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Gérando (1772–1842) and the Post-Revolutionary
Science of Man in France around 1800**

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MARTIN H. HERRNSTADT

ADMINISTRATING THE EMPIRE OF THE SELF

Joseph-Marie de Gérando (1772–1842) and the Post-Revolutionary
Science of Man in France around 1800

»Notre intérieur ressemble à ces empires mal gouvernés où tous les individus, à la faveur du désordre, échappent à la surveillance des magistrats. Le sentiment, la pensée sont comme une ombre qui disparoit à l’instant où nous voulons la saisir. On pourroit poser en principe que rien ne nous est moins connu, que ce qui nous est plus intime.«

Gérando, *Des signes et de l’art de penser* (1800)

»Le but de la psychologie est d’étudier les faits qui se passent »au sein du moi: on les découvre en observant.«

Flaubert, Bouvard et Pécuchet (1881)

I. Narratives of discontinuity or obstacles for a historical epistemology of the science of man around 1800

In the historiography of the human sciences in France, the Société des observateurs de l’homme (SOH) is usually regarded as a watershed. It stands out by being connected to virtually all the important debates in the science of man around 1800, including the »Voyage of Discovery of Captain Baudin« to Australia¹, the observation and education of the so-called feral child Victor of Aveyron², the national campaign for the education of deaf-mutes³ and – although in a wider sense – the project of a *Statistique générale*⁴. Most historians regard this moment as a moment of discontinuity: a shift from the former model of encyclopaedic knowledge to disciplinarisa-

1 Peter COWLEY, Jean FORNASIERO, Margeret SANKEY (ed.), *The Baudin Expedition 1800–1804. Texts, Contexts and Subtexts*, Special Issue: *Australian Journal of French Studies* 41 (2004); Bertrand DAUGERON, *À la recherche de l’Espérance. Revisiter la rencontre des Aborigènes tasmaniens avec les Français 1772–1802*, Paris 2014.

2 Sergio MORAVIA, *Il ragazzo selvaggio dell’Aveyron. Pedagogia e psichiatria nei testi di J. Itard, P.H. Pinel e dell’anonimo della »Décade«*, Bari 1972; Thierry GINESTE, *Victor de l’Aveyron. Dernier enfant sauvage, premier enfant fou*, Paris 2011; Jean-Luc CHAPPEY, *Sauvagerie et civilisation. Une histoire politique de Victor de l’Aveyron*, Paris 2017 (*L’épreuve de l’histoire*).

3 François BUTON, *Administration des faveurs. L’État, les sourds et les aveugles, 1789–1885*, Rennes 2009; Laurens SCHLICHT, *tabula rasa. Beobachtung von Sprache und Geist am Menschen in der Société des observateurs de l’homme, 1789–1830*, Tübingen 2020 forthcoming (*Historische Wissensforschung*).

4 Marie-Noëlle BOURGUET, *Déchiffrer la France. La statistique départementale à l’époque napoléonienne*, Paris 1989 (*Ordres sociaux*); Martin H. HERRNSTADT, *Menschenbeobachtung und*

tion. The short lifespan of the SOH (1799–1804) and its premature disappearance has come to symbolize a paradigm shift in epistemology as well as politics of knowledge. *Idéologie*, the revolutionary science of ideas, understood as the program to create a unified »science of man«⁵ and its project of human regeneration was supplanted by a new order of knowledge. The novel order was divided into specialised disciplines such as comparative anatomy, phrenology, psychology, psychiatry and hygiene among others. This epistemic shift is usually seen as complementary to the political shift from republicanism to the politics of Napoleonic Empire. The inclusionary program of an encyclopaedic science of man and its enlightenment appeal to universal regeneration of all men was overturned; the consolidation of essential differences between races, gender, mental and intellectual capacity took its place⁶.

