1741-44. 4. neun und zwanzig Stücke von Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten»<sup>35</sup>. The same data is recorded in the sixth edition, edited by Johann Christian Fischer, of the *Introductio in notitiam rei litterariae et usum bibliothecarum* (1704; 1754<sup>6</sup>), originally published by Burkhard Gotthelf Struve, where it is stated: «Phi-

<sup>32</sup> *Philosophische Briefe von Aletheophilus*, p. 101.

<sup>33</sup> See T. Verweyen, G. Witting, *Zur Rezeption Baumgartens bei Uz, Gleim, Rudnick*, «Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie», 113, 1994, pp. 496-514.

<sup>34</sup> *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz*, hrsg. v. C. Schüddekopf, Litterar. Verein, Tübingen 1899, p. 70.

<sup>35</sup> J.A. Fabricius, *Abriß einer allgemeinen Historie der Gelehrsamkeit*, Weidmann, Leipzig 1752, p. 875.

losophische Briefe von Alethophilo, 29. Stücke, Halle, 1741-1744. 4to. ab Alex. Gottl. Baumgarten»<sup>36</sup>.

From these two entries, it is apparent that the *Brieffe von Aletheophilus* do not come to an end in 1741, as has always been claimed, but do continue until 1744. In the light of this rectification, it is much easier to explain Baumgarten's reference to the lectures on aesthetics in a «famous German university». For in all probability letter 36 does not date back to 1741, as declared by Kliche, but to a subsequent period between the end of 1742 and 1744 (or perhaps to an even more limited time span, if we take the reference to a «wished continuation» of such a *collegium* as evidence of the conclusion of the semester towards Easter 1743)<sup>37</sup>.

The correction of the dating also enhances our understanding of the different approach with respect to letter 2<sup>38</sup>. Between the two of them, in fact, there is the preparation work for the lectures of the winter semester 1742/43, which leads to a more sophisticated structuring of the project<sup>39</sup>. It is in this context that the original skeleton of the future *Aesthetica* finally comes to light. Not by chance does letter 36 not continue with the presentation of the lower faculties of the mind and their improvement started in letter 2<sup>40</sup>, but rather inserts such a question within

<sup>36</sup> B.G. Struve, *Introductio in notitiam rei litterariae et usum bibliothecarum* (1704), edidit J.C. Fischer, Broenner, Francofurti et Lipsiae 1754<sup>6</sup>, p. 561.

<sup>37</sup> In favour of this hypothesis there could also be another element. As just reported, Uz asks Gleim for information about the possible continuation of the Aletheophilus in the mentioned postscript of 1744. Uz remains in Halle up to the beginning of April 1743 (see the letter to Gleim from Halle on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1743 in *Briefwechsel zwischen Gleim und Uz*, pp. 36-39); given the interest in this issue, it seems legitimate to suppose that Uz would have been informed about a possible continuation of the journal until this date if it had ever happened. From Uz's question, anyway, the project seems to be in the air. In the catalogue of books possessed by Uz, there is a copy of the Aletheophilus in the edition published in Frankfurt and Leipzig, see *Uz'scher Katalog*, Ms. hist. 553, fol. 205, nr. 19 (Staatsbibliothek in Ansbach).

<sup>38</sup> For these differences, see Kliche, «*Ich glaube selbst Engel können nicht ohne Sinnlichkeit sein*», pp. 62 and ff.

<sup>39</sup> Although Baumgarten had promised lectures on the «general laws of aesthetics» as early as 1741 (*Gedanken vom vernünftigen Beyfall auf Academien*, 1741<sup>2</sup>, § 11), he admitted that the crucial urge to put this intention into practice had come from his students (*Scriptis*, § 15).

<sup>40</sup> The improvement of sensate cognition, which is the aim of aesthetics as organic philosophy, was discussed in letter 2 with respect to attention and abstraction, the



a much richer program dealing with: the name of aesthetics; its definition; the prehistory of the discipline; the improvement of the lower faculties; the plan of theoretical aesthetics, covering the beauty of thoughts (rhythmed by the six perfections of sensate cognition); the method of thinking beautifully and the signs of the beautifully-represented things. There follows the hint at practical aesthetics, aiming at the application of the general theory of beautiful cognition to its different particular species. The exposition concludes with a speech against possible intellectualistic and theological objections<sup>41</sup>.

As is evident, the plan is completely convergent with the future project of the *Aesthetica*, except for the collocation of the answer to the objections. It is thus legitimate to expect that also in the *collegium aestheticum* of 1742/43 the crucial points were already in line with the program of the *Aesthetica*. Precisely this *collegium* will be sent to Meier<sup>42</sup>, who will lecture on it starting probably from the winter semester of 1745/46<sup>43</sup>, and will then use it as the groundwork for his *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften* (3 voll., 1748/50)<sup>44</sup>.

