

THE BIRTH OF THE TRUE, THE GOOD, AND THE BEAUTIFUL: TOWARD AN INVESTIGATION OF THE STRUCTURES OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

John Levi Martin

ABSTRACT

Purpose – To determine where, when, how, and wherefore European social theory hit upon the formula of “the True, the Good, and the Beautiful,” and how its structural position as a skeleton for the theory of action has changed.

Methodology/approach – Genealogy, library research, and unusually good fortune were used to trace back the origin of what was to become a ubiquitous phrase, and to reconstruct the debates that made deploying the term seem important to writers.

Findings – The triad, although sometimes used accidentally in the renaissance, assumed a key structural place with a rise of Neo-Platonism in the eighteenth century associated with a new interest in providing a

Reconstructing Social Theory, History and Practice
Current Perspectives in Social Theory, Volume 35, 3–56
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ISSN: 0278-1204/doi:10.1108/S0278-120420160000035001

serious analysis of taste. It was a focus on taste that allowed the Beautiful to assume a position that was structurally homologous to those of the True and the Good, long understood as potential parallels. Although the first efforts were ones that attempted to emphasize the unification of the human spirit, the triad, once formulated, was attractive to faculties theorists more interested in decomposing the soul. They seized upon the triad as corresponding to an emerging sense of a tripartition of the soul. Finally, the members of the triad became re-understood as values, now as orthogonal dimensions.

Originality/value – This seems to be the first time the story of the development of the triad – one of the most ubiquitous architectonics in social thought – has been told.

Keywords: Neo-Platonism; transcendentals; values; triad; Shaftesbury; Diderot

PREFACE

A recurring feature of many, though by no means all, productions of social theory and the philosophy of action is the development of a core architectonic – an orientating analytic scheme that partitions the subject at hand in ways that are not merely theoretically relevant, but perhaps even in some senses, that determine the range of possible thinking. Consider the impressive work of Habermas (1984 [1981], 1987 [1981]), which has involved a dogged attempt to systematize the relation between a number of past architectonics. Most fundamental has been his assumption that there is a triadic structure of human engagement with the world, a “trisection” of reason (Bernstein, 1997 [1989]) for which he has been criticized, as if, prior to his work, reason remained whole and entire. Yet the notion of such a tripartition was built into most of the analytic tools that were available to Habermas ... as it is to us.

This structure now is refracted in a number of different ways, but its most fundamental – and earliest – incarnation is that of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. (The second key structure is a tripartition of the faculties, which must be left to the side for now.) It may be that we do not understand our own thought – what we can and cannot do with it – until we understand our position in the space of possibilities established by this

architectonic. That thought motivates a larger study in progress, for which this serves as prolegomenon. It can be seen as an initial attempt to do for social thought what Levi-Strauss hoped to do for myth: to see the outlines of the most basic structures that are used in the production of thought, how they map onto one another, and the possible transformations that may connect them.

Strangely enough, it appears that the origins of this structure have never yet been explicated, perhaps because of an incorrect assumption that they go back to ancient Greece. (Habermas himself at one point 1990 [1983], pp. 2f, 18, misattributed this structure to Weber, as well as suggested that it was fundamental to Kant's approach.) Here I wish to sketch a preliminary genealogical exploration of this basic structure of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.

INTRODUCTION

In 1853 Victor Cousin published his *Lectures on the True, the Good, and the Beautiful*, a compelling statement of his eclectic philosophy, one that he believed could be summarized as a pursuit of these three values. This allowed him to attempt to wed a somewhat neo-Kantian theory of knowledge and action to his religious sensibilities, and was to perhaps be the most important influence on French social thought since Descartes.

A number of wonderful ironies lie here in his adoption of what I will henceforward call "the" triad – the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. First, Cousin used it to organize his theory of the human faculties, when the triad developed by severing the pursuit of the excellences from the adumbration of faculties (also see Guyer, 2014, Vol. 1: 27; cf. 34). Second, Cousin used it to preach a sentimental theism, when this triad was formed only through the rejection of theism. Finally, this was used to finalize a division of the human soul into orthogonal dimensions, a project that dovetailed with the emerging value theory of neo-Kantians in Germany, while the triad was first used to oppose any such decomposition.

Here, I will briefly trace the key processes that led to the development and consolidation of this triad, which has had a remarkable holding power over Western thought since the mid-eighteenth century. I will speed quite quickly through the work that is preparatory to my story; my glosses will be simplistic, but not, at the level of specificity intended here, contested.

I then move more carefully where I am constructing the argument about the development of the triad.

TRANSCENDENTALS AND TASTE

Greeks and Medievals

It is often assumed that there is some precedent for the triad in the works of the ancient Greek philosophers, which is quite untrue. There was, however, an intellectual nugget that was to play a major role in the development of the triad, namely the idea that some persons might have a certain type of beauty/nobility and goodness – *kalos kai agathos*, or *kalos kagathos* for short (here see Norton, 1995, on the history of this concept).

It is also often assumed that the triad harks back to the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals, but this is equally untrue. The “transcendentals” were terms that were coextensive with Being – thus to say that Good is a transcendental is to say that Being, in so far as it *is* being, is good (e.g., Aquinas, *Truth* Qu 21, art. 1 1954, pp. 3–6). “Goodness” and “Truth” only appear as different because Being enters into different relationships with the human soul and mind. Although Beauty might appear along with Truth, Goodness, and a whole host of positive terms (as in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987), the triad of transcendentals was always that of the One, the True, and the Good, and claims made by Eco (1986 [1959], p. 21) as to the status of the Beautiful as a transcendental have been shown by Aertsen (1991, 2012) to be without merit.

Further, the triad did not arise from the Beautiful being swapped in for the “One” in the set of transcendentals – rather, there was a more indirect route, for it was a deliberate return to the principles of *kalos kagathos* that first brought the Beautiful to assume a place of equality with the Good and the True, and this then proved interconnected with further changes in the understanding of the human faculties and virtues.

At the level of sweeping generality necessary in these prefatory remarks, it is accurate to say that at the end of the medieval period, the great distinction was that made between the intellect and the will – what Ficino (see *Platonic Theology* Book II.1.1, 1.14 V.8.8, IX.1.3, XIV.2.2, XIV.3.5.6; 2001, pp. 93, 97; 2002, p. 85; 2003, p. 11; 2004, pp. 227, 229, 247) called the “two Platonic wings” on which the soul ascends to the Divine – though this bifurcation was often mapped onto two different triads.¹ One was the

transcendentals (leaving “the One” without a human correlate), and the other was the more orthodox triad of the attributes of God as being Wise, Good, and Powerful. Here it was God’s power that lacked a comfortable analogue in the human constitution.

But in any case, there was a general reliance on a division between intellect and will (with senses, judgment, and so on occupying more particular positions) that reinforced a distinction between the True and the Good, a template that had no place for Beauty. The centrality of this bifurcation was in no way shaken by the new materialism associated with Hobbes, or the less dramatic form of Descartes. The most important change for our story came from a most unlikely source – the analysis of manners.

Taste and Neo-Platonism

What destabilized this system were two new, related, concerns that swept the writing classes of European society. The first was a new focus on *taste*. Inspired by reflections on a new cosmopolitanism that belied the self-assurance of previous courtly visions of the perfect life, Europeans, starting with Baltasar Gracian, began to puzzle over the nature of taste. Taste could not be approached with the same underlying search for certainty that characterized not only the theological philosophies, but even that of Descartes, with its search for “clear and distinct” conceptions. Most important, taste required a capacity to orient to variations in quality that had a certain amount of irreducible and unpredictable incommensurability. It thus implied the introduction of a kind of horizontal differentiation in a world view that had tended to revolve around vertical differentiations.

This early literature on taste was not wholly revolutionary, for it built upon themes common in earlier advice-type books. Yet we shall see that the idea of taste brought with it different implicit emphases, and, as others have argued, suggested a new relation between the intellect and sensibility. Like the later works on taste, many medieval works had counseled discretion, though as part of a nexus turning on reserve, caution, and self-control (Arditi, 1998, p. 57). But in the fourteenth century, such reserve and suspicion were increasingly connected to a fascinating theoretical problem: the mere presence of variation across persons. Adovardo Alberti in Florence wrote, “The world is so full of human variety, differences of opinion, changes of heart, perversity of customs, ambiguity, diversity, and obscurity of values. The world is amply supplied with fraudulent, false, perfidious, bold, audacious, and rapacious men. Everything in the world is profoundly

unsure. One has to be far-seeing, alert, and careful in the face of fraud, traps, and betrayals.” As McLean (2007, p. 42, from whom I take this quotation) emphasizes, what was looked for in others was an honest *constancy*, and so the Florentines worked carefully on faking this whenever it proved advantageous. But note that Alberti lumped differences in human constitution and custom with the vices like fraud and dissimulation, as all of these made it difficult to read another person.

In the Renaissance, the proliferation of stage metaphors accompanied a shift from an apparent mood of paranoia and defensiveness to a focus on skilled playing (Arditi, 1998, p. 86). Frustration with the accomplished duplicity encouraged thereby seems to have inspired the famous work of Baldesar Castiglione, who emphasized the greatest skill of all – the art of appearing artless, what Castiglione (2002 [1528], pp. 28f [1.21], 34 [1.28]) called “grace” and “nonchalance” (*Sprezzatura*).

This work – nominally about the perfect “courtier” – ends with a Platonic analysis of the relation between truth, goodness, and beauty (Castiglione, 2002 [1528], pp. 246 [4.53], 248f [4.57, 58]). Yet here Castiglione (2002 [1528], p. 257 [4.69]) clearly turned to Ficino, and, despite a predilection for triadic thinking,² posed no new structural understanding of the relation between truth and the beautiful-and-good. Nor did his turn to transcendent Platonism, with its lofty rhetoric and fervid deification of beauty, solve the practical question of how to account for differences in taste.

The beginnings of a new approach were found in the work of the seventeenth century writer Baltasar Gracián. As had earlier writers, Gracián saw the variety of persons to be a challenge to the actor, and “discretion” as the central trait to be developed. Yet the way this problem was solved was to involve “taste.” This understanding of “taste” was a new one. (Previously, in the sixteenth century, “taste” generally was used to mean a “small bit of something that familiarizes us with it,” as in “to have just a taste of philosophy,” Schümmer, 1955, p. 122.) Gracián’s notion of taste was a nonreasoning faculty that could complement the dictates of reason. Gracián himself did not determine where taste might fit in to previous adumbrations of the human faculties, most importantly the division of intellect and will (or desire), nor did he arrange it in regard to the excellences or virtues.³ Rather, Gracián (1992 [1647], p. 89) relied on the earlier transcendentals to suggest values (“friendship has the three qualities of anything good: unity, goodness, and truth”), and otherwise picked up and dropped different systems as they served his purpose.

Why, then, did this interest in taste destabilize previous understandings of the human constitution? Because attempting both to accept the diversity

of men and manners, and to find some core principles across this range, required rejecting or at least adapting the largely deductive and top-down conceptions that dominated scholastic thought. Here I will leave the fascinating story of the development of new partitions of the faculties to the side, only noting where the two developments split off from one another, and where they reunited.

The second major development (in addition to the new focus on taste) was a reinvigorated, poetic neo-Platonism that fundamentally destabilized previous architectures. It is not that Platonism had disappeared, nor that earlier forms lacked poetic elements. (I have mentioned Ficino's two "Platonic wings" above, which indicate some of the flights of the spirit that Platonism eagerly anticipated.) Yet it seems that the general scholastic orientation toward framework building and toward consistency had led to a convergence of Platonic with more Aristotelian modes of theorizing, and, in particular, an emphasis on the role of the intellect in determining the True, and even, in many cases, an emphasis on the will as finding the Good (often rooted in discussions of Augustine).

To anticipate, the fusion of these two concerns (taste and neo-Platonism) led to an emphasis on moral sensibility, as has been well adumbrated by Norton (1995) among others. But in the hands of some writers, this also led to an expanded notion of taste which could encompass not only beauty, nor even goodness as moral beauty, but even truth as an intellectual beauty. The flattening of the True and the Good into something that would be accessible to an embodied empirical sensibility then allowed Beauty to be seen as comparable enough to the others for the triad to appear as a set of three comparable excellences. As the tide of enthusiasm for such sensibility receded, it left these three as co-equals, now to be matched, each to its own faculty.

But I anticipate too much. Let us begin where all subsequent writers would begin: with the Earl of Shaftesbury.

THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION

Shaftesbury and the Triad

Rarely in intellectual history is it this easy to identify a single pivotal work: Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury (third of twelve identically named Earls), published in 1711 his *Characteristicks of Men*,

Manners, Opinions, Times, which rapidly became one of the most influential works of the century. A hodge-podge of letters, dialogues, and reflections, Shaftesbury attempted to found ethics in a way that would support an enlightened, gentlemanly, liberal state. Further, as the title suggests, Shaftesbury attempted to help his reader understand the diversity of temperaments as a practical issue.

Shaftesbury noted (2001 [1732], pp. I.56/89)⁴ that “an able and witty Philosopher of our Nation [that is, Hobbes (1909/1651, p. 95)] was, we know, of late Years, so possess’d with a Horror of [political unrest], that both with respect to Politicks and Morals, he directly acted in this Spirit of *Massacre*” – to forbid letters, learning, and liberty as the only sure road to peace. Shaftesbury meant to counter the Hobbesian perspective by rooting it out at the source – the refusal to imagine that all competent people could simply know the good.

This knowledge is possible because goodness is an observable and inter-subjectively valid quality of action. Just as “there is in certain *Figures* a natural Beauty, which the Eye finds as soon as the Object is presented to it,” so too there is a natural beauty of actions (*ibid.* III.135/238; III.231/414; 234/419). Such a valid sense of “moral beauty” could explain our capacity to form stable groups and pursue perfection, and this was what readers found most exciting in Shaftesbury’s work.

