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Vincent M. Bevilacqua
University of Massachusetts

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BOOK REVIEWS

Arthur E. McGuinness. *Henry Home, Lord Kames* (No. 82 of *Twayne's English Authors Series*, ed. Sylvia E. Bowman). New York. Twayne Publishers, Inc. 1970. 160 pp. No Price.

Professor McGuinness has written an informative little book, apparently directed more to advanced students in the history of English literature than to mature scholars in the development of eighteenth-century intellectual thought. In keeping with his limited aim, McGuinness has provided a brief, annotated Bibliography, critical Notes, and a Chronology of dates important in the life of Kames, while focusing his critical attention on an analysis of three works which characteristically reflect Kames' "scientific" (experimental) understanding of the philosophy of criticism: *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751), *Elements of Criticism* (1762), and *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774). By examining the most prominent topics relating to "moral studies" in each of these works, McGuinness provides a brief though broadly inclusive overview of the leading precepts of Kames' theory of morality (its introspective origins in human nature and the Scottish philosophy of common sense, as well as its disparate union of empiricism and sensibility, free will and benevolent determinism), his "experimental" philosophy of criticism (an introspective-psychological annotation of established rhetorical, literary, and aesthetic theory in the philosophical tradition of Hume's *Treatise*), and his naïve conception of the progressive social and intellectual development of man (a cyclical view of the rise of the arts and human nature offered in response to Lord Monboddo's eccentric primitivism and in support of the historical authenticity of the Ossian poems).

McGuinness' brief biography of Kames sketches broadly the mid-eighteenth-century intellectual climate of opinion and sets Kames' life and thought within it, but adds little new to what Helen W. Randall previously has presented regarding Kames ("The Critical Theory of Lord Kames," *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, XXII [1940-41]) and is admittedly short of Ian S. Ross' announced "definitive" biography of Kames. Indeed, in all of his discussions of the

particulars of Kames' life—his education, his philosophical relationship with Hume and literary controversy with Voltaire, his promotion of the belles lettres in Scotland and close friendship with Boswell, as well as his various oft-recounted vulgarities and eccentricities—McGuinness draws exclusively from only the most generally known works on Kames. Alexander F. Tytler's standard *Life and Writings of Kames*, for example, does not appear, nor does John Ramsay's *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*.

Likewise, in McGuinness' sketch of the eighteenth-century intellectual milieu only the more commonly read commentators appear—Basil Willey, James McCosh, Arthur O. Lovejoy, Leslie Stephen; all stimulating interpreters of the eighteenth-century scene, but hardly new to mature readers in the Enlightenment. Accordingly, few of the deeper insights of more recent, sophisticated scholarship in eighteenth-century intellectual thought are suggested (recent re-interpretations of Lovejoy's long influential characterizations of the period, for example), and little of the broad influence on Kames of the thinking of his contemporaries James Beattie and Alexander Gerard (regarding psychology, taste, and the affective nature of language and the belles lettres), of Adam Smith (on sympathy and the origins of moral-aesthetic propriety) as well as that of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (in particular the Baconian orientation of its philosophical and belletristic investigations) are considered. The very brevity and simplicity of McGuinness' work does, however, allow an uncluttered exposition of Kames' "neoclassical" view of morals, aesthetics, and human nature which provides a concise overview of Kames' broad understanding of the philosophical bases of aesthetic criticism without distorting his views or misleading the reader unfamiliar with the period. In short, the work is an accurate and illuminating introduction to Kames and his times which includes all of the important elements of Kames' philosophical, literary, and aesthetic thought and presents them in clear and systematic fashion.

