> and this is a maxim to him. Now since a man, in and for himself, is supposed to be an end for his humanity, the miser assuredly violates humanity in his own person, in that he puts out of sight the end prescribed to him, and looks upon the mere means given for that purpose as though he himself were a means in that regard. (MSVig 6:659)

Baumgarten simply regards certain needs as fixed by the conditions of human "necessity" and "commodiousness," and thus regards self-perfection as requiring the provision of the right amount of means to those ends, neither less nor more. Kant regards one end as given to human beings—the end of humanity in themselves, to go back to the framework of the Vigilantius lectures—but this end is nothing other than our ability to set our own ends freely, and in letting what should be mere means to the ends that we might set for ourselves, our possible ends, become ends in their own right, we undermine the end of humanity in ourselves. Kant's invocation of the "watchdog" is telling: by undermining our ability to set our own ends freely we undermine our humanity and reduce ourselves to the level of mere animals. This is an analysis that Baumgarten could not offer, because he took mind—even including our moral capacities—body, and external condition as the immediate objects of perfection, rather than taking freedom and thus our ability to set our own ends—an ability that we all have, and that must thus be regarded inter- as well as intra-personally—as that which is to be preserved and promoted—perfected—as the foundation of morality. The preservation of our freedom, inter- and intra-personally, is the right of humanity in ourselves, and its perfection is the end of humanity in ourselves.

10
Perfectionism from Wolff to Kant

Courtney D. Fugate

If we compare Kant's mature moral theory to what is found in the previous tradition, particularly that of natural law—and if we exclude Wolff and Baumgarten momentarily—then certain of its features stand out as startlingly original, some of which have even been considered distinctive to his thought. In this chapter, I will trace these features back to what I believe are their roots in the moral perfectionism of Wolff and Baumgarten. This may initially seem quite surprising, since Kant not only unequivocally rejects their moral theories but in fact does so precisely because of their shared commitment to perfectionism. Now, while one might argue for a *negative* influence, insofar as Kant formulates his theory through the diagnosis and remedy of perfectionism's failings, I will argue here for a decisive *positive* influence. On my account, Kant does not reject perfectionism as such, indeed quite the contrary, but instead rejects an *empirically specified* perfectionism, which, because of that qualification, is able to treat only of the empirically determined will (with its "turnspit" freedom) and so is not, in Kant's eyes, moral at all. What Kant takes almost fully onboard, however, is the highly articulated *idea* or *formal structure* of perfection as this is found particularly in Baumgarten's cosmology and practical philosophy.[1] In Kant's hands, this same formal structure of a world or, more precisely, of a "nature" in general, becomes the law imposed by the transcendentally free will directly upon its own manners of acting.

As I will argue, the conceptual preparation for this transformation turns upon two hinges, both of which trace to Baumgarten's subtle modifications of Wolffian perfectionism, namely, his fuller articulation of a non-consequentialist, internal morality of actions and what I call a "hyper-Leibnizian" account of the idea and formal structure of perfection itself. In the fourth section of this chapter, we will then see how Kant discovers a new account of the a priori origin of this formal structure, which, when combined with his conception of unconditioned or transcendental freedom, allows him to locate an unconditioned, hence genuinely *moral* law, in freedom's likewise unconditioned, *intentional* imposition of this same formal structure, this *homologia*, on all its actions. In this way, the

[1] A similarly positive account of Kant's relation to perfectionism is found in Guyer (2007) and (2016a).

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neo-Stoicism found in the earlier rationalist tradition, which bids us to "live according to nature," becomes in Kant the absolute duty to live according to reason's pure, a priori *idea* of a nature.

I

Three Striking Features of Kant's Moral Philosophy. The first of the striking features of Kant's moral philosophy I would like to highlight here concerns its internal unity. On his account, the moral law is not only more unified than what you will discover in earlier authors, but its very *principle* consists in the self-imposed requirement that free action itself take on a special sort of systematic unity. The late scholastic philosopher Francisco Suárez, for instance, argues that the natural law is supremely one, but not for the reason given by Kant, namely, because all moral principles ultimately stem from one ultimate principle or formula, but rather because all primitive moral principles are grasped by the same innate rational capacity, synteresis, and tend toward the same general end, namely, the perfection of the human being's various capacities (Suárez 2015, II: VIII:243–50). Natural law is then one, not in formula or derivation, but rather in regard to the psychological origin from which our knowledge of it arises and in terms of the general end it fulfils. Something similar seems to be the view of Locke and others, who also defend the unity of the first ground of all moral principles, but fail in practice to provide a truly unified account of the actual content of moral judgment. On Kant's reading, all such principles fail and must fail in this way because, as much as their principles may take on a general or abstract form, this generality can only be specified empirically, and so contingently, and is thus different *in kind* from *genuine* universality, which always contains necessity and so must be specified a priori.[2]

Stoicism, which served in many ways as an inspiration for Wolff, Baumgarten and also Kant, perhaps comes closer to such unity through the doctrine of *homologia* (see e.g. Cicero 1931, III:xxi). In this we find that the genuine good consists not only in all action being subject to one single account or *logos* but more specifically in this *logos's* serving as the *chosen* principle within us for the selection of all further action. In this way, Stoicism does indeed place the *intention* to act in a consistent and harmonious way at the very basis of the good. However, upon closer inspection, it turns out that the content of this intention is also so closely tied to the empirically given dispositions of human nature and traditional religion

[2] Perhaps the best explanation of this distinction is found in Kant's contrasting of analytical and synthetical universality in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (AA 5:407–8). That Kant ascribes synthetical universality to our moral cognition is confirmed in his Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion (AA 28:1057).

that the unity of the Stoic account remains, in practice, a mere promissory note, which disappoints as soon as the discussion turns to specific duties.[3]

In Kant, by contrast, we find that the moral law itself is not only absolutely one, such that all other moral principles are supposed to be derivable from it, but also that it admits of various, closely related formulations from which specific duties are supposed to follow in a unified, rationally transparent way—namely, the formula of the law of nature, the formula of humanity as an end in itself and the formula of a kingdom of ends—each of which *in turn* aims in its own manner at rendering human freedom supremely and systematically unified. It is notable, moreover, that these formulas also, *in themselves,* are supposed to constitute a special system according to the a priori moments of form, matter, and complete determination, which, Kant claims in the *Groundwork,* follow from "the categories of the *unity* of the form of the will (its universality), the *plurality* of the matter (of objects, i.e. of ends), and the *allness* or totality of the system of these" (GMM 4:436). Here, the Stoic *homologia* in action is thought as only possible based upon the unity that the pure understanding and reason directly—and so not only with *intention* but even with *insight into its derivation from one ground*—apply in the selection of the maxims from which all actions are to follow. I would observe here again that we find nothing of this kind in any previous system of moral philosophy.

