



Review of Theopi Parisaki-Giannaraki, *Aitiaki Exgisi kai Kninoniki Erminia ton Technon ston David Hume* (Causal Explanation and Social Interpretation of the Arts in David Hume)

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Aitiaki Exigisi kai Kinoniki Erminia ton Technon ston David Hume (Causal Explanation and Social Interpretation of the Arts in David Hume). By Theopi Parisaki-Giannaraki (Thessaloniki: Philosophical School of the Aristotelian University. 1979. Pp. xiv + 264.)

So much reading in cultural history, French as well as English, has been worked into this study of Hume, that the reader is liable to experience continuous anxiety in trying to maintain a sense of direction. The essential line of argument is overlaid by sheer learning so often that it is difficult to assess how and when the book's professed programme is being realized. Yet the programme is a comparatively simple one, and the author frequently reminds us what it is. The general idea on which she works is that Hume's original "attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects" is not effectively developed beyond the Treatise; at any rate it is well out of sight when we look at the "literary" (and associated) examples of Hume's Essays.

Hume originally did have in mind the possibility of extending beyond the physical sciences the "regularity" schema of causal explanation which he held to be characteristic of and pervasive in these sciences. And wherever this was possible, a conspicuous role would fall to be assigned to principles of association, as the subjective counterpart of what is objectively uniform and of a pattern. How far do such possibilities illuminate the interpretation of the arts actually undertaken by Hume in the context of the "moral sciences"? The author's answer is that they do so minimally or not at all. If, for example, Hume had tried to give physicalistic (including physiological) explanations of "the rise and progress of the arts and sciences" and related human activities and institutions, there would presumably have been scope for him to ground his interpretations on the relationship of cause and effect as he understands it. But,

as the author argues, Hume tends to regard such explanations as being either unsuccessful or else merely of peripheral interest. His interpretations of the arts are in part historical, part social; generalizations he does attempt, but he envisages, in these areas, neither universal laws nor reliable predictions. He tries to see the development of the arts in different societies with due recognition of their variation as well as of their similarities.

So far as this goes, of course, what Hume is doing would have its counterpart in any natural science "causally" structured as he would see it. And, as the author points out, he does rely considerably on "social principles of human nature". It is the kind of attention paid to context, however, which distinguishes his work on the arts. Whether he is theorizing about rhetoric, painting, poetry, or any other art, he does so with reference to the particular spirit of a particular age or a particular society in which an art-form may (or may not) have flourished, to the way in which an artist or artistic movement may have expressed or been motivated by that spirit, and also to chance or accident as possible factors adding to or modifying the particularity of the context. (The "spirit" of an age or society is, of course, a function of many things, in the case of a society its political constitution, its security, its state of prosperity, its manners and customs, and so on.) The author claims accordingly that Hume's is a "social" interpretation of the arts. In a peculiar respect this is held to achieve a kind of success of which a natural-scientific theory - construed at any rate in Hume's original terms - is not capable, in that it makes certain kinds of connection "intelligible" ("logicizes them", as the author occasionally puts it). It exposes, that is, a meaningful relationship between artistic activities and various "social factors" which are sometimes said to "determine" them.

This rather general thesis might be thought important only as a reminder that Hume varied the analytical level of

his writing from time to time and from occasion to occasion. And the sheer mass of information assembled by the author in support of it - I estimate that the footnotes occupy at least as much space as the text - might seem, in that light, particularly out of proportion. But the book has the merit of drawing attention to questions of method in an area of Hume's thought which possibly has been less systematically studied in that respect than his epistemology or moral philosophy - the aforesaid "literary" (and associated) examples of his Essays. The evidential features of Hume's writing about the arts as social phenomena interest the author particularly in the following group of essays: "*Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*"; "*Of Commerce*"; "*Of the Standard of Taste*"; "*Of Refinement in the Arts*"; "*Of Civil Liberty*"; "*Of Eloquence*"; and "*Of National Characters*". But there is in her book a vast amount of Humean exposition apart from these pieces and, as already indicated, the historical background to Hume's aesthetic thinking is presented in extenso.

It has to be confessed that what the book offers is exposition rather than originative analysis. But because the exposition is clear and competent it should open up a considerable vista to Greek students of the artistic sociology of the eighteenth century. And also, if I may add this without being presumptuous, the book is written in a good, clear, modern, philosophical Greek. The author, however, does not mention what I take to be the case, that all translations into Greek are by herself.

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