

EDITORIAL
A DIALOGUE CONCERNING AESTHETICS AND APOLAUSTICS

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Scotland and Germany, in the opinion of Americans, are not very far from each other. But between them there roars an ocean, often very stormy – as I can testify from having lived for years upon its shores. The philosophies certainly agree, but they also differ.

-James McCosh, 'The Scottish Philosophy as
Contrasted with the German'

We discover two philosophers taking a break before the plenary session at an aesthetics conference in order to dine together in a rather shabby hotel restaurant. Teutonio is enjoying sausages made from pork, together with sauerkraut, potatoes, and beer. Caledophilus is having sausages made from sheep's intestines, together with rutabagas, potatoes, and a few drams of whiskey. They appear to be arguing...

TEUTONIO: You really must rid yourself of this bias in favor of all things Scottish, Caledophilus. It is common knowledge that the term 'aesthetics' can be traced with great precision to a German: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62). In his *Philosophical Meditations on some Requirements of the Poem* of 1735, he uses the term '*epistemémé aïsthetiké*' to refer both to the kind of knowledge derived from sense perception and to the faculty that makes it possible (Baumgarten 1954).

CALEDOPHILUS: That is indeed common knowledge, Teutonio. But it also seems quite irrelevant to the question we're discussing, which is whether the

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Germans or the Scots are of more historical importance to the sub-discipline of philosophy *now* known as ‘aesthetics’. For, first, Baumgarten’s book is quite boring and had minimal long-term influence. But second, as you must know, he used the term ‘aesthetics’ to refer to the study of *sense-perceptual experience generally*, rather than the study of judgments of beauty, sublimity, or taste in particular. He was another one of your over-subtle Germans: trying to coin a neologism by retrieving a word from the Greek, and in the process leaving everyone completely confused. ‘*Aisthetikos*’ simply means ‘sensitive or sentient’ – it’s a noun derived from the verb ‘*aisthese-aisthanomai*’, meaning ‘to perceive, feel, or sense’.

TEUTONIO: True enough, but don’t forget that the coinage occurred in a book about *poetry*, whatever your other opinions of it. Also, much of Baumgarten’s work in his lectures from 1742 onwards – the basis for the two volume *Aesthetica* – had to do with what *we* would now call aesthetics more narrowly (Baumgarten 1961).

CALEDOPHILUS: Not as much as you might think. Even in *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten explicitly says that ‘aesthetics’ refers to the ‘science of sensory cognition’ quite generally – just as it did in the earlier treatise on poetry. Such a science would *include* aesthetics as we know it today, of course, but by no means be restricted to just that. *Any* sense-perceptual awareness would be aesthetic on this usage – from the humdrum awareness of these neeps and tatties on my plate, to the most glorious views of Hadrian’s Wall.

And you of all people must know this! Your own Immanuel Kant used the term in this same broad sense in his ‘Transcendental Aesthetic’ – the chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/87) that explicitly deals with the ‘science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility’ (Kant 1902-: A21/B35).

TEUTONIO: Of course I know that. The *Critiques* are like mother’s milk and beer to me: I’ve been nourished on them for as long as I can remember. What you seem to forget, however, is that Kant has a long footnote in that very chapter where he claims to be *resisting* Baumgarten’s ‘futile effort’ and ‘failed hope’ to use the term to refer to ‘a critical estimation of the beautiful under principles of reason, and elevating its rules to a science’ (A21/B35, note). So whatever Baumgarten himself intended in *Aesthetica*, the term had obviously been appropriated by other Germans to refer to the science of *taste* in particular.

Of course, nine years later in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790), Kant changes his mind without explaining why –

CALEDOPHILUS: (*interrupting*) Characteristically enough . . .

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TEUTONIO: (*ignoring him*)—and starts using ‘aesthetic judgement’ as a synonym for ‘judgement of taste’. This is the kind of judgement, he says, that is distinguished from its logical counterparts by being necessary and universal while also referring solely to our states of pleasure (Kant 1902-: 5: 203–4). Given Kant’s world-historical status, his concession to contemporaneous use stained the word ‘aesthetics’ so deeply that no subsequent history could wash it away –

CALEDOPHILUS: An apt metaphor . . .