No sign of Baumgarten's 'Proto-Aesthetica' has as yet been found. As a matter of fact, the first volume of the *Aesthetica* includes what Baumgarten managed to write during the winter of 1749/50 in correspondence to new aesthetic classes requested by his students<sup>45</sup>. Baumgarten

internal and the external senses. The letter refrained from the exposition of the other parts of aesthetics from a lack of time and space, but did not exclude the possibility of returning to it in the future, *Philosophische Briefe von Aetheophilus*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>41</sup> Kliche, «*Ich glaube selbst Engel können nicht ohne Sinnlichkeit sein*», pp. 56-59.

<sup>42</sup> Bergmann hypothesized that Baumgarten sent it to Meier in 1745, see E. Bergmann, *Die Begründung der deutschen Ästhetik durch Alex. Gottlieb Baumgarten und Georg Friedrich Meier*, Röder & Schunke, Leipzig 1911, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> See the letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1745, where Meier affirms he is holding a *collegium aestheticum* (S.G. Lange, *Sammlung gelehrter und freundschaftlicher Briefe*, 1. Theil, Hemmerde, Halle 1769, p. 173; and *ibidem*, 2. Theil, Hemmerde, Halle 1770, p. 185). See also T. Hlobil, *Aesthetics in the Lecture Lists of the Universities of Halle, Leipzig, Würzburg and Prague (1785-1805)*, «Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert», 29, 2005, pp. 13-43, here p. 18, note 15.

<sup>44</sup> Meier, *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften*, vol. I, Vorrede, p. A2. See also A.G. Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, vol. I., Kleyb, Traiecti cis Viadrum 1750, *Praefatio*.

<sup>45</sup> Baumgarten surely held aesthetic classes in the summer semester of 1749, as witnessed by a letter of Beausobre's dated 26<sup>th</sup> August 1749, where he also makes reference to the imminent publication of the *Aesthetica* (see M. Fontius, *Baumgarten*

writes in the preface that he has made some additions and corrections with respect to the theory elaborated eight years before<sup>46</sup>, although such a revision obliged him to publish only a small part of the work he had originally intended<sup>47</sup>.

There exists, however, possible indirect evidence of the first *collegium aestheticum* of 1742/43, which, as far as I know, has gone hitherto unnoticed by scholarship. According to Meier's account, Baumgarten also held classes of dogmatic theology in Frankfurt upon his students' request<sup>48</sup>. There are two versions of these lectures<sup>49</sup>: the one was published by Semler in 1773 with the title of *Praelectiones theologiae dogmaticae*<sup>50</sup>, while the other, in four volumes, under the title of *Isagoge philosophica in theologiam theticam*, is so far unpublished<sup>51</sup>. In both of these texts there are references to the *Aesthetica* (*Aesth.*) which do not correspond to the paragraphs of the printed work.

*und die Literaturbriefe. Ein Brief aus Frankfurt/Oder an Louis de Beausobre in Berlin*, «Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte», 80, 2006, pp. 553-594, here pp. 571-572). The aesthetic notes of Baumgarten's lectures published by Poppe derive from a cycle of lectures following the publication of the *Aesthetica* (according to Poppe, summer semester of 1750 or winter semester of 1750/51), see B. Poppe, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. Seine Bedeutung und Stellung in der Leibniz-Wolffischen Philosophie und seine Beziehungen zu Kant. Nebst Veröffentlichung einer bisher unbekanntenen Handschrift der Ästhetik Baumgartens*, Noske, Borna-Leipzig 1907, pp. 62-63.

<sup>46</sup> Baumgarten mentions these changes in the preface to the first volume of the *Aesthetica*.

<sup>47</sup> The general plan of the *Aesthetica* is at § 13 as well as in the *conspectus*. The decision to publish a part of the work in that moment is due to the attempt to lighten his students' efforts (see the preface). In any case, Baumgarten declares that the volume has its own autonomy and promises to conclude the work soon.

<sup>48</sup> Meier, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgartens Leben*, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> On the fact that Baumgarten held more than one cycle of lectures of this kind, see Baumgarten, *Vorreden zur Metaphysik*, p. 228 and *passim*.

<sup>50</sup> A.G. Baumgarten, *Praelectiones theologiae dogmaticae, Praefationem adiecit J.S. Semler*, Hemmerde, Halae 1773.