This first striking feature of Kant's moral theory prompts us to ask: From whence did this conception of virtue arise? Did Kant just invent, out of thin air, the idea that our duties *themselves* constitute a scientific system under one supreme formula and that morality itself consists in seeking the determining ground of all our willing in that very idea of unity? Or is there, if not an historical precedent, then at least an historical root for this both ambitious and radical moral ideal?

If we look a bit more closely at Kant's various formulations of the moral law itself, we find a second striking feature. A casual perusal of Kant's texts shows that he never tires of contrasting the realm of nature with that of freedom. However, in explaining the purpose and origin of the three further formulations of the moral law just mentioned, he also indicates that *all* of them are based on what in the *Groundwork* he calls "a certain analogy" (GMS 4:436). It is easy to verify that this analogy is precisely one with "nature" in the most general, or formal sense (GMS 4:437), or with what Kant in the first *Critique* and *Prolegomena* terms "*natura formaliter spectata*" or nature viewed formally (see e.g. Rel 8:333n.; B165; A419/B447n.).[4]

[3] In this respect, it is a common failing of traditional natural law theories that, despite their supposedly rational origin, the specific duties this is held to ground usually consists in little more than a loose list of traditional religious and civic duties. See e.g. the discussion in Cicero, *De legibus,* II. A fine comparison between periods of the natural law tradition in this respect is found in Scattola (2003).

[4] I drew attention to this concept of nature in Kant, its moral function, and its roots in Baumgarten's cosmology in BM 25–9.

Thus about the formula of the law of nature, he writes:

> Since the universality of law in accordance with which effects take place constitutes what is properly called nature in the most general sense (as regards its form)—that is, the existence of things insofar as it is determined in accordance with universal laws—the universal imperative can also go as follows: *act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature.* (GMS 4:421)

In the case of the formula of humanity as an end in itself, the use of the analogy is admittedly not quite so obvious, but Kant still states that it consists in considering the rational being as an "end by its nature" (GMS 4:436). Kant also begins his derivation of the ends formula with the premise: "Rational *nature* is distinguished from the rest of *nature* by this, that it sets itself an end" (GMS 4:437; emphasis added), thereby basing it not on transcendental freedom, but on the rational agent as a special kind of natural being. And in one passage he indirectly confirms this by explain with regard to *all* the formulas: "Imperatives as they were represented above – namely in terms of the conformity of actions with universal laws similar to a *natural order* or of the universal *supremacy as ends* of rational beings in themselves [...]" (GMS 4:431).

As for the last formula, Kant clearly states in summary right after its derivation: "A kingdom of ends is thus *possible only* by analogy with a kingdom of nature" (GMS 4:438; emphasis added). And just before this, in stating it as following from the need for a principle of the complete determination of our maxims, he says that it amounts to judging "all maxims by means of the formula, namely, that all maxims from one's own lawgiving are to harmonize with a possible kingdom of ends as with a kingdom of nature" (GMS 4:436).

Finally, in one footnote, Kant says even more broadly:

> *Teleology* considers nature as a kingdom of ends, *morals* considers a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature. [...] In the former, the kingdom of ends is a theoretical idea for explaining what exits. In the latter, it is a practical idea for the sake of bringing about, in conformity with this very idea, that which does not exist but which can become real by means of our conduct. (4:436n)

In this passage, all of morals is ascribed the general inverse function of teleology; instead of thinking nature as a possible realm of ends, it thinks of moral ends *as if* they were to form a system of nature. I could present more evidence from other texts for this analogy with nature taken formally but will not belabor the point presently. I will only mention that Kant takes this analogy so seriously, that in the second *Critique* he feels comfortable adopting as his standard title for the intelligible world simply "supersensible *nature*." What is more, at several points in the

Metaphysis of Morals, but also in various unpublished notes, he exploits this analogy to explain specific moral concepts through comparison with principles of mechanical nature, including the equality of action and reaction, and universal gravitation (see e.g. MS 6:232–3, 449). Although I will not present any further evidence for this claim here, I regard it as relatively established that all three formulas are based on, or derived from, an analogy with what Kant calls in this context "formal nature."

Now, this analogy with formal nature or—what is the same—*the form of a nature in general* can be linked with what I said before about the intrinsically systematic character of the moral law through the fact that the latter is *articulated,* even *generated,* through the rational elaboration of that analogy and its implications, according to the a priori moments of the *form, matter*, and *complete determination* of a nature in general. The first formula tells us to think of our maxims *as if* they held as or possess the form that laws of nature must possess, the second infers an *as if* natural end as the only possible ground for those same sorts of laws, and the third has us think of all such ends *as if* perfectly and harmoniously unified in the form of a kingdom of nature.

The third thing that I find striking and a bit mysterious about Kant's theory of the moral law is how on the surface it looks a whole lot like something Leibniz would have dreamt up even though there is no immediate link between the two philosophers on this point. Not only did Kant surely not read Leibniz's moral theory, but he also forthrightly rejects Leibnizian and Wolffian perfectionism as a moral principle, arguing that it is both empty and unfit for serving as a categorical imperative. And yet, despite this, the supreme systematicity we find in Kant's capstone idea of a kingdom of ends in the *Groundwork* and in that of the highest good in the second *Critique,* unmistakably encapsulates the idea of a sort of absolute perfection in a sense Leibniz would have recognized as substantially his own.[5] For, in the German tradition, Leibniz is after all the father of the idea that perfection is that of a maximal unity among the greatest multiplicity, and hence consists in the greatest consistency, order, and universal lawfulness in a whole of all rational beings.

With these three features of Kant's moral law before us, my aim in the rest of this chapter is to offer a hypothetical reconstruction of the path these ideas took from Wolff to Kant.[6] To anticipate my conclusion, the reconstructed path I have in mind is that Kant reached his own account of the moral law through a specific transformation of Wolffian perfectionism, not directly, but as it was modified, refined, and refocused in the work of Baumgarten. The details and manner of this

[5] On Leibniz's conception of perfection, see e.g. Faveretti Composampiero (2018).

[6] I qualify what I am going to say as "hypothetical," simply because I don't believe that textual evidence of influence is ever quite conclusive. But I do believe this hypothesis is most likely correct and is also the most well-supported reconstruction available.

transformation are no doubt complex, as most such developmental stories behind major ideas tend to be, and for this reason I will focus in this chapter only on what I regard as a few of the more pivotal episodes.

II

Wolff's Empirical Perfectionism. The tale starts with Christian Wolff's moral theory, which has fittingly been called a type of moral perfectionism.[7] Considered generally, Wolff's moral thought clearly stands within the broader tradition of natural law ethics and, in particular, within the intellectualist rather than the voluntarist strain of it. Pretty much all natural law ethicists, of either kind, hold the following views: namely, that all human beings possess the natural capacity to grasp the distinction between good and evil; that this capacity consists in recognizing some certain end or ends that are good; that the moral quality of an action derives from its fitness or unfitness for realizing this end or ends; that, more specifically, this end or these ends are the core of what constitutes human nature; and so, finally, that the moral quality of an action derives in particular from its agreement or harmony with human nature.