In what follows I want to use the example of Joseph-Marie de Gérando (1772–1842) and his trajectory to challenge this perspective of discontinuity and epistemic antagonism. I will argue that the declinist narrative of the republican tradition of the science of man, as presented in the case of the *Idéologues*, does not account for biographies like Gérando's; whilst sharing and promoting basic insights of the revolutionary science of man, he made a stellar career after the demise of the First Republic. Moreover, the narrative of decline loses its explanatory potential when applied to administrative thought and practices, giving way for a wider perspective on the migration of knowledge and practices from the science of man towards an emerging administrative science around and after 1800⁷.

Recent scholarship has begun to challenge the narrative of epistemological discontinuity around 1800 by providing a more detailed sociology of knowledge. The work of Jean-Luc Chappey has shown that the Société des observateurs de l'homme was a highly heterogeneous group, and that the label *Idéologues* to signify a fixed group of republican philosophers demands great caution⁸. The actors inside the SOH ranged

Selbstverwaltung. Joseph-Marie de Gérando und das nachrevolutionäre Selbst 1799–1813, Tübingen 2020 forthcoming (Historische Wissensforschung).

- 5 François AZOUVI (ed.), *L'institution de la raison*, Paris 1992; Brigitte SCHLIEBEN-LANGE, *Idéologie. Zur Rolle von Kategorisierungen im Wissenschaftsprozess*, Heidelberg 2000. For a comprehensive and up to date overview of the research on *Idéologie* as a science of man and on its founding figure Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy see Laurens SCHLICHT, *Die Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Idéologie als Wissenschaft vom Menschen*. Aus Anlass der deutschen Edition der Ideenlehre von Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836), in: *Francia* 47 (2020), S. 241–265.
- 6 Cf. among others Nicole DHOMBRES, Jean DHOMBRES, *Naissance d'un pouvoir. Sciences et savants en France (1793–1824)*, Paris 1989; Charles Coulston GILLISPIE, *Science and polity in France. The revolutionary and Napoleonic years*, Princeton, NJ 2004; John CARSON, *The measure of merit. Talents, intelligence, and inequality in the French and American republics, 1750–1940*, Princeton, NJ 2007.
- 7 Charles-Jean BONNIN, *Principes d'Administration publique pour servir à l'étude des lois administratives [...]*, Paris 1809; for recent research see: Gaïd ANDRO, Laurent BRASSART, *Administrer sous la Révolution et l'Empire*, in: *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 389 (2017), p. 3–18; Igor MOULLIER, *Une Révolution de l'Administration? La naissance de la science administrative impériale (1800–1815)*, in: *ibid.*, p. 139–160.
- 8 Jean-Luc CHAPPEY, *La société des observateurs de l'homme, 1799–1804. Des anthropologues au temps de Bonaparte*, Paris 2002 (Bibliothèque d'histoire révolutionnaire); for the history of the

from Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) or Antoine François de Fourcroy (1755–1809), all members of the revolutionary scientific elite, to a large number of *émigrés* and other scholars who had been imprisoned or living in hiding due to the danger of revolutionary or republican purges. Returning back to the public scene after Brumaire, these figures sought to use the society as a hub to launch their post-revolutionary careers. These included figures like Joseph-Marie Portalis (1778–1858) later Minister of Cults under the Empire, the philanthropist Mathieu de Montmorency-Laval (1766–1826), the deaf-mute teacher Roch-Ambroise Sicard (1742–1822), the geologist Ramond de Carbonnières (1755–1827), the orientalist Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838), and the protagonist of this paper, Joseph-Marie de Gérando.

For the history of political thought, Pierre Serna scrutinized the sharp distinction between First Republic and Empire⁹. In his study on the »République des Girouettes« (»Republic of Turncoats«), he turned his attention to what he called the politics of the extreme centre in order to understand the transformation from the First Republic to the Napoleonic state. For the intellectuals associated with the science of man, the Napoleonic transformation was not a step backwards that broke with revolutionary principles. On the contrary, they saw the establishment of a strong neutral administrative power as a necessary protection of revolutionary »achievements«¹⁰.

