

---

*H-France Forum* Volume 1, Issue 1 (Winter 2006), No. 5

**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.

Response Essay by Jan Goldstein, University of Chicago, to the Review Essays of her book by Victoria Thompson, James Smith Allen, Lucien Jaume, and Peter McPhee.

---

First I would like to thank the organizers of H-France for having selected *The Post-Revolutionary Self* to inaugurate their new on-line publication, *H-France Forum*. It is an unaccustomed privilege to receive four long reviews of one's new book, each written from a different scholarly perspective, at one fell swoop and, moreover, to be given a platform from which to reply to them. The four reviewers assembled here include a historian of publishing and reading practices (James Smith Allen), a social historian (Peter McPhee), a cultural historian (Victoria Thompson) and a historian of political philosophy (Lucien Jaume). Seeing my book through these four pairs of eyes brings home the hermeneutic commonplace that reading is a highly personal endeavor, influenced as much by what the reader's mind already contains as by the novel stimulus the text affords. It is gratifying when the reader's understanding of the text coincides with one's own authorial intention and frustrating when the reader seems to have missed the point. Taken as a group, these four reviews have given me plenty of the former kind of gratification and, it must be acknowledged, a nearly equal measure of the latter kind of frustration.

Before taking up the reviewers' comments one by one, I want to consider the fate of the book's central concept at the hands of this group of readers. That concept is the post-Revolutionary self of the book's title—that is, the concept of the *moi* showcased in the philosophical psychology of Victor Cousin. As I was at pains to point out in the book, a fundamental ambiguity or tension marked this *moi*.<sup>[1]</sup> It was, according to Cousin, at once dynamic and constrained. Posited as a free and active will able to mold the external world, it was also, because Cousin styled his psychology as the "vestibule" to metaphysics, lodged within a metaphysics that mandated conformity to conventional values. I labeled this *moi* a "bourgeois" self for two separate but mutually reinforcing reasons. First, it was institutionalized on a vast scale in a state-run *lycée* system effectively reserved for the male bourgeoisie during the nineteenth century; that bourgeoisie was, for practical purposes, its captive audience. Second, by dint of the ambiguity I underscored, its internal characteristics "refer[red] simultaneously to the affirmative self-image of the nineteenth-century bourgeois and the risible image of that same social creature in the abundant antibourgeois satire of the era" (p. 180, see also p. 12).<sup>[2]</sup> In other words, a single concept of the self embraced an imposing volitional force and the unoriginality of Flaubert's Monsieur Homais.

This set of reviews suggests, however, that an author ascribes ambiguity to a central concept at her peril. I was gratified that Victoria Thompson read me correctly. She highlighted the place of the ambiguous *moi* in my argument, even citing as one of my methodological contributions that I expanded Foucault's concept of the technology of the self by demonstrating that such technologies may enable "a ruling class [to] control not only its subordinates but also its own members (p. 181)." But, by contrast to Thompson, neither James Smith Allen nor Lucien Jaume perceived my contention about the fundamental ambiguity at the heart of the Cousinian *moi*. Instead each noted only one pole of the ambiguity—a different pole in each case, interestingly enough—and, taking it for the totality, then proceeded to find fault with my (misrepresented) argument. Allen recognized only the constrained pole of the *moi*. Paraphrasing me inaccurately, he refers to the "staid, controlled, unitary self Cousin sought to establish for bourgeois elites" and protests that I've said nothing about the early nineteenth-century vogue of Romanticism or about the attraction exercised on the bourgeoisie by the Romantic self with "its imaginative leaps, its demonic excesses, its unruly creativity."

While Allen is correct that I have not made Romanticism a major category of my analysis, neither do I ignore its existence. I note that under the Restoration (that is, before he became a mainstay of the establishment), Cousin was widely regarded as a charismatic "youth guru," in Alan Spitzer's fine phrase (p. 156). I specify that, at that time, "Cousin cared too much about reason to be a full-fledged Romantic, but his recognition of the insufficiency of reason, as well as the prose style that accompanied that recognition, sufficed to qualify him as a generic romantic" (p. 155). I cite Stendhal's famous 1823 quip that "the vast majority of well-bred youth have been converted to Romanticism by the eloquence of Monsieur Cousin" (p. 155). As I describe it, the Cousinian *moi* contained recognizably Romantic elements—for example, the Ecole normale exam paper of 1820 that proclaimed "I name 'self' (*moi*) that force that matter obeys" (p. 222)—which existed side by side yet in tension with the conventionality of Cousinian metaphysics. My argument does not endow the French bourgeoisie with a form of selfhood that "run[s] counter" (Allen's phrase) to Romanticism; instead I argue that Cousinianism allowed the bourgeoisie to be flattered by a healthy dose of Romantic willfulness while prudently containing that same tendency.