It is easy to verify that Wolff accepts each of these claims under some interpretation. Indeed, he often tells us such in direct or indirect reference to previous authors on natural law. However, despite this broad agreement, Wolff's conception of the moral law and of moral science radically departs from both the meaning and the intention found in most if not all of those authors, and it does so according to a common underlying project aimed at revolutionizing moral theory on the model of modern natural science.

This project of moral enlightenment, which broadly falls under his general aim to create a sacred marriage between reason and experience, is grounded in the *German Ethics,* but is most fully explained in a Latin essay entitled "On Moral Experience" ("De experientia morali," 1731). In this work, Wolff explains that the familiar scientific methods, including those of empirical research, are perhaps even more crucial to developing a proper moral science, and to a human being's becoming moral, than they are to the elaboration of physical science. He introduces and defends this claim on several different grounds, which I have discussed elsewhere,[8] but the most fundamental surely lies in his specific conception of the law of nature itself, or better, of the *nature* of the natural law. This law, he explains, makes it our duty to perform the best action available to us (even if we are not presently aware what that might be), where goodness is defined in terms of

[7] Wolff's perfectionism is treated, among other places, in Klemme (2007) and Schwaiger (2018b). The following is a compressed summary of the argument in Fugate (2024).

[8] The following is a summary of the findings in Fugate (2024).

whatever promotes natural perfection and this "natural perfection" is understood broadly according to the Leibnizian formula of the "maximal agreement of the manifold" both within any being and between that being and all others. In short, then, for Wolff the law of nature bids us to perform whatever action most increases the agreement in the actual, physical, and mental manifold within us and others, that is to say, whatever action most increases our natural perfection. Moreover, according to Wolff (again following Leibniz), the laws that govern how and by what means such moral perfection can be increased are also just the regular laws of nature. That is to say, the natural perfection that the moral law directs us toward is said to be "natural" precisely because it involves nothing other than a harmony of structure and operation under and according to the laws of actual, physical, and psychological nature. For this reason, and because knowledge of the latter requires empirical research essentially, understanding precisely what the natural law demands of us, that is, the distinction between good and evil, as well as how to best follow this law, both also require in Wolff's view an *empirical* investigation of our own constitution—our unique inner manifold—as well as of the nature of our actions and their effects in the whole of the actual world. For this reason, Wolff spends the bulk of the above essay outlining the many roles that empirical observation and even experiments can play in discovering and confirming such moral knowledge. And, not surprising given his views on physical science, in the course of this he more than once recommends that moral philosophers improve their own science by imitating the way theory, observation, and experiment are combined to dramatic effect in modern, astronomical theory.

The core observation I wish to draw from this is that Wolff's moral theory should be seen as forming a crucial moment in the development of ethics, because in it—for the first time, at least in the modern German tradition—we find an attempt to completely assimilate moral science to natural science, and this based upon the assertion of a sort of convertibility between moral perfection,[9] or the goodness of an action, and natural perfection of the same as this is discoverable through metaphysics and experimental science. Once this is paired with his empirical psychology of motivation and his deterministic account of freedom and practical reasoning, we can see that Wolff's ultimate aim was to build a thoroughly naturalistic moral theory (of course, according to his own conception of the natural).

To express the point differently, we can observe that, for Wolff, the fundamental goal of moral science is for human action, as much as possible, to be based upon a knowledge of how we can increase the systematic order and harmony of the natural world to which our actions contribute. As he explains in the report on his own writings, the Wolffian moral principle can be expressed most generally as

[9] For a similar point see Favaretti Composampiero (2018, 24).

simply: *"the human being ought to do what brings about the perfection of the world, and omit what destroys it"* (WAN §137; emphasis in original). For this reason, we find Wolff fully and explicitly endorsing the Stoic view that ethics ultimately comes down to living in agreement with nature (WTL §28). However, by "nature" he means not Stoicism's teleological conception of a cosmos guided by intrinsic purposes and knowable to us through tradition and rational reflection on our natural instincts, but rather nature as the object of modern, experimental science as Wolff understood it. For my purposes, the important point to stress here is this Wolffian claim of the convertibility between the moral and natural perfection of an action, along with its implications, because I think such is both the focal point of the agreement and the disagreement between Wolff and Baumgarten.

Stepping back from the details of Wolff's system for a moment, and bracketing its other laudable qualities, it is helpful to consider the cost of holding such a theory from the traditional standpoint of theories of natural law—a cost that I think Baumgarten, and later Kant, were unwilling to pay. Recall that perhaps the central reason for the invention and continuation of the long tradition of natural law theory rested in its promise to articulate what was supposed to be a universally and easily recognized set of laws for human conduct, one which could be common to everyone regardless of religion, rank, or level of education. Wolff's specific brand of natural law ethics, by contrast, is founded on the idea that nothing less than a sophisticated moral science, itself resting on the other philosophical disciplines, is required for providing new insights and overturning received, but erroneous views about right and wrong, just as modern observational astronomy (resting on sophisticated mathematics) was required to do with respect to common, but erroneous views of the cosmos, such as that the earth does not move or that the Sun is only a palm in width. What is more, in his writings Wolff places such emphasis on the value of acting from such scientific moral knowledge—stating many times that those who do so are alone masters of themselves and are virtuous, while others at most only appear virtuous and are more like slaves, or children or animals (see WTL §38, 81)—that it is hard to see how his theory would not create an elite class of philosophers alongside the rest of "childlike" humankind. But this is the natural consequence of taking the Stoic emphasis placed on knowingly acting from the *logos* that animates nature and pairing it with a modern, scientific conception of that *logos* and hence also of the methods required for its discovery.

III

Baumgarten's Innovations. It is from this point of view, I believe, that we can understand the deep changes Baumgarten makes to Wolff's moral theory, many of which are initially quite subtle, but together amount to a moral science with an

entirely different orientation. First, however, it is important to recognize that Baumgarten clearly does follow Wolff's moral theory in its broad outlines, including the latter's account of the moral law and, at least in principle, of the practice of moral science. Baumgarten even clearly recognizes the empirical dimension of this discipline that Wolff claimed to have discovered, although in his writings it seems to be reduced to a few scattered indications, which one could easily overlook.

The main differences between Wolff and Baumgarten, I will argue, can be grouped under three headings:

(1) Despite his Leibnizian connections, including his conception of perfection, Wolff places little emphasis on or even rejects several key Leibnizian doctrines that Baumgarten, however, both expands and places at the heart of his own philosophical system. Two are most relevant here.