Thus Shaftesbury’s (2001 [1732], p. II.223/399) main point was perhaps simply “that BEAUTY ... and GOOD ... are still *one and the same*.” And this, in starkest form, was the lesson that the Platonism of the eighteenth century was to drive home. This emphasis was, as we see, different from Ficino’s, in which the good was necessarily paired with the *true*, because of our dual faculties. Shaftesbury was, rather, proposing a unified aesthetic-rational capacity to see good and beauty, and for this reason, at times made clear that he was thinking of *kalos kai agathos* (the beautiful and good) (e.g., note to I.38). I call this capacity aesthetic-rational because Shaftesbury (2001 [1732], p. II.237/424f) also followed Plato in thinking that the beauty in question was not mere physical beauty, but something reached by reason. Perhaps as a result, Shaftesbury’s (2001 [1732], pp. II.232/416, 233/418) aesthetic principles were simplistic and confused. On the one hand, he dismissed the idea that beauty was a mere matter of opinion, claiming that all could see beauty, at least in the abstract, but on the other hand, he admitted that people might disagree because it is hard to apply these principles to particularities, which seems to beg the question.

Thus Shaftesbury's confidence in the unity of beauty and goodness seemed to promise an answer to the contemporary problem of whether the variation of taste could be any other than good and bad taste (Dennis, 1701). Shaftesbury's platonic conception suggested that one might be able to stand in the absolute – in Beauty and in Goodness.

But the most important thing about Shaftesbury's understanding was not simply that beauty and goodness “are one and the same.” It was that practically *everything* was “one and the same” (one of his favorite phrases). Everything ultimately reached back to “the Whole of Nature” (2001 [1732]: II.200/357). And it is because of this – that Shaftesbury was not overly hesitant to equate any two things – that I believe that he was the first important writer to actually use the terms, the true, the good, and the beautiful not only together, but with an indication that the three claimed comparable places in his system. He asked rhetorically (*ibid.* III.111f/182f) “Will it not be found in this respect,” above all, “That what is BEAUTIFUL is *harmonious* and *proportionable*; what is harmonious and proportionable, is TRUE; and what is at once both *beautiful* and *true*, is, of consequence, *agreeable* and GOOD?” And in a note he clarified by that by “the beautiful,” he meant “the HONESTUM, the PULCHRUM, τὸ καλόν”

This triad was not, however, a key structural element for Shaftesbury. And this is because, in large part, he *had no* structural elements, as his method in many ways was (and admitted by his fictional characters in his *Dialogue* to be) to wind himself up so that he could wax florid with enthusiasm for the All.

This gave his writing not merely an analytic looseness, but something that later generations – including writers like Adam Smith – would, anachronistically, think of as downright girly.⁵ But Shaftesbury (2001 [1732]: II.106/186) understood his own work quite differently, indeed, criticizing his peers for just this: “Our Sense, Language, and Style, as well as our Voice, and Person, shou'd have something of that Male-Feature, and natural Roughness, by which our Sex is distinguish'd” Without judging who was most macho, we cannot deny that Shaftesbury's work encouraged an accumulating avalanche of sentimentalism, especially in the influential work of Samuel Richardson (see Alderman, 1931, p. 158).

Even at the time, this had its ridiculous aspects (hence Fielding's wicked and wonderful parodies of Richardson). Yet it was this very feature – the graceful, enthusiastic, and florid writing – that led to Shaftesbury's widespread appeal in the continent, and the spread of his thoughts to French

and German circles. Most important for us (as we shall see), Diderot (who had loved Richardson) translated Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit*, which is part of the third volume of the *Characteristics*. In Germany, Shaftesbury's ideas were taken quite seriously by Wieland, Goethe, Schiller, and Herder (among others). This emphasis on moral beauty was a powerful vision for many of the more poetic thinkers, but it also suggested the solution of some of the problems posed by the new empiricist philosophy, and was therefore of interest to some of the more sober minded and scholastic minds. Most important of these was Francis Hutcheson.

The Codification

Although he was in many ways a Lockean, Hutcheson tried to give Shaftesburian ideas of moral beauty a clearer foundation. Like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson argued that this quality was available to direct perception. Yet he differentiated this from our perception of physical beauty, thus backing away from Shaftesbury's Platonic interpretation. If it were not *sensibly* pleasing, how could such beauty be intuited? Hutcheson (2004 [1726]: I.VIII.5, 80)⁶ argued that for both physical and moral beauty, we could assume that God was "so kind as to connect sensible Pleasure with certain Actions or Contemplations." Just as we fortunately have a taste for things that will help us survive, so we have a taste for actions that lead us collectively to thrive. Thus even though he posited two different faculties (and possibly subjectivized beauty; see Savile, 1982, p. 118), by making a coherent argument for a moral perception, Hutcheson furthered the attempt to make Beauty something that was parallel to, but separable from, the Good.

Thus Hutcheson attempted to secure the notion of a moral perception by moving away from the concepts of "taste" that had seemed central to the notion. On the other side, Edmund Burke soon attempted to reject the widespread assumption that to ground judgments on taste was to accept irreducible subjectivity (also see Hume, 1985 [1777], p. 227). "On the whole," Burke (1937 [1756], p. 23) wrote, "one may observe that there is rather less difference upon matters of taste among mankind, than upon most of those which depend upon the naked reason; and that men are far better agreed on the excellence of a description in Virgil, than on the truth

or falsehood of a theory of Aristotle.” Taste and judgment were implicitly divorced from the intellect as being fundamentally *cultivated* and implicitly *informal* faculties. Thus – just as we can see emerging in Germany at roughly the same time (Nivelle, 1971) – a split between analytic approaches associated with philosophy and appreciative approaches associated with critique.

The most impressive (and, for German thinkers, influential) British attempt to reconcile these positions came from Thomas Reid. Known as the father of Scottish common sense realism, he continued the Hutchesonian tradition but returned it, at least in part, to a reliance on taste.

By “taste” Reid (1969 [1785], p. 753) meant “That power of the mind by which we are capable of discerning and relishing the beauties of nature, and whatever is excellent in the fine arts.” That is, the *quality* sensed is an objective one: but it “depends no doubt upon our constitution, whether we do, or do not perceive excellence where it really is: but the object has its excellence from its own constitution, and not from ours.” This capacity could be applied to moral and intellectual, as well as aesthetic, matters.

I mentioned above that Reid, like Shaftesbury, allowed a connection of taste to moral and intellectual matters (Reid, 1969 [1788], p. 226). Indeed, it is precisely *because* there can be a taste for the good and the true (just as for beauty), that the three emerge as comparable.⁷ Thus Reid (1969 [1785], p. 756; also see 1970 [1764], p. 6) wrote, “There are moral beauties as well as natural; beauties in the objects of sense, and in intellectual objects; ...” And it is for this reason that what might seem an awkward insistence on the objectivity of the qualities appreciated by taste was critical; Reid (1969 [1785], p. 758) understood that given his approach to the faculties, any argument that we cannot dispute about taste, if not qualified, could also be used against any standard of *truth*.

In sum, Reid, perhaps more than any other thinker previously, moved to establish a clear and plausible grounding for the parallelism of the members of the triad, though he did not himself use it any point.⁸ And here, he promised a possible codification of the Shaftesburian notion of the interchangeability of truth, goodness, and beauty. Yet there was a different branch of this Shaftesburian impulse, one that rejected the move toward parallelism inherent in the Hutchesonian, and began from aesthetics, and not philosophy. And it was here that the triad first emerged as a structural element.

THE RISE OF THE TRIAD

Good Taste in France and Germany

In late seventeenth-early eighteenth century France, there was perhaps less interest than in England in connecting the beautiful to the good and the true simultaneously. For some, such as the very influential Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1674), the “Good” was relatively unimportant (also see Kristeller [1990, p. 196] on de Crousaz). For others, such as the Abbe Du Bos (1748 [1719], pp. 37, 40, 196f), the arts (or at least poetry) could be divorced from morality (as preachy poems were dull poems) but not from truth (even fiction should be “probable,” a notion that became central in Germany). And for still others, such as Batteux, a work of art *must* have goodness as well as beauty, but not truth (which, unlike beauty, is an objective matter) (Dewey, 1920, pp. 5, 31, 34).

But, just as with Shaftesbury, there was interest in France in comprehending our capacity to appreciate *variety* in our understanding of beauty, and its cultivation. One example is the work of the Jansenist academic Charles Rollin. In his mammoth four volume work *On the Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles-Lettres*, the first volume of which was published in 1726, Rollin (1770, p. 41) proposed that “Taste ... is a clear, lively, and distinct discerning of all the beauty, truth and justness of the thoughts and expressions, which compose a discourse” (this emphasis on the “clear and distinct” is typically French, coming from Descartes). Although most persons have in them the first principles of such taste, it often remains dormant for want of instruction, or worse, because it has been corrupted by bad educations or customs.

For Germans at the time, the key question was simpler: can there even *be* a good taste in Germany that is not simply *French* taste? And if not (as many accepted), how can the most tasteful French sensibility be imported? It was considerations like these that inspired the key theoretical effort work by Johann Ulrich König, the Saxon poet laureate (Saintsbury, 1904, p. 22f). And it is König’s (1727) work (a compendium of translations, poems, and an investigation of good taste) that is the first of which I am aware to use the triad of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. We will see that this focus on taste was key to a fundamental re-structuring of the understanding of the excellences and faculties.

König (1727, pp. 283, 285)⁹ argued that good taste was something that could be manifested across any realm of choice – whether of books, of dogs, weapons, and so on – yet it seemed that one could have good taste

in one realm, but lack it in another. This was one of a number of puzzles that taste confronts us with, and König's first task was to clarify our usage. He spent what might seem retrospectively a humorously long time analyzing different words for taste, but his purpose was a serious one: he assumed that all enlightened authors were so under the sway of French culture, that it was an open question whether one could, in good taste (as it were), speak of "taste" in one's own vernacular (as opposed to borrowing *bon goût*). Encouraged by English writers in the *Guardian* and *Tattler*, and especially Shaftesbury himself, König (1727, p. 239) made a case for using the German word *Geschmack*, noting that in all languages, the same word was used both for the external tense of taste associated with the organ of the tongue, and metaphorically for an inner sense of appropriateness.

It is not that König wanted to reject French influences; he (1727, p. 238) gave a short history of the development of good taste that, like Hegel's spirit of Freedom, has moved from place to place over time, born in Greece¹⁰ and currently comfortably settled in France. In particular, König pointed to the importance of Boileau-Despréaux in freeing his people from the tyranny of a corrupted taste (König's [133] tenth satire here was a translation of Boileau-Despréaux fifth).

König's acceptance of French primacy is seen in his deliberate mistranslation of Rollin, who we briefly explored above. For it is here that König implies that he has a predecessor using the triad, and he clearly treats Rollin as an authority of unusual weight (the quotation goes on for three pages, uninterrupted). The crucial passage from his quotation from Rollin is as follows (318f): "Good taste in talented [*sinreichen*] writing is then a fine, finished, precise and authentic judgment of all the beauty, truth and goodness occurring in a speech or in a poem, as well as the the thoughts thusly expressed."¹¹

Now the 1770 English translation of Rollin (1770, p. 41) puts it this way: "Taste ... is a clear, lively, and distinct discerning of all the beauty, truth and justness of the thoughts and expressions, which compose a discourse." And indeed, Rollin's original (1740, p. liv) reads: "*de toute la beauté, la vérité, & la justesse ...*" Although Rollin in other places joined truth and beauty (thus he speaks [lvii] of the "immutable rules of truth and beauty [*du vrai & du beau*])," the substitution of goodness for justness (or appropriateness) made by König is a radical change, allowing him to read a theory of moral sensibility into Rollin. It may well be that he was unsure of proceeding with his own ideas without a French aegis to shield him.

Yet König was not content to simply repeat what had already been done in France, for he (1727, p. 286f) believed that current thinking on taste was

muddled, and that clarifications and distinctions had to be established. The key commonality in taste was that “through the internal sensation ... we uncover [*entdecken*], without knowledge of rules, if a work of art is good or bad” (p. 263). Thus an act of taste is an act of judgment, but one that is instantaneous and does not require the manipulation of concepts (p. 273). At the same time, like many of our other (later) thinkers, König (1727, p. 276f) saw that in addition to our natural (inborn taste), we can also have a cultivated taste, which may involve more deliberate forms of judgment.

This was key to König’s (1727, p. 277) resolution of the puzzle of the nonunanimity of taste. There was, he argued, a distinction between a *general* good taste, shared by all so graced by God, and then a *particular* taste that varies by people, temperament, and custom, but still follows the rules of good taste.

Now what seems retrospectively somewhat interesting is that König (1727, p. 256) posited that our taste could make the equivalent sorts of judgments, at least in terms of liking as opposed to disliking, as did the intellect, but immediately, and without consideration or investigation. He thus proposed that we could speak of an “intellectual taste” (*Geschmack des Verstandes*), which is “nothing other than the composite power of the soul to perceive [*empfinden*] and to judge, mediated through the tools of the senses to perceive a certain impression, and thereupon express a decision of liking or disliking” (p. 257f).