Jaume's complaint is the mirror image of Allen's. Taking the dynamic side of the Cousinian *moi* for the whole ("Jan Goldstein expose en quoi la théorie du *moi* chez Cousin vise à pourvoir la bourgeoisie d'une affirmation individuelle forte"), he then indicates that this position is belied by his own 1997 book *L'individu effacé ou le paradoxe du libéralisme français*. Put differently, Jaume charges that the Cousinian *moi*, as I depict it, is insufficiently effaced. But that charge derives from his having overlooked my insistence on the metaphysical dimension of the theory—the dimension that Allen, for his part, overemphasized. Jaume insists that nineteenth-century France never witnessed "sa révolution individualiste," the sort that "connaissent nos amis américains" and that, by implication, an American might be inclined to project onto the citizens of the Hexagon. But in fact—and while I have not discussed the existence or non-existence of a "révolution individualiste" in France—there is no logical disagreement between Jaume and myself here. The ambiguity that I find and emphasize in the Cousinian *moi* easily accommodates Jaume's "individu effacé." To Jaume's jubilant exclamation, "Comme on le voit, le *Moi* libre, chez Cousin...n'est pas exactement glorieux!" I can only reply: my point exactly. Or to quote the concluding sentences of chapter four of my book (p. 181): "During the period of the constitutional monarchy, then, a Cousinian *moi* was a valuable, relatively rare, status-conferring possession. But to those on whom it was bestowed, it was nonetheless an ambiguous, even tarnished gift."

I have begun this response with a clarification of my representation of the Cousinian *moi* both because of the utter centrality of that concept to my argument and because the ambiguity I unambiguously ascribed to it seems to have eluded two of my reviewers, causing them to come up with opposite, though equally unnuanced versions of my claims. One of the main points I wish to hammer home in this response is precisely the Janus-faced nature of the Cousinian *moi* and what it stands to tell us about the constitution of the nineteenth-century French bourgeoisie as a class or ruling class. Into the psychological make-up of this group Cousinian teaching inculcated a strain of triumphalism and potentially titanic will; yet it also hedged round that strain with an opposing one of regulated conformism. The *moi* that Cousin repeatedly proclaimed as unitary was, in the end, oddly, even poignantly, divided in its attitude toward the world.

Let me turn now to the individual reviews.

Reading and rereading James Smith Allen's thoughtful and erudite review, what struck me most is the note of self-contradiction that implicitly runs through it. After pronouncing my book "bold," Allen goes on to enumerate a series of "perspectives or contexts," all of which end up faulting the book for insufficient breadth and inadequate inclusiveness—for example, inattention to the long pre-1750 history of the bourgeois self; failure to recognize that other nineteenth-century works, notably Lamennais' *Paroles d'un croyant*, outsold Cousin's; failure to recognize the role of Romanticism in offering an

attractive model of selfhood to the bourgeoisie; failure to give the flourishing of nineteenth-century "women's self-writing" its due. In other words, Allen combines concise praise for the book's putative boldness with prolonged worry about its putative narrowness. That apparent self-contradiction turns, I think, on what Allen takes the "boldness" of my argument to be.

Although Allen summarized my book well in the opening paragraph of his review, he seems nonetheless to have misunderstood the scope of my claims. And his misunderstanding, in turn, offers me an opportunity to clarify those claims. It would appear, from Allen's comments on the book in the rest of his review, that he took me to be saying that the influence of Cousinianism accounts for each and every instance of bourgeois self-fashioning in post-Revolutionary France—or, put differently, that the boldness of my thesis is its claim to a kind of encyclopedic exhaustiveness. Thus Allen, distinguishing his position from mine, writes: "I see the bourgeois self as a less imposing phenomenon than Goldstein does. It is certainly not the only historical self in modern France."

But my claim was never that the Cousinian self exhausts the field of possible nineteenth-century French selves. (Chapter seven on the appeal of phrenology to the working classes makes that point concretely, and Victoria Thompson sees the book as illustrating "that multiple concepts of the self can operate simultaneously within a culture.") Nor was my claim that the Cousinian self exhausts the field even of the possible selves of the *lycée*-educated male bourgeoisie—though here, I now realize, I probably could have been more explicit. I contend rather that, in a domain of historical study where the object—selfhood—is by definition elusive, insubstantial and highly idiosyncratic, Cousinianism offers the historian, by dint of its institutional status, a privileged point of entry and a position from which to generalize. Because a *lycée* education was the route to upward social mobility in nineteenth-century France, because the philosophy class of the sixth and last year (in which Cousinianism found and long maintained its niche) had unique prestige in that education, because the philosophy professor was supposed to exercise unique power in shaping his charges (see p. 190), investigating Cousin's writings and especially the textbooks that he and his disciples produced can tell us a great deal about an explicit concept of selfhood that was routinely imparted to a particular stratum of the population over a long time-frame. Of course, as Allen objects, certain students were more receptive to it than others; of course certain students were more prone to rebel against what they were taught in school than to accept it. But such variations have little effect on my argument. There is no way of escaping the fact that generations of (mostly bourgeois) male students were exposed to the Cousinian concept of the self during the nineteenth century in a highly charged pedagogical setting in which they were being shaped for leadership roles, and that, in the dreaded baccalaureate examination, they were even examined on it. It is, my book argues, the sheer magnitude of the cultural reproduction of this concept in France that commands our attention as historians. Thus when Allen writes, "I would question just how influential were [Cousin's] teachings outside the French *université*," I can only reply: just how influential compared to what? Is there anything else in nineteenth-century France that even came close to shaping concepts of selfhood explicitly and in a uniform manner to the degree that this *Université*-based instruction did? [3]