It was in this political climate shortly before Napoleon's *coup d'état* that Gérando began his stellar career studying the revolutionary science of man. His knowledge of the German language and German philosophical debates at the time were an important asset in his ascent, as was the significant support of his German-speaking wife Annette de Rathsamhausen (1770–1824). Twice he had to seek refuge in Germany: one time running away from the Jacobin troops attacking his hometown of Lyon in 1793; the other, fleeing republican purges better known as the *fructidorisation* in late summer 1797. In 1799 he won the first prize of the Classe des sciences morales et politiques of the Institut national, the later Institut de France, with his work »On Signs and the Art of Thinking Considered in Their Mutual Relationships« (1800) that allowed him to settle in Paris. As a leading connoisseur of German philosophy in Paris, he was among the first to popularize Kant's philosophy in France. His connections with Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), and Germaine de Staël (1766–1817) but as well with Philipp Albert Stapfer (1766–1840), Karl Viktor von Bonstetten (1745–1832) and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

philosophical use of the term see the pioneer work by François PICAVET, *Les idéologues*, Hildesheim 1972 [1891]. The best recent presentations are among others SCHLIEBEN-LANGE, *Idéologie* (as in n. 5); for the history of the polemical use of the term see the classic studies of Ulrich DIERSE, *Napoleons Ideologiebegriff. Texte und Dokumente*, in: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 22 (1978), p. 30–89; ID., *Napoleons Ideologiebegriff*, in: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 25 (1981), p. 211–220.

9 Pierre SERNA, *La République des girouettes (1789–1815 et au-delà). Une anomalie politique. La France de l'extrême centre*, Seyssel 2005.

10 Martin S. STAUM, *Minerva's message. Stabilizing the French Revolution*, Montreal, Buffalo, NY 1996; Andrew J. S. JAINCHILL, *Reimagining politics after the Terror. The republican origins of French liberalism*, Ithaca, NY 2008.

(1746–1827) make him an important mediator between the German- and French-speaking intellectual cultures of the time. This was further boosted by his publication of the first »History of philosophy« in French in 1804, a three-volume work translated into German by Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1761–1819) in 1806. In addition to his German leaning, he maintained close connections with Genevan philosopher and translator of Adam Smith, Abbé Pierre Prévost (1751–1839), Thomas Reid (1710–1796) and others, thus also serving as an important relay for the reception of Scottish *moral philosophy* in France at the time¹¹. In this light, it seems instructive to look at Gérando as an intellectual *émigré*, whose thought cannot be reduced to a single tradition but must be studied as the meeting point of different cultures.

Besides the peculiar nature of his thought—about which I shall say more in what follows—Gérando was a senior official of the French state and a prolific social reformer¹². Returning from exile he made an administrative career after Bonaparte's military coup. Only a few years after entering state service in 1800, he was promoted to secretary general of the French Ministry of the Interior in 1804. He was subsequently promoted to a *baron de l'Empire*, appointed as member of the Conseil d'État (maître des requêtes 1808, conseiller d'État section de l'Intérieur 1811), joined the Legion of Honour (1811) and served as a leading imperial administrator in Tuscany (1808), Rome (1809–1810) and Catalonia (1812–1813). Moreover, he stands out as a prolific founder and activist of economic and philanthropic associations, including the Société des observateurs de l'homme (1799), the Société pour l'encouragement de l'industrie nationale (1800), the Société de prévoyance (1807) or the Société pour l'instruction primaire (1815), to name but a few. In contrast to some of his contem-