The first is the famous Leibnizian doctrine that every substance is a mirror of its entire world. In his *German Metaphysics*, Wolff expresses doubt about this theory and later in his career appears to reject it altogether.[10] Baumgarten not only provides a new explanation and proof for this idea (BM §400), he also employs it to extend Wolff's own conception of what is called the "analogue of reason." In Wolff, the phrase "analogue of reason" refers purely to the expectation of similar cases of which even brutes are capable (WPE §506). Because reason is the faculty that allows us to know the causal connections between things, this instinctual expectation of similar cases bears, in Wolff's view, a similarity or analogy to syllogistic reasoning. But this is far from an important idea in Wolff—it notably plays no role in his practical philosophy—and I think no one would even remember it if not for Baumgarten's innovative use of the phrase "analogue of reason" to refer to a whole host of capacities—not found in Wolff—which supposedly belong to the sensitive faculty of knowledge (BM §640). What in Wolff was a single, unimportant similarity between reason and one of the lower mental faculties, becomes in Baumgarten a robust doctrine about how even confused, sensory cognition is implicitly structured like, and even operates in a way parallel to, the higher cognitive faculty. It is on this basis that Baumgarten equates the analogue of reason in his own work, with what in legal practice is called "experience" (BIP §95), and calls for a "twofold marriage of reason and its analogue" in practical philosophy (BIP §99). Now, by combining this conception of the analogue of reason with the mirror doctrine, Baumgarten is able to regard the analogue of reason as itself capable of "mirroring" the world with a perfection analogous to, and even complementary to, that of which the higher faculty of cognition is capable, though in the special register of sensitive knowledge.

[10] On this, see Wunderlich (2021).

The second key Leibnizian doctrine that Baumgarten extends and places at the heart of his philosophical system is that the actual world is the best of all possible worlds. Wolff does in fact endorse this Leibnizian doctrine but gives it relatively little scope. Baumgarten, again, provides a clear defense and elaboration of the best-world doctrine, while transforming it into a foundational principle of metaphysics where it is used to prove universal preestablished harmony and to explain the relationship between the natural and the supernatural orders, and the hierarchical priority of different sorts of law, among other things. As far as its elaboration, Baumgarten articulates several principles thought to govern how the *natural* perfection of a world is structured, anticipated, and measured.

As I have treated these matters in detail elsewhere, I will recall only those elements relevant to my argument here (see Fugate 2023). The first point to note is that philosophy, on Baumgarten's understanding of it, is something that belongs to both God and human beings. However, the divine "archetypal" philosophy stands in a complex relationship to its human "ectype," or philosophy insofar as it is developed by finite, human beings like ourselves. In God, all things are known to flow from all things, such that there is no intrinsic priority between cause and caused, principle and principled, etc. In human knowledge, by contrast, some things can only be known through others, and indeed certain truths ought to be given priority in science because, for beings like us, it happens to be easier to grasp and demonstrate other truths from them, and since, moreover, it is a duty of wise judgment that the scholar conform philosophy to the needs of regular human beings. That is to say, although these truths are not *intrinsically* fundamental or first, they will be chosen to serve in this role by the philosopher who recognizes that they are rather first or simplest *relative to us* and is cognizant of and strives to realize the perfections of human knowledge in the wisest manner.

The two sciences that build upon such wisely chosen first principles are metaphysics, or "the science of the first principles in *human* knowledge" (BM §1; emphasis added), and first practical philosophy, or "the science containing the first principles that are proper but also common to the rest of the practical disciplines" (BIP §6). In the former, Baumgarten defines perfection in terms of conformity of several things with a single determining ground or focus, and its magnitude in terms of the degree of such conformity. Now, a norm or law is a "proposition that expresses a determination in conformity with a ground" (BM §83). So in the best or most perfect world as "that in which the greatest of the most parts and the most of the greatest parts that are compossible in a world agree in as great a being as is possible in a world," there is the "*greatest universal nexus*, harmony, and agreement that is possible in a world" (BM §441). Consequently, there are the most universal laws (BM §444). And, indeed, the supreme law of this world is that "*[t]he best of all compossibles are joined together with the best*" such that there will be the greatest unity of the greatest multiplicity under the greatest number of universal laws (BM §482; emphasis in original).

But the philosopher, who studies only what can be known without faith, has no access to God's archetypal knowledge of things and so knows things only insofar as they are derived from metaphysics and experience. Together, these allow us to know only laws of things that flow from the latter's persistent, internal properties, which we are aware of through experience. And as the collection of all these internal properties is called the "nature" of the thing and what follows from such according to laws is said to be "natural" (BM §430, 470–3), human philosophical knowledge is restricted to the knowledge of natural laws. Thus, while admitting other, supernatural laws are possible in the best world, Baumgarten believes that our philosophical knowledge is restricted to those that are natural. This is, however, not much of a handicap, because although supernatural laws are hypothetically possible, the principle of the best itself places a priority on natural over supernatural order, such that the law immediately subordinated to the law of the best is "*the law of the best in nature: the best of all natural things in the most perfect world are joined together with the best*" (BM §482; emphasis in original). The upshot is the general law that supernatural events will occur if and only if it is the case that the same perfection cannot be achieved according to the ordinary laws of nature. Thus, while possible, supernatural order will be as minimal and natural order will be as maximal as possible in the best of all possible worlds, and so in the actual world. Hence, the philosopher will *expect* the laws in the actual world to conform as much as possible to the form of a most-perfect system of *natural* law.[11]

This metaphysical conception of the connection between perfection, law, and nature in the broadest sense—of which I have provided the barest possible outline—is of paramount importance for understanding Baumgarten's practical philosophy, which is founded upon it.[12] First practical philosophy has the function of wisely choosing the best and simplest principles according to which we can come to know one specific domain of the natural laws that obtain in the best of all possible worlds and so also in this world, namely, those pertaining to the free determinations under the control of the human will (BM §472; BIP §60). Consequently, the practical philosopher—in the absence of any supernatural signs to the contrary—will take the system of moral laws to constitute a most-perfect system of propositions obligating us to conform our own actions to the realization of the greatest possible *natural* perfection in the world. It is on this basis that Baumgarten writes:

> In any case, there can be positive law in human laws, and even in divine laws, that is not natural, the sufficient ground of which we cannot know from the nature of the action and the agent. But seeing that the will of God, or his most free choice (BM §898), follows most perfectly upon supreme knowledge (BM §893), all his

[11] See Fugate (2018) and (2023). [12] See Fugate (2023).

> positive laws have likewise a sufficient ground in the nature of the action and the agent, or are likewise natural (§63). And since God wishes every good (BM §899), all the natural laws (§39) are also divinely chosen. From the natural law, one may validly infer the will of God concerning the free determinations of people, and from the will of God concerning the free determinations of people, one may validly infer the natural law. (BIP §69)

The propositions of moral philosophy will thus form the best possible system of *natural* norms or laws. Furthermore, as actual nature, encompassing both the laws of physical and free nature, is for him the best possible, we can now see why Baumgarten so readily embraces the Stoic principle *to live according to nature* (BIP §45); for one who does so brings their free actions under the universal laws of the best possible world, thereby knowingly and intentionally uniting them into the most perfect system with all other free actions and with all of physical nature as well. This is therefore just the same as the duty to "seek perfection" (BIP §43).