From that phenomenon of institutionalized reproduction we can infer both the intention of the French state (or, more accurately, of its educational administration) to disseminate a certain concept of the self; and the likelihood that this concept was absorbed, in some manner, by a large population of nineteenth-century bourgeois male adolescents. To postulate the influence of this concept is not, to be sure, to postulate that Cousinianism formed the sum total of the identity or interiority of all who encountered it in the *lycée* philosophy classroom. It is rather to postulate that the Cousinian *moi* functioned as a kind of template or basic definition of selfhood that these young men had to reckon with, one that would figure in their eventual sense of self, either combined with other elements or, probably less often, reacted against or rejected outright.

Once my claim is stated in this form, rather than in the blanket or encyclopedic form that Allen seems to impute to it, Allen's comments about the book's omissions assume a different aspect. They no longer function to poke holes in my argument; rather they pose interesting and often shrewd questions to that argument, questions that probe the relationship of the remarkable intellectual formation that was Cousinianism to other factors relevant to nineteenth-century French selfhood. Thus I would suggest with respect to Allen's invocation of Romanticism, first (as indicated above), that the Romantic vogue was not entirely separate from Cousinianism but affected Cousin's earliest philosophical formulations; second, that Romantic notions of volition and holism were funneled into the positive, self-affirmative pole of the Cousinian *moi*; and third, that, through its institutionalization, Cousinianism may actually have preserved something of the Romantic ethos into the second half of the nineteenth century in France. Or, to pick another example, Allen's challenge about the large sales of Lamennais' *Paroles d'un croyant*, which overshadowed sales of texts by Cousin and his followers, raises a methodological issue. I agree with Allen that sales figures and sizes of print runs serve as indispensable aids to the historian attempting to assess the influence of ideas that lacked an institutional base and circulated primarily by means of the market. But I would argue that our assessment of the influence of Cousin can safely dispense with such data because it rests on the existence of a vast, prestigious, state-financed institutional apparatus devoted to teaching his precepts. Similarly, Allen's objection that "the text is far from the only cultural filter mediating intellectual exchange"—which he adduces to argue that I have oversimplified the process of reading Cousin—falls within the purview of that same methodological issue. The whole point of my treatment of Cousinianism was to underscore the institutional and social factors that powerfully shaped this particular transfer of knowledge, to shift our focus away from the model of an isolated individual's encounter with a printed page of Cousin's prose. Nor was the Cousinianism disseminated in the *lycées* simply equivalent to the words of the *maître*. As I stressed in my discussion of the textbooks produced by Cousin's disciples (pp. 192-202), the lacunae in Cousin's system necessarily gave the textbook writers interpretive latitude in their presentation of that system to students. Throughout his review, Allen seems to ignore or discount the impressive institutional apparatus—including control of teacher training and of the questions on the baccalaureate exam, a multi-volume "dictionary" of philosophical orthodoxy, a "regiment" of disciples strategically placed in teaching posts throughout the provinces—that I so carefully traced in chapter five. Only such a posture explains how he can speak of Cousinianism in action as "the philosophic creation of *one* busy, self-made man, Cousin himself" (my italics).

A final comment. The points that Allen makes in his capacity as a historian of publishing and of reading practices help to sharpen the distinction between that domain of inquiry and the kind of history of *institutionalized* knowledge transfer that occupied me in *The Post-Revolutionary Self*. Ruminating on his comments prompted me to perform a thought-experiment about a hypothetical Victor Cousin who lacked institutional affiliations and who published his philosophical ideas in treatises that were sold in bookstores. It is highly unlikely that such a figure would have ended up as a powerful cultural force in nineteenth-century France.

Peter McPhee's review enabled me to see my book through the eyes of a social historian. Especially because one of my main goals as a historian has always been to figure out how to forge links between the realm of ideas and the realm of social life, I was particularly delighted to learn that the book spoke to him as directly as it did, even having the effect of defamiliarizing the period 1750-1850 that he knows so well. I was charmed that he zeroed in on all my favorite archival nuggets, going so far as to identify them to fellow *habitués* of the AN by their carton numbers! That he recognized the importance to my argument of the individual cases of Caroline Angebert and Amédée Jacques gave me a tangible sense that I had succeeded in what I had set out to do.

Given that McPhee very nearly qualifies as an ideal reader of my book, I should perhaps be gracious enough simply to accept the single criticism he offers. But this being the author's "response," respond I will. McPhee takes me to have said, or at least to have implied, that public festivals and the vogue of

sensationalism waned simultaneously because the latter was the necessary condition of the former. He then goes on to point out that public festivals both antedated the eighteenth century and continued long after the Revolution, thus casting doubt on the connection I draw between them and sensationalism.