- 11 A concrete example of knowledge transfer is Gérando's early engagement for Pestalozzi's educational methods. See Lezay-Marnezia's petition to the Minister of the Interior on the 4th of Prairial An XI (24 May 1803) in the National Archives in Paris: Archives Nationales (AN) F15/1874A. For his contact with the Humboldt brothers see among others Ernest HAMY, Les Humboldts et les Gérando. A propos de quelques autographes de W. et Al. de Humboldt, in: Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, Belles-lettres et Arts de Lyon, 9 (1907), p. 241–260. Daniel SCHULTHESS, L'école écossaise et la philosophie d'expression française. Le rôle de Pierre Prévost, in: Annales Benjamin Constant 18/19 (1996), p. 96–105. For early translations of Gérando into German, see Joseph-Marie DE GÉRANDO, Betrachtungen über die verschiedenen Methoden, welche bey Beobachtung wilder Völker zu befolgen sind, in: Allgemeine geographische Ephemeriden 6 (1800), p. 540–572; ID., Vergleichende Geschichte der Systeme der Philosophie mit Rücksicht auf die Grundsätze der menschlichen Erkenntnisse, transl. by Wilhelm Gottlieb TENNEMANN, 2 vols., Marburg 1806.
- 12 A succinct description of Gérando's career can be found in the recently published anthology Jean-Luc CHAPPEY, Igor MOULLIER, Caroline CHRISTEN (ed.), Joseph-Marie de Gérando (1772–1842). Connaître et réformer la société, Rennes 2014 (Collection Carnot); a more extensive overview is available in Antoine BOCQUET, Portrait d'un spiritualiste en penseur social. Joseph-Marie de Gérando, 1772–1842, Besançon 2016; and a close reading of his early biography and the development of his peculiar form of thought in HERRNSTADT, Menschenbeobachtung (as in n. 4). Gérando's biography is, for the most part, reconstructed on the basis of eulogies: Edme François JOMARD, Discours sur la vie et les travaux du baron de Gérando, Paris 1843; Albert BEUGNOT, Éloge funèbre du baron de Gérando, Paris 1844; Jean-Baptiste BAYLE-MOULLARD, Éloge de Joseph Marie baron de Gérando, Paris 1846; Octavie MOREL, Essai sur la vie et les travaux de Marie-Joseph baron de Gérando, Paris 1846; François MIGNET, Le baron de Gérando, in: Id. (ed.), Éloges historiques, Paris 1864, p. 45–91.

poraries, his career as a state official lasted 40 years and went undamaged through numerous regime changes. A fact, that later made him a target of Sainte-Beuve's disdain¹³.

Given all this, it is astonishing that recent research on Gérando, although illuminating important aspects of his work, has not drawn a more systematic connection between his conceptual work and his administrative and social practice. When his work as a philosopher or early linguist¹⁴ is pointed out, his administrative and social practice is usually ignored; and when he is pictured as a social reformer¹⁵ little importance is accorded to his theoretical work, which is either depicted as the continuation of a classical »taxonomic mode of thought«¹⁶ or a marginal element in his administrative work¹⁷. A convincing account of the coherence of Gérando's approach that aims to reconstruct the specificity of his philosophical as well as administrative practice thus still remains a desideratum.