As can be seen from this, Baumgarten not only extends Leibniz's theory of the best possible world but indeed makes it into a fundamental component of his theory of the systematic structure of philosophical knowledge in general. For this reason, it is able to provide the formal structure—what Kant would call a "regulative principle" or "idea"—to guide the discovery and construction of the systems of both physical and moral laws, as well as the single system comprising both. However, it does so only under the regulative but philosophically justified guideline that these laws are all, or at least for the most part, consonant with our innate conception of *natural* perfection.

(2) The second main difference between Wolff and Baumgarten concerns the latter's development of a key set of doctrines, which he brings together in a special chapter of his *Metaphysics* entitled "The First Principles of the Mathematics of Intensive Quantities."[13] Baumgarten introduces under this title a new branch of ontology that has the aim of providing a mathematically precise account of the scales or degrees of various kinds of perfections. This mathematics is referenced and employed throughout his works and plays an essential role in his natural theology and even in his conception of the nature of philosophy. As Baumgarten says in the introduction to his *Metaphysics*, the mathematics of intensive quantities opens up "a new sphere of mediation" for the philosopher and allows us to "conceive what is the greatest of that which is real and positive and thus discover God and the divine" (BM 90). Among other things, in practical philosophy it proves essential to understanding the degrees of our own perfections, one lesson of which is that owing to the mirroring doctrine, we should not underestimate the extent to which just the analogue of reason is already far on the better side of

[13] I have discussed the importance of this new doctrine in Fugate (2023).

representing the perfection of things and so also what is good. Since the analogue of reason is already capable of providing a relatively perfect, if not rationally pure, grasp of the perfection of the world, it can be considered a relatively good source of judgment about right and wrong, if properly formed. Moral instincts and common moral views are thus not necessarily to be despised or regarded as intrinsically vulgar, slavish, or incorrect. In rather sharp contrast with Wolff's ethical intellectualism, then, one might see this as part of Baumgarten's acceptance and defense of the "mediocre," which is something we find mentioned in several passages in his writings.[14]

(3) The third main difference lies in Baumgarten's view that knowledge is an intrinsic good because it is a perfection in itself. Both Wolff and Baumgarten agree that naturally good and evil actions are such per se, intrinsically or in themselves. This is what makes them moral intellectualists rather than voluntarists like Pufendorf. But for Wolff, this doesn't mean that actions are good or evil when taken entirely in isolation from the rest of nature. It means rather that they are such because of how they are connected by natural laws with the rest of things. In fact, Wolff constantly reminds us that the way to determine the moral quality of an action is by looking to its natural effect, either by experience or by knowing this in advance through science. A good action is such because it causes perfection, while an evil action is such because it causes imperfection. This conception of intrinsic goodness is expressed in the following passage from Wolff's *German Ethics*:

> While the free actions of human beings *become* good or evil through their consequence, that is, through whatever alterable thing follows in the internal or external state of the human being, but whatever follows from free actions must do so necessarily and cannot refrain from happening (Met. §575); they [i.e. free actions] are good by and in themselves, and are not first made such through God's will. (WTL §5; emphasis added)

If we follow up the reference provided to the *German Metaphysics*, §575, we find that in that book Wolff carefully explains that the nature of the necessity of moral matters—that is, between an action and its consequence—is not an absolute necessity, but rather what he calls a "physical necessity." This means that the necessity of the link between the action and its own goodness is also the necessity of what happens by virtue of the laws of nature. These laws themselves, of course, are contingent, but on the hypothesis that they obtain, the connections they create

[14] By speaking of the "mediocre" here Baumgarten surely intends to draw on the ancient doctrine of the mean (BIP §107, 244, 248; BA §269), yet in a way deeply rooted in his metaphysics of finitude (BM §249) and framed to instill a respect for the average human being and the "lower" cognitive faculties (BPB 12).

between things—in this case between an action and its consequence and so also between the former and its own goodness—possess a kind of hypothetical necessity depending on the actual order of nature. To give an example: Brushing your teeth would be good, according to Wolff, because it improves or maintains one's bodily perfection. But there is a possible world in which the natural laws would make it such that brushing would decrease one's perfection (say by eroding one's enamel) and so would be bad. This explains why, in one sense, Wolff is able to maintain, in opposition to moral voluntarists, that actions are *intrinsically* or *objectively* good or evil (WAN §137), while, in another sense, Kant can be correct in saying that Wolff's view implies that actions are not *intrinsically* good or evil at all. This is because, for Wolff, lying, or breaking one's promise, or whatever, is not good or evil all by itself and in virtue of certain features of the very maxim that internally defines it as the kind of act that it is, as is the case for Kant, but only when seen from within the actual, though still hypothetical nexus of natural laws. In short, two different senses of "intrinsic" are operative here; one employed by Wolff, meaning within the context of natural laws and so of the nature of the act understood accordingly, and another, employed by Kant, meaning internal to the maxim defining the act itself irrespective of the actual laws of nature.

Now, Baumgarten fundamentally alters this Wolffian theory in an essential way, which I don't think has been noticed previously. Instead of defining goodness in terms of an action's effect or consequence, he writes:

> The essential determinations of each being agree with its essence (§63, 40) and its attributes. Therefore, *every being is* transcendentally *perfect.* [. . .] Something is good if, when it is posited, a perfection is also posited. Therefore, every being is *transcendentally good* (§99). (BM §99–100)

The third sentence in this passage is key. It does not say something is good when it *causes* perfection or when perfection is its real *consequence*, but only that it is good if, when the thing is posited, a perfection is posited.[15] This means there are now two possibilities: Something can be good if, when it *itself* is posited, perfection is posited (namely its own); or something can be good if, when it is posited, something *else* is posited (say *caused*) that contains perfection. The significance of this change can be seen from the rest of the passage. To prove a being is transcendentally good here, Baumgarten does not show that every being causes some other perfection according to natural laws, but only that its being as such is in itself *already* a perfection. The logic he employs is as simple as it is

[15] Although Wolff's understanding of his own theory is clearly consequentialist, it is unclear to me that this was a necessary implication of his own principles and that it could not have been developed in the way done by Baumgarten. All he would have had to do was to broaden his conception of goodness to include perfection itself, instead of restricting it to what causes or brings about perfection.

consequential (and non-Wolffian): If something is good, if, when it is posited, perfection is posited, then since the positing of any perfection X, posits perfection X, any perfection X is therefore *good.* In this case, the perfection in question is not outside of the being, but rather lies in the positing of its very being.[16] Here perfection is not an effect, which would be external to the being as an effect would be to its cause but is instead an immediate "logical consequence" (*consectarium*), a term Baumgarten carefully employs to deal with such cases. In fact, so far is Baumgarten's conception of goodness consequentialist, in the manner of Wolff, that he as it were *reverses* the direction in which goodness is held to be grounded: whereas we have seen that Wolff holds that actions "become" good through their consequences (which is rooted more deeply in his view that the relation between an act and its consequence is only physically necessary), Baumgarten thinks that the goodness of the consequences is grounded in the goodness of their cause.[17] I submit that such a view of intrinsic goodness is not possible on Wolff's definition of goodness (WDM §422; WPE §554), at least in the way he himself understands that definition, and to my knowledge he never defends in this manner the proposition that all beings, whether necessary or contingent, are transcendentally good.[18]