McPhee misunderstands my contention here. I never said that public festivals *tout court* exist only when sensationalist psychology is widely accepted by political elites. I said that the *revolutionary* festivals, with their calendrical regularity, their overt pedagogical intent, and their organizers' use of sensationalist vocabulary to explain their expected mode of operation on their audience, were a manifestation of the revolutionaries' faith in sensationalist psychology. Hence only this particular kind of public festival waxed and waned together with the prestige of sensationalism. That a certain kind of festival is dependent on sensationalism does not mean that all festivals are. When ruling elites ceased to regard sensationalism as the psychology of choice, they ceased making a cycle of civic festivals a feature of everyday life. But occasional recourse to festivals by, for example, the two Bonapartist regimes did not need to be fueled by sensationalist principles. As I note (pp. 61, 81, 83), the sensationalist architects of revolutionary political culture saw themselves as putting into scientific language the truths about the effects of pomp and ceremony that had always been known and exploited by the Catholic church. In the absence of a commitment to sensationalism, then, political recourse to festivals might stem from a desire to sacralize the state and the political regime by addressing them with techniques redolent of those employed by the church.

Victoria Thompson's sensitive reading of my book and its fundamental convergence with what I intended the book to convey leave me little to respond to. As already illustrated in my discussion of the Janus-faced *moi*, Thompson's review instead supplies me with corroboration (and a welcome bit of reality-testing) as I respond to the comments of reviewers who misunderstood my arguments. Indeed, I will turn to her again for that purpose in the body of this response. Moreover, Thompson's depiction of the book's ability to "move seamlessly between materials and methods of analysis used by intellectual, cultural, and social historians" fits extraordinarily well with my own sense of one of the book's goals.

The final paragraph of Thompson's review shows, I think, the suppleness with which she has "thought her way into" my book. The expansions and qualifications of the book's argument that she proposes there strike me as very much in the book's spirit. While I have focused on Caroline Angebert's justified complaints against Cousin's exclusion of women from reflective capacity and therefore from training in selfhood, depicting Angebert as deconstructing Cousin's theory, Thompson has wisely pointed out the emancipatory potential of that same gesture and its possible implications for the nascent feminism of the era. She similarly wonders whether there are other instances of *critical* responses to Cousin that double as indications that his theory exercised a wider influence than might be suggested by "mere" acceptance of it. In this way her comments coincide with the statement of my claims that I set forth above in my response to James Smith Allen. Thompson recognizes that when an intellectual movement is powerful enough to be reacted against, those who react against it have not thereby eluded its influence.

I have saved my consideration of Lucien Jaume's review for last because I find it such a profoundly dispiriting piece of work: dispiriting not only or even mainly because Jaume so thoroughly dislikes my book but because his opinions, although stated with complete conviction, betray only the most cursory familiarity with my book. One line of Jaume's review may be taken as emblematic, or symptomatic, of his approach. In the middle of a particularly scathing criticism (to which I will return), he mentions "la bourgeoisie conquérante (tel Dupin aîné dont Jan Goldstein fait l'image de couverture de son livre)." However, the famous Ingres portrait that graces the jacket of my book (to see image click here)—"the greatest portrait of them all," according to a recent *New York Times* review of the Ingres show currently at the Louvre<sup>[4]</sup>—depicts not the lawyer and jurist Dupin aîné but Louis-François Bertin, publisher of the *Journal des débats*. The back flap of the book jacket clearly identifies it as such. Jaume was apparently so sure that the jacket depicted Dupin aîné that he never thought to consult the back flap. This is only a

minor lapse, of course. But Jaume was, similarly, so sure of what my book said that he barely bothered to read it--and given his negative evaluation of the book, that is not a minor lapse at all.

Before turning to the large errors Jaume makes in representing the content of my book, let me start with a medium-sized error. Apparently eager to cast doubt, helter-skelter, on just about every assertion the book contains, Jaume ends his review by commenting on chapter one for the first time. He muses: "Il me semble que la grande critique des pouvoirs de l'imagination, cette 'folle de logis,' se trouve au XVIIe siècle chez Pascal, Spinoza, Malebranche et bien d'autres.... Je ne vois donc pas là un problème qui émerge au XVIIIe siècle, et peut-être même est-il, comparativement, en reflux dans cette période." The author of this book, Jaume seems to say, may not be the *folle de logis* or madwoman in the attic, but she is surely the village idiot, someone capable of writing a long chapter entitled "The Perils of Imagination at the End of the Old Regime" that maintains that imagination first emerged as a problem in France in the eighteenth century. However, anyone who read chapter one with any semblance of care would know that I said nothing of the sort. Not only was I fully aware of the seventeenth-century discourse on the dangers of imagination (pp. 35-36), but I also explicitly contrasted the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discourses on this subject. I marshalled a great deal of evidence from a variety of printed and manuscript sources to argue that the sensationalist epistemology of the eighteenth century gave the already recognized problem of imagination a new twist and hence a new lease on life. Because the environment impinged directly on the sensationalist psyche, writers who took sensationalism as their framework tended to emphasize the particular external stimuli that either unleashed or contained the perils of the imagination. Thus, I observed (and went on to demonstrate), "the sensationalist construction of imagination had a more pronounced tendency to become involved in social, political and economic discourse" (p. 36). Victoria Thompson, who seems to catch all the pivotal points that Lucien Jaume misses, cites this very line. And, as chapter one shows, the pace of eighteenth-century economic change--I stress the deterioration of corporate bonds, but I might also have mentioned the new availability of consumer goods--provided ample fodder for those who believed the imagination in danger of overstimulation. So much, then, for Jaume's off-the-cuff thesis of a comparative "reflux" of the problem of imagination in the eighteenth century.