Somewhat similarly, argued König (1727, p. 279), there is room for good taste in ethical theories – that is, we have a mental sensation (*Gemüths-Empfindung*) which suggests us taking pleasure or displeasure in something, but one that has to do with heart and soul more than the intellect and cognition. “Good taste in its ethical meaning refers to a subjective sensation, to recognize the truth, to desire the good, and to choose the noblest and best.”¹²

It is this capacity for good taste to orient not only to beauty, but also to truth and goodness that led König to propose the triad: what brings these three together is not that they are each parallel to a fundamental (but different) faculty; on the contrary, it is that all are reachable by good taste. “The general good taste is an intellectual capacity, derived from sound wits and a keen power of judgment, to correctly experience the true, good and beautiful” (p. 259; also see pp. 260, 276, 292).¹³

The general good taste allows us to reach these three excellences, but because there is a particular, in addition to a general, taste, we have to recognize that there must be more than one way to reach them (p. 296).¹⁴ Since the will, intellect, and external senses vary across people, so will taste.

Indeed, wanting your own taste to triumph over others is itself contrary to the rules of good taste! Thus, like Shaftesbury, König (1727, p. 322) saw his theoretical work as a preface that would allow us to understand, and appreciate, how different peoples constitute the good, true, and beautiful in their poetry and orations.

At the same time, it is important to understand the limitations placed on this open-mindedness. König was in no way saying that all taste is equally good. Further, like Reid, he understood that to make a taste for the beautiful subjective implied the relativity of truth and morality as well (1727, p. 316). So if we say, “about taste there is no dispute,” this is not because we must accept all others’ tastes, but because there is no disputing with a boor who lacks taste (316f).¹⁵

Now as we shall see, König’s triad did not seem to make immediate inroads in German thought. As aesthetics was monopolized by Wolffians (on whom, below), who emphasized a structure that came from the *faculties*, and not the excellences, there was little recognition of the potentially radical implications of König’s work, namely the following. First, there was his claim that taste allowed for a direct relation to truth, unmediated by the intellect. Second, this implied a stricter parallelism between truth, goodness, and beauty than even Shaftesbury had proposed. The part of König’s work that did, however, seem to be picked up (or re-created) in other areas came from the use of the triad to express all that was worthy in the matter of an enlightened person’s engagement with the world, and the most important thinker here was Diderot, in France.

DIDEROT AND THE ENCYCLOPEDIA

Diderot and the Development of the Triad

It is clear that most of the Encyclopediasts still firmly attached beauty to either truth or goodness – but not both. Thus Yvon’s (2003 [1752]) article on “Good” in the Encyclopedia began by emphasizing the parallel to the Beautiful (both equally difficult to define), and by accepting that “the *good* then has two branches, one of which is the *good* that is *beautiful* and the other the *good* that is *useful*.” Voltaire (1965 [1765], p. 341) made a similar opposition of the useful and the nonuseful: “When we find pleasure in seeing something that is useful for us, we say that it is *good*; when we find pleasure in seeing it, without discerning for the moment any utility in it,

we call it *beautiful*.” Finally, in his (2006 [1752]) own article on the “beautiful,” Diderot regularly drew attention to the parallel of the Beautiful with the Good (basically when dealing with Hutcheson), did not link these to the True.¹⁶ Yet Diderot was to be one of the most important adherents of the triad. If it did not come from his aesthetics, whence came it?

Diderot adopted the triad as a way of signaling an alignment with a Shaftesburian movement. Indeed, Diderot’s first contribution was in fact a loose translation of Shaftesbury’s *Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit*, one which he published in 1745. Here, we can again gain insight by close attention to an interesting choice in the translation. Shaftesbury (the piece was incorporated in the later *Characteristics*; (2001 [1732]): II: 29/II.ii.50) had written, “For whoever thinks there is a God, and pretends formally to believe that he is *just* and *good*, must suppose that there is independently such a thing as *Justice* and *Injustice*, *Truth* and *Falsehood*, *Right* and *Wrong*; according to which he pronounces that *God is just, righteous, and true*.” Diderot’s (I.48)¹⁷ version goes as follows: “*Celui qui admet un Dieu vrai, juste et bon, suppose une droiture et une injustice, un vrai et un faux, une bonté et une malice, indépendants de cet Être suprême, et par lesquels il juge qu’un Dieu doit être vrai, juste et bon*” Diderot has rationalized Shaftesbury’s inconsistent usage to a triad, in which God is true, just, and good. It may be that we see here Diderot’s first draft at a new triad, one in which the One has been replaced – here his provisional replacement is the Just.

It is two years later, it seems, that Diderot hit upon the triad using beauty, and it first appears in a very significant context. Toward the end of his 1747 *Promenade of a Skeptic*, a dialogue turning on the hero’s question of whether or not to announce himself an atheist skeptic, Diderot concluded (I: 186) that the humorlessness of his theological opponents and their intolerance of his own fooling around must come from one of the following: (1) because they themselves are practical jokers, or (2) because they do not realize that the true, the good, and the beautiful are not susceptible to ridicule, or (3) that these qualities are foreign to them.¹⁸

In fact, we find that from this point on, Diderot returned again and again to the triad when he attempted to oppose his own tolerant philosophical ethos to that of his intolerant enemies.¹⁹ Thus we see it again in a much later piece, his 1782 *Essay on the Reigns of Claudius and Nero*, an expansion of a 1778 work, focusing on the attempt to justify the philosopher Seneca for his complicity with Nero’s crimes, and turning into a justification of Diderot himself in his squabbles with the recently deceased

Rousseau (Morley, 1884, p. 390ff). It is in such a context that he suggests that it would be good if modern philosophers could remain untroubled by ignorant critics. “Where would we be,” asked Diderot (III.320) rhetorically, “if perverse men could turn false that which is true, bad that which is good, or ugly that which is beautiful? The true, the good and the beautiful form, in my eyes, a group of three great figures, around which evil can raise up a storm of dust that may conceal them from the eyes of the majority, but the time passes, the cloud dissipates, and they re-appear as venerable as ever.”²⁰

But it is not simply that Diderot appealed to these when he wished to wrap himself in the mantle of all that is good, or re-assure himself as to his eventual triumph. He also used the triad as a standard around which to rally his troops against orthodoxy. Thus in his 1762 letter to Voltaire (XIX.464), speaking about the project of the *Encyclopedia*, Diderot announced that what he liked best about their fellow Encyclopedists was that they were united less by their hatred of their enemies than by “the love of truth, by a sense of charity, and a taste for the true, the good and the beautiful, a kind of trinity that is somewhat superior to [that of their opponents].”²¹

Even more, Diderot seemed to want to use this to connect his own project to earlier traditions. I believe the only place where the triad is used, at least by Diderot, in the *Encyclopedia* is in the article on “Eclecticism,” which Diderot (1967 [1765]) used as a statement of his own self-understanding. (“The eclectic,” he began, “is a philosopher who, by riding roughshod over prejudice, tradition, antiquity, universal consent, authority, in a word, everything that subjugates the mass of mind, dares to think for himself, goes back to the most clear and general principles, examines and discusses them, while admitting only what is proven by experience and reason.” He includes Bruno, Bacon, Descartes and Hobbes as examples.) Diderot then claimed that the first principle of this sect, using Iamblichus as his professed model, is that we have within us immediate confirmation of the existence of divinity. We are simultaneously conscious of our own nature, the proximate cause of this, and as a necessary result, have a love for the good, the true, and the beautiful.²²

But the clearest forerunner is of course no one other than Socrates himself, whose fate Diderot sometimes feared would become his. For example, in a 1766 letter to Etienne-Maurice Falconet, dealing with the issue of being unappreciated in one’s own time, Diderot (XVIII.107) again turned to the death of Socrates at the hands of his ungrateful fellow-citizens, and

imagined a contemporary, taking this lesson, saying proudly to himself, “After all it is only the true, the good and the beautiful that remain, and I prefer that these current persecutions that will bring honor to my memory than those praises and rewards that will wither away.”²³

If the parallel were not clear enough, in his *De la Poesie Dramatique* of 1758 (VII.389), Diderot’s obvious alter ego, Ariste, who is known to his (equally fictional) friends as “the philosopher,” soliquizes thusly:²⁴ “I’m forty years old. I have studied a lot, and they call me the philosopher. However, were someone to ask me, ‘Ariste, what is the true, the good and the beautiful?’ would I have an answer? No. How Ariste, do you not know what is the true, the good and the beautiful, and yet let yourself be called a philosopher!”²⁵ Thus Diderot is now leaning toward just that link that Rousseau was to make (as we shall see) – and considering the quest for philosophy equivalent to the quest for the true, the good, and the beautiful. And this would be to finish the Socratic analogy.

That is, Diderot:France :: Socrates:Athens :: The True, The Good, the Beautiful:Orthodoxy, Intolerance, Stupidity. Yet here Diderot also unveiled another theme that surrounded his use of the triad – the issue of objectivity. Thinking through these issues, Ariste wonders how, given the variety of people across place and time, it could be possible for two to have the same taste, or the same conceptions of the true, the good, and the beautiful?²⁶ Even more, when we consider how our *own* state is subject to change, it seems just as implausible that any one of us could maintain the same understanding of these throughout his life.²⁷ We seem to be condemned to have only a local understanding of the true, the good, and the beautiful, cut off from the ideas of others and indeed ourselves at different times (VII.392). Thus Diderot used the triad to express the strange mixture of local variation and eternal validity that, he believed, characterized the most important core of the human project (here see his 1774 *Refutation d’Helvétius*; II, 279; II.437; also see [Diderot, 1995 \[1767\]](#), p. 107).

Diderot and the Trinity

Thus far, we have seen that Diderot developed the triad as a point around which the *philosophes* could gather, and which a courageous intellect could at least approach if not attain, and that could be used for understanding the variation of human sensibilities without losing a guiding star or orientation.²⁸ He did not allow his convictions in mechanistic determinism (expressed in a number of his writings) to shake his faith in these transcendents. Indeed, we

have seen in his 1762 letter to Voltaire, that Diderot considered this triad of transcendentals a trinity. Around this time, he then began to make this not merely an analogy, but an allegory.

In his (for a long time unpublished) work “Rameau’s Nephew,” Diderot (2001 [c. 1765], p. 66) had Rameau make the parallel of this triad to the Trinity explicit: “The True which is the father, engenders the Good, which is his son, whence comes the Beautiful, which is the Holy Ghost.” (This work could have been started as early as 1761, but most think serious work began roughly around the time of the letter to Voltaire.) This mapping is significant and revealing. First, we can see that there is something very different from the assumptions of the neo-platonists, in which the centrality of the Good would make it more likely to assume the position of the Father, should this be case. In contrast, Truth, as *logos*, would, following the Gospel of John, be associated with the Son. In general, Diderot’s dethronement of the Good by the True well expresses the shift in Enlightenment thought: it is science that must tell us what is the proper way to conduct our lives, and not vice versa. Second, it is worth noting that Diderot envisioned the Beautiful as that which exists in between the Good and the True, mediating the two as the Holy Spirit flies between the Father and the Son. I will argue that this does connect, albeit by a thin line, Diderot’s use of the triad to his emerging aesthetics. Before making that point, there is one other thing we need to say about Diderot’s use of the trinity.

In his 1765 report on the *Salon*, in which he reviewed sculptors and painters’ new offerings, often with extremely blunt words, an exasperated Diderot (1995 [1765], p. 114) went into an excursion: “If these painters had a little sense a little intelligence, they’d have asked themselves: What moment should I paint? ... and they’d have answered themselves: That in which the eternal Father acknowledges and designates his Son, makes himself known to the earth as his Father.” Given the incredible potential of such a scene, Diderot could only see Nicolas-Guy Brenet’s version as impoverished and trivial ... the angels are worried about Jesus’s *clothes* getting damp! “When an artist has nothing in his head, he should take a break. And if he still has nothing in his head, he should take a *long* break.”

For those who have forgotten, this moment is when Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist. As he is baptized “behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a void from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” (Matt. 3:16; RSV). (In his discussion of Lépicié’s painting of the same scene, Diderot (1995 [1765], p. 135) quoted this phrase.)

It is hard to deny that Diderot associated the trinity with this moment in the Gospels, and that, despite his atheism, he found it extremely moving.²⁹ And this is almost certainly related to the unexpected death of his father in 1759. Although they had been estranged for some time over Diderot's impulsive marriage, they had been reconciled by 1754, and his father's approval had always been of paramount importance for Diderot. (He said that he remembered as one of the "sweetest moments of his life," when he had returned from school with a great deal of prizes at the end of the year to his house, and his father came to door, saw him, and burst into tears; Furbank, 1992, p. 10f.) With the Encyclopedia finally coming out in 1765, Diderot now lacked one of those whose approval was most important to him, and would not hear the words that Matthew attributes to the Father.

Thus this moment had some special meaning for Diderot, in that it is a special case of a very treasured communication between the Father and Son, and this is carried out by the Spirit, which, we recall, Diderot identified with the Beautiful. This makes the Beautiful fundamentally about a *relation* between truth and goodness. And in fact, in some places, Diderot seemed to hold exactly this: namely, his theory of beauty as relation (*rapport*) (1995 [1765], p. 100). This allowed Diderot to fold in our associations to our aesthetic perceptions; and as we have had different experiences, we might have different associations and hence different aesthetic appreciations (see Crocker, 1952, p. 99). But this structural position implied that, in contrast to Shaftesbury, Diderot could not see the members of the triad as "one and the same."

The Relations between the Members of the Triad

Certainly, as Diderot wrote in his *Essay on Painting*, "The true, the good, and the beautiful are very closely allied. Add some unusual, striking circumstance to one of the first two qualities and truth becomes beauty, or beauty truth" (Diderot, 1995 [1766], p. 238). Indeed, Diderot considered that there was a way in which "truth" was necessary for art, and often criticized works that he believed lack this truth (1904 [1761], p. 253; 1995 [1765], p. 94; 1995 [1767], p. 207, 323f; 1995 [1766], p. 195). But because he rejected the Hutchesonian conception of a moral sense (Diderot, 1995 [1767], p. 23), he had to acknowledge the separation of truth from beauty. I accept Crocker's (1952, pp. 45, 48, 66) evaluation: Diderot was torn between a materialist, utilitarian and determinist view that his logic forced him to accept, and which implied the fundamental subjectivity of beauty,

but emotionally, he could not drive away a conviction that virtue should be beautiful – and that the triad should bring us toward unity.