- 13 »Il y a des esprits essentiellement *mous* comme Degérando, comme Lacretable: ils traversent des époques diverses en se modifiant et même avec facilité et même avec talent; mais ne demandez ni à leurs œuvres, ni à leurs souvenirs, aucune originalité; ils versent sur tout une teinte monotone et fade, et ne savent en rien marquer les temps auxquels ils ont assisté. Degérando ne sent pas que Royer-Collard a été un événement en philosophie, et Lacretable, que Guizot en a été un en histoire. L'image n'est pas belle; mais ces sortes d'esprits ne sont pas seulement *mous*, ils sont *filants comme le macaroni*, et ont la faculté de s'allonger indéfiniment sans se rompre.« Charles Augustin SAINTE-BEUVE, *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. 11, Paris 1862, p. 477.
- 14 Wilhelm KÖSTER, *Joseph Marie Degérando als Philosoph*, Paderborn 1933; Elisabeth SCHWARTZ, *Les Idéologues et la fin des grammaires générales raisonnées*, Thèse pour l'obtention du Doctorat, Université de Provence 1981; Ulrich RICKEN, *Linguistics, anthropology and philosophy in the French Enlightenment. Language theory and ideology*, London, New York 1994 (Routledge history of linguistic thought series); Brigitte SCHLIEBEN-LANGE, *Idéologie, révolution et uniformité de la langue*, Sprimont 1996 (Philosophie et langage); EAD., Isabell ZOLLNA, *Die Idéologues*, in: Johannes ROHBECK (ed.), *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie. Begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg. Die Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Band: Frankreich, Basel 2008, p. 973–1015; most recently Ayşe YUVA, *Transformer le monde? L'efficace de la philosophie en temps de révolution France-Allemagne, 1794–1815*, Paris 2016; BOCQUET, *Spiritualiste* (as in n. 12); Kerstin OHLIGSCHLÄGER-LIM, *Erkenntnistheorie im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert in Frankreich. Eine Neubetrachtung des Pariser Wettbewerbs zur Frage nach dem Einfluss der Zeichen auf das Denken (1796–1799)*, Münster 2017.
- 15 Cathérine DUPRAT, *Usage et pratiques de la philanthropie. Pauvreté, action sociale et lien social*, à Paris, au cours du premier XIX^e siècle, 2 vols., Paris 1997; CHAPPEY, MOULLIER, CHRISTEN, *Connaître et réformer* (as in n. 12).
- 16 Michel FOUCAULT, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris 1966 (Bibliothèque des sciences humaines); Julien VINCENT, *Une histoire naturelle de la société civile? La science morale et politique de Joseph-Marie de Gérando*, in: CHAPPEY, MOULLIER, CHRISTEN, *Connaître et réformer* (as in n. 12), p. 93–112. Few instructive exceptions are : Jean-François BRAUNSTEIN, *De Gérando, le social et la fin de l'idéologie*, in: *Corpus revue philosophique* 14/15 (1990), p. 197–215; Gabriel Louis Moyal, *Le sauvage, le mendiant et la statue. La sémiotique appliquée de Gérando*, in: *Recherches sémiotiques – Semiotic Inquiry* (2000), p. 75–94; Sophia A. Rosenfeld, *A revolution in language. The problem of signs in late eighteenth-century France*, Stanford, CA 2001.
- 17 Igor MOULLIER, *Le ministère de l'Intérieur sous le Consulat et le Premier Empire (1799–1814). Gouverner la France après le 18 brumaire*. Thèse pour obtenir le doctorat, Université de Lille III 2004; Ralph KINGSTON, *Bureaucrats and bourgeois society. Office politics and individual credit in France, 1789–1848*, New York 2012.

I propose the outlines of such a comprehensive picture by revisiting key aspects of Gérando's work. My starting point will be to reconstruct elements of Gérando's critique of the political epistemology of the First Republic. I will argue that the distinctive feature of his style of thought is found in his concept of »empire of the self« (»empire de soi-même«) as basis for a post-revolutionary science of man (II). The finding of the supposedly feral child Victor of Aveyron in 1799 will provide an example of the research practice connected to establishing an empire of the self (III). I will then turn to Gérando's administrative practice. Using examples from his early career, I show how the epistemological as well as moral principle of post-revolutionary science of man were functional in his practice as a founder of a new kind of economic associations after the Coup of 18 Brumaire as well as in his practice as a high-level official during the Napoleonic administrative reforms (IV). As a consequence, this reconstruction has a double focus. On the one hand, it restores a guiding principle in both Gérando's philosophical as well as administrative career; on the other, it challenges the narrative of epistemological discontinuity by presenting alternative paths of the migration of concepts and practices, from the *science of man* to administrative reform and towards the formation of a new administrative science after the Brumaire.