<sup>51</sup> The exact title is *Isagoge philosophica in theologiam theticam per Alexandrum Gottlieb Baumgarten phil. prof. publ. ord. in acad. Viadrina*; the four-volume work is held in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (209. theol. oct. 48-51). The first volume is dated March 1748; the last one, August 1748.

In the case of the *Praelectiones*, we do not have the precise date of the lectures. As for the *Isagoge*, we know that the first volume was transcribed by Baumgarten's disciple Johann Gottfried Beneke in March 1748 in Berlin, so that the lectures on which it relies were probably held between the summer semester of 1743<sup>52</sup> and the winter semester of 1747/48, that is, after the conclusion of the first *collegium aestheticum*, but before the elaboration of the first part of the *Aesthetica*. The only *Aesthetica* available at that time was in all likelihood the *collegium aestheticum* of 1742/43, which must have been very well known to the students. The notes of the lectures on dogmatic theology, which remained unpublished until after Baumgarten's death, have not been updated in their references since the publication of the *Aesthetica*, and thus conserve some 'fossils' from the first phase of the elaboration of the new discipline<sup>53</sup>.

The references are recorded in the section on the Holy Scripture, and in particular in the discussion on the first «argumentum internum» proving its divinity<sup>54</sup>. In order to discover if a book is not a merely human product – Baumgarten argues – it is necessary to consider it in the light of the critical rules, both aesthetic and logical: in the event that it possesses a superior perfection to the natural forces of a human author, it is likely to be divinely inspired. But such seems to be the case here<sup>55</sup>. It is this need to analyse Scripture on the basis of criteria lent from aesthetics that leads Baumgarten to consider the holy text in relation to the same subdivisions (firstly, the tripartition heuristics, methodology and semiotics, modelled on the three rhetorical categories of *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*, and secondly, the six perfections of cognition), thus justifying the series of references to his *collegium aestheticum*.

<sup>52</sup> In the *Scriptis*, where a lecture list up to the winter semester of 1742/43 is recorded, there is no reference to this class.

<sup>53</sup> The same holds for logic; although these notes (as well as those of the *Philosophia generalis*) make reference to several paragraphs, sections and chapters of logic, the printed edition of the *Acroasis logica* will be released only in 1761.

<sup>54</sup> Baumgarten, *Praelectiones*, §§ 75 and ff.; Id., *Isagoge*, §§ 41 and ff.

<sup>55</sup> Id., *Praelectiones*, §§ 75-6; Id., *Isagoge*, § 41.

In the *Praelectiones*, the references concern only the first three perfections of heuristics<sup>56</sup>. In the *Isagoge*, the references also concern the other perfections as well as the sections on the *methodologia* and *semiotica* (regarding respectively order and style), that is, the last parts of theoretical aesthetics that will never be published in the edited version of the *Aesthetica*<sup>57</sup>. The second and last volume of the *Aesthetica*, as is well known, breaks off before the end of heuristics, with the chapter on aesthetic persuasion (the fifth perfection), covering §§ 829-904; if we compare them with the corresponding paragraphs of the ‘Proto-Aesthetica’, approximately §§ 81-102<sup>58</sup>, and consider that the ‘Proto-Aesthetica’ consists of more than 400 paragraphs<sup>59</sup>, we have a scale of the magnitude that the complete work could have assumed.

While, therefore, letter 36 helps us understand the general scheme of the project of aesthetics, the references to the *collegium* can provide some further indication of the never-published sections of the *Aesthetica* and the evolution of Baumgarten’s thought<sup>60</sup>. By virtue of the new da-

<sup>56</sup> Id., *Praelectiones*, §§ 78-80. The references to the *Aesthetica* are far less numerous than those included in Beneke’s manuscript. The present references, however, agree with those in the *Isagoge*. This means that the lectures on which the *Praelectiones* rely should have been held before 1750. It cannot be excluded, therefore, that the text published by Semler derives from the lectures on revealed theology of the summer semester 1749 quoted by Beausobre, see Fontius, *Baumgarten und die Literaturbriefe*, p. 571.

<sup>57</sup> Baumgarten, *Isagoge*, §§ 42-53, corresponding to *Praelectiones*, §§ 95 and ff.

<sup>58</sup> Id., *Isagoge*, § 49, corresponding to *Praelectiones*, §§ 89-91.

<sup>59</sup> §§ 397-409 of the ‘Proto-Aesthetica’ discuss semiotic problems, see Id., *Isagoge*, § 53, corresponding to *Praelectiones*, §§ 99-100. As far as I can see, no reference is made in these theological lectures as to practical aesthetics.