Now, why is this important? First, in a general respect, it means Baumgarten's moral theory is founded on a conception of intrinsic goodness that is not purely consequentialist (in a naturalistic sense) and so is much closer to, if not the same as, Kant's later view. Or at least we can say that Baumgarten potentially offered to Kant's eyes a non-consequentialist form of perfectionism.[19] Second, I think this one subtle, but fundamental change helps us understand why Baumgarten's actual ethics looks entirely different from Wolff's. Just to mention one major difference this explains, consider that for Wolff religion plays an important, but still relatively minor role in his ethics. In fact, Wolff initially has a bit of difficulty even explaining its function. This is because, as he recognizes, all our duties consist in

[16] This can also be seen from BM §147: "When the realities of a being are posited, its perfection is posited (§141). Hence, realities are good (§100), and indeed absolutely necessary realities are a METAPHYSICAL GOOD, and realities contingent in themselves are CONTINGENT GOOD [. . .]."

[17] This follows from BIP §32, which states that goods only have goods as their implications, evils only evils as their implications.

[18] That he could not do so is signaled by the fact that he first defines "good" in his empirical psychology, and thus as a concept that makes sense only in relation to human nature. In both the German and Latin writings, goodness is defined as "whatever perfects us and our own state" (*"quinquid nos statumque nostrum perfecit," "Was uns und unserun Zustand vollkommener machet"*) (WDM §422; WPE §554). Wolff does mention, but notably without endorsing, what he refers to as the Scholastic *"bonitas transcendentalis"* (WO §503). He equates this however with perfection a such, which—if he is to be consistent with the above definition of goodness—means that goodness would not even be a species of perfection, but instead, its cause according to natural laws. Baumgarten, as noted, defines goodness already in his ontology as whatever, when posited, posits perfection. Hence, for him, moral goodness is simply a species of goodness as such, namely, that in respect to free determinations insofar as they are free. This change is clearly fundamental as are its consequences for understanding the intrinsic goodness of moral acts.

[19] I refrain from making the claim here that Kant explicitly recognized this fact.

the necessity of performing good actions, which themselves are such only because they cause an increase in the perfection of the world. But since God clearly cannot be made more perfect in any way, let alone made so by our actions within the world, there can be no direct duties toward God and hence no direct duty to know God, i.e. to develop religion. Unwilling, however, to consider there may be no duty to religion at all, Wolff concludes that the only possibility is that we have an indirect duty to meditate on God's perfections in order to increase our motives for performing our *other* duties (WTL §651). So, if one is religious in a Wolffian sense, one will, for instance, brush their teeth more vigorously and frequently in the awareness that God, with all his power and majesty, wants them to do so and so has chosen it to be the natural law of the world in which they live. In this manner, religion is good for us and is a duty because it lends support to other acts through which we perfect ourselves and others. That is to say, religion is good, and so is a duty, *because* it brings about or causes acts that themselves in turn cause perfections. The indirectness of this role played by religion here is mirrored in the fact that Wolff first deals with it in the penultimate chapter of his *German Ethics* and in the third of his five-volume *Latin Ethics*.

By contrast, almost the first quarter of Baumgarten's own *Philosophical Ethics* focuses on duties of religion, and he provides no less than ten distinct proofs that we have a duty to religion. Here is one sample paragraph, which I think immediately demonstrates the main difference between him and Wolff:

> It is a reality to know the most perfect being most abundantly, worthily, truly, clearly, certainly, and brilliantly (BM §36). Therefore, the glory of God posits a reality in you (BM §947). The illustration of divine glory *also* posits a reality in you; otherwise it would be evil (BM §146). That would contradict BM §947. Therefore, the glory of God *and* his illustration in you agree as the determining ground of perfection (BM §94), and are good for you (BM §660). Therefore, religion perfects you as an end (BM §947) and indeed you are obligated to religion (BM §10). (BEP §11; emphasis added)

Here Baumgarten makes use of both possible ways in which a thing can be good, that is, in a non-consequentialist and in a consequentialist manner, the latter being the only one articulated by Wolff himself. What Baumgarten here calls the "glory of God"—as the *Metaphysics* tells us—consists in nothing but the greater knowledge of God (BM §942). So part of this paragraph tells us that knowing God, which is one aspect of religion (BM §947), perfects us *directly or internally*, insofar as we have that very knowledge, thus "as an end," and this goodness does not depend on any consequence such knowledge may have. This glory of God, by itself, is good (BM §942).

Now, also in this passage Baumgarten talks about the goodness of the "illustration of divine Glory." A little research reveals that this is just the Wolffian,

consequentialist idea of the role of religion in other terms; we illustrate God's glory, according to Baumgarten, when we perform our other duties from the motivation provided by our knowledge of God (BM §947). So here again religion is good for us, and so is our duty, but now because it *also* provides a motivation for us to perfect ourselves. This agrees with what we saw above: Instead of holding that knowledge of God becomes good through its consequences, which is the Wolffian view, Baumgarten holds it to be good *in itself* and *therefore also* good in its consequences.

Let me conclude this section by recapping Baumgarten's relation to Wolff. From Baumgarten's point of view, based upon the Leibnizian ideas mentioned above, Wolff shouldn't have extolled moral science at the expense of common moral knowledge, indeed, not even at the expense of our moral instincts, which can become more perfect through training the analogue of reason. Reason and its analogue are in fact continuous with one another, and in view of the full scheme of perfection, even the most childlike of human beings stands very high on the ladder, while none of us—not even the philosophers—exceed anyone else by much in comparison with the highest, archetypal perfection of the divine. What is more, from Baumgarten's point of view, Wolff understood goodness in a way that rendered it essentially consequentialist, which in turn led him to overlook the true center-point of ethics, namely, the knowledge of divine perfection, which perfects us directly and so is intrinsically good in a non-consequentialist manner.

IV

Kant's Transformation: From Empirical to Absolute Perfectionism. I now return to Kant. In teaching from Baumgarten's textbooks year in and year out, Kant would have encountered a version of the Wolffian convertibility between moral and natural perfection, including an endorsement of the Stoic duty to live according to nature, which would, however, be focused not on a Wolffian experimentally informed improvement of the human condition through natural science, but rather on an intrinsically moral natural theology and the endeavor to live a life in light of it. In the mathematics of intensive quantities and the rules of the best possible world developed in Baumgarten, which provide a rationale for prioritizing natural over supernatural laws in moral science, Kant also would have encountered an elaborate, hyper-Leibnizian theory of the systematic form and measurement of natural *cum* moral perfection from which he could draw.