TEUTONIO: (*ignoring this too*)—and so I think you must agree that the title of our discipline is German through and through: it comes from the Greeks (who as we know are just early Germans¹), it was revived by Baumgarten in the modern period, it was restricted to the philosophy of art and beauty by Baumgarten’s followers (including G.F. Meier, through whom Kant got some of his Baumgarten), and it was made to stick by the greatest German of them all. (*raising his glass*) It is to Greco-German culture, then, that we owe the term’s current reference to a particular sub-discipline of philosophy!

CALEDOPHILUS: (*consenting to the toast, continuing to argue*) But you’ve forgotten one crucial fact, Teutonio. The ‘greatest German of them all’ had a Scottish heritage! He wrote to his friend J.A. Lindbolm in October of 1797 that

I have known for quite some time that my grandfather, who lived in the Prussian-Lithuanian city of Tilsit, came originally from Scotland, that he was one of the many people who emigrated from there, for some reason that I do not know, toward the end of the last century and the beginning of this one. (Kant 1902-: 12: 206)

TEUTONIO: (*spluttering into his stein*) Forgotten? Not at all. I myself have a Polish grandmother, but what of it? We’re speaking of *Kultur* here, man, not *Blut*. Kant was as regular, industrious, fastidious, and opinionated as a man can be—German in every respect. His ancestry is as irrelevant to our dispute as his diminutive height: neither make him Scottish in any important respect. I dare say his English was no better than your German.²

CALEDOPHILUS: But then how did he speak to the mysterious Joseph Green—the *Scottish* merchant who lived in Königsberg and seems to have taught him what he knew about British philosophy, and much more besides, no doubt? Poor Green died in the mid-1780’s: too early to tell the world how many of the ideas in the *Critique of Pure Reason* originated with him.³

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TEUTONIO: (*spittle flying*) Bah! Green was a mere merchant, and had left his native Scotland behind long before. I expect they spoke German, complete with some very hard *ch*'s and *gh*'s.⁴ If Kant learned anything more than a few drinking songs from Green, I'd be very surprised indeed.

CALEDOPHILUS: (*sighing*) Be that as it may, Teutonio, I suspect we are chasing a red kipper here. The origin of the use of the *term* 'aesthetics', after all, is a poor indication of how the discipline itself developed. It's like assuming that the origin of the term 'Hamburger' had something to do with who started eating beef sandwiches.⁵ Generations of writers outside your Fatherland managed perfectly well without the term 'aesthetics' – and without any knowledge of Baumgarten or Kant either, for that matter. In Britain, if I recall, it wasn't until the late 1830s that there was decisive acknowledgement of its use – and this, mind you, by a prominent Scot. I know the passage by heart: 'It is nearly a century', William Hamilton wrote,

since Baumgarten . . . first applied the term *Æsthetic* to the doctrine which we vaguely and periphrastically denominate the Philosophy of Taste, the theory of the Fine Arts, the Science of the Beautiful, etc., and this term is now in general acceptance, not only in Germany, but throughout the other countries of Europe. (Hamilton 1859: 124)

Hamilton couldn't help expressing some chagrin over this development, however: he added that the term 'Apolaustic' – meaning 'devoted to enjoyment', and thus better suited to a British sensibility perhaps – 'would have been a more appropriate designation' (*ibid.*). In fact, as late as 1821, the term 'aesthetics' was regarded with suspicion as an exotic foreign import – like that Sauerbraten on your plate, or the Königsberger Klopse you brought to the session this morning –: fine for the unrefined Teutonic tongue, but best kept at a distance by everyone else. Even Samuel Taylor Coleridge, that over-ardent lover and disseminator of all things German, lamented that he could not find some 'more familiar word than "æsthetic" for works of taste and criticism' (Coleridge 1985: 938).