<sup>60</sup> I venture only a tentative hypothesis on this development: given that the treatment of the perfection of *ubertas* ends at § 19 of the *collegium* (or at § 20; the first mentioned paragraph concerning *magnitudo* is § 21; see Id., *Praelectiones*, §§ 78-79; Id., *Isagoge*, §§ 42-43) and that all the other five perfections occupy more than 10 paragraphs each, it is legitimate to suppose that the important discussion of the lower faculties of the mind, in the same way as in Meier’s *Anfangsgründe* and differently from the *Aesthetica*, is postponed to the analysis of the perfections of cognition rather than forced into the very few initial paragraphs of the *collegium*. In any case, see § 27 of the notes published by Poppe for Baumgarten’s difference from Meier on this point in the final version of the *Aesthetica* (Poppe, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten*, p. 85).

ting of Aletheophilus' letters and the consideration of the hints in the lectures on dogmatic theology, the reflection accompanying the first *collegium aestheticum* in the winter semester of 1742/43 seems to take a clearer shape.

#### IV.

The attestations of the *Abriss* and of the *Introductio* enable us to revise the date of the conclusion of the *Philosophische Brieffe von Aletheophilus* in a way that is congruent with the textual evidence of letter 36. This leads us to question what is written at the bottom of the letter published by Kliche. One or the other: either Kliche has made a transcription mistake in copying the date or the error was already present in the typescript on which Kliche relies.

Thanks to the courtesy of Wiebke Witzel, I have been able to look into the original document, now at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin<sup>61</sup>. The date of 1741 is effectively recorded in the typewritten text. It is therefore likely that the paratext was inductively inferred by the typewriter (be it Krauss or not), including the page numeration, which skips letter 35 without any justification<sup>62</sup>. In any case, it is all but certain that there was a consequential numeration with respect to that of the volume of 1741, also given the fact, mentioned by both the quoted entries<sup>63</sup>, that the separate issues of the Aletheophilus were originally published in Halle and not in Frankfurt and Leipzig. From other catalogues of that time<sup>64</sup>, it is possible to identify the first editor as being Carl Hermann Hemmerde, who, among other things in

<sup>61</sup> NL W. Krauss, Kasten Exzerpte 1; Mappe Aesthetik.

<sup>62</sup> For the moment, nothing is known about this letter.

<sup>63</sup> See also Meier, *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften*, vol. I, p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> See for example «Alethophili Philosophische Briefe, 4. Halle, bey Ch. [!] Hemmerde», in *Catalogus universalis oder Verzeichniß derer Bücher, Welche in der Franckfurter und Leipziger Oster-Messe des 1741sten Jahres Entweder gantz neu gedruckt, oder sonsten verbessert, wieder aufgelegt worden sind, auch ins künftige noch heraus kommen sollen*, Große, Leipzig [1741], p. Ev. The issues from 25 to the end (probably, therefore, issues 25 and 26) are mentioned in the same catalogue, in the issue of Easter 1742, p. Dv, where «Carl Hermann Hemmerde» is reported as editor.

those years, had also published Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* and *Ethica philosophica*<sup>65</sup>.

Another element mentioned in the *Abriss* and the *Introductio* is also noteworthy, namely the fact that the total number of the issues comes to 29. This means three things: 1) the lost letters are not *at least* three, they are *exactly* three; 2) there is every reason to assume a perfect correspondence between the last three issues and the last three letters (27-35; 28-36; 29-37); 3) letter 36 does not correspond to issue 27, as affirmed in the typescript, but to issue 28.

A confirmation of this last conclusion comes from a different source: a review published in the «Pommersche Nachrichten von gelehrten Sachen» and dated 6<sup>th</sup> March 1744<sup>66</sup>. The anonymous reviewer declares that the 29<sup>th</sup> and last issue of the philosophical letters published under the pseudonym of «Alethophilus» [sic] has just been released<sup>67</sup>. Such evidence enables us to further limit the end of the journal to the very first days of March 1744. The reviewer touches on the topic of some issues published in the edition of 1741. Particularly significant is the mention of issue 28, in which – it is stated – there is an explanation of aesthetics. No doubt thereby remains regarding the fact that letter 36 corresponds to issue 28. But the best is yet to come. In fact, the review briefly lingers on issue 29<sup>68</sup>, which is as yet unknown. The issue – we learn – is directed at Greifswald and «deals with some aspects concerning the po-

<sup>65</sup> See H.-J. Kertscher, *Die Verleger Carl Hermann Hemmerde und Carl August Schwetschke*, Halescher Verl., Halle 2004, p. 23, who, however, does not mention the Alethophilus.