On a few particular points, however, brevity has resulted in a rather limited analysis of the broader historical origins and effects of Kames' aesthetic thought. For example, although Kames' philosophy of criticism is concerned largely with matters historically a distinctive regard of rhetoric, as McGuinness himself observes, noting after Randall Kames' conspicuous reliance in the *Elements* on the rhetorical works of Cicero, Quintilian, Demetrius, Dionysius, and Longinus (p. 93), McGuinness does not delineate Kames' philosophical understanding of "rhetoric," whether it was the traditional, Ciceronian

"grand art of communication" composed of the five intellectual arts of invention, disposition, expression, memory, and delivery (*Brutus* VI. 25), or George Campbell's more modern art of adapting discourse to the ends of enlightening the understanding, pleasing the imagination, moving the passions or influencing the will (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* [1776], Bk. I. Ch. I), or whether it was (as appears most nearly the case) the belletristic view of Thomas Reid which takes the proper "provinces of rhetoric" to be "grace, elegance, and force in thought and in expression" (*Sketches of the History of Man*, III, 208), a view in the long-established stylistic tradition of Cicero and the Renaissance stylists and exemplified in eighteenth-century Scotland by Adam Smith's lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres before the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh (1748-51) and at the University of Glasgow (1751-63)

and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783). Similarly, as has been noted, McGuinness does not examine in detail the considerable influence on Kames' aesthetic theory of Adam Smith's popularly received analysis of "sympathy" (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759]), the effect on the emerging *Elements* of the lectures on philosophy, rhetoric, and the belles lettres delivered by Alexander Gerard at Aberdeen University from 1750 to 1760, or, conversely, Kames' own considerable influence on Joseph Priestley's *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777) ("the most considerable work on the subject of criticism . . . extant at the time of my composing these Lectures," p. iii).

But more lamentable still, McGuinness also fails to underscore various historical origins of Kames' philosophy of criticism in those very same rhetorical precepts which comprise a central philosophic and aesthetic starting point for nearly the entire *Elements of Criticism*. That is, although McGuinness does acknowledge (after Samuel H. Monk) the influence of Longinus' affective view of the rhetorical sublime on Kames' conception of the aesthetic sublime, the historical influence of other distinctly rhetorical precepts of criticism such as grandeur, decorum, novelty, and grace are not so considered. Nor does McGuinness consider the possible origin of Kames' philosophical-artistic observations on human nature in the rhetorical works of Cicero, Quintilian, and Longinus, especially the apparent influence of Longinus' notion of the persuasive effect of rhetorical vivacity on Hume's and Kames' understanding of such philosophical belief as arises from "liveliness of ideas." Moreover, where McGuinness does acknowledge the more subtle effect of rhetorical theory on the historical development of eighteenth-century views of human nature he limits such influence to the rather obvious role of rhetorical *actio* in the mid-eighteenth-century

elocutionary movement (p. 86), when in fact, as a body of artistic precepts and a central intellectual discipline which extended by tradition to many "sister" arts and modes of communication, the concerns of rhetoric—a "grand art of communication, not of ideas only, but of sentiments, passions, dispositions, and purposes" (*Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. xlix)—pervaded the entire realm of eighteenth-century artistic and philosophic thought from Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses on Art* (1797), which reflects in Reynolds' use of the verbal and conceptual idiom of rhetoric a rhetorical view of painting dating from Junius, Vossius, and the Renaissance art theorists, to Alexander Gerard's *An Essay On Genius* (1774), which considers "invention" and the creative imagination in terms of the Aristotelian hunt metaphor prominent in the *Rhetoric* as well as in the rhetorical theory of Cicero and Quintilian and the psychology of Hobbes and Dryden. In short, McGuinness largely ignores the origin in traditional rhetorical theory of various psychological, critical, and artistic precepts of eighteenth-century thought which were historically established concerns of rhetoric and which in light of both their broad pervasiveness as well as Kames' own particular familiarity with them could well have influenced substantially his broader understanding of the psychological origins and artistic effects of the various aesthetic elements of criticism. The essential shortcoming of McGuinness' little book is, then, not so much that he has not told us both clearly and well old things about Kames, but rather that he has told us little that is new, and hence has not advanced significantly our understanding of Kames and the wider intellectual origins of his *Elements of Criticism*.

VINCENT M. BEVILACQUA
University of Massachusetts