But eighteenth-century imagination holds only a passing interest for Jaume. The big game is Cousin. It is with respect to Cousin that he notes the only similarity he can find between my scholarship and his own: we both wrote books that devote two chapters to Cousin. Those two books--his is *L'individu effacé*, already mentioned above--led, he believes, to "des conclusions différentes et même opposées" and at the root of our "désaccord" lies "l'interprétation même de la philosophie de Cousin."

But do our books in fact propose "different and even opposed conclusions"? Jaume enumerates the two basic conclusions of his own book in the body of his review of mine. I have already considered his conclusion about the absence of an "individualistic revolution" in nineteenth-century France. Nothing in my book contradicts this finding of Jaume's. While I have not been particularly concerned with the category of individualism per se and hence have not attempted to judge whether or to what extent the Cousinian *moi* was "individualistic," Jaume's belief that I represent that *moi* as a node of rampant, unmitigated individualism is based on his overlooking the portions of my book that insist on the ambiguity of the Cousinian *moi*, its poles of dynamism and constraint. By ignoring my insistence on its constrained character, Jaume erroneously infers that I am combatting his thesis about the effaced (or, translated more strongly, erased) individual of nineteenth-century French liberal political thought. I am not. In this regard, the arguments of our two books are quite compatible.

The second conclusion of Jaume's 1997 work is, he tells us, that nineteenth-century French liberalism tended to ally with, rather than to oppose, the state and hence that the bourgeoisie of that era gravitated to posts in the administration, finding in them a "levier stratégique." Although Jaume believes that I disagree with this twofold finding, I say much the same thing, not about nineteenth-century French liberalism, which is not the subject of my book,<sup>[5]</sup> but about the French bourgeoisie. I indicate in no

uncertain terms that I am not identifying this group as captains of industry, especially since economic historians have shown that industrial capitalism had little purchase in France before 1850, but rather as a "state-educated elite" readied for leadership in the *lycée*, an institution "designed to train civil servants for the state administration" (p. 12). I developed this theme more fully in a recent article.<sup>[6]</sup> Later in *The Post-Revolutionary Self*, I described the Doctrinaires--the political coterie to which Cousin and Guizot belonged and which Jaume calls liberal and I call constitutional monarchist--as gravitating to "the state bureaucracy ...[as] the obvious means for crafting the institutions that, firmly rooted in society, would make modern governance feasible" (p. 153). Jaume and I are on the same page, here, as well, although he, again, vigorously denies that fact.

Why then should Jaume have taken such an instant dislike to my book, developed such an allergic reaction to it that he could not, apparently, bear to read it with sustained attention? Why did he review the book he imagined I wrote instead of the book I actually wrote?

Two possible reasons spring to mind. The first is methodological-cum-political. The fact that I speak of the Cousinian *moi* as a "bourgeois self" seems to have been a red flag to Jaume, leading him to believe that I was some sort of vulgar Marxist. Thus, the final paragraph of his review chides me in lofty tones: "De façon plus générale, il me paraît périlleux de considérer une philosophie comme la traduction ou la réplique d'une conscience de classe: le lien entre le *moi* cousinien et la bourgeoisie conquérante (tel Dupin aîné [sic!] dont Jan Goldstein fait l'image de couverture de son livre) ne me paraît pas convaincant." In fact, I make abundantly clear both that "I am not using the term ['bourgeois'] in a strict Marxian sense" (p. 11) and that I do not regard Cousinian philosophy as an epiphenomenal reflex of bourgeois class-consciousness. As I state explicitly in the Introduction, "In calling this self 'bourgeois,' I am not, it should be evident, conceptualizing Cousinian psychology as the ideological reflex of an already existent bourgeois class. Rather I am suggesting that Cousinian psychology participated actively in the constitution of this social group, furnishing its members with a shared, highly articulated subjectivity or self-conception and providing them with a psychological justification for their social superiority" (p. 12). In this as in so many other instances, Jaume seems to have failed, simply, to read what I wrote.