If we then consider the notes Kant penned in the margins of his copy of Baumgarten's *Elements*, I think the following story starts to emerge. Early on, he accepts this form of perfection, which in Baumgarten's Leibnizian account is also (due to the best of all possible worlds doctrine) the form or structure of nature, as genuinely being the essential form and structure of whatever is good (passim, but

esp. Refl 6750, 19:148). As stated already in the Herder notes, Kant believes that Baugmarten's *Elements* contains a fully adequate, general account of practical perfection, but fails to properly distinguish and specify moral perfection and hence moral goodness (PrHer 27:16). In this respect, Kant agrees with perfectionism's claim that the essential form of the good lies in something's degree of formal diversity and unity under laws, completeness, or formal perfection. What he rejects is that a grasp of this form can provide a criterion, as Wolff seemed to believe it able, for discovering unconditioned, substantive, and thus *moral* goods through our empirical experience of physical and mental nature. Kant has three related insights here.

First, this form is insufficient by itself to specify the morally good (Refl 6624–5, 19:116). Baumgarten, following Wolff in this regard, had already indicated the path forward, even if he had not trod it himself, by defining perfection not just as the harmony of a manifold under general laws, but more determinately as such agreement in respect to one thing, the so-called "determining ground of perfection" (BM §94). The question, then, was this: What is the determining ground of *moral* perfection as that one thing with which everything specifically moral must harmonize according to the essential, albeit general form of perfection? Kant's answer is that this is not human nature, but the will itself (Refl 6589, 6590, 19:97–8). In future formulations, this will come to mean that the moral determining ground of all the will's actions must be the will itself as an end. But at this moment Kant is still working out the conception of a will that would be distinct in kind from the empirically determined will of Wolff and Baumgarten.

The second insight concerns the metaphysical concept of unconditionality. One, unquestioned presupposition of Kant's reflections is that morality must consist in the duty to follow an *unconditional* or *absolutely necessary* law. But here Kant makes a fundamental break with Baumgarten's conception of concepts like "unconditioned," "absolute," and "in itself"—a break that, as we will see, has the unexpected consequence of making Baumgarten's hyper-Leibnizian cosmology (and so his conception of the perfection of nature) immediately relevant to his (Kant's) conception of *intrinsic* goodness. As we saw above in relation to Baumgarten, he defends both an intrinsic and an extrinsic conception of the moral goodness of an act,[20] that is, goodness with respect to its own being as well as goodness as conformity with the natural nexus of all other things. Now, as Kant notes, Baumgarten defines the above terms as follows: "Whatever is

[20] Although I cannot defend the view here, I think it may be more accurate to say he defends three distinct ways (which can overlap) in which an action can be considered good, namely, in regard to its own being, in regard to its relations to other things in the nexus of nature, and finally in regard to the divine will and its possible supernatural nexus. The second of these corresponds to the Wolffian sense of intrinsic goodness and I think also is contained in Baumgarten's own conception of objective morality, along with the first. On a similar but in some ways strikingly different account, see Bacin's chapter in this volume.

considered, but not in a nexus with those things that are posited externally to it, IS CONSIDERED IN ITSELF (intrinsically, simply, absolutely, *per se*)" (BM §15). As I have explained elsewhere, for reasons central to the Critical turn, Kant rejects this conception of the "in itself" or "absolute" as what is valid in abstraction from external relations and replaces it with the concept of what is valid in *every* respect or in *every possible* relation (BM 30–1). To illustrate the difference: Whereas for Baumgarten the absolutely possible may be impossible in the actual world (in some external nexus), what is absolutely possible for Kant would be possible not only in this world but in every possible world. Now, the upshot for morality is this: the unconditioned good, as the object of an unconditional or absolutely necessary law, according to Kant, rests on the notion of a law valid in every possible respect or relation. That is to say: "The worth of an action or person is always decided through relation to the whole. But this is only possible through agreement with the conditions of a universal rule" (Refl 6711, 19:138; also, Refl 6712, 19:138). It would thus be a law that is necessary in *every possible* moral world and so also, of course, prescribes a sort of unity—a *good*—that can be considered a condition of the possibility of any moral world at all. What is more, if it is necessary even in every relation, it is not only necessary with regard to the world as a whole, but also prescribes some sort of condition and so unity to every relation *within* that whole.

The third and final insight concerns the implications of this absoluteness of the moral law. The otherwise empty Wolffian moral principle, noted above, was to be provided with sufficient content through its empirical specification by way of observation and experiment. But empirically determined laws (Kant would call these merely "general rules") will, on Kant's view, always be conditional, and so not necessarily, let alone unconditionally, good. They will be valid only in some relation, not in every relation possible. The only possible *unconditional* good, then, would have to consist in an *unconditional* formal perfection of the act itself; the proposition expressing the necessity of the conformity of action to such would alone be worthy of the name of a moral "law." Here Kant silently adheres to the view that action must be good in itself in Baumgarten's, and not Wolff's, sense of intrinsic goodness, while incorporating his own conception of intrinsic or absolute goodness as good in every possible relation (Refl 6648, 6651, 19:124; 6700, 19:135; 6711–3, 19:138–9). Now, as the form of what is *naturally* good in every possible relation must, on his Baumgartenian understanding of *natural* perfection, harmonize with the most perfect possible absolute but also *natural* totality of free beings (as a moral nature), Kant seems to have just adopted this same form as the form of any intrinsically good act. The upshot is that the determining ground of moral perfection, i.e. the will, cannot be the empirical will of Wolff and Baumgarten but rather must be understood as practical reason not only as unconditioned by any sensible inclinations and hence as *pure* and *free* (Refl 6621, 19:114; Refl 6639, 19:122), but also precisely insofar as it imposes upon itself the *pure and complete form* of natural perfection. Thus, by reversing

Baumgarten's conception of "absolute" from what is not considered in a nexus at all to what is considered in every possible nexus, Kant is able to regard the determination of an action (its selection) based on its fitness to the *pure* form of an absolute totality of all possible wills (i.e. a kingdom of ends) as the *intrinsic* mark of its moral perfection and to identify this with the will's own absolute independence in action, i.e. with its true freedom.

In a series of notes from the 1770s, Kant thus comes to the idea that the only thing that is unconditional is the human will insofar as it is free, and so the only possible, unconditional formal perfection (and so also universally valid good) is the formal perfection that the free will imposes upon itself as law and *qua* free will and not *qua* object of empirical nature (Refl 6605, 19:105–6; 7063, 19:240). We find the first hints of this reasoning in Reflection 6598, where Kant notes: "Just as freedom contains the first ground of everything that happens, it is also what alone contains independent goodness" (AA 19:103). Reflection 7197, from the 70s or 80s, further illustrates his line of thought:

> Morality is the inner conformity to law of freedom, namely, insofar as it itself is a law. When we abstract from all inclination, then conditions still remain under which alone freedom can agree with itself. 1. That its use harmonize with the determination of its own nature, 2. with purposes of others, insofar as they harmonize as a whole, 3. and with the freedom of others in general, [all] under a universally valid condition. This perfection of freedom is the condition under which the perfection and happiness belonging to a rational being must universally be pleasing (worthiness) and alone remains left over when the objects of our present inclination have all become indifferent to us.