<sup>66</sup> «Pommersche Nachrichten von gelehrten Sachen», 19. Stück, 6. März 1744, pp. 153-154.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153. It is interesting to notice that the epsilon in «Alethophilus», present in the title of the edition published in Frankfurt and Leipzig, has been expunged here as well as in the entries of the *Abriss* and of the *Introductio*. On this graphic duplicity, probably due to the spread of the pseudonym Alethophilus at that time, see U. Franke, *Kunst als Erkenntnis. Die Rolle der Sinnlichkeit in der Ästhetik des Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten*, Steiner, Wiesbaden 1972, p. 18; D. Mirbach (*Ale.theophilus Baumgarten*, p. 329) indicates that in certain cases the fictitious correspondents call him Alethophilus.

<sup>68</sup> Actually, the reviewer writes «Brief 29», but it is clearly a misunderstanding. 29 is the number of the issue, while the number of the letter is 37.

em»<sup>69</sup>. The reviewer adds that ‘Aletheophilus’ replies in this piece to the doubts raised concerning Baumgarten’s *Meditationes philosophicae* in the first treatise of the sixth issue of the «Critische Versuche». The review concludes by pinpointing the depth of these letters, from which it is possible to guess the author<sup>70</sup>, in any case announced in the opening of the volume<sup>71</sup>.

## V.

Compared to the scant attention devoted to the other issues, the information on the last letter of Aletheophilus is remarkable. A primary reason, rather extrinsic, for this interest derives from the fact that the letter is directed at Greifswald, that is, at a Pomeranian city, where the journal aims to record the news of the learned world. This location, though, is not accidental. Since 1739 Greifswald had been the seat of a «Deutsche Gesellschaft» for the promotion of the German language<sup>72</sup>, whose aim found its highest expression in the publication of the «Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache» (1741/46)<sup>73</sup>. It was precisely the future secretary of the German Society in Greifswald (from the end of 1743), Johann Carl Dähnert, who founded the «Pommersche

<sup>69</sup> «Pommersche Nachrichten von gelehrten Sachen», 19. Stück, 6. März 1744, pp. 154-155.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 155.

<sup>71</sup> J.C. Dähnert, *Beytrag zur neuesten Geschichte der Gelehrsamkeit*, «Pommersche Nachrichten von gelehrten Sachen», 1744, pp. 3-32, here p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> See R. Hasenjäger, *Aus dem litterarischen und wissenschaftlichen Leben Greifswalds im zweiten Drittel des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, «Pommersche Jahrbücher», 8, 1907, pp. 135-158; R. Schultz, *Die Königlich Deutsche Gesellschaft zu Greifswald*, Adler, Greifswald 1914; H. Langer, *Gelehrte Sozietäten in Schwedisch-Pommern. Programmatik und Realität*, in K. Garber et al. (hrsgg.), *Europäische Sozietätsbewegung und demokratische Tradition*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 1996, vol. II, pp. 1550-1564; and D. Doering, *Gelehrte Gesellschaften in Pommern im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, in D. Alvermann et al. (hrsgg.), *Die Universität Greifswald des Ostseeraums*, Lit, Berlin 2007, pp. 123-154.

<sup>73</sup> On this journal in particular, see R. Schultz, *Die Königlich Deutsche Gesellschaft zu Greifswald*, pp. 81-103; Th.Ch. Rauter, *The Eighteenth-Century «Deutsche Gesellschaft»*. *A Literary Society of the German Middle Class*, Diss., Urbana/Illinois 1966, pp. 164-174.

Nachrichten von gelehrten Sachen» (1743/48), on which the account on the Aletheophilus was published<sup>74</sup>.

Hereby, the intersections with Baumgarten's work become clearer: Dähnert (or whoever) reviews Baumgarten/Aletheophilus' reply to the review on Baumgarten's *Meditationes*, a review that was published in a journal – the «Critische Versuche» – to which Dähnert was among the most active contributors. Such a journal had arisen in the wake of the «Beiträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit» in Leipzig, and welcomed papers – authored by some of the members of the Society in Greifswald – concerning linguistic and literary themes, with a number of reviews, among which that on the *Meditationes*. The Leipzig model suggests a link with Gottsched which will never fade, at least for certain members<sup>75</sup>, although several essays stand in close proximity to the Swiss critics' positions<sup>76</sup>.