Even more importantly, Diderot struggled with the fact that our different personal biographies must necessarily give us different tastes. In this sense, Diderot appears as a modern, in contrast to those who claimed a straightforward objective definition of beauty and hence a nonproblematic basis to taste. An instructive contrast is the take of Voltaire, who, in the *Encyclopedia's* article on the subject, acknowledged that there was no disputing of matters of taste, simply “because it is impossible to correct a flaw that is organic.” That is, if you cannot taste the delightfully sweet taste of honeysuckle flower, there is something wrong with you. But this inability to dispute “is not true in the arts: since the arts have genuine beauty, there exists a good taste that discerns it and a bad taste that is unaware of it, and often the flaw of the mind that produces wrong taste can be corrected” (Voltaire [François-Marie Arouet] et al., 1965 [1765], p. 339).

Diderot, in contrast, tried to grapple with the legitimate dispersion of tastes, and he used the triad to express the humanist excellences that had some puzzling combination of flux yet constancy. While he was unable to demonstrate any strong architectonic relations between these, he never connected them to faculties in a one-to-one correspondence. In other words, for Diderot, the members of the triad were secularized transcendentals (see 1995 [1767], p. 106). The triad, then, was composed of the general and transcendental terms to which Diderot himself had an emotional/intellectual commitment, but he had no clear way of defending their priority in our approach to human life, if only because this would require an anthropology that did not yet exist.

While Diderot was the one to really put forward the triad again and again in such a way as to influence others, Rousseau may have used it in print earlier. This is in his “first discourse” (Rousseau, 1761 [1750], p. 18f), where Rousseau, recounting the scene of Socrates’s apology, so close to Diderot’s heart, substituted “the true, the good and the beautiful” for Socrates’s phrase “*kalos kagathos*.” Interestingly, it appears that Rousseau used Diderot’s translation, which reads more closely to the original Greek.³⁰ More important, Rousseau’s simpler, and more consistent, adumbration of the faculties was a clearer transmission to the next generation. Further, while Diderot tended to associate himself more with Socrates, Rousseau understood his project more like that of the Platonists, and it is possible that his understanding here was influenced by Ficino.³¹

And yet, in his *Julie*, Rousseau (1997 [1761], pp. 49, 158, 185, 406) did not rely on this triad³² but rather, as Norton (1995) has emphasized, on the

idea of the beautiful soul, that which unites the good and the beautiful, suggesting an intuitive understanding of morality that re-casts *kalos kagathos* in a more feminine and sentimental light. (“As soon as we are willing to search within ourselves, we all sense what is right, we all discern what is beautiful; we have no need to be taught either one”; *ibid.*, 47). Thus it seems that in France, the triad was used as a rallying cry, and not a wedge for reformulating a theory of the faculties. This was to occur instead in Germany, and must be understood as a split in the ranks of the Leibnizians between those who we can see as primarily aestheticians and those who became philosophers of the subject.

THE WOLFFIANS

Baumgarten to Sulzer

The notion of a study of “aesthetics” is usually attributed to Alexander Baumgarten, the disciple of the leading Leibnizian philosopher in Germany, Christian Wolff. In his 1735 *Philosophical Thoughts on Matters Concerned with Poetry* [*Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*], Baumgarten (1931 [1735], p. 84/§ 116, 85/§ 484) drew upon the ancient distinctions between *noeta* (objects of logic) and *aistheta* (things perceptible by sense), and proposed to systematize the principles whereby we carried out judgment via the senses as opposed to through the intellect.³³ Baumgarten (2007: I.27; § 29; I.403; § 423³⁴) argued that aesthetic experience, led to a sort of truth, aesthetic truth, “that is the truth, insofar as it can be sensibly known [*i.e.*, *veritas, quatenus sensitive cognoscenda est*].”

Thus Baumgarten (I.515; § 539) proposed an *intellectualist* conception of beauty, in which aesthetic experience produced a second-best sort of truth: verisimilitude or probability. Thus the Wolffian approach to aesthetics was to be marked by an emphasis on intellectual values, as well as moral ones, in the appreciation of beauty. The most important figure here was Sulzer.

Sulzer

Johan Sulzer was born in 1720 as the 25th child of a minor civil servant in Switzerland, back in the days in which a Swiss minor civil servant could have

25 children! Although fascinated with British empiricist philosophy – he even translated Hume’s *Essay on Human Understanding* – Sulzer was greatly influenced by the Pietism that dominated his area, and he appreciated sentimentalist works like Richardson’s novels (Christensen, 1995, pp. 6, 8f, 11; cf. Sulzer, 1792, III:627/BC 36). In 1747 he moved to Berlin, and, as a central Wolffian, headed the philosophical section of Berlin academy, where soon he published an article on the origin of agreeable and disagreeable sensations.

Here Sulzer laid out the skeleton of what was to be his triadic scheme. There are, he argued (1773 [1751–2], p. 24), three fundamental aspects of the soul: the Sensibility [*Sinne*], the Heart, and the Intellect.³⁵ He maintained this structure of heart/sense/intellect in his later work as well (1792–4: IV.259). This idea of the “heart” clearly evokes the Pietist sensibilities of Sulzer’s upbringing – although partially as a result of Max Weber’s disgusted evaluation of such pietism,³⁶ sociologists are likely to imagine that the Pietist heart would be quite at home in bowl of cling peaches, so covered with cloyingly sweet sentimental sauce it must be, there was not a necessary trade-off between embracing this sort of sentimentalism and accepting the importance of intellect. However, there was a tendency to *separate* the two, a separation that was to prove pivotal for later thinkers. Thus, for Sulzer, enjoyments of sensation come without reflection or judgment; those of the heart come from moral sensations.³⁷

Now despite the likely influence from König even at this time, Sulzer did not connect his tripartite scheme to the triad (despite the fact that his Pietist orientation would make a connection of Good and Heart far from implausible). Further, Sulzer’s attempt to ground everything in the (dis)agreeableness of sensations, without slipping into utilitarianism, did not prove to be a fruitful way to approach aesthetics. The difficulties he ran into were to some degree (but not wholly) resolved in his masterwork, a four-volume encyclopedic treatment of aesthetics. Like Diderot’s *Encyclopedia*, this began as a translation of an existing work, the 1752 *Dictionary of the Fine Arts* of the French academician Jacques Lacombe. Like Diderot’s, it soon outgrew this and became an independent work, but unlike Diderot’s, Sulzer’s work was almost entirely his own. Although he solicited contributions from others (including Wieland) on specific technical matters, the philosophical articles are all Sulzer’s (Christensen, 1995, p. 14). Taking twenty years to complete, the first volume of the first edition came out in 1771 and the last in 1774; the second edition, somewhat expanded in content and with exhaustive references for each article, was published in (1792–4).³⁸ Here I use the second edition but wherever timing is of issue,

I have compared to the first. Portions of several articles have been translated by Baker and Christensen (1995); where these exist I give first the volume and page number from the second edition, then the page number of the translation as BC; otherwise the translation is my own.

In this massive encyclopedia, Sulzer's basic position was a somewhat reactionary one, frequently emphasizing the moral virtue of aesthetic creation and reception (as if otherwise art should be scorned), and drawing on the ideas of *kalos kagathos*. While he was not always consistent in his theoretical architecture across articles (thus, the scheme in his article on the Beautiful [*Schön*]; e.g., IV. 247–50] was different), it was in his article on Taste (*Geschmack*) that Sulzer put together what was to be an influential system.

Here Sulzer (II.371; BC 48; translation altered for exactitude) argued “Taste is really nothing other than the capacity to sense beauty, just as reason is the capacity to recognize that which is true, perfect [*Vollkommene*] and just [*Richtige*], and moral feeling [*das sittliche Gefühl*] the capacity to feel that which is good [*das Gute*].” Sulzer connected this to the imagination: “Beauty pleases us not because reason finds it perfect, or our moral sense finds it good, but because it flatters our imagination by presenting itself in an attractive, pleasing form” The pairing of beauty and taste is as tight as that historically between the intellect and truth: If beauty is real, as he had argued in the article treating beauty, “then taste is also something real in our soul to be distinguished from other faculties.”³⁹

This suggests a perfect dimensionalization of the three excellences, one in keeping with our current ideas (reason:true::moral sense:good::imagination:beauty). But Sulzer immediately rejected this, in part because he needed to emphasize his understanding of the arts as morally uplifting. If we cultivate our taste, he argued, we have not simply a better capacity to identify the beautiful, but in fact have better feeling for the True and the Good. “Taste is, at basis, nothing other than the inner feeling, through which one senses the stimulus [*Reizung*; one might also say the charm] of the True and the Good” (II.375).⁴⁰ Thus although reason and ethics are the chief needs of human development, to perfect these, we also must develop our taste (II.376). Note that, as with others we have explored, it is the focus on the idea of *taste* as a fundamental relation to the world that brings the True and the Good into a realm in which they can be equated with the Beautiful. More specifically, the fact that taste is paired with beauty, yet reaches the True and the Good, suggests that there is an “outer” beauty, one that *includes* and combines the True, the Good, and

Table 1. Sulzer’s Scheme.

Excellence	Receiver’s Faculty	Artist’s Faculties	Aspects of Outer Taste	Artist Reaches Via
Good	Moral sense	Genius	Heart	Senses
Beautiful	Taste (imagination)	Taste	Imagination	Phantasy
True (perfect, just)	Reason	Reason	Reason	Intellect

the Beautiful. That is exactly what Sulzer (II.373; BC 50) proposed (see Table 1).

Now we can perhaps understand the ambiguous position of imagination in the second column; when we are thinking about “lesser taste,” as we might call it, that reaches the lesser beautiful, we can say that taste ↔ beauty, but when we are thinking of the “Greater Taste,” the analogous faculty must be considered to be the imagination. Further, there still seems to be an aspect of the feeling/representing distinction in our aesthetic faculties, as Sulzer (33/I:349), in his article on inspiration [*Begeisterung*] writes that enthusiasm is a duplex phenomenon – one part works on our senses, the other on our imagination.

Sulzer has clearly travelled far down the road toward a splintering of the triad by matching the elements to faculties. Yet Sulzer (II: 374) used his article on taste to argue that we need to pursue the unification of all our soul’s powers (“*die Vereinigung aller Seelenkräfte*”) – that is, in contrast to those who might emphasize the independence, perhaps *orthogonality* of the three powers and their attendant excellences, Sulzer saw these as flawed if not combined. Thus Sulzer attempted to strike a middle ground between the Wolffians who emphasized a distinction between faculties, and the Platonists who emphasized the unity of the soul. In fact, at the end of the day, he was still waffling: “One may view Reason, Moral feeling, and Taste as three wholly differentiated faculties of the spirit, through whose growth and development Man is gradually perfected, but one might also see them as one and the same power, only turned to different objects.”⁴¹ But whether they begin as one or not, they must end as one, for “only through the unification of these three gifts of heaven can Man attain perfection.”⁴² The relation between the faculties and the excellences remained uncertain, and this provoked a contest between two factions to claim the triad.

WHOLISTS VERSUS ANALYSTS

Riedel

So far as I know, the first work to clearly and unambiguously lay out the triad as having a basis in fundamental cognitive faculties is Riedel's (1767; I use the revised 1774 version) *Theory of the Fine Arts and Sciences*. (I also make reference to his "Fourth Letter to Mendelssohn," published the next year in a compilation.) Riedel was a protégé of Christian Adolf Klotz, whose somewhat outlandish behavior and simplistic theorizing have made him a popular target (Norton, 1991, p. 120). Riedel – a friend of Wieland – is often treated a bit more gently, sometimes seen as "corrupted" by Klotz (Clark, 1955, p. 89). He attempted to oppose the direction taken by Baumgarten, the dominant Leibnizian, by relying on others such as Kaymes. In so doing, he laid out an extremely simple, and perhaps overly convenient, relation between the excellences and the faculties.

In his first paragraph Riedel (1774, p. 7) announced that philosophy has three objects – the true, the good, and the beautiful – corresponding to our nature as thinking, acting, and experiencing [*Denkens, Handelns, und Empfindens*]. Interestingly, the next year, he modified the triad somewhat, replacing "acting" with "willing."⁴³ This brought his usage into line with the triadic approach to the faculties that, in Germany, would be associated with Mendelssohn (1997 [1761], p. 140; also see 1997 [1776], p. 309 and 2012 [1785], p. 53), who had never quite connected his triadic scheme to the triad of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. Further, here Riedel more explicitly argued that there was something *lawful* connecting each aspect of human life and the excellences, although these laws were more akin to laws of possibility than laws of necessity.⁴⁴

"The ultimate touchstone [*letzte Probirstein*] of the truth is the *sensus communis*; that of the good is the moral feeling; that of the beautiful the taste."⁴⁵ These three capacities are bound up with the very nature of the human being. The *sensus communis* referred to an "inner feeling" whereby we can immediately, "without rational reflection" [*ohne Vernunftschlüsse*; note that this is also the term used for *sylogisms*], tell the true from the false. Similar "inner feelings" guide our other types of judgments. Philosophy thus has a tripartite structure – a philosophy of mind [*Geist*], one of heart, and one of taste (see Table 2).

There are two surprising things about this synthesis. The first is that we have seen that the reason that the True and the Good first came to be united with the Beautiful was that "taste" was seen to apply to all. Riedel

Table 2. Riedel’s Scheme.

