Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005. 414 pp. $45.00 (hb). ISBN 0674016807.

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In *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850,* Jan Goldstein traces debates concerning the nature of selfhood, the relationship of these debates to political and social changes, and the means by which dominant conceptions of selfhood became institutionalized and disseminated. This thoroughly researched book is carefully argued, and Goldstein takes great care to lead the reader through the rich and varied documentary base that provides the material for her argument. Her approach is methodologically varied as well; this work moves seamlessly between materials and methods of analysis used by intellectual, cultural, and social historians. The result is a model of how crossing such sub-disciplinary boundaries can enrich the exploration and analysis of a given topic by illustrating the complex paths along which concepts--in this case, that of the self--move through a culture.

There are many insights that the reader takes away from this book. For the purposes of this forum, let me just outline the main aspects of her argument. I will then focus more specifically on certain methodological aspects of Goldstein's work.

Goldstein states that her main goal was to explore why the concept of a "unitary self became so tenaciously implanted during the nineteenth century" among bourgeois men (p. 329). She begins by illustrating how, during the second half of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, a fragmented concept of the self predominated in French culture. This self was that of the sensationalists, described by Locke as a *tabula rasa* shaped by impressions emanating from outside the individual. It was imported into French culture by the abbé de Condillac and became central to debates about the impact of social and economic changes on the individual. This self was composed of "an accumulation of discrete pieces"(p. 5). In the years before the Revolution, one of these pieces, the imagination, was frequently linked with excess individualism. Revolutionary authorities attempted to harness the imagination so as to create new citizens. Following the Revolution, a group of intellectuals, inspired by German philosophy and by discussions with Maine de Biran, developed an alternate concept of the self, one that existed *a priori* and whose different elements--sensation, volition, and reason-- functioned together "as a seamless ensemble" (p. 160). This unified self would serve as the linchpin of a new social and political order by providing the stability necessary to stave off the excesses of the imagination that they believed had radicalized the Revolution. In the 1830s, under the mentorship of Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard and in close collaboration with François Guizot, Victor Cousin became the leading spokesman for this approach to selfhood, soon known as Cousinianism. By accumulating a number of key posts in the French educational system, and by cultivating a group of devoted disciples who taught his doctrine in the provincial *lycées*, Cousin established an intellectual hegemony over the teaching of philosophy that endured until the late 1920s. Although both Catholicism and phrenology challenged Cousin's doctrine in the nineteenth century by offering alternate ways of thinking and talking about the self, the thorough penetration of Cousinianism into the higher educational system meant that, at least among bourgeois men, the Cousinian self, or *moi*, was difficult to dislodge.

As this brief résumé indicates, Goldstein's work illustrates that concepts of the self vary over time and that multiple concepts of the self can operate simultaneously within a culture. Goldstein thus concludes that although institutionally dominant and widely accepted among bourgeois men, the unitary self of

Cousinianism was "perennially beleaguered" by competing understandings of selfhood (p. 329). This relative instability--or inconstancy--of expressions of selfhood results from the way in which these expressions are understood to relate to the socio-political order. In other words, each concept of the self that Goldstein discusses was interpreted by contemporaries as implying a certain type of relationship between self and society. Goldstein implies that the usefulness of a concept of the self at any given place and time depends upon the degree to which this concept is understood as reflecting either existing or potential articulations between self and society.

This interplay between concepts of self and society is particularly evident in the chapters of the book that precede her discussion of Cousinianism (chapters 1-3). To understand Goldstein's method in these chapters, it is useful to adopt an expression she uses in the introduction, when she talks about "points of contact" between "sensationalist-psychological discourse" and "discourses about society, economics, and politics" (p. 8). While Goldstein does indeed explore these points of contact, her method consists of more than a juxtaposition of discourses. Through an examination of written texts, she brings into contact discourses and the political, social, and economic systems that both produced and were shaped by these discourses. Goldstein's book thus provides an example of how one can move beyond the question of whether discourses determine or reflect social, economic and political structures.

This method serves her particularly well in the first part of the book, because, as she explains, sensationalism's emphasis on the role of the external environment in shaping the self meant that "the sensationalist construction of imagination had a more pronounced tendency to become involved in social, political, and economic discourse" (p. 36). Goldstein thus demonstrates how changes--both real and proposed--in the existing social structure facilitated the spread of sensationalist discourse. Sensationalist psychology appealed to French men and women who, believing that the corporate structure was "the necessary underpinning of persons," needed a way to talk about how changes to this structure would affect the individual (p. 40). In the years preceding the Revolution, a key component of this discourse linked the unraveling of corporate ties to the dangerous unfettering of the imagination. The widespread anxiety that was a central component of this discourse meant that when the social structure was radically overhauled during the Revolution, authorities took care to put in place means to contain the imagination of French citizens. They did so by drawing on the principles of the dominant psychological discourse of the time, sensationalism. In particular, they were inspired by the belief that the external environment had a profound impact on the imagination. The strength of this belief helps us understand why Revolutionary authorities--in the midst of general chaos caused by war and political turmoil--put on festivals, designed new costumes for officials, and renamed city streets. In Goldstein's discussion of sensationalism, we see the interplay of discursive and social and political changes. The discourse on sensationalism took on new meanings in the midst of social and political changes, while social and political changes were understood and even initiated through the means of the discourse of sensationalist psychology. By focusing on "points of contact" between discourses of the self and changes in the social and political structure during an extremely turbulent period, Goldstein illustrates the mutually reinforcing nature of discourses and the milieus in which they are produced.