TEUTONIO: That *you* should accuse me of being unrefined seems a tad ironic, Caledophilus, since your Scots are the champions of so-called 'common sense'. And that there might have been a *concept* of aesthetics before there was the term – an aesthetics without 'aesthetics', as it were – would surprise precisely no one at this conference. Setting aside the *Symposium* and the *Poetics*, it's clear that Aquinas, for instance, was very interested in these topics too. He argued that beauty is goodness or perfection *as* it presents itself to sensibility, and the rationalists carried this 'perfectionist' analysis forward. Leibniz, Baumgarten, and

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G.F. Meier are all in this tradition. But as you know the paradigmatic figure is Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–66). He published his *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst für die Deutschen* ('*Attempt at a Critical Poetics for the Germans*') in 1730; he spends page after page there offering rules to insure the production of the kind of beauty that the rationalists had analyzed: harmony amidst diversity, unity, clarity, and so forth (Gottsched 1962).⁶

CALEDOPHILUS: Rules and insurance? Completely beside the point. Aesthetics isn't some *a priori* science ('*Wissenschaft*' as you might say) of the rules for insuring the production of beautiful objects or rhymes, as though they could be guaranteed against failure by Allianz itself. Such projects were already dismissed as hopeless in the eighteenth century—most prominently by the Scots. In fact, from the Scottish point of view, Kant was just pointing out the obvious in 1781 when he belittled Baumgarten's attempts to come up with 'putative . . . *a priori* rules according to which our judgement of taste must be directed' (Kant 1902-: A21/B35). As a result, aesthetics as we now know it focuses largely on the apolaustic *experience* of value and the subjective categories used to name it ('beauty', 'sublimity' and so forth). Just look at the program for this conference: no sessions on the *a priori* rules of successful artistic production to be found.

TEUTONIO: Perhaps, but the Germanophone world anticipated this development as well. Consider, for instance, Johann Jakob Breitinger's *Kritische Abhandlung* (1740)—a book that explicitly rejects *a priori* theorizing about *a priori* rules, and focuses instead on inductive, introspective accounts of how we experience great art, and the conclusions that can be drawn from that data (Breitinger 1967).

CALEDOPHILUS: A rejection of rules and a focus on empirical induction, eh? Breitinger may have been Swiss, but his approach sounds almost British. And in any case, my normally detail-oriented friend, chronology is important here. Breitinger and Gottsched were writing in 1740 and 1730, respectively, as you say. But the internal sense theory of aesthetic apprehension, which is one of the great Scottish contributions to aesthetics, was advanced by Francis Hutcheson back in 1726! His *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* argues that we should regard aesthetic properties *not* as somehow out there in the world but rather as akin to Lockean secondary qualities. I think I can recall this one as well: (*clearing his throat*)

Beauty, like other Names of sensible Ideas, properly denotes the Perception of some Mind; so Cold, Hot, Sweet, Bitter, denote Sensations in our Minds, to which perhaps there is no resemblance in the Objects, which excite these ideas in us, however we generally imagine that there is something in the Object just like our Perception. (Hutcheson 2004: 27)

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Apolaustic qualities are produced in the mind through some other faculty (external sense perception, typically), and they are then perceptible through what Hutcheson calls 'internal sense'. It was more or less this same theory that was expressed some sixty years later by Thomas Reid in 'On Taste' (1785).

And this isn't the only important early eighteenth century contribution to the discipline by the Scots, either. A second main tradition—equally influential today—has its source in David Hume, who, in the *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–40), the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), and a number of his other essays (1741–) emphasizes the imagination as the faculty that is not only responsible for copying impressions into ideas, but also the seat of combinatorial powers that explain creativity on the side of the artist and receptivity on the part of the audience. Hume's ideas here show up in Kant's discussion of the imagination and its role in both aesthetic production and experience, and again in the account of the role of productive imagination put forward by your notorious Heidegger.

Finally, a third Scottish movement (which also takes its inspiration from Hume) emphasized the important role of the *associative* powers of the mind in experience of the beautiful and the sublime. The associationist view was developed by Alexander Gerard in his *Essay on Taste* (1759) and *Essay on Genius* (1774), Archibald Alison in *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), and Henry Home, Lord Kames, in *Elements of Criticism* (1763), and only picked up by Kant in his discussion of 'aesthetic ideas' in the third *Critique*.⁷

And so, Teutonio, even if I grant you the Greco-German origins of the *name* of the contemporary discipline, philosophically it makes far more sense to trace the main themes that animate it to a group of eighteenth-century Scottish writers based in and around the august universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen.