Object	Human Characteristic	Inner Feeling	Philosophy of ...
True	Thinking	<i>Sensus Communis</i>	The Mind
Good	Acting	Moral feeling	The Heart
Beautiful	Feeling	Taste	The Taste

Table 3. Riedel on Types of Beauty.

	Faculties	Type of Beauty
Outer sense		Physical
Inner senses	Imagination	Imaginative
	Intellect	Higher (Order, Virtue, Morality)

has preserved some of this, by proposing these taste-like “inner feelings” for our judgments, but rejected the use of taste as a general umbrella uniting them. More surprisingly, he has tried to graft these on to the sort of division of human characteristics that was associated with a very different partition of the faculties (that of Mendelssohn).

Thus even on his own terms, Riedel had perhaps not completely worked out the relation of these capacities to the general theory of the faculties that he accepted. Like most others (specifically one may compare to Sulzer’s tripartition of beauty reaching us via the senses, imagination or intellect, discussed above), Riedel began with a distinction between outer experience (sensation) and then the inner sensations, which are divided into the intellectual and the imaginative (Riedel, 1774, p. 7). This implied three types of beauty (14) (see Table 3).

Most of his attention was given to physical beauty, the beauty that might be held of an object. It is here that he had to confront the question of whether the beauty of an object was a simple objective property. This seemed to be implied by his strong argument that the three realms were parallel because their excellences were unambiguously universal: “I. What anyone [*jedermann*] must desire is good and what anyone must detest is evil; II. What anyone must believe to be true is true and what anyone must believe to be false is false; III. What pleases all [note the shift in number] is beautiful and what displeases all, is ugly” (Riedel, 1774, p. 12).

But this was not the argument Riedel (1774, pp. 13–15) made; rather, he tried to compromise and proposed that beauty is neither purely

subjective, nor purely objective, but involved a relation, or a relation between these, or two relations, one ideal and one real. Although the ground of the sensation may lie in the object, the sensible properties of interest (e.g., bitterness in food) lie more in our sensations than in the object (also 1768, pp. 37, 45, where Riedel appeals to Hutcheson). The puzzle seems to be that by claiming that we recognize beauty by an inner feeling, and tying this to existing theories of the faculties, Riedel implied parallel conclusions for the true and the good – that at least to the extent that we use our senses to orient to these, they are really about a relation between the objective and subjective. This was not a conclusion that would have been congenial to Riedel.

In his work of the next year, Riedel (1768, p. 50ff) clarified somewhat, first, by (like König) making a distinction between a “general” taste that all humanity has, and the second, a “particular” (*besondere*) taste that has to do with the contingent aspects of our existence – place, time, age, station [*Stand*] and particular opinions, passions, inclinations and capacities. Thus there are both general and particular beauties. But even this recognition of particular tastes need not imply an acceptance of all tastes, especially idiosyncratic ones. There can, argued Riedel (1768, p. 53), be a *bad* taste. Such bad taste would probably not survive any *reflection*, and Riedel (1768, p. 42) pointed out that we are able to reflect on our own judgment – is this really good to me or you? Just as we can attempt to distinguish that which only *seems* good from the truly good, so too with beauty.

Further, Riedel (1768, p. 38f) had to allow that the True was less subjective than either the Good or the Beautiful, which tended to share dynamics.⁴⁶ To distinguish these last two, Riedel relied on the empiricist notion that Good is, at basis, good-for-me (Riedel, 1768, p. 38; 1774, p. 9f).⁴⁷ In contrast, our orientation to beauty is fundamentally a disinterested one. “The Beautiful is thus that which pleases our senses without our taking an interested perspective, and therefore can please us, even if we do not possess it” (Riedel, 1774, p. 11; cf. 183).⁴⁸ Although he was certainly not the first to make this argument, it was one that was central to his scheme and which, perhaps, he could explain precisely because of his separation of the Beautiful from the Good, in contrast to the Platonists who tended to blend them.

Riedel’s work has influenced posterity basically only in the stinging reply that he received from Herder; Riedel himself is remembered as “a scholarly opportunist who more or less fatuously pursued the literary and philosophical fashions of his day in an attempt to appeal to the widest popular audience” (Norton, 1991, p. 159), and indeed, this is why Herder chose him

as a foil. In a way, Riedel's work reminds one of Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischman, who prematurely announced a dramatic discovery of a powerful form of cold fusion – thereby eclipsing the serious work being done on related processes by other electrochemists.

For the problems Riedel attacked were serious ones. His notion of taste as an “inner feeling of the soul that is able, without syllogistic reasoning, merely though the sensible feeling of pleasure, to find the beautiful, wherever it may be” was perhaps on the right track (1774, p. 398). But just like Helvetius, Riedel attempted to solve this puzzle by simply declaring that all could be explained by a simple, direct, unmediated sense. Thus just like Diderot responded to Helvetius's simplisms by attempting to develop a more plausible psychology, so too was Herder's response.

Herder

J. G. Herder is often remembered (or mis-remembered) in social theory for three things: as the student and later enemy of Kant, as the sponsor and later frenemy of Goethe, and as a formulator of an idea of national cultures and the importance of language. For us, he is vital as an aesthetic theorist who attempted to reform the Leibnizian tradition and reject the faculties' psychology that had reconsolidated, and which was being used by Riedel to support a simple solution to the puzzle of the excellences. His key contribution here came in a (only posthumously published) critique of Riedel's work.

It might seem somewhat surprising, but Herder fiercely highlighted his loyalty to the tradition of Leibniz, Wolff, and even Baumgarten (see, e.g., his 1767 “A Monument to Baumgarten,” 2006 [1767]; also 2006 [1769], p. 185). Even more, Herder (2006 [1769], p. 275) saw (or professed to see) the work of Sulzer and Mendelssohn (along with others) as being pivotal for our understanding of aesthetics. He worked hard to turn Sulzer and Mendelssohn into opponents of a “faculties” theory (which he pinned on Hutcheson).

But it is not that Herder rejected the tradition from which Hutcheson sprang – that of Shaftesbury. To Herder (1844 [1801–1803], p. 997), Shaftesbury had reminded Europeans as to the true nature of Greek philosophy, and the central place of the Beautiful (*to kalon*). Precisely what Hutcheson disliked in Shaftesbury – his fluid language, his inexactness, his resistance to system – was what Herder found so valuable. As Herder wrote in his *Letters on the Advancement of Humanity* (1881 [1793] v17, p. 158), this

“virtuoso of humanity” had had a profound effect on Diderot, Lessing, Mendelssohn, “on the best minds of our century, on men who, with resolute honesty, pursued the True, Beautiful and Good.”⁴⁹

Further, Herder saw Shaftesbury as having spread this neo-Platonic understanding of beauty to the French as well, namely via Diderot. While most of the French had neglected the study of the Beautiful in favor of the study of *taste*, Diderot – stirred by Shaftesbury – transcended this national limitation (Herder, 1844 [1801–1803], p. 999; 2006 [1769], p. 275f). Indeed, Herder in one letter of 1769 referred to “Plato, Shaftesbury and Diderot” as the three deepest philosophers (Gerold, 1941, p. 17).⁵⁰

This Diderotian influence possibly began around 1764, when Herder met Diderot while in France (Gerold, 1941, p. 12ff), and remained intact during the time of Herder’s work on sculpture (as Dewey, 1920, p. 119 points out, every version of Herder’s *Sculpture* opens with a discussion of Diderot’s famous letter on the blind). Eventually, Herder backed off this infatuation, but we will see that he retained a fundamentally Diderotian approach to an understanding of the role of the aesthetic, especially in contrast to Riedel (also see 2004 [1774], p. 45). And this meant, to Herder, a revival of classic Greek sentiments, in opposition not only to fancified French mannerisms, but even more, to the German school of Christian Klotz in Halle.

All commentators have sided with Herder here; Clark (1955, p. 68f) says that in Halle, the “capital of pseudo-classicism,” Klotz “held sway with a coterie which can be described by no more fitting appellation than that of a gang of literary thugs.” Even by the looser and more creative standards of eighteenth century literary practice, Klotz was indeed shameless: when his first work was ignored, he published an anonymous attack on himself, and then defended his work, which finally attracted attention. It was not Klotz himself, however, but Riedel, who was the main target of Herder’s key work on aesthetic theory, his “Fourth Grove, on Riedel’s Theory of the Beaux Arts.”

The Critique of Riedel

Now the vituperative nature of Herder’s critique of Riedel was in part personal – Riedel seems to have acquired a draft of Herder’s *Fragments* manuscript by somewhat illicit means, and to have adapted some of Herder’s ideas in b*****dized fashion, incorporating them into his own book of essays reviewed above (Clark, 1955, p. 73). But the core of

Herder's complaint was an intellectual one: "How disgraceful it is in a theory of the belles lettres to disregard a Sulzer and instead show more familiarity with the writings of Messrs. Klotz and Dusch ..." (Herder, 2006 [1769], pp. 204, 272). That is, Herder was disgusted that a German philosopher would prove to be so ignorant of the Leibnizian tradition, or even a Platonic Shaftesburian one, and instead implicitly align himself with (what Herder considered) a Hutchesonian version (Dewey, 1920, p. 74ff).

And to Herder, this Hutchesonian tradition was one that worked by convenient assumptions about the connection between faculties and excellences. Herder (2006 [1769], p. 177) began as follows: "Like all good things, the fundamental concepts of our new fashionable philosophy come in threes." Riedel is simply able to declare that "the true, the beautiful, and the good are *qualitas occulta*; he who feels them is welcome to feel them; he who does not – who can help, who can convince him?" (Herder, 2006 [1769], p. 183).

What could be wrong with such an approach? For one thing, Herder (2006 [1769], p. 193) argued, it ignored that sort of individual variation that Shaftesbury had emphasized. For all souls are different, and some have one sense stronger, and others a different one. Further, even within an individual, we see, as a result of experience, a development of capacities from the crude to the more complete and refined (2006 [1769], p. 199). Even more shocking, Riedel's approach, especially his assumption of "a" common sense, was unable to appreciate the importance of difference in tastes across cultures and times (Herder, 2006 [1769], p. 201f; also see 1892 [1778], pp. 210, 213; 1989 [1764], p. 152). "Is the *sensus communis* of the Greenlander and the Hottentot⁵¹ the same as ours with respect to its objects and application?" (Herder, 2006 [1769], p. 198).

Thus Riedel managed to combine the violence to the unity of the soul characteristic of the Hutchesonian tradition with the incapacity to account for human variety characteristic of the crudest Platonism, and, were that not enough, somehow managed to flub the issue of the role of higher processes (such as judgment) in taste. And all this, because Riedel wanted easy answers; to staple the elements of the triad to convenient faculties designed to reach just these (Herder, 2006 [1769], p. 182).

Instead, Herder (2006 [1769], pp. 181, 198; also see 2006 [1781], p. 338) argued, what Riedel took as three different fundamental faculties are actually three habitual applications "of a single power of the mind." If indeed we do not have dedicated modules for the recognition of truth, goodness, and beauty, then we cannot, argued Herder (2006 [1769], p. 178; also see

2006 [1775], p. 311f), imagine that our reaching these can dispense with judgment.

Thus Herder's wholistic view assumed that if we see a division between the way our mind grapples with the world, one that produces truth, goodness, and beauty, it is not because we have three separate modules, but rather, that truth, beauty, and goodness are different from one another. Herder's wholism, however, went beyond this critique of Riedel's overly-convenient tripartite vision, and undermined the very division between cognition and sensation itself. His arguments here appeared in response to a prize essay question regarding the relation between the two, and since the question had been framed by none other than Sulzer, Herder took care in his exposition to deny the premise of the question without making the asker seem foolish (Clark, 1955, p. 217).

"We are accustomed to bestow upon the soul a host of sub-powers [*eine Menge Unterkräfte*]: imagination and foresight, poetic gift and memory," but these are "but a single energy of the soul" (1892 [1778], pp. 195, 199; cf. 196).⁵² Will and cognition are inseparable, as are reason and sensibility (since God has arranged a marriage between "Mr. Intellect" and "Mrs. Sensation" [Herder, 1892 [1778], pp. 232, 233]).

One will note that despite his excoriation of Riedel's triadic foolishness, turning on his attempt to adumbrate the nature of the true, the good and the beautiful, Herder himself often used the triad. Even more, I think the evidence is that he only did so *after* reading Riedel. Further, Herder used the triad deliberately in a most un-Riedelian manner. Consider one of his most explicit treatments, one of his drafts for the essay on sculpture. Here (1892 [1768–69], p. 104) he had a section entitled "Philosophy of the True, Good and Beautiful from the Sense of Feeling [*Sinne des Gefühls*]." His argument here was that feeling is the most fundamental sense of Man, and hence the source of both our concepts and our sensations – and hence "the true source of the True, Good and Beautiful!"⁵³

Although Herder (1892 [1768–69], p. 112) gave some attention to the basis of the sensing to these excellences, it seems that he used the triad, like Diderot, as a general expression of the pinnacle of what the human spirit strives for – but something that varies across time and place. The puzzle he began with – and never resolved – was whether to see this as fundamentally variable or fundamentally eternal.

Thus in an early fragment, Herder (2004 [1766], pp. 101–103) asked himself, "How could that which a nation holds at one time to be good, beautiful, useful, pleasant, or true be considered bad, ugly, useless, unpleasant, and untrue by it at another time? And yet this does happen. Are not

truth, beauty, and moral goodness the same at all times? Surely – and yet one can observe how the same principles for which everyone would at one time have sacrificed his last drop of blood are at other times cast into the fire by the very same nation. ... We should almost go mad with such skepticism, putting no more trust in our own tastes and feelings!” Note that in this pre-Riedelian work, Herder gives a list of five excellences, combining Diderot’s triad with the “useful” and the “pleasant,” though repeating in a shortened version that is an unemphasized version of the triad.