The anonymous account on the *Meditationes*<sup>77</sup>, actually written by Hermann Jacob Lasius<sup>78</sup>, a young member of the Society in Greifswald (from 1742)<sup>79</sup>, is a synthesis of the contents of Baumgarten's work rather than a true review. The aim is to make a mostly unknown or neglected Latin text accessible in German. A text which, in any case, is not easy to read as a consequence of its author's insight and depth<sup>80</sup>. As

<sup>74</sup> See W. Braun, *Existenzkampf einer kritischen Zeitschrift in Schwedisch-Pommern 1743-1748. Aus den Anfängen des Greifswalder Bibliothekars Johann Carl Dähnert*, «Greifswald-Stralsunder Jahrbuch», 4, 1964, pp. 217-240; more in general, see E. Zunker, *Die Greifswalder wissenschaftlichen Zeitschriften und periodischen Veröffentlichungen. Ein Beitrag zur Universitätsgeschichte*, in *Festschrift zur 500-Jahrfeier der Universität Greifswald*, vol. I, Ernst Moritz Arndt-Universität, Greifswald 1956, pp. 262-282.

<sup>75</sup> Doering, *Gelehrte Gesellschaften in Pommern im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 138 and ff.

<sup>76</sup> See on this Hasenjäger, *Aus dem litterarischen und wissenschaftlichen Leben Greifswalds*, p. 148.

<sup>77</sup> «Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache», 1742, 6. Stück, pp. 573-604. Although the title of the journal is in the singular form on the frontispiece of this and other issues («Critischer Versuch...»), I always use the plural form to avoid misunderstandings.

<sup>78</sup> *Jetztlebendes gelehrtes Mecklenburg*, hrsg. v. J.Ch. Koppe, vol. I, Koppe, Rostock-Leipzig 1783, pp. 107-116, here p. 114.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107.

<sup>80</sup> «Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache», 1742, 6. Stück, p. 574.



shown by the earliest reception of Baumgarten's work<sup>81</sup>, the objective will be fully fulfilled<sup>82</sup>.

At first, Lasius provides a brief introduction, where he underscores the need for a philosophical poetics – the science of the rules deriving from the essence of a poem in general – of which Baumgarten offers the main points in this dissertation<sup>83</sup>. In the summing up, the reviewer draws two linguistic conclusions, as is usual for this journal: on the one hand, he states the legitimacy to include Latin words in his account in the absence of German counterparts, and, on the other hand, he stresses the importance of philosophers as favouring the enrichment of the lexicon of their language<sup>84</sup>. Lasius' exposition faithfully follows Baumgarten's arguments and proves to be in almost total agreement with them<sup>85</sup>.

The only question to which the reviewer takes exception concerns the syllabic quantity. While Baumgarten maintains that the duration of the syllables depends on the assumption of a syllabic value as the unit (the 'short' syllable)<sup>86</sup>, thus explicitly rejecting the thesis that «quantity [can] be known from the value of the letters»<sup>87</sup>, Lasius objects that the syllable is still composed of letters and that its duration should be attributed

<sup>81</sup> See the pioneering study S. Tedesco, *Alla vigilia dell'Aesthetica*, Aesthetica, Palermo 1996, pp. 35 and 42-43. See also Kliche, «*Ich glaube selbst Engel können nicht ohne Sinnlichkeit sein*», pp. 60-61.

<sup>82</sup> At the beginning of the *Vertheidigung der Schweitzerischen Muse*, Hr. D. Albrecht Hallers (Heidegger, Zürich 1744, pp. 5-8), for example, Breitinger thanks the authors of the «*Critische Versuche*» for summing up Baumgarten's dissertation, which was hard to find and guiltily neglected in the German poetic debate. Even Quistorp's disruptive review relies on Lasius' account rather than on Baumgarten's original text (see «*Pommersche Nachrichten von gelehrten Schriften*», 8. April 1746, 28. Stück, pp. 227-228).

<sup>83</sup> «*Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache*», 1742, 6. Stück, pp. 573-574.

<sup>84</sup> Lasius quotes, for example, the «wahre, utopische und heterokosmische Er-dichtungen» (*ibidem*, p. 603).

<sup>85</sup> See also [H.J. Lasius], *Unpartheyische Gedanken von dem Wehrte [sic] der Dichter*, «*Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache*», 1742, 6. Stück, pp. 617-637, in which the influence of Baumgarten's aesthetics was evident in several passages.

<sup>86</sup> A.G. Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry*, ed. by K. Aschenbrenner, W.B. Holther, Univ. of California Pr., Berkeley-Los Angeles 1954, § 100.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, § 98.

to the duration of the latter<sup>88</sup>. Although it may seem a question of detail, Lasius attached great importance to the sonority of languages as well as to their prosodic and linguistic analysis, as arguable from other essays of his, such as *Von der rauben, männlichen, zärtlichen und weibischen Sprache* (1742)<sup>89</sup> and the *Gedanken von dem Numero in der Rede* (1743)<sup>90</sup>. In this sense, Lasius' doubt was not only inscribed within the context of the Society in Greifswald, but also witnessed to his own research topics.