TEUTONIO: It's a nice taxonomy, I admit, and I relish taxonomies almost as much as I appreciate a really tight, baroque architectonic. But your genealogical theses are as dubious as Newton's discovery of the calculus. Have you forgotten that at least two of the earliest and most important works in the tradition you're discussing are no more Scottish than they are German? Consider Shaftesbury's 'The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody', one of a series of essays composed 1705–10 and published together in three volumes as *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* in 1711. Shaftesbury already talks there in terms of 'inner sense', and in many ways Hutcheson and Reid are just piggybacking on the work of this excellent Englishman.

Second, Joseph Addison's 'The Pleasures of the Imagination' was published in *The Spectator* between 21 June and 3 July 1712. This was also a very English affair, and contained much of the 'imagination' theory that you are trying to

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ascribe to Hume. And don't forget about other non-Scots like Edmund Burke, William Hogarth, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, all of whom would have to figure into any complete account of the period and its importance . . .

CALEDOPHILUS: (*pounds the table, voice raised*) It is to CARP and quibble to cite minor Englishmen, in whose works these ideas are at best faintly sketched, as grounds for denying the singular and primary role played by Scottish thinkers in the development of our discipline! Piggybacking indeed! I would venture to say that the contribution of the Scots – in terms of issues raised, theories developed, and questions answered – operates as a kind of skeleton to the modern *corpus* of the discipline practiced today.

The waiter, thinking he's been summoned, hurries over.

WAITER: We're out of carp, I'm afraid, but can I offer you some cod with your sausages?

TEUTONIO: (*waving him off*) No fish for me, but I'm afraid I will continue to quibble. A comprehensive account of the origins of aesthetics in the eighteenth-century would have to include just as many Englishmen as it would Scots, and more Germans than both combined. Furthermore, as I just suggested, in everything but the 'associative theory', the Scots are more imitative or elaborative than genuinely foundational. Hutcheson, Hume, and Reid are good writers, skillful tinkerers, impressive popularisers for the *hoi polloi* – I admit – but as the history of German philosophy surely demonstrates, the greatest ideas are initially unpopular, and the profoundest of thoughts are first expressed in the obscurest of prose.

CALEDOPHILUS: (*gesturing to the waiter for the bill*) Shaftesbury and Addison may have been many things, but they were neither unpopular nor profound. It's clear that we won't be able to settle our dispute over one meal, Teutonio, and I have certainly had enough sausage for one evening. It is a source of great frustration for me, in conversations like these, that there are so few secondary works on Scottish apolaustics to which I can refer you.⁸ As opposed to entire shelves of longwinded books and articles on all things German –

TEUTONIO: That in itself should tell you something.

CALEDOPHILUS: Only that German philosophy is so obscure that each successive generation of scholars is able to make a living arguing over its interpretation. Perhaps the reason there is so little secondary literature on the Scots is that they speak quite clearly for themselves! –

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TEUTONIO: (*under his breath*) As opposed to thinking for themselves . . .

CALEDOPHILUS: –Even so, there is a nice new collection of essays on the philosophy of art and beauty in the most recent special issue of the *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*. Have you received it?

TEUTONIO: Bah! You could hardly expect me to subscribe to such a rag, much less read it.

CALEDOPHILUS: Reconsider, my friend, and ask your university library to subscribe to *JSP* as well, for this special edition goes directly to the heart of our question. It also includes the winning essay in the first annual \$1000 George Davie Prize competition.

TEUTONIO: \$1000? Now that is something. Who won it?

CALEDOPHILUS: Theodore Gracyk, of Minnesota State University, for an excellent piece on the notion of ‘delicacy’ – something about which the Germans knew less than they should. Gracyk focuses on the important role played by delicacy in Hume’s work, and points out that though Hume claims that superior taste requires ‘delicacy of imagination’, his commitments on that score actually ‘undercut justification of the sentiment of beauty’ in an important way.

