



Jonathan Friday, ed. *Art and Enlightenment: Scottish Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century*

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JONATHAN FRIDAY, ed. *Art and Enlightenment: Scottish Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century*. Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004. Pp. iv+212. ISBN 0-907845-762, paper, £12.95 / \$25.90.

This volume is the third in a series (The Library of Scottish Philosophy) intended to make the writings of Scottish philosophers more widely available to modern readers. The series is under the general editorship of Gordon Graham. Presumably the editorial decisions set out in the Series Editor's Note at the beginning of the volume are his and are intended to be uniform throughout the series. Some, given the intent of the series, are reasonable decisions to modernize spelling and punctuation and to transliterate Greek passages (which in the originals are sometimes orthographically eccentric). On the other hand, some are worrisome, as in the decision to omit some original footnotes and re-title selections. (Why re-title the first selection from Hutcheson "Powers of Perception distinct from Ordinary Sensation" instead of Hutcheson's "Concerning some Powers of Perception, distinct from what is generally understood by Sensation"?) Most problematic is the way the selections are documented. Reference is simply to a first publication date, not to a standard edition, and in the case of selections drawn from larger works, no way to locate the selection within the work is provided. For example, the reference to Hutcheson is to "London, 1725" but in fact the text does not correspond to the 1725 edition of the *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* but presumably to that of 1726 or 1728. There are differences between the first edition and the later ones not only of wording but of section numbering. And for example, two selections from Hume's *Treatise* are referred only to the *Treatise* in general; no reference to the specific sections is provided. Granted that these are not intended as scholarly editions, but for someone who would like to follow up and either read more or check the context, this is likely to be a major annoyance, and it is hard to see why the book, part, and section would not be given for a work such as the *Treatise*. Anyone who might want to quote from the text would be in something of a quandary as to how to check the citations.

The *Art and Enlightenment* volume is edited by Jonathan Friday who provides an "Introduction" of twelve pages and very brief introductions to each selection as well as one or two suggestions for further reading after each selection. Eleven writers are included, beginning with Francis Hutcheson and ending with Dugald Stewart. All are Scottish, although Friday notes that the inclusion of John Baillie's "An Essay on the Sublime" may violate that restriction because so little is known about who Baillie was. In addition to Baillie's essay, complete essays from Hume on tragedy and the standard of taste are included along with selections from the

works of Hutcheson, George Turnbull, Hume, Alexander Gerard, Adam Smith, Henry Home, Thomas Reid, James Beattie, Archibald Alison, and Stewart. Missing are the more rhetorically oriented works of George Campbell and Hugh Blair as well as any critical works such as the essays of Henry MacKenzie or some representatives from the influential *Edinburgh Review*.

The selections themselves are selectively edited. Omissions are not always clearly noted. One can infer, for example, that since the sub-section numbers in the first section from Hutcheson's *Inquiry* jump from 10 to 12 that a section has been omitted (in fact in the 1725 edition, there are two sections omitted, and what is section 12 here is section 13 in that edition). But the task of selecting from the extensive and verbose eighteenth-century writers just the precise crucial pages to be included within a limited space is daunting, and in every case, Friday's choices are reasonable and informative. One can follow the evolution of aesthetic concepts from Hutcheson's internal sense theories that attempt to follow Locke and Shaftesbury, to the emergence of theories of expression in Reid and Alison with their emphasis on the state of mind of the perceiver, and the summing up of Dugald Stewart, who anticipates some of the anti-essentialist arguments of the twentieth century. Within less than 220 pages, one has a concise survey not just of Scottish Enlightenment aesthetics, but of the evolution of aesthetics as a whole, which the Scottish Enlightenment dominated. Inevitably, in an anthology such as this, the minor must be included along with the major. Thus Turnbull, who, as Samuel Holt Monk noted, thought nothing of commenting extensively on Greek paintings that he could never have seen, and James Beattie, who is best known (perhaps unfairly) from Hume's characterization of him as "That silly bigoted fellow," appear alongside Hutcheson, Hume, and Reid. The most useful part of the anthology may be the inclusion of John Baillie's essay on the sublime, which was widely known in its day but is not readily available now.

Jonathan Friday provides a brief but very illuminating introduction to the volume in which he justifies the place of the Scottish Enlightenment in the development of a self-conscious aesthetic philosophy. He argues that three influences found particularly fertile ground in Scotland: Locke's empiricism; the emergence of the sublime as a competitor to the received notions of taste and beauty; and the synthesis of moral and aesthetic judgments that revolve around the demand for a standard of taste. Locke's philosophy, particularly modifications of his ideas of reflection, provides a way to conceptualize beauty in terms of sense. The sublime, understood as a subjective phenomenon that responds to the vastness and grandeur of the cosmos, extends aesthetic qualities beyond beauty and at the same time shifts the locus to the subjective feeling of the individual. And prior to Kant's separation of moral from aesthetic intuition, the Scottish Enlightenment retains a moral dimension in judgments of taste that demands a resolution to the

problem posed by the subjectivity of experience and the apparent objectivity of both moral and aesthetic judgments.

One might quibble with Friday's assertion that "although England and Ireland produced a small number of significant contributors to the debates about taste, beauty and the like, the vast majority of important writers on the topic were Scots" (4). Shaftesbury, Addison, and Burke stand out as counterexamples, and George Turnbull can hardly stand up to Reynolds, Hogarth, or even James Harris in developing an aesthetics of the visual arts. For every James Beattie, there was a Joseph Priestley. If one takes into account the more actively literary circles in England and includes Dryden, Dennis, and Johnson, then aesthetics is not a specifically Scottish Enlightenment preserve. In fact, as Friday acknowledges, the eighteenth century was a very cosmopolitan time. But that in no way reduces the importance of the Scottish contribution.

On the whole, this is a useful volume. It would be improved by a more extensive bibliography, and I have noted some reservations about the editorial policy. But the volume is attractive, inexpensive, and an excellent way to become acquainted with what are, arguably, the central positions in aesthetics prior to Kant.

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