The other possible reason for Jaume's allergy to my book could not have been alleviated by more careful reading; indeed, that reason appears to be one datum in the book for which he actually searched with scrupulous care. "Jan Goldstein ne cite pas (sauf erreur) et ne discute pas *L'individu effacé*," he observes in footnote 7. I suspect that, in at least one of the successive drafts of my book, I cited Jaume's book. I do own a copy of it, and while I thought I had included it in an omnibus bibliographical note at the beginning of chapter four, I may have subsequently pared down that note, together with many others, at the request of my space-conscious editor. I have read *in* Jaume's book, but I haven't read it from cover to cover. Jaume is correct that I do not discuss it in my book. Its absence in that regard bespeaks not a negative opinion of Jaume's scholarship, but rather a recognition that, while Jaume certainly treats Cousin, his interest in the Sorbonne *maître* is very different from my own. As befits his professional identity as a "specialist in political philosophy and in the history of the categories of the modern State (sovereignty, representation, citizenship)"--I cite, in translation, the author's biography on the back of his book--Jaume was interested in what a group of thinkers, including Cousin, had to say about the place of the individual in liberal political theory, about an explicitly *political* subjectivity. The book repeatedly invokes "le sujet libéral." My project, by contrast, was to look at Cousin as the source of a *psychological* theory, one that could, by dint of its broad dissemination, leave its technical-philosophical roots behind and affect the ordinary, everyday concept and experience of selfhood. To quote my introduction again, "I see sensationalism, Cousinianism, and phrenology as functioning in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France much as Freudianism functioned in the twentieth-century United States. Freudian concepts became part of the mental furniture of the average educated American" (p. 13). For a project of this nature, I regarded Jaume's book as less relevant than some others that competed for my attention. (Indeed, Jaume's book is much less about Cousin than he suggests; taken together, the two chapters he

mentions account for some 30 pages out of a book of almost 600 pages.) To be sure, I now very much wish that I had read and engaged with it, if only to have elicited from Jaume a different, more intellectually serious review of *The Post-Revolutionary Self*.

I need to address one more set of issues raised by Jaume's review. Jaume alleges that he and I reach opposite conclusions (although we really do not) because we interpret Cousin differently--and, implicitly, that he is the one who interprets Cousin correctly. The battery of technical details that he ostentatiously displays in his review seem meant to insinuate that I haven't done my homework, that my scholarship on Cousin may be superficial or even defective. Hence it falls to me to dispel that impression--not a difficult task but a rather tedious one.

The textual details that Jaume sets forth concern Cousin's relative evaluation of the two terms of a dichotomy that he proposed and extensively mined: the reflection of the educated classes versus the spontaneous reason of the people. I take up this issue repeatedly in my book (pp. 176-77, 179, 198, 201, 249-50), providing citations from Cousin that bolster my contention that he assigned superiority to reflection. I even cite the testimony of an early nineteenth-century reader of Cousin, none other than the young Ernest Renan, who "suspected that Cousin's frequent recourse to the spontaneity-reflection distinction covertly expressed the kind of 'haughty and disdainful philosophy at which he aims'" (p. 177). A related issue also raised by Jaume is whether the members of those groups that Cousin considered incapable of reflection--women and *le peuple*--could, within the terms of his system, accomplish the reflective maneuvers that Cousin deemed necessary to disaggregate the will from the other elements of consciousness and to appropriate it for and as their selves. I argue, again with ample textual citation (pp. 171-79), that Cousin denied this capacity to the unreflective and hence that he regarded women and workers as effectively "unselved." With respect to each of these issues, Jaume produces, against my numerous citations pointing in one direction, a single textual citation from Cousin that points in the reverse direction. With respect to the second issue, he also argues from the silence of Pierre Leroux in his *Réfutation de l'éclectisme*; according to Jaume, the socialist Leroux surely would not have neglected to mention this unselving of the working class by Cousin had Cousin ever articulated such a position.

How to respond to this set of Jaume's charges? First of all, I should note that Cousin's corpus is in a state of disarray; its component pieces are scattered; no modern edition of it exists. Cousin actually "wrote" relatively little in a philosophical vein; most of the texts we possess are renderings of his oral lectures, often compiled by his disciples on the basis of students' notes. In other words, Cousin scholarship lacks a sure textual grounding. It is difficult to be certain that one has rounded up everything the *maître* wrote or said on any given subject. Missing a relevant citation or two is much easier--and much less "blameworthy"--than when the works of the author in question have been amassed in a modern, manicured, cross-referenced edition. Second, and more important, Jaume's two citations from Cousin that suggest that he had a more favorable opinion of the reasoning powers of the people than I have allowed, and that he even occasionally acknowledged the existence of a *moi* in persons lacking reflection (although, as this passage specifies, a *moi* whose free development is impeded), both date from the period of the Restoration: 1828 for the first, 1818 for the second. At that time, Cousin belonged to the political opposition and had more expansive, Romantic-tinged views than he did subsequently. The Cousin whose theories were first institutionalized in the *lycée* in 1832 and who was a mainstay of the July Monarchy is, clearly, the Cousin of greatest relevance to my argument.

