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*Austrian History Yearbook*

Knapp, Lore. *Empirismus und Ästhetik: Zur deutschsprachigen Rezeption von Hume, Hutcheson, Home und Burke im 18. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022.

In this book, Lore Knapp shows that the empiricist aesthetics of certain eighteenth-century British authors positively influenced the development of late eighteenth-century German aesthetics. Arguing against the one-sided thesis that German theorists were primarily critical of works by British authors, especially from 1800 onwards (3), Knapp's study seeks to illustrate that the reception of British empiricist aesthetic thought was multifaceted from the very beginning. (8) Knapp's focus is how British empiricist aesthetics inspired German authors to incorporate, develop, or otherwise engage with the British philosophy being rapidly spread via the translation of English texts into German during the second half of the eighteenth century. The book is a rich source of information about the German reception of eighteenth-century British thought and will be of interest to a wide variety of scholars. In this brief review I offer an overview of the book as well as highlight a few discussions that are especially interesting.

The book focuses on four authors who were directly influenced by Locke's empiricism, especially in the domain of aesthetics: David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, Henry Home, and Edmund Burke. Knapp is clear that these authors serve only as examples and that an exhaustive picture would have to engage with Shaftesbury, Smith, and many others. (33) Knapp is also explicit that she focuses on the aesthetic theories of these authors exclusively, which has the result that their moral philosophy, for example, is left to the side (23n). While this limited focus might disappoint some, it is made up for in the close attention Knapp pays to each author and the detailed information given about the German language reception of the texts she analyzes.

The book is divided into seven parts. The first introductory part outlines the ‘anglophilia’ in Germany especially prevalent in the second half of the eighteenth century, as well as describes the general features of ‘empirical aesthetics’ and ‘British empiricism.’ The core of the book is in parts II–V, wherein Knapp investigates select writings by Hume, Hutcheson, Home, and Burke, in chronological order based on when the translation of each text appeared. (34) Each of these parts has a similar structure: after a first section discussing the empirical aesthetics to be found in the author under discussion, Knapp then proceeds to discuss a given text directly, before considering the German reception of the text *before* its first translation into German (to the extent that this took place), the German translation(s) of the text during the eighteenth-century, and then finally the reception of the translation(s). Each part is somewhat unique: part II on Hume, for instance, discusses not one but three texts: *Of the Standard of Taste*, *Of the Passions*, and *Of Tragedy* (as well as the versions of these texts included in the *Four Dissertations*). Each of the other core parts of the book only deal with one text: Hutcheson’s ‘Inquiry Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design,’ which was Treatise I of his *An Inquiry Into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Part III); Home’s *Elements of Criticism* (Part IV); and Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Part V). In Part VI Knapp considers how the empiricist aesthetics of these four theorists were further spread in textbooks and compendia, and Part VII systematizes five characteristics of the empirical aesthetics in German speaking areas during the late eighteenth century: 1. they were methodologically inductive, i.e., subscribed to a method based on experience and observation; 2. epistemologically sensualistic, as part of the Lockean tradition; 3. interdisciplinary in that they were philosophical, psychological, and physiological; 4. possessed an evolutionary worldview; and 5. were politically democratic in that they accepted that anyone could have aesthetic experience.

I wish to highlight just two especially interesting results of Knapp's study. First, Knapp notes that Christian Garve translated Burke's *Enquiry* much more soberly than Burke himself wrote. 'Mechanical', for instance, became *körperlich*, and 'physical causes' became *Ursachen natürlicher Erscheinungen*. Perhaps even misleading was Garve's rendering of 'experiments' with *Erfahrungen* instead of *Versuche*, which indeed reflects Garve's own philosophical commitments more than it does Burke's ideas. (358) Although Knapp does not reference the book, this would have been worth comparing to Fania Oz-Salzberger's claim (see *Translating the Enlightenment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995, Ch. 6) that Garve's translation choices with Adam Ferguson's *Essays on the History of Civil Society* contributed to the loss of Scottish civic vocabulary. Second, Knapp illustrates that Johann Heinrich Merck's translation of Hutcheson's *Inquiry* contains several curious choices that have important consequences. (144–7) Merck translates 'perceptions', for instance, with *Vorstellung* instead of *Wahrnehmung*, a choice that would have made Hutcheson more appealing to a rationalist audience. Knapp argues that this led readers (such as Marcus Herz) to interpret Hutcheson along more cognitivist lines than the original suggests. Knapp therefore sees Merck's translation choices as exemplary for what befell British aesthetics in the German speaking lands: namely British empiricist aesthetics was transformed and made to fit into German developments. (146) Fascinating results such as these run throughout the book and should be easy to find for all those interested in the German reception of English thought during the eighteenth century.

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