Now compare to a post-Riedelian work making the same point. Here, in his *Journal of My Journey in the Year 1769*, Herder wrote, “each nation has its riches and distinctive features of spirit, of character, as of country. These must be sought out, and cultivated. No human being, no land, no people, no history of a people, no state is like the other, and consequently the true, the beautiful, and the good is not alike in them” (*Sämtliche Werke*, 4:472; translation from Forster, 2010; also see 1881 [1793] V18.149f).

Thus while Herder sometimes lapsed back into a Hellenism of *kalos kai agathos*,⁵⁴ after Riedel’s work, he seemed desirous to reclaim the triad for Diderot’s purpose: both as a rallying flag for the appreciation of what is finest in the human spirit, but also, to point to the puzzle of the highest cultural values being variable and yet calling for universal assent. Finally, while Herder did sometimes link the members of the triad to certain faculties, these were not (hypostatized) mental abilities, but the (concrete) *senses*. Thus it was not the abstract and perhaps unscientific faculties, such as the heart, the sense, and the will, that Herder used to organize his researches, but the more empirically obvious sight, hearing, and touch (2006 [1769], p. 211; 2002 [1768–70]: 43f; also see Herder, 2006 [1769], pp. 140, 261; 1892 [1778], p. 212f; 2002 [1768–70], p. 39; for an extended discussion, see Norton, 1991, pp. 153, 201).

In sum, Herder represented a clear break in the developing Wolffian tradition in which the tripartition of the excellences mapped onto a new tripartition of the faculties. This is not at all because Herder represented a more romantic strain unwilling to divide what should not be divided. Indeed, it is true that he emphasized the unification of our faculties and our soul. But in another sense, he looked toward a more scientific and indeed behavioristic conception that focused on the particular determinations implicit in each sense, and its interaction with the material world, a conception that broke with the eighteenth century proliferation of invisible faculties and senses. Many Kantians attempted to derive a similar moral from Kant himself, as they refused to see him as a faculties’ theorist at all,

emphasizing his transcendental logic over his psychology. But, as we shall see, Herder was correct not to see in Kant an ally here.

Instead, Herder's allies were the romantics and neo-platonists – above all, those influenced by Shaftesbury. In addition to Herder's young friend Goethe, there was Christoph Martin Wieland who (influenced by Shaftesbury [for an extended discussion, see Norton, 1991, pp. 153, 201]) followed the transitive implications of the equation of the good as the beautiful, and the beautiful with the true. Thus in his *Aristipp*, he wrote, "I bade him to see me as a youth, who loves the Beautiful and the Good, and in both of these, the True, and especially the bond that ties both together, through which he hoped to know them" (Wieland, 1856).⁵⁵ Finally, it seems that Schlegel tried to further Herder's focus on the concrete nature of the arts, and to connect this to the triad. Thus at the end of the eighteenth century, when Schlegel was trying to orient his aesthetic thought around three key concepts – *Liebe*, *Natur*, and *Kunst* (Sulger-Gebing, 1897, p. 10), he was also proposing that artists could be divided by whether they pursued the Good, the Beautiful, or the True.⁵⁶

But these thinkers, by their very refusal to participate in analytic decomposition, were seen as outside the main current of philosophy. The Wolffian branch, despite its cautious relation to such Platonic terminology, ended up defining the reception of the triad. And although the triad was returned to those of a more romantic temperament, its passage through the faculties' theorists smuggled in a connection to the faculties that was to undo the vision of the wholists.

THE PHILOSOPHERS

Tetens

The most important pre-Kantian attempt to rationalize the faculties-approach to a philosophy of Man was that of Johann Nicolas Tetens. His mammoth two volume work on human nature and its development returned to Mendelssohn's triad of faculties, and explored the limits of this and other schemes. Interestingly, although Tetens gave careful consideration to the triad, he did not link it to either of his two main triads of the faculties, neither the first that he began with (an "interior" one, Man as a sensing, representing, and thinking being), nor his "outer" one, which was

man as having feeling [*Gefühl*], intellect, and will. Yet nor did he, like Riedel, attempt to connect the triad to “feeling.”

Now given his close engagement with the British empiricists, it was natural that Tetens give serious consideration to ideas of moral feeling. But while he acknowledged some similarities between the form of our judgments regarding *physical* properties of things (such as their color) and our judgments regarding their *moral* and *aesthetic* properties (Tetens, 1777, pp. I, 554), he also emphasized differences between these sorts of feelings, especially the difference between the mere “passion and feeling” (*blos Leiden und Fühlen*) in our appreciation of sensible beauty and the nature of our feelings for truth and for the good (Tetens, 1777, pp. I, 626, 187).

Thus the analysis of feeling brought Tetens (1777, pp. I, 188) to a triad of the agreeable, the good, and the true.⁵⁷ But beauty is somewhat different from the agreeable, and so when Tetens (1777, pp. I, 185f, 190) dealt with the triad of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, he argued that these are *relational* feelings, which correspond to his notion of “relational ideas” (*Verhältnißideen*).⁵⁸ This means that our notion of truth has something relative about it – it too speaks of a relation (Tetens, 1777, pp. I, 532, 557f). And he could not avoid concluding that this sort of relationality implied not merely a potential for disagreement across persons, but more, different *types* of persons. Like all others we have seen in the Shaftesburian tradition, Tetens took for granted that different persons have different characters and hence respond differently to the same stimuli (Tetens, 1777, pp. I, 705f).

However, Tetens (1777, pp. I, 559) emphasized, the similarity of the *feeling* for (and of) truth (one the one hand) and the feeling for the beautiful or good (on the other) does not imply that truth has no greater objectivity than does beauty. This is because the *feeling for* truth is not the same thing as truth itself. Further, we must recognize that there is some way in which judgments of physical properties have greater objectivity than those of beauty, and perhaps even of moral worth (I: 554). Tetens thereby tried to separate that which Riedel had purposefully blurred – our capacity to have an intuitive feeling for truth or goodness, our intellectual capacity to reach these using concepts, and the nature of truth and goodness in themselves.

Thus Tetens attempted to move more carefully where Riedel had rushed in, and to make analytic separations between faculties where these were plausible as opposed to where they were convenient. Further, Tetens attempted to synthesize the German and British traditions. The result, however impressive, was indeterminate. It suggested that while *some*

purchase could be derived from an analysis of various “feelings” for the excellences, this was not enough.

Kant’s Critique

As I noted above, Tetens is now read primarily in terms of his influence on Kant. Kant’s own contribution is again an ironic one – he himself did not use the triad,⁵⁹ but instead reformulated the division of the faculties in a way that was seized upon by others and mapped onto the triad.

Here I must of course be brief to a scandalous degree, but in a nutshell, the following is safe to say. Immanuel Kant’s work was revolutionary in large part in that he severed the realms of the intelligible and the empirical, which had been tied together in the system of Wolff. This led to a sophisticated critique of knowledge and a demonstration of the limits of reason; it also led to grounding ethics in a world inaccessible to empirical proof or disproof. And it posed a problem: we may accept that there is really only a single “reason,” and that the empirical laws of the phenomenal realm produced by our pure reason are our subjective representations of very real objective laws in the noumenal realm, this being the realm that we, as actors inhabit; further, we can therefore understand (or at least understand why we do not understand) that the laws of necessity that characterize the physical world are themselves part of the laws of freedom that govern a willing soul. But how can we be sure that, as a finite being approaching the world with a specific form of intellect, we actually *do* produce empirical laws that have any moral status? How do we tie these two aspects of ourselves together?

Kant’s own answer, worked out as he went along, involved producing a triadic system, first laid out in Kant’s “first introduction” to his Third Critique (1987 [1790] F, p. 396). We have three main vital powers – that of *cognition*, that of *desire*, and that of the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure* – each of which has a priori principles located in functions of the subject, namely in the intellect, in pure reason, and in the judgment.⁶⁰

The power of cognition in turn is divided into three: “The first part is *understanding*, the ability to cognize the *universal* (i.e., rules); the second is *judgment*, the ability to *subsume the particular* under the universal; and the third is *reason*, that is, to ability to *determine* the particular through the universal (i.e., to derive [the particular] from principles)” (Kant, 1987 [1790] F, p. 391). It is somewhat confusing that Kant could make this same division (knowledge/pleasure/desire) to define the cognitive faculties as

Table 4. Kant’s Scheme.

Powers of the Mind	Higher Cognitive Powers	A Priori Principles	Products
Cognitive power	Understanding	Lawfulness	Nature
Feeling of pleasure and displeasure	Judgment	Purposes	Art
Power of desire	Reason (Will)	Obligation (purposiveness that is also law)	Morals

Table 5. The Relation to Kant’s Critiques.

Higher Cognitive Powers	Judgments	Critiques	Parts of Philosophy	Excellences
Understanding	Theoretical	First	Physics	The True
Judgment	Aesthetic (judgments of reflection)	Third	Aesthetics	The Beautiful
Reason (Will)	Practical	Second	Ethics	The Good

distinct from others, and *within* the cognitive faculties to *again* establish understanding, judgment and reason as a cognitive triad (see especially Kant, 2006 [1798], p. 90f, where the relation of these two nested uses of “understanding” is explicitly addressed).⁶¹ Thus understanding represents in a way the most cognitive of the cognitive faculties (Matthews, 1997, p. 3).

This suggested, continued Kant (1987 [1790] F, p. 434f), the table reproduced here as Table 4, which he supplied; I then augment with a second table (Table 5), adding the second column based on (1987 [1790] F, p. 415) and the fifth indicating how the critiques would later be mapped onto the triad.

This simplified scheme of our second table is far from exact – the first critique demonstrates that our knowledge relies not only on forms of the understanding but also forms of pure sensibility; the third critique treats not only our perception of beauty but that of the sublime; the practical reason that constitutes the will is, in its pure form, inseparable from pure speculative reason, and so on. But Kant still found the outlines of his system solidifying into this form, and he neither adopted this structure from others blindly nor fell into it without consideration.

Further, what is most important is that the mediating realm, that of aesthetics, is associated not with feeling per se (though it is related to pleasure and displeasure), but rather, with a faculty which can make reflexive judgments. These are judgments that attach a universal to a particular even when we lack the determinate rules that would allow us to subsume a particular case into a larger category. Thus with determinate judgment, we can say that a canary is a bird (given that it is a feathered vertebrate); with reflexive judgment, we can say that the canary is beautiful.

The powers of pleasure and displeasure thus mediate between the laws determined by our cognition and the laws we need to act, the laws of freedom.⁶² These three powers clearly suggest a possible relation to the True, the Beautiful, and the Good respectively. But such a connection was not made by Kant himself. Still, whether or not we see Kant as a faculties' theorist, we must see his system as a decisive formulation in the anti-wholism tradition, one primed to be attached to the triad. And such an attachment was made by a thinker who attempted to find a way *back* to wholism, namely Schelling.

Schelling

Schelling (1978 [1800]; 1989 [1801–1804], p. 27f) returned to the opposition between real and ideal and proposed a resolution between the two in the form of “indifference” (i.e., recognition of nondifference). For him, the real was the realm of matter, of being, of necessity, while the ideal was the realm of activity, of freedom (thus corresponding to Kant's realms of things and of persons respectively). The indifference was the realm of the organism as such, and he argued that these three corresponded to truth, goodness, and beauty respectively.

Further, Schelling described these three as “powers” (*Potenzen*), a complex term taken from (Schelling's hero) Giordano Bruno (for a discussion, see Grün, 1993). Here is Schelling's own (1989 [1801–1804], p. 14) take: “Let me explain the expression *potence* now. ... It refers to the general proposition of philosophy concerning the essential and inner identity of all things and of all that we are able to discern and distinguish in general ... Since [the absolute] is indivisible, diversity among things is only possible to the extent that this indivisible whole is posited under various determinations. I call these determinations *potences*.”

The reader familiar with Hegel is likely to see these as “moments,” which is what they became. Yet the term properly evokes both connotations of

“powers” in English – a latent capacity for activity, but also a dimension in the sense of an exponent (such as “ x to third power”). Of course, for Schelling, these were *not* “dimensions” that could be treated as statically orthogonal; quite the contrary, they were bound to one another as part of a whole with its own tendencies of self-development. But this vision required a capacity for extreme, perhaps delusional, abstraction, and synthesis – in the absence of the quasi-gnostic conception that Schelling shared with Hegel, the potences would lose their dynamic interrelation. Thus Schelling took what Shaftesbury had introduced as comparable because they were “one and the same,” and began the process whereby these became orthogonal dimensions, irreducible to one another (as was to be the central lesson of the neo-Kantian “value” theory at the end of the nineteenth century).

Cousin

And this brings us to Victor Cousin, with whom we opened, and who was greatly influenced by Schelling. Cousin (1890 [1853], pp. 450, 352f, 354f) believed that he had a special affinity for Kant, and said that he had borrowed much from Kant’s three critiques. “These three works are, in our eyes, admirable monuments of philosophic genius, – they are filled with treasures of observation and analysis.” But despite his admiration, he only followed Kant up until any point where it threatened the certainty of the Cartesian *cogito*, a point that most philosophers considered rather early (see, e.g., Cousin, 1854 [1846], p. 92). Unconcerned with this fundamental opposition, Cousin worked hard to force Kant’s system in to a somewhat different shape, now connecting to a triad of sciences different from the classic logic/physics/ethics. “The foundation of science is absolute truth, that the direct foundation of art is absolute beauty, that the direct foundation of ethics and politics is the good, is duty, is right, and that what reveals to us these absolute ideas of the true, the beautiful, and the good, is reason.”