In any case, it was a critique expressed in a respectful and polite manner, as a token of esteem for the author being reviewed. Radically different was the tone of the review signed by Quistorp (1745) – another member of the Society in Greifswald who was very close to Gottsched – who brutally accused Baumgarten of subduing reason to unbridled sensibility<sup>91</sup>. In the latter case, Meier undertook to reply on Baumgarten's behalf, and did it once again from the pages of the «*Critische Versuche*»<sup>92</sup>, for which he also wrote a series of aesthetic essays<sup>93</sup>. Actually, Baumgarten himself also reacted to the attack in the preface to the third edition of the *Metaphysica* (1739; 1750<sup>3</sup>), where Quistorp was implicitly charged with maliciously misunderstanding the definition of a poem provided in the *Meditationes*, insofar as he translated «*oratio sensitiva perfecta*» as «*vollkommen sinnliche Rede*»<sup>94</sup>. On the other hand, Quistorp's misunderstanding could be due to Lasius, who had employed both the German phrases «*vollkommene sinnliche Rede*» and

<sup>88</sup> «*Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache*», 1742, 6. Stück, pp. 596-597.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*, 1742, 5. Stück, pp. 461-494.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, 1743, 9. Stück, pp. 259-278. Lasius' essay will be anonymously reviewed by Georg Venzky, to whom Lasius will give a timely response (see respectively: *ibidem*, 1744, 11. Stück, pp. 461-475, and *ibidem*, 1744, 12. Stück, pp. 559-568).

<sup>91</sup> T.C. Quistorp, *Erweis, daß die Poesie schon für sich selbst ihre Liebhaber leichtlich unglücklich machen könne*, «*Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste*», 1745, 5. Stück, pp. 433-452.

<sup>92</sup> See above. Quistorp will reply to this review from the pages of the «*Pommersche Nachrichten*» in the 28. Stück of 1746.

<sup>93</sup> See for example Y. Wübben, *Gespenster und Gelehrte*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 2007, pp. 121, n. 89.

<sup>94</sup> A.G. Baumgarten, *Vorreden zur Metaphysik*, pp. 52 and ff.

«vollkommen sinnliche Rede» to translate Baumgarten's definition<sup>95</sup>, although without any polemical intent.

For this reason too, Baumgarten's reply to Lasius must certainly have been friendlier. Indeed, it was probably Baumgarten's friendship with several members of the Society in Greifswald that favoured his admission as a member in 1744 along with his disciple Meier<sup>96</sup>. From what is reported in the biography of Meier, the date of admission of the latter is the 12<sup>th</sup> of March<sup>97</sup>: should it be so for Baumgarten as well, his entrance into the Society would immediately follow the conclusion of the journal, and thereby his letter to Greifswald, and could possibly be occasioned by this theoretical exchange.

## VI.

In the light of all this, it is possible to advance some hypotheses about the content of letter 37. Certainly, as announced in the «Pommersche Nachrichten», Baumgarten must have returned to the doubts raised by the review in the «Critische Versuche». Since the question of the syllabic quantity is Lasius' only real objection, it is plausible that Baumgarten defended his point of view on this theme in letter 37<sup>98</sup>.

According to the account of the «Pommersche Nachrichten», however, letter 37 also deals with «einige Stücke» concerning the poem. The terms «einige Stücke» here seem to mean the Latin neuter «*varia*»<sup>99</sup>, which Baumgarten had employed in the *Meditationes* to indicate the three fundamental aspects of a poem: the sensate representations, their connection and the words, as well as the elements constitutive of the

<sup>95</sup> The first solution is recorded, for example, in «Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache», 1742, 6. Stück, p. 576; for the second solution, see *ibidem*, p. 599 and *passim*.

<sup>96</sup> «Pommersche Nachrichten von gelehrten Sachen», 29. Dezember 1744, 102. Stück, p. 828.

<sup>97</sup> See S.G. Lange, *Leben Georg Friedrich Meiers*, Gebauer, Halle 1778, p. 44.

<sup>98</sup> It is impossible to know for the moment if such an answer contained a discussion about Lasius' initial and conclusive remarks as well.

<sup>99</sup> See also also Lasius' mentioned review, «Critische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache», 1742, 6. Stück, p. 577.

words themselves (the articulated sound and the meaning)<sup>100</sup>. To be sure, these *Stücke* can also refer to more specific properties of a poem: such was the case of letter 11 (1741), which analysed in particular the third aspect of a poem (*Ausdruck* or *dictio*) with respect to *puritas, concinnitas, congruentia* and *ornatus*<sup>101</sup>, so as to propose a slightly different definition of the poem from the one put forward in the *Meditationes*: no longer «perfect sensate discourse»<sup>102</sup>, but rather discourse so vivid as to require the metre<sup>103</sup>. In any case, the peculiar «Stücke» of a poem possibly discussed in letter 37 must have fallen under the mentioned tripartition: in fact, if Meier quotes Baumgarten's definition of letter 11 as the most important in his *Vertheidigung* of 1746, this implies that there should not have been substantial changes in this sense between 1741 and 1746<sup>104</sup>.