Third, and most important, while Jaume's project as a historian of political philosophy may turn on a reading of Cousin's thought that describes all the twists and turns of its development, mine does not. I am interested in the *discourse of Cousinianism* that emerged from a collective pedagogical effort, a discourse certainly inspired by the individual thinker Cousin but one not necessarily faithful to the *maître* in every detail. As I noted above, my book demonstrates that the very practical work in which Cousinian pedagogues and textbook writers engaged often forced them to improvise simply to fill the gaps or clarify the ambiguities in Cousin's teachings. It is the broad outlines of Cousinianism, the

doctrines "codified" in syllabi, textbooks, and examination questions, that I have sought. [7] In my book (p. 195), I described the intellectual formation I was seeking by analogy to Max Weber's treatment of Calvinism in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, a treatment that led Weber to go beyond Calvin's own works to the manuals of pastoral care written by the Calvinist ministers who shouldered the practical task of disseminating the faith.

But if I was looking for "broad outlines," was I content to do superficial research on philosophical matters? Not at all. Let me review the charges against me. Jaume charges in his footnote 13 that I failed to consult Cousin's never-published course of 1819-20, a text that Jaume himself accessed by means of its transcription in Jean-Pierre Cotten's 1996 *thèse d'état*. I don't know if I consulted the (otherwise unidentified) rendering of the 1819-20 course to which Jaume refers, but I did consult, in the original manuscript at the archives of the Sorbonne, the notes on that same course taken by the student Louis de Raynal; I even cited those student notes at length in my book (pp. 157-58 and note 68 to chapter four on p. 361). With respect to non-consultation of Cotten's unpublished *thèse d'état* on the young Cousin, I stand guilty as charged in Jaume's footnote 13. But Jaume is again incorrect when in his footnote 8 he charges that I did not consult the 1836 edition of Cousin's foundational course of 1818. In fact, through my own textual labors, I identified this edition as the one that the young Renan read in the 1840s and on which he made the copious notes that provided me with such rich source material (see note 91 to chapter six, pp. 382-83). The game of scholarly one-upmanship that Jaume initiated could, of course, continue. I could point out that I read the Cousinian textbooks, and he did not; that I read the manuscript correspondence from Cousin's disciples to the *maître*, and he did not; that I unearthed at the Archives Nationales a series of Ecole normale essay examinations on Cousinian philosophy dating from the year 1820, and he did not. But such a game is hardly edifying.

There remains the issue of Pierre Leroux' silence on the availability or non-availability of a *moi* to the working classes. Does the fact that a Leroux, a violently critical reader of Cousin in the 1830s and a socialist, failed to remark on this point of Cousinian doctrine in his *Réfutation de l'éclectisme* indicate that the point of doctrine failed to exist? Not at all, as the evidence in chapter seven of my book, "A Palpable Self for the Socially Marginal: The Phrenological Alternative," clearly suggests. While I do not discuss Leroux specifically in that chapter, the *lycée*-trained typesetter turned socialist generally fits the pattern of the left-wing thinkers described there. This group had no use for the unitary self, which they sometimes characterized as more suitable for animal existence than for the fully *social* life of human beings. They preferred the phrenological equation of mind with brain as well as the obviously fragmented nature of the phrenological model of the mind, which was divided into discrete brain organs and contained no unifying agency or self. Such a psyche, they believed, conduced to a socialized existence because it encouraged distribution of the individual's mental powers throughout a network of duties to society. Typically labeling the Cousinian self as "egoistic," this group had no reason to protest Cousin's denial of that *moi* to workers. Instead, they went about teaching the workers, who were excluded from the *lycée* anyway, the alternate theory of the mind that was phrenology.

The Leroux of the *Réfutation de l'éclectisme* (1839) is not an avowed phrenologist, but he is openly sympathetic to phrenology, lauding it for its flagrantly un-Cousinian features: its refusal to view the mind as a purely spiritual entity, its commitment to undertaking "a vaster study comprising both the soul and the body." For his part, Leroux stressed the inadequacy of an immaterial, introspective psychology (of the generic sort Cousin espoused) and called for a corporeal "physiology" to complement it; he saw the former as analogous to the static structures of anatomy, and the latter as considering the mental faculties *en exercice*, as constituting a "science of the living, functioning, and effectual mind (*âme*)."[8]

But Leroux did not propose some remedial tinkering with Cousin's philosophy. As befit his choice of the word "refutation" for his title, he wanted to demonstrate that Cousin's philosophy was so riddled with contradictions as to be a complete nullity. Thus his preface to the book addressed a hypothetical

skeptical reader. No, he said, it's not excessive to devote a whole volume to responding to errors "when you consider that these errors form the entire philosophy that has been taught to our children for the past fifteen years and that, for this same length of time, the public itself has also been the victim of this false philosophy." [9] Hence, while Leroux bitterly reproached Cousin for having abjured his earlier political positions ("I knew you when you preached the most revolutionary ideas, when you were involved in Carbonarist insurrection") and thus for having betrayed his young followers ("I used to listen to your speech with religious transport"), [10] he did not think to reproach him for the exclusion of workers from full-fledged selfhood. After all, Leroux refused to lend Cousin's philosophical concepts--including his particular concept of the *moi*--any credence whatsoever. To complain that Cousin denied workers a radically defective *moi* would have been the height of logical inconsistency.