TEUTONIO: Very interesting indeed. Is ‘Gracyk’ a German name? Minnesota is a very Scando-Germanic area –

WAITER: (*returning with the bill, and interrupting*) Excuse me, sirs, but are you discussing Ted Gracyk’s prize-winning essay in the latest edition of the *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*?

CALEDOPHILUS: Indeed we are.

WAITER: I thought so! I just received my copy yesterday, and read through it immediately. Superb issue – except, perhaps, for that rather odd introduction by the editors. My own favorite was on ‘Good Sense, Art, and Morality in Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste”’. Reed Winegar makes an important contribution to the debate over Hume’s famous essay by defending it against two criticisms raised by commentators: first, that Hume makes freedom from prejudice a major requirement of the true judge while taking a normative position himself, and, second, that his psychological approach is untenable since it presents human

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nature as both delicate and inflexible. Winegar argues, quite persuasively in my view, that both objections fail when seen in the context of the role Hume assigns to reason or ‘good sense’.

TEUTONIO: Remarkable!

CALEDOPHILUS: Yes, an extremely good paper, and by a graduate student at that.

TEUTONIO: No, no: remarkable that even waiters read the *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*! One can’t say the same about *Kant-Studien*, I must admit.

WAITER: Well, I haven’t always been a waiter. I received a Ph.D. in philosophy from a good department a few years ago, but unfortunately my area of specialization was aesthetics and so I had little hope of getting a tenure-track job. Despite the fact that undergraduates attend aesthetics courses in droves, and interdisciplinary demand for aesthetics courses is high, few philosophy departments seem willing or able to hire professional aestheticians. And so here I am. And here you are. (*handing them the bill*)

CALEDOPHILUS: (*taking it*) Quite unjust. Fortunately, my friends in literature departments tell me that the situation is somewhat different over there. Insofar as there are any jobs at all (and there aren’t many), people working in aesthetics are still in demand. As it happens, the *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* issue we’re discussing contains a very nice contribution by a professor of comparative literature, Neil Saccamano, called ‘Aesthetically Dwelling: Sympathy, Property, and the House of Beauty in Hume’s *Treatise*’. Saccamano’s focus is on autonomy and heteronomy in Hume’s account of aesthetic judgement, the role of sympathy in grounding such judgments and making them heteronomous, and, finally, the metaphorical place of buildings and houses in Hume’s discussion of sentiment. He argues, quite forcefully for a literary kind of guy, that the connections between these have been insufficiently appreciated by philosophers writing on the *Treatise*, and that understanding the role of sympathy makes sense of Hume’s odd claim (from a Kantian point of view) that judgments of taste are best seen as heteronomous.

TEUTONIO: Is this special issue devoted entirely to Hume? Does Scotland have nothing else to offer?

CALEDOPHILUS: Half to Hume, but there is also an essay that you would very much appreciate, Teutonio, by Professor Paul Guyer –

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TEUTONIO: – Aha, one of my favorite authors!

CALEDOPHILUS: – on ‘Alexander Gerard and Immanuel Kant: Influence and Opposition’.

TEUTONIO: That’s better. I assume that his point is to show that Kant’s theory is superior in every way?

CALEDOPHILUS: Quite the contrary. The goal is to show that a great deal of the ‘Kantian’ theory of the associative ‘harmony’ and ‘free play’ is anticipated in Gerard’s too-neglected works in aesthetics: the *Essay on Taste* and the *Essay on Genius*. Both of these, as I mentioned earlier, were written well before the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* was even a twinkle in Kant’s transcendental ‘I’.

TEUTONIO: Rubbish! Guyer is clearly not up to his usual standards in that piece.

WAITER: There is also an essay on a Scottish philosopher whose work as a whole is well-known, but whose work in aesthetics is still understudied. ‘Adam Smith’s ‘Sympathetic Imagination’ and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Environment’, by Emily Brady, explores resources in Smith’s notions of the sympathetic imagination and the impartial spectator for defending non-cognitivist theories of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Aesthetic judgements for Smith, Brady argues, are self-regulated responses in which the spectator assumes an impersonal point of view in order to check the ‘humanizing’ tendencies that lead to a failure of aesthetic appreciation.