Here we see Kant precisely equating the "perfection of freedom" with its unconditional agreement with itself and with the totality of other free wills according to universal laws.

Similarly, note 7254, written between the lines of text in which Baumgarten explains the central principle of perfectionism, reads:

> The proposition "perfect yourself <*perfice te*>" is tautological. One wants to know what the perfection that is the object of the categorical imperative consists in. Moral perfection is the condition under which alone all others can be called perfection. Now, I want to know what this consists in. It is a perfection of the will: but what [does it consist] in?

At this point, as we have seen, Kant has his answer. The absolute perfection of the will can only be that its acts within *any* world (and so also this one) are necessary and so valid in respect to every *possible* world of free wills in which the will itself is under no empirical limiting condition. The only limiting condition left is that of

the form of natural perfection itself, articulated by Baumgarten as the only form of perfection knowable to the philosopher. This includes the inner "natural" lawfulness of the acts themselves as well as the maximal harmony of all wills within a completely determined totality of "natural" laws.

In this way, the abstract form of natural perfection—though it remains formal and a priori empty with respect to given nature, natural ends, and even moral ends—becomes for Kant something substantively good, i.e. a specific end guiding free choice, because imposing that form on every act of choice now itself becomes the will's own end and not just the form of an end that would only be discoverable empirically. In addition to now being its own end insofar as it unconditionally and intentionally wills the idea of its own acts *as unconditioned*, the free will is now also its own supreme good, but only insofar as it acts essentially or purely in view of the form of perfection, first discoverable to us as in the form of a nature in general.

Finally, as this form of perfection in Baumgarten's sense is essentially the form of an absolute totality, maximally unified under laws of order, it is basically what Kant would later call an "idea." The idea "contains the greatest perfection in a certain intention" and "[a]ll morality rests on ideas" (Refl 6611, 19:108; also, Refl 6978, 19:219). So following this, Kant naturally thinks of this unconditional good as consisting in the will's imposing upon itself not just some lawful order, but indeed the *idea* of a complete or absolute order, the "natural" perfection of the will in every possible respect (Refl 6725, 19:141–2). In this way, Kant talks about absolute or moral goodness as simply equivalent to whatever harmonizes with the whole of all possible acts of willing according to an "idea," namely that of a completely determinate kingdom of ends thought in analogy with a kingdom of nature.

Hence, even before this specific term "kingdom of ends" appears in Kant's published writings, we find many notes to Baumgarten's *Elements* in which the idea is already present. To take just one example:

> We can say that in a world all ends descend from the universal (the whole) to the particular and thus the end of the whole contains in itself the condition of the ends of the parts, i.e. that everyone must see himself as subject to the laws through which he conforms to universal laws in every condition either of nature or freedom. (Refl 6899, 19:200)

To summarize this point, Kant argues that the actions of a free will can be absolutely good only because the principle that they arise from is precisely the awareness of their fitness to completely harmonize with, or to constitute an absolutely perfect whole with, all possible acts of willing. In this last step, Kant fully detaches perfectionism from any empirical or natural-scientific remnant. And in doing so, he also does away with any need for Baumgarten's softening of

Wolffian intellectualism. For Kant, we need not be assured that we are all, whether by insight or instinct, somewhere on the better side of things, possibly due to our confused mirroring of the best possible world, since the goodness of our free will lies entirely within our power to impose our own formal conception of natural perfection on our own, unconditioned acts.

V

Conclusion. With this story, all the surprising features I mentioned in my introduction fall into place. It is now clear why Kant's theory looks so Leibnizian; it in fact is a direct descendent of, and so borrows many structural features from, Baumgarten's hyper-Leibnizian perfectionism. The difference is that Kant's perfectionism is a perfectionism of the free will *qua* unconditionally free rather than *qua* a form of natural causality through the will (i.e. Wolffian "freedom"). We can also see why Kant would look to the form of nature for the principles of this form of moral perfection. That idea was already present in Wolff's perfectionism and had become central in Baumgarten's, but with the first *Critique's* isolation of the a priori form of a nature in general, the notion of *natura formaliter spectata* can now provide the pure categorial structure for an intelligible world ("supersensible nature") of moral beings. The following note, penned in direct reference to Baumgarten's endorsement of the Stoic duty to live according to nature, makes this connection in Kant's mind particularly clear:

> The principle of the unity of freedom under laws establishes an analogue with what we call nature, and so also an internal source of happiness that nature cannot provide of which we ourselves are authors. Thereupon we find ourselves in a world of the understanding bound according to special laws that are moral. And therein we are pleased.
>
> The unity of the intelligible world according to practical principles, just like the world of sense according to physical laws. (Refl 7260, 19:296–7)

11

Baumgarten, Kant, and the Subdivisions of Practical Philosophy

Frederick Rauscher

This chapter is an attempt to understand this specific passage that Kant wrote as a note to §88 of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Elements of First Practical Philosophy*, the book Kant used as a text for his lectures on ethics:

> 1. Inner freedom under inner laws
> 2. Outer freedom under inner laws
> 3. Outer freedom under outer laws
>
> (Refl 7065, 19:240, likely written 1776–78)[1]

What immediately puzzles me about this passage is how this triad fails to accord with Kant's own later mature dual division of practical philosophy into right and virtue. Right seems to match the third item in Kant's list, outer freedom under outer laws, and virtue seems to match the first item in Kant's list, inner freedom under inner laws. But there is no obvious match for the second item in Kant's list, outer freedom under inner laws. Could it be precisely the same set of actions labeled "outer freedom under outer laws" but given the distinct viewpoint of inner laws? Or are there two types or perhaps two aspects of outer freedom, each subject to either inner or outer laws? And what is the difference between the inner and the outer such that it differs for freedom and laws? In working out what Kant might have meant in this jotting in his book, I will concentrate on the most immediate evidence we have of Kant's assessment of Baumgarten, namely, the reflections Kant wrote in his own copy of Baumgarten's *Elements*. I will show that Kant uses some of Baumgarten's own distinctions between inner and outer in practical philosophy and follows some of Baumgarten's understanding of types of law, but that unlike Baumgarten Kant makes freedom itself the key value in practical philosophy, resulting in various possible divisions of the subject. There is some tension among these various distinctions between the inner and the outer,

[1] For the convenience of those examining the new edition that combines a translation of Baumgarten's *Elements* and Kant's own notes in his copy of that text, I use those translations, occasionally modifying them.

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