Put differently, a person had first to believe in the basic soundness and validity of Cousinian psychology before he or she would have reason to protest that certain groups enjoyed only second-class citizenship in the world according to Cousin. My book makes that point nicely if implicitly. The cases that I narrate of persons motivated to criticize Cousin for "unselving" certain groups were passionately committed to Cousin's philosophy: Caroline Angebert, who exposed both Cousin's disdain for women and the logical inconsistency of that disdain (pp. 174-75), and Amédée Jacques, who did much the same with respect to Cousin's attitude toward the working classes (pp. 199-201, 316-21). I wonder why Jaume did not address the evidence I actually put forth in favor of Cousin's "unselving" from the highly vocal Angebert and Jacques, instead of trying to parse the silence of Pierre Leroux, who is absent from my book. Just another example, I guess, of Jaume's reviewing an imaginary book instead of the one I wrote.

And so I come to the end of this response. Rarely have I felt more situated within a hermeneutic circle than in this exercise of writing about what others wrote on the basis of their reading of my writing! The experience has also been a bracing and exhilarating one. It has tested my arguments and given me the opportunity to defend and clarify them. If I could ensure that future readers would understand three things about the argument of *The Post-Revolutionary Self*, they would be (1) that its central portions about Cousin and Cousinianism are primarily the story of an institutionalized transfer of knowledge, in which the force of persuasion is exercised at least as much by the institution in question as by the logic and rhetoric of particular texts; (2) that the Cousinian *moi*, poised between its two poles of dynamic will and metaphysical constraint, was an ambiguous gift to the nineteenth-century French bourgeoisie, contributing both to the self-affirmation of that group and to the conformism that was the butt of antibourgeois satire; and (3) that the Cousinian *moi* functioned not as the sum total of the selfhood, identity, or interiority of those in whom it was inculcated, but rather as a template or basic definition that had to be reckoned with.

---

## NOTES

[1] See, especially, the last section of chapter four, entitled "The Ambiguous Gift of Bourgeois Selfhood," pp. 179-81.

[2] Part of that affirmative self-image was property ownership. Within Cousin's system, the *moi* served as a foundational principle explicating and valorizing private property; see pp. 162-65.

[3] I should make clear that I am not relinquishing the claim that Cousin's psychological ideas exercised an extra-academic influence. My book mentioned several indications of their spread to the general culture--e.g., their presence in a household reference tool of the era (pp. 182-83) and in Guizot's bestselling and much reprinted *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe* (pp. 228-32); the sale of the individual texts of Cousin's 1828 lectures as recorded by hired stenographers--the medium through which Caroline

Angebert, and no doubt many others, first encountered the *maître* (pp. 156, 174). But my book does not explore this extra-academic influence thoroughly. The brunt of my argument lies elsewhere: in the influence directly exercised in the classrooms of *lycées* (and, to a lesser degree, Faculties of Letters) all over France.

[4] See Michael Kimmelman, "Ingres and His Pursuit of a Higher Reality," *New York Times*, March 24, 2006, B25 and B27: "And then there's the newspaperman Louis François Bertin, the greatest portrait of them all...."

[5] Jaume seems to fault me for *not* having written a book about liberalism. See his footnote 3: "Il me semble que Jan Goldstein n'emploie jamais le terme 'libéralisme' (qui est dans le discours des acteurs)." As in his opposite assumption that "individualism" is one of the major categories in my book, he appears unable to appreciate that I have narrated the same stretch of history that he has but through the optic of somewhat different categories.

[6] See "Of Marksmanship and Marx: Reflections on the Linguistic Construction of Class in Some Recent Historical Scholarship," *Modern Intellectual History* 2 (2005): 87-107, esp. 97-8, 101-2. Of course, I had no expectation that Jaume would read my oeuvre in entirety to write his review; I expected only that he would read *The Post-Revolutionary Self*.

[7] In the body of his review, Jaume actually cites textual evidence that supports my claim that Cousin denied the existence of the *moi* in individuals possessing spontaneity but lacking reflection. Yet, in a remarkable interpretive maneuver, he dismisses this text as a mere "formula" that should not be taken seriously and admonishes us to be "fair" to Cousin. For my purposes, however, the "formulae" that Cousin articulated must be emphasized rather than dismissed, since they were more likely to find their way into the discourse of Cousinianism.

[8] Pierre Leroux, *Réfutation de l'éclectisme* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1979; original ed., Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1839), pp. 121-22. [9] *Ibid.*, p. v. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Jan Goldstein  
University of Chicago  
jegoldst@uchicago.edu

Copyright © 2006 by H-France, all rights reserved. H-France permits the electronic distribution for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and its location on the H-France website. No republication or distribution by print media will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France.

*H-France Forum* Volume 1, Issue 1 (Winter 2006), No. 5

ISSN 1557-7058