CALEDOPHILUS: After that, the issue turns back to Hume for Peter Kivy’s brief but tantalizing ‘Remarks on the Varieties of Prejudice in Hume’s “Standard of Taste”’, before rounding out with a provocative piece by Eva Dadlez on Henry Home (aka Lord Kames) and his account of the rationality of our emotional reactions to what we know to be fiction. Dadlez suggests that the whole problem about fiction and emotion in aesthetics that’s been discussed over the last few decades was anticipated – and perhaps even solved! – by Lord Kames back in the eighteenth-century.

TEUTONIO: (*finishing his beer*) Also quite implausible. Perhaps I should take a look at that special issue, however, if only to see whether I can refute Guyer’s article. Perhaps I can submit my refutation to *JSP* and win the next Davie Prize!

CALEDOPHILUS: Unlikely, since that prize will be awarded for an essay in the next special issue – on political philosophy, I believe. Do have a look at the journal though, and if your library doesn’t subscribe to it, ask them to consider doing so.

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WAITER: Anything else, gentlemen? *Fromage* for the palate perhaps?

Both men grimace.

CALEDOPHILUS: Certainly not: far too French for my tastes. Besides, we're late for the plenary session on, of all the preposterous things, Nicolas Boileau's contributions to the theory of the sublime. Shall we?

They stand up to leave. Only now do we see that Caledophilus is wearing a kilt, and Teutonio is strapped into Lederhosen.

TEUTONIO: (*slapping him on the back*) Well, Caledophilus, perhaps that's one thing we can agree on: the insignificance of the French contribution to both gourmet cuisine and aesthetics! –

CALEDOPHILUS: – Apolaustics!

They depart.

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NOTES

- ¹ See Schmidt 2001. But cf. Monty Python, 'Philosophers' Football Match' for a somewhat more oppositional picture. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Philosophers%27_Football_Match
- ² For Kant's diminutive stature and mediocre English, see Kuehn 2002.
- ³ John Zammito refers to Green as 'the Scottish merchant' who became 'Kant's best friend' from about 1766 onwards. 'Kant spent a great deal of time with Green, dining with him regularly. They talked of everything – even, Kant would have it, the details of the composition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There is little reason to suspect Green of metaphysical acumen, but there is every reason to see in him that *Weltkenntnis* that Kant perhaps prized more highly. Green's death in the mid-1780's left Kant genuinely bereft . . .' (Zammito 2002: 183).
- ⁴ James McCosh writes: 'The Scotch and German people do so far agree: Both have a considerable amount of broad sense, and I may add, of humor. Both can pronounce the sounds indicated by the letters *ch* and *gh*, which many other people cannot utter – no Englishman can ever take into his mouth the word *Auchtermuchty*, the name of a place famous in the contest of the Scotch Free Church for independence' (McCosh 1882: 338).
- ⁵ 'Steak tartare' sandwiches were a staple for Ghengis Khan's soldiers as early as the thirteenth century. It wasn't until the fifteenth century that Russian soldiers introduced beef sandwiches to inhabitants of various German port cities, including Hamburg. For a complete history of the hamburger, see Smith 2008.
- ⁶ For a very nice overview of eighteenth-century rationalist aesthetics in Germany, see Beiser 2009.
- ⁷ We are indebted to Shelley 2006 for this tri-partite setup of traditions in British aesthetics. For Hume's aesthetics generally, see Costelloe 2007. For the important role of 'aesthetic ideas' in Kant's theory, see Chignell 2007.
- ⁸ There are a few such overviews, notably Hipple 1957, Kivy 2003, and Dickie 1996 (though Dickie also devotes a long chapter to Kant). Most of the best recent work on Scottish aesthetics has tended to take individual figures as its focus. Timothy M. Costelloe's *The Anglo-American Aesthetic Tradition* (forthcoming with Cambridge University Press) aims to help correct this situation.