Thus remaking the conventional triad of philosophical studies, Cousin could remake the history of philosophy: “Philosophy, in all times, turns upon the fundamental ideas of the true, the beautiful, and the good.” This division of excellences produced a division within philosophy – the pursuit of the true led to psychology, logic and metaphysics, the pursuit of the good to ethics, and the pursuit of beauty to aesthetics. But what is the nature of these three excellences, and why their immortality? Cousin did

not flinch from the strongest possible grounding: “Truth, beauty and goodness are attributes and not entities” – ultimately, attributes of God. Further, Cousin’s understanding of the nature of these excellences implied the medieval doctrine of “convertibility”: “The true, the beautiful, and the good, are only different revelations of the same being. ...” (Cousin, 1890 [1853], pp. 34, 215, 359, 361, 326).⁶³

Finally, Cousin, like Riedel, firmly tied the triad to faculties, but no longer to forms of taste. According to Cousin (1890 [1853], p. 47f), we have three general faculties. The first is the will, characterized by activity and freedom.⁶⁴ The second is the sensibility (*la sensibilité*), characterized by passivity or suffering. The third is reason (*la raison*), the faculty of knowing, of understanding, of intelligence.⁶⁵ The triad was now connected to different dimensions and different faculties. The three were still unified, but only by the postulate of God – and not, as hoped by Diderot and Herder, by something in the nature of *Man*. This was to prove a very brittle bond.

CONCLUSION

The irony of the story of the triad, then, is the following: from the work of neo-Kantians like Cousin, we now have a sense of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful being different dimensions, indicating inherent incommensurable directions for the pursuit of value. We often also believe these three to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive of value in itself. Yet we have seen that the triad could only stabilize when this was denied – when truth was beauty, and beauty was goodness.

Second, the triad was pushed (especially in France) by those who were putting forward a humanism that could serve in contrast to the traditional trinity of Christianity, associated with intolerance and obscurantism. Indeed, the triad only arose when truth and goodness were *detached* from God’s person and made natural, accessible to man. Yet in France, Cousin then used the triad to attempt to re-insert Christian visions and values into social thought.

Third, we have also seen the triad used (especially in Germany) to emphasize the fundamentally *unitary* nature of the soul, and we have seen that those who were attempting to pursue a “faculties” psychology were late in joining the triadic bandwagon. But in Cousin’s version, and ever since, there has been pressure to re-align the triad with distinct faculties.

Fourth, this then has led to a distorted understanding of Kant's third critique by many of those who considered themselves his followers, dethroning the reflective judgment from the key position therein, and replacing it with "sensibility" or "feeling," thereby doing the greatest violence to Kant's own system. Both imagination and judgment, two *active* though potentially countervailing faculties, were key to the exploration of taste in the tradition we have reviewed. Even more, Kant found each of these to have a key mediating role (for the imagination mediates *within* the more cognitive functioning discussed in the first critique). Yet the pseudo-Kantian understanding of Beauty that linked it primarily to feeling (and not judgment) or even *sensibility* (associated for Kant with the problems of the first Critique) led the realm of beauty to be increasingly associated with passivity, then with passion, and finally with infantile expressivity. Thus the problem of taste was ultimately solved by denying it completely.

Fifth, by allowing the triad to be linked to a simple division of widely separated human faculties (as opposed to only partially different forms of *taste*), the triad began to stretch away from a whole and toward three different dimensions. If it was only God's nature that held the three together as fundamentally "one and the same," the rejection of this "hypothesis" would lead to a splintering into radically disjoint dimensions that lacked any consubstantiality. And this is exactly what happened in the generation after Cousin's. The True, the Good, and the Beautiful straggled on briefly, though more as verbal reflex than analytic scheme, as the notion of "values" rose up everywhere, as a last ditch effort to preserve notions of excellence and validity in the face of irreducible and undeniable differences across persons, places, and times. Indeed, when the triad survived and guided architectonic projects (e.g., those of certain neo-Kantians in Germany), it was only by being transmogrified into "values," a new notion of quasi-transcendentals that continually failed to transcend, and continually frustrated attempts at a unified anthropology.

NOTES

1. Ficino is often mis-remembered as originating the triad of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, either in his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, or in his commentary on the *Philebus*; neither of these is correct. The closest he comes is in the latter; see Ficino (1975, p. 78).

2. Castiglione (2002 [1528], p. 222 [4.22]) did at times rely on the triad often used to describe God, who has "power, goodness and wisdom." (This triad, used by Aquinas [e.g., 1952, p. 144/Q3, Art. II], seems to have been first put forward by

Peter Abelard.) Interestingly, when Castiglione (2002 [1528], p. 257f [4.70]) reached the height of his humanist Platonic rapture, he substituted “beautiful” for “powerful” in this triad. “Most beautiful, most good, most wise, thou dost flow from the union of beauty and goodness and divine wisdom, and dost abide in that union, and by that union dost return thereunto as in a circle.”

3. He did at one point suggest its position in a triad of faculties: “Three things make a marvel, and are at the acme of true nobility: fertile intelligence, deep powers of judgment, and a pleasant, relevant taste” (1992 [1647], p. 167).

4. References are first to the volume and page of the edition used, then by the standard page number.

5. Like Mandeville, Smith relished lambasting Shaftesbury and indeed implying his impotence and effeminacy: “Abstract reasoning and deep searches are too fatiguing for persons of this delicate frame. Their feableness [sic] of body as well as mind hinders them from engaging in the pursuits which generally engross the common sort of men” such as “love and ambition,” so instead such persons focus on “the fine arts, matters of taste and imagination” (Phillipson, 2010, p. 98).

6. I use an edition that combines the two treatises he published in the same year, the first, *An Inquiry Into The Original Of Our Ideas Of Beauty And Virtue*, and the second, *An Inquiry Concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good*. I basically begin with the first and move to the second with a few jumps.

7. “As the eye not only gives us the conception of colours, but makes us perceive one body to have one colour, and another body another; and as our reason not only gives us the conception of true and false, but makes us perceive one proposition to be true, and another to be false; so our conscience, or moral faculty, not only gives us the conception of honest and dishonest, but makes us perceive one kind of conduct to be honest, another to be dishonest” (Reid, 1969 [1788], p. 434).

8. Interestingly, like Castiglione, Reid (1969 [1785], pp. 152f, 667, 773; 1969 [1788], p. 284) often used Abelard’s triad of “wisdom, power and goodness,” but, when turning to analyzing humans, he (1969 [1785], p. 784) substituted *art* for *power*.

9. Eighteenth century German orthography, like British, gave moderate bold accentuation to important subject terms in a way that would be strange to our eyes, and so in translating I do not always reproduce such emphases using italics (especially when I am not entirely sure if a word *is* enlarged); I generally do for English because these are in the cited editions. I do not modernize spelling, though I do give a final “i” which was typed in a way that looks more like a “y” as “i,” as “y” was graphically distinct.

10. Perhaps significantly, König (1727, p. 281) cites Aristippus (in the words of Canitz).

11. “*Dann der gute Geschmack in sinnreichen Schrifften ist, wie ihn Herr Rollin sehr wohl beschreibt, eine feine, fertige, deutliche und eigentliche Beurtheilung aller in einer Rede oder in einem Gedichte vorkommenden Schönheit, Wahrheit und Güte, so wohl was die Gedanken als die Ausdrückungen betrifft.*” Note that at this time, “he wrote” and similar would be included within quotation marks.

12. “*Der gute Geschmacke in sittlicher Deutung, heist [sic] eine durch die Vernunft [sic] geübte Gemüths-Empfindung, das Wahre zu erkennen, das Gute zu verlangen, und das Edelste und Beste zu wehlen [sic].*”

13. “Der allgemeine gute Geschmack ist eine aus gesundem Witz und scharffer Urtheilungs-Kraft erzeugte Fertigkeit des Verstandes, das wahre, gute und schöne richtig zu empfinden....”

14. “Dann es ist mehr als nur ein einziger [sic] Weg zu [sic] Erlangung des guten, zur Vorstellung des wahren, und zur Erfindung des Schönen....”

15. “Dann wo der Eindruck einer von der vernünftigen Welt einmal für gut wahr und schön erkannten Sache, bey mir eine richtige Empfindung erweckt, da kan [sic] mir mein Geschmack so wenig bestritten werden, als der Geschmack einer gesunden Zunge, welche eine Speise oder einen Tranck kostet, un dieselben ihrer wahren Eigenschafft [sic] gemäß, beurtheilet.”

16. Although he did cite approvingly Father André’s distinction between the essential beautiful, the moral beautiful, and the intellectual beautiful, this was only set of three of six such “beautifuls” that André introduced. While Diderot used the triad in his article on *Eclecticism* (discussed below), in that on *Constance*, he (XIV.212) added “decent and honest,” suggesting that at this time, the triad had not yet crystallized in his mind as such. (“*C’est cette vertu par laquelle nous persistons dans notre attachement à tout ce que nous croyons devoir regarder comme vrai, beau, bon, décent et honnête*”).

17. For such brief references to untranslated works, I here refer to the Assezat and Tourneux edition of Diderot’s works (1875–1877), by volume and page.

18. “*En vérité, il faut ou que ces graves personnages soient de mauvais plaisants, ou qu’ils ignorent que le vrai, le bon et le beau ne sont pas susceptibles de ridicule, ou qu’ils aient un violent soupçon que ces qualités leur sont étrangères.*”

19. For another minor example: It makes an appearance in his (2001 [1772], p. 199) “Supplement to Bougainville’s ‘Voyage’,” again, like the first appearance in the *Promenade*, in the context of the distortions of European cognitive authorities.

20. “*Où en serions-nous, si des hommes pervers pouvaient rendre faux ce qui est vrai, mauvais ce qui est bon, laid ce qui est beau ? Le vrai, le bon et le beau forment à mes yeux un groupe de trois grandes figures, autour desquelles la méchanceté peut élever un tourbillon de poussière qui les dérobe un moment aux regards des gens de bien; mais le moment qui suit, le nuage disparaît, et elles se montrent aussi vénérables que jamais.*”

21. “*Ce qui me plaît des frères, c’est de les voir presque tous moins unis encore par la haine et le mépris de celle que vous avez appelé l’infâme que par l’amour de la vérité, par le sentiment de la bienfaisance, et par le goût du vrai, du bon et du beau, espèce de trinité qui vaut un peu mieux que la leur.*”

22. “*C’est une conscience simultanée de l’union nécessaire de notre nature avec sa cause génératrice; c’est une consequence immédiate de la coexistence de cette cause avec notre amour pour le bon, le vrai et le beau*” (XIV.368). Diderot was being loose here, as Iamblichus would not have used this triad; indeed, he was part of a line of Platonists who were attempting to harmonize Plotinus’s triads with several remarkably strange ones from the Chaldean oracles (triads such as father/power/intellect and once-beyond/Hecate/twice-beyond) (Majercik, 2001).

23. “*Je voudrais bien savoir si un homme un peu jaloux de la considération présente, qui aimerait le repos et l’éloge comptant, qui connaîtrait, comme Socrate, le côté faible de ses con-citoyens, et le moyen infallible de jouir de leur suffrage, et qui serait bien net de l’illusion prétendue de la postérité, braverait aussi intrépidement le jugement,*

la mépris, la haine, les dégoûts qui l'attendent infailliblement, que celui qui se dit fièrement à lui-même: Après tout il n'y a que le vrai, le bon et le beau qui subsistent, et j'aime mieux des persécutions présentes qui honoreront ma mémoire que des éloges et des récompenses qui la flétriront. Il y a des hommes qui ont ainsi raisonné avec eux-mêmes et dont les actions n'auraient peut-être pas été conséquentes à leurs principes, s'ils n'avaient envisagé que le moment. Et vous appelez ces hommes-là des fous, des insensés, soit. Mais apprenez-moi du moins la différence de l'insensé et du héros."

24. There is (VII.389) an earlier use of the triad in the context of a discussion of the different sorts of evils of great and petty men respectively. Whether "Ariste" is supposed to evoke Aristippus, another philosopher Diderot sometimes saw as a predecessor, is unclear; as we will see, Wieland connected Aristippus with the triad of the true, the good and the beautiful. But the term simply means *highest*, or *elite*. On Diderot's relation to the different philosopher-role models, see Goulbourne (2011: espec 22 on Aristippus).

25. "*J'ai quarante ans. J'ai beaucoup étudié; on m'appelle le philosophe. Si cependant il se présentait ici quelqu'un qui me dit; Ariste, qu'est-ce que le vrai, le bon et le beau? aurais-je ma réponse prête? Non. Comment, Ariste, vous ne savez pas ce que c'est que le vrai, le bon et le beau; et vous souffrez qu'on vous appelle le philosophe!*"

26. "*Comment serait-il donc possible que deux hommes eussent précisément un même gout, ou les mêmes notions du vrai, du bon et du beau?*" (VII.391).

27. "*Comment serait-il donc possible qu'il y en eût un seul d'entre nous qui conservât pendant toute la durée de son existence le même goût, et qui portât les mêmes jugemens du vrai, du bon et du beau?*" (*ibid*).

28. Both in the *Paradox of the Actor* ([1773–1777], VIII.393) and in "D'Alembert's Dream" (2001 [1769], p. 157), Diderot suggested that those who possess overly sensitive temperaments may have difficulty discerning the true, the good, and the beautiful.

29. Diderot (1995 [1765], p. 131) in his notes on *A Russian Baptism* by Jean-Baptiste Leprince lapsed into a long reverie and referred to baptism – both seriously and humorously – as "the most serious of Christian ceremonies, in which we're reborn in Jesus Christ by having the sins committed by our grandfathers seven thousand years ago washed away!"