II. From citizen to self:

Gérando's critique of republican epistemology and the outlines of an *interactive* science of man

To grasp the distinctive feature of Gérando's thought it is necessary to understand not only the epistemological problem of the First Republic but also the archaeology of some of its key concepts. In this part, I will therefore give a reconstruction of the epistemological problem at stake in Winter 1799 and trace its roots to the first half of the 18th century and the philosophy of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780). I argue that the specificity of Gérando's thought is to be found in the combination of sensationalist philosophy with a concept of an irreducible subject of thought or energy of the self (*moi*) – present in eighteenth-century psychology – that went beyond the scope of an analysis of discourse.

Semiotic transformation and the limits of human regeneration: Republican Condillacism

Gérando began to engage with the discourse of the science of man in the context of the first prize question announced by the newly founded National Institute's Class of Moral and Political Sciences after the end of the revolutionary government¹⁸.

18 The reconstruction of the concours and the semiotic paradigm of the *Idéologie* inside the Institut national is based on the works of the historiography of linguistics and most notably those produced in the context of the research groups of Ulrich Ricken, Sylvain Auroux and Brigitte Schlieben-Lange cf. among others Martin S. STAUM, *Les concours de l'Institut en sciences morales et politiques*, in: *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 4 (1982), p. 111–116; Sylvain AUROUX, *Idéologie et langue des calculs*, in: *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 4 (1982), p. 53–57; Ulrich RICKEN, *Probleme des Zeichens und der Kommunikation in der Wissenschafts- und Ideologiegeschichte der Aufklärung*, Berlin (East) 1985; ID., *Linguistics* (as in n. 14); Winfried BUSSE, Jür-

The question announced in July 1796 was to *determine the influence of signs on the formation of the ideas*.¹⁹ Upon returning to Paris in 1797 after his first exile together with Camille Jordan (1771–1821), royalist deputy of the Rhône department and close friend, Gérando prepared his first contribution to the prize question. Yet, in the initial competition, none of the thirteen memoirs that had been handed in was chosen as the winner. Gérando's treatise as well as the one of a young marine engineer Pierre-François Lancelin (1769?–1809) were given honourable mentions by the National Institute's committee guided by Dominique Joseph Garat (1749–1833). However, the coup of 18th Fructidor Year V (4 September 1797) forced Gérando into exile again shortly thereafter. Passing through Basel and Tübingen, he spent most of his exile at the house of the pedagogue and schoolmaster Gottlieb Konrad Pfeffel (1736–1809) in Colmar, who was caring for the orphaned and impoverished noble woman Annette von Rathsamhausen, Gérando's later wife. It was in these surroundings that Gérando perfected his German, established contacts to various German-speaking circles and prepared a renewed version of his treatise after the prize question was announced a second time in January 1798. Due to vivid exchanges in the Pfeffels' literary circles, his work considerably grew in scope and size²⁰. While the first version contained 131 large-format manuscript sheets, the second version grew to two manuscript bundles, each over 200 pages²¹. Most notably, he integrat-

gen TRABANT (ed.), *Les idéologues. Sémiotique, théories et politiques linguistiques pendant la Révolution française*, Amsterdam 1986 (Foundations of semiotics, 12); Gerda HASSLER, *Die Erkenntnisfunktion der Sprache. Ein Diskussionsthema an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert*, in: Hans-Josef NIEDEREHE, Konrad KOERNER (ed.), *History and historiography of linguistics*, Amsterdam 1990, p. 529–540; Joël GANAULT, *Idéologie et organisation du savoir. L'exemple du concours sur l'influence des signes*, in: AZOUVI (ed.), *Institution (as in n. 5)*, p. 63–81; Lia FORMIGARI, *Signs, Science and Politics. Philosophies of Language in Europe 1700–1830*, Amsterdam 1993 (Studies in the history of the language sciences); ROSENFELD, *Revolution (as in n. 16)*; Kerstin Ohligschlaeger-Lim has recently provided a complete reading of all the *mémoires* presented in the two rounds of the prize question, OHLIGSCHLAEGER-LIM, *Erkenntnistheorie (as in n. 14)*; for a close reading of the different stages of Gérando's text see HERRNSTADT, *Menschenbeobachtung (as in n. 4)*.