There remains the doubt concerning which elements have been effectively discussed in letter 37. Although the collected data does not allow us to draw definitive conclusions, it is nonetheless interesting to reflect on the direction that the analysis of poetry takes in these years in Meier. In the critical review to Gottsched's poetics (1747), Meier sketches his own approach to the crucial elements of a poem<sup>105</sup>. He starts from the usual tripartition of things or thoughts, signs and order<sup>106</sup>, and develops the first two dimensions in a further series of elements (*Stücke*)<sup>107</sup>: things or thoughts must be regarded with respect to the six perfections of cognition, the poet's character, and the different kinds of poetic

<sup>100</sup> See Baumgarten, *Reflections on poetry*, §§ 10 and 78.

<sup>101</sup> *Philosophische Briefe von Aletheophilus*, pp. 29 and ff. In this case, Baumgarten avoids the term «Stücke» and prefers «Vollkommenheiten» or «Vorzüge», which contain a more pronounced evaluative connotation. See also Baumgarten, *Sciagraphia*, §§ 94-96; Id., *Philosophia generalis*, § 147. These concepts should have been discussed in the semiotic part of the *Aesthetica*, insofar as the 'Proto-Aesthetica' deals with them at §§ 403-409, see Id., *Isagoge*, § 53. The four elements are also mentioned in Id., *Praelectiones*, § 100.

<sup>102</sup> See Id., *Reflections on poetry*, § 9.

<sup>103</sup> *Philosophische Briefe von Aletheophilus*, p. 31. See also Baumgarten, *Sciagraphia*, § 106; and Id., *Philosophia generalis*, § 147. The presence of this doctrine in the *Sciagraphia* indicates that such a change probably derives from the *collegia privatissima* held in Halle.

<sup>104</sup> Meier, *Vertheidigung der Baumgartischen Erklärung eines Gedichtes*, § 3.

<sup>105</sup> Id., *Beurteilung der Gottschedischen Dichtkunst*, Hemmerde, Halle 1747, § 12.

<sup>106</sup> In this case, the order is postponed to signs.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*, § 11.

thoughts (concepts, judgements, and demonstrations); the exposition must be regarded with respect to words, statements, style and euphony<sup>108</sup>. Such a scheme surely takes advantage of the general aesthetic project elaborated in those years by Baumgarten<sup>109</sup>; and yet, it is not unlikely that Baumgarten himself could have applied this general plan to the poem in letter 37<sup>110</sup>.

Whilst waiting for the research to make available further data to clear up this matter, it is already possible to conclude that letter 37 lies at the heart of the relations among the aesthetic issues of the *Briefe*. Certainly, it is tied to letter 11 in the same way as letter 36 is tied to letter 2. There is therefore a double couple of letters on the basis of their topics: the first couple dealing with poetics and the second couple dealing with aesthetics. However, letter 37 also has a close connection to letter 36, not only for their paired and crucial position in the series of issues of the journal, but also for the affinity of their content and approach: the «Ästhetik nach Hamburg» is thus complemented by a sort of «Poetik nach Greifswald». In bidding a definitive farewell to his readers, Aletheophilus seems at last to drop his mask, bringing to the fore the two main focuses of Baumgarten's aesthetic thought.

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<sup>108</sup> After the general part, the analysis should include a special part, devoted to the different genres of poetry.

<sup>109</sup> Meier's scheme makes reference to a theoretical structure which emerged, although in slightly different ways, both in the *collegium aestheticum* and in letter 36, see above.

<sup>110</sup> In the *Vertheidigung* (§§ 7; 10-11), for example, Meier declares that Baumgarten's definition of a poem requires the six perfections of sensate cognition (or beauties), even if Baumgarten had not made clear such a link either in the *Meditationes* or in Aletheophilus' 11<sup>th</sup> letter of 1741. To be sure, the connection could be an autonomous conclusion of Meier's on the basis of Baumgarten's earliest applications of this doctrine to aesthetics (see letter 36 and his *Scriptis*, § 15), but it is not excluded that behind this bold assertion there could be a more explicit indication in this direction contained in letter 37, a letter that Meier had quoted at the beginning of the *Vertheidigung* as an important source for Baumgarten's poetic doctrine.