30. A relatively literal translation (by Benjamin Jowett) has Socrates turning away from this person (a politician), noting that "although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really *beautiful and good*, I am better off than he is, for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know." Socrates here speaks of the beautiful and the good, the common formulaic combination of *kalon kagathon*.

Diderot's translation was: "*Nous ne savons à la vérité ni l'un ni l'autre ce que c'est le beau, et le bon avec cette différence que quoique cet homme ne sache rien, il croit savoir quelque chose, au lieu que moi je ne sais rien; au moins je ne suis pas en doute;....*" Roughly in English, "We do not know the truth – neither one nor the other – [of] what is the beautiful, and the good, with this difference that although this man knows nothing, he believes that he knows something, while instead I know nothing; at least I am not in doubt...." (Diderot, 1978 [1749], p. 251).

Now Diderot's actual published translation is defensible – although he inserted the True, it was separate from the Beautiful and Good. Rousseau's version,

however, is modified: “*Nous ne savons, ni les sophistes, ni les poètes, ni les orateurs, ni les artistes, ni moi, ce que c’est que le vrai, le bon, & le beau: mais il y a entre nous cette différence que, quoique ces gens ne sachent rien, tous croient savoir quelque chose: au lieu que moi, si je ne sais rien, au moins je n’en suis pas en doute*” (Rousseau, 1761 [1750], p. 18f). In compressing the portion of the apology dealing with the sophists, the poets, etc., with this confession of Socrates knowing his ignorance, Rousseau has introduced the triad of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

And yet it is not clear that it was not Diderot himself who suggested this formulation to Rousseau. It may not only be that Diderot felt that to properly convey the substance of the quest of philosophy (for it was this which Socrates intended by *kalon kagathon*), one had to insert a word for truth, but that in other conversation with Rousseau, it was he who emphasized the triad of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

31. Although he never cited Ficino, Rousseau used the translations of Plato that Ficino had prepared (and written introductions to), and seems to have studied them carefully (Williams, 2007, p. 50).

32. Further, in *Emile* Rousseau tends to use the “good and beautiful” or “beautiful and virtuous” as pairings, clearly reaching back to Greek and Roman ideas of proper manhood.

33. On Baumgarten’s relation to earlier German theories of the connection between the judgment and the communal senses, see Gadamer (1975 [1965], p. 29f).

34. I use the 2007 edition and base my translations on the German translation of Mirbach.

35. “*Es giebt deren drei verschiedene Gattungen. Die Sinne, das Herz, und die intellektuellen Fähigkeiten, sind die Werkzeuge derselben.*”

36. Distastefully recycling Zinzendorf’s “disgusting terminology,” Weber remarks (1976 [1920–1921], p. 247; n 134), “To read him is an act of penitence because his language, in its insipid melting quality, is even worse than the frightful Christoturpentine of F. T. Vischer.”

37. “*aus den moralischen Empfindungen, und vornehmlich aus der Neigung, die alle Menschen mehr oder weniger gegen ihres gleichen oder wenigstens gegen ihre Freunde haben.*”

38. For example, in the article on beauty, he cited among many others Father Andre, Diderot, Falconet, Hutcheson, Kant on the sublime and beautiful; and all of Riedel’s work; in the article on taste he also cited Voltaire’s Encyclopedia article, Addison, Hume, Home, Priestly, Andre, and Koenig. He also referenced Herder and Kant’s third critique, which of course had not been published at the time of the first edition.

39. When it came to the production of art, Sulzer (II.372; BC 49) proposed a different triad, of reason, genius, and taste. Sulzer elsewhere (III.580; 72) argued that the artist must determine whether his idea speaks more to the heart, to reason or to phantasy. Then he can see which character should reign in intellect [*Verstand*], imagination [*Phantasie*], or senses [*Empfindung*].

40. “*Der Geschmack ist im Grunde nichts, als das innere Gefühl, wodurch man die Reizung des Wahren und Guten empfindet....*”

41. *“Ob man gleich die Vernunft, das sittliche Gefühl und den Geschmack, als drei völlig von einander verschiedene Vermögen des Geistes ansieht, durch deren Anwachs und Entwicklung der Mensch allmählig vollkommener wird, so kann man sie doch auch also ein und dasselbe Vermögen, auf verschiedene Gegenstände angewendet ansehen.”* In the first edition, he was more certain; rather than saying that one “might” see them as one and the same power, Sulzer (1792–4, I, p. 463) had more emphatically stated that they were, at basis, one power (“... so sind sie im Grund ein und dasselbe Vermögen ...”).

42. *“Also kann der Mensch nur durch Vereinigung dieser drei Gaben des Himmels zur Vollkommenheit gelangen.”*

43. Riedel (1768, p. 48) argued that we have some substance in our soul that lets us carry out certain actions (“zum Denken, Wollen, Empfinden aufgelegt”).

44. *“Dergleichen Gesetze, nach welchen die Handlungen unserer Seele erfolgen, giebt es für das Wahre, für das Gute und für das Schöne”* (Riedel, 1768, p. 49).

45. Wherever my translations are not literal, I give the original in a footnote; Riedel’s prose is generally straightforward.

46. *“Der Begriff [sic] des Guten und Bösen entsteht in uns fast auf eine gleiche Weise, wie der Begriff des Schönen und Häßlichen.”* Again, Riedel (1768, p. 43f): *“Es ist mit der Schönheit nicht, wie mit der Wahrheit.”* Something is true if it really is *outside* of my own ideas, but beauty is nothing *but* an idea. At the same time, at one point, Riedel (1768, p. 55) even hints that there could be similarly particularistic aspects of the true, namely a “thought style” (*Denkart*; an idea used by Herder as well) that characterize a “manner.” (*“Diese Manier laßt [sic] uns durch den Kunstgriff der Reduction übertragen auf unsere Sitten, auf unsere Denkart, auf das, was wir schön finden....”*).

47. *“Was ich will, das nenne ich mir gut.”*

48. *“Schön ist also, was ohne interefierte Absicht sinnlich gefallen und auch dann gefallen kan, wenn wir es nicht besitzen....”* My translation is somewhat free.

49. *“Wie Leibniz, so hielten Diderot, Lessing, Mendelssohn von diesem virtuoso der Humanität viel; auf die besten Köpfe unsers Jahrhunderts, auf Männer, die sich fürs Wahre, Schöne und Gute mit entschiedner Redlichkeit bemühten, hat er auszeichnend gewirkt.”*

50. Again, Herder (1877 [1767], p. 182) wrote, “among the moderns I know as excellent only a Shaftesbury, who has learned tolerably well from Plato, and so in turn seems to have been the teacher of Diderot” “[unter den Neuern weiß ich vorzüglich nur einen Shaftesburi, der sie vom Plato ziemlich abgelernt, so wie er selbst wieder der Lehrer des Diderot zu seyn scheint].”

51. The use of this pair as the most radical contrasts to the Europeans is also found in a more extreme form in (2006 [1766], p. 35).

52. *“Man ist gewohnt, der Seele eine Menge Unterkräfte zu geben, Einbildung und Voraussicht, Dichtungsgabe und Gedächtniß; indessen zeigen viele Erfahrungen, daß, was in ihnen nicht Apperception, Bewußtsein des Selbstgefühls und der Selbstthätigkeit sei, nur zu dem Meer zuströmender Sinnlichkeit, das sie regt, das ihr Materialien liefert, nicht aber zu ihr selbst gehöre. Nie wird man diesen Kräften tief auf den Grund kommen, wenn man sie nur von oben her als Ideen behandelt, die in der Seele wohnen, oder gar als gemauerte Fachwerke von einander scheidet und unabhängig einzeln betrachtet. Auch in der Einbildung und dem Gedächtniß, der Erinnerung*

und Voraussicht muß sich die Eine Gotteskraft unsrer Seele, 'innere in sich blickende Thätigkeit, Bewußtsein, Apperception' zeigen: in dem Maasse [sic] dieser hat ein Mensch Verstand, Gewissen, Willen, Freiheit, das andre [sic] sind zuströmende Wogen des großen Weltmeers." "Ist jedes gründliche Erkenntniß nicht ohne Wollen, so kann auch kein Wollen ohn' [sic] Erkennen sein: sie sind nur Eine Energie der Seele."

53. "Die Maße unsrer Sinnlichkeit: der wahre Ursprung des Wahren, Guten, Schönen!" In the *Kalligone*, Herder (1830 [1800], p. 115) used the triad in a discussion of the relation of interest and the beautiful soul. I believe that "feeling" here has more of the connotations of sensory engagement than internal experiential state.

54. For example, when (in his *Adrastea*) he wrote that Wieland gives us a sense for the true and beautifully-good (Elson, 1913, p. 65).

55. "Ich bat ihn, mich als einen Jüngling zu betracher, der das Schöne und Gute liebe, und in beiden das Wahre, und vornehmlich das Band das beide zusammenschlinge, durch ihn kennen zu lernen hoffte."

56. "Wenn es vergönnt ist, alle diejenigen Künstler zu nennen, deren Medium ideale Darstellung, deren Ziel aber unbedingt ist: so giebt es drey spezifisch verschiedene Klassen von Künstlern, je nachdem ihr Ziel das Gute, das Schöne, oder das Wahre ist" (Schlegel, 1999 [1797], p. 36).

57. "Diese erwähnten Eigenschaften der afficirenden [which I read as archaic for affizierenden] Empfindungen; das Angenehme, das Gute, das Wahre kommen ihnen zu, in so ferne die Seele mit ihnen oder ihren Eindrücken und Vorstellungen dermalen sich beschäftigt, in so ferne ihre Vermögen bei ihnen zur Anwendung gebracht werden, und die regen Triebe und Thätigkeiten eine Nahrung erhalten, die ihrer Natur gemäß ist, und sie befriediget."

58. Tetens considered the question of whether there might be other such ideas, or whether there was something inherently triadic at play. Until such time that we have a complete classification of our internal sensations – a goal that has, he said, so far eluded us – this was an unanswerable question. "Das Gefühl des Wahren, des Schönen und des Guten, und der diesen entgegengesetzten Beschaffenheiten der Dinge, mit den besondern Arten der Gefühle, die hierunter begriffen sind, gehören ohne Zweifel zu den Gefühlen, die von den Verhältnissen und Beziehungen unserer Vorstellungen und Veränderungen unter einander, und auf den innern Zustand unserer Seele, abhängen, und also innere Verhältnißgefühle sind. Ob diese angeführten Arten die ganze Gattung erschöpfen, oder ob es noch andere Verhältnisse in unsern innern Modificationen gebe, die in dem Wahren, dem Schönen und Guten nich befasset sind, das läßt sich erst alsdenn beurtheilen, wenn man so weit mit den Beobachtungen der macherlei innern Empfindungen gekommen ist, das eine vollständige Klassifikation von ihnen angestellt werden kann."

59. In his own work on the proof of God's existence, Kant (1996: trans. P231) ascribed to God the traditional triad of Wisdom/Power/Goodness. Indeed, he always struck a curious pose of a defender of orthodoxy (at least, for *others*), and where Kant (1950 [1787], p. 635f; B833) did embrace triads, most importantly, in his three questions – "1) what can I know 2) what ought I to do 3) what may I hope?" – his third was not one that supported the emerging triadic understanding of human nature. Note that in (2005 [1800], p.18), as well as in an earlier letter, Kant added "what is man?"

60. “Now the *power of cognition* according to concepts has its a priori principles in the pure understanding (in its concept of nature), and the *power of desire* has its a priori principles in pure reason (in its concept of freedom). That leaves, among the general properties of the mind, an intermediate power or receptivity, the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*, just as judgment as left as an intermediary power ... What is more natural than to suspect that judgment will also contain a priori principles of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.” Again, “So NATURE bases its *lawfulness* on a priori principles of the understanding as a cognitive power; ART is governed a priori in its *purposiveness* by judgment in reference to the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*,” etc.... (Kant, 1987 [1790] F, p. 435f).

61. This sort of fractal nesting of cognitive faculties within vital faculties was, it should be admitted, rather common before Kant.

62. In the “First Introduction” to his third critique, Kant listed *pure* reason as the place where the cognitive powers of desire are rooted, which may seem somewhat out of place, as we would expect this to correspond to his critique of *practical* reason. Here Kant seemed to be thinking of reason as the capacity to determine the particular with the general (e.g., act in accordance with a law), a broader issue than the *direction* of reason (whether it is oriented to making sense of intuitions or to applying laws).

63. “The true, the beautiful, and the good, are not three distinct essences; they are one and the same essence considered in its fundamental attributes. Our mind distinguishes them, because it can comprehend them only by division; but, in the being in whom they reside they are indivisibly united; and this being at once triple and one, who sums up in himself perfect beauty, perfect truth, and the supreme good, is nothing else than God.”

64. “l’activité volontaire et libre ...” (1853, p. 31).

65. Cousin noted that this classification “save some difficulties more nominal than real, is now generally adopted, and makes the foundation of the psychology of our times.” It is worth remembering that although for Kant an experience of beauty involves sensibility and the imagination, and indeed reason as a whole (for we *feel* that the object presented to the sensibility comports itself to our reason), the faculty whose *interest* is this experience is judgment. It is significant that in his critique of Kant, Cousin (1854 [1846], p. 189) had argued against Kant’s separation of sensibility, intellect, and reason – these all are now largely bound together in this expanded notion of reason.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for support, conversations, and/or comments on these issues or this work from Randall Collins, Harry Dahms, Lawrence Hazelrigg, Paul McLean, Jim Stockinger, and especially for the close reading and critique of Robert Norton, which led to numerous corrections. Any remaining errors are, sadly, my own.

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