Given the association between sensationalism and the Revolution, it is not surprising that sensationalism came under renewed criticism following the Terror. Driven by a combination of personal and political discomfort with the Revolution, Maine de Biran questioned the reigning assumptions concerning selfhood. In her discussion of Maine de Biran's crisis of selfhood, Goldstein once again emphasizes points of contact, arguing that Maine de Biran's crisis of selfhood was spurred by his "day-to-day experience of the political vicissitudes of the Revolution and its aftermath" (p. 131). This experience included a career change and a period in hiding at his family estate. In the midst of this upheaval, Maine de Biran found himself imbued by a melancholy that he expressed as dissatisfaction with the passivity of a self buffeted by exterior sensations. As a response, he developed a more robust model of a unitary self, a model that Victor Cousin would eventually adopt as the central component of his own psychological system.

In these chapters, Goldstein's focus on points of contact between psychological discourses and social and political changes serves, as she states, to distance her work from that of Michel Foucault by focusing on "the blatantly public field of national politics, and not only the hidden recesses of insidious systems of micro-power, as the site of the constitution of the self" (p. 15). In so doing, she expands upon another Foucauldian theme that becomes more explicit in the later chapters, arguing that "technologies of the self" were developed not only by, but also for, those in power. Goldstein's discussion of Maine de Biran illustrates how the emergence of an alternate form of selfhood served to comfort those whose lives had been drastically altered by the events of the Revolution. In the chapters concerning the dissemination of Cousinianism in particular, Goldstein argues that this new discourse of the self became the preserve of bourgeois men and, thus, served to legitimate, to themselves and others, their dominant role in society. Her analysis of student examinations and of letters written by provincial teachers to Cousin, their mentor and former professor, brilliantly illustrates how bourgeois men came to "speak Cousinian" and, thus, developed a language to express how their *moi* predisposed them to leadership roles in French society (p. 219). Goldstein retains the Foucauldian idea that technologies of the self serve the needs of power while also expanding this idea, arguing that through such technologies, "a ruling class controls not only its subordinates but also its own members" (p. 181). At the same time, the evidence she offers illustrates that these technologies can also comfort (as in the case of Maine de Biran), spur to action (as in the case of one of Cousin's students who wrote that his *moi* allowed him to act without constraint), and even liberate. We see this last aspect in Goldstein's discussion of Cousin's female correspondent, Caroline Angebert, for whom an education in Cousin's psychological method served as a "revelation" concerning her own capacity for self-reflection and willful action (p. 224).

As with sensationalist psychology, Cousinianism's appeal lay in its ability to articulate a self that accorded with the existing social order. Thus women and workers, although possessing unified selves, were said to be unable to develop the capacity of self-reflection necessary to understand the self. Yet, just as sensationalism was used by both those who supported and those who opposed transformations in late-eighteenth-century France, we might assume that Cousinianism could be used to different ends as well. Angebert's correspondence with Cousin, for example, hints at the ways in which nineteenth-century feminists might have adopted the Cousinian *moi* to their own ends. Similarly, Goldstein's discussions of the relationship between Cousinianism and both Catholicism and phrenology illustrate, as Goldstein phrases it, Cousin's "failure to control all the implications of the complex philosophical system he set in play" (p. 247). Along these lines, Goldstein's work makes one wonder how the *moi* held up under assault from the various social and political upheavals of the nineteenth century. Did the *moi* successfully serve to buffer its possessors from the vicissitudes of revolutionary upheaval that characterized this century? While her discussion of Sartre's adherence to the Cousinian *moi* leads us to believe it did, her exploration of how the Revolution unsettled the sensationalist self suggests that the *moi* that existed after 1848, 1871, and 1914-1918 might have differed in some ways from that articulated by Cousin. It will be for other researchers to build upon this rich and thought-provoking work, investigating other points of contact between discourses of the self and the social and political environment in which they functioned.

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See also the Review Essays on this book by James Smith Allen, Lucien Jaume, and Peter McPhee, as well as Jan Goldstein's response to all four Review Essays.