19 Cf. *Sujet du premier prix. Déterminer l'influence des signes sur la formation des idées*, in: *Mémoires de l'institut national des sciences et arts pour l'An IV de la République, sciences morales et politiques*, vol. 1, Paris: 1798, p.i. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from the original French texts are provided by the author.

20 For the intellectual network of Pfeffel and his connection to Gérando, see: Théodore SCHOELL, *Pfeffel et le baron de Gérando*, in: *Revue d'Alsace* 47 (1896), p. 61–86; Michel GRIMBERG, *Réseaux intellectuels et sociabilité culturelle autour de Théophile-Conrad Pfeffel (1736–1809)*, correspondant de Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin (1735–1806), in: Marie-Renée DIOT (ed.), *Gelehrten-netzwerke in Straßburg am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig 2007, p. 151–169; Wilhelm KÜHLMANN, Walter Ernst SCHÄFER (ed.), *Zwischen Direktorium und Empire. Die Briefe Gottlieb Pfeffels an Johann Gottfried Schweighäuser (1795–1808)*, Heidelberg 1992; Hans Erich BÖDEKER et al. (ed.), *Die Wissenschaft vom Menschen in Göttingen um 1800. Wissenschaftliche Praktiken, institutionelle Geographie, europäische Netzwerke*, Göttingen 2008.

21 The two manuscript versions are preserved in the archives of the Académie des Sciences. Archives de l'Institut national de France (AIN) SMP B1: *Concours An VI, 1797 – analyse formation des idées – mémoire n° 12, Degérando: »De l'influence des signes sur la formation des idées«*; SMP B2: *Concours An VII, 1799 – analyse formation des idées – mémoire n° 9, Joseph Marie Degérando, de Lyon: »L'art des signes considéré dans ses rapports avec l'art de penser«*. The file also contains the official report of the commission: *Rapport fait à la classe des sciences morales et politiques de*

ed idealist positions, among others a chapter on Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Immanuel Kant. This second and augmented version received the first prize of the National Institute in January 1799 and allowed Gérando to return to Paris for good. The third revision of the text took place between spring and winter 1799. During this time, he sought counsel and support from one of the leading intellectuals of the late Republic and early Empire, Pierre-Louis Roederer (1754–1835). Under his auspices, a now monumental four-volume work of around two thousand pages eventually appeared following the 18th Brumaire in spring and autumn 1800²².

There is no space here to enter into details, neither of the competition, nor the significant developments of Gérando's text between 1796 and early 1800. However, it is necessary to understand both the scope and importance of the prize question to grasp the specificity of Gérando's critique of the republican science of man, and the formative importance this critique had on the development of his style of thought.

At first glance, a rather abstract problem of the philosophy of language, it actually placed basic principles of the republican epistemology on display. If language was not simply a means of communication, but the condition of thinking itself, then a reform of language held out the prospect of radical reform of a people's thought, its ideas, feelings and desires. Hence, the bottom line of the first prize question was nothing less than to determine the possibilities and limits of republican pedagogy as a whole.

The transformative project of republican epistemology had famously been laid out in Constantin Volney's »La Loi naturelle« in 1793. There he proclaimed that the »science of education« would soon be able to »totally change the nature and the inclinations« of individuals and probably the human species as a whole²³. However, Robespierre's appropriation of the language of science and natural law to implement the reign of revolutionary violence²⁴, posed a problem for a post-Terror rhetoric of human regeneration²⁵. After the Thermidor, leading members of the Class of the Moral and Political Science claimed that it had not been the principles of republican epistemology that wreaked havoc on society but rather the abuse of its language by the Jacobins²⁶.

Within this general intellectual climate, Antoine Louis Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836) and his friend Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis (1757–1808) proposed a scientific program under the name of »Idéologie« or »science of ideas«, supposed to give a renewed fundament to the republican project of education and its salient role as a po-

l'Institut national sur les mémoires envoyés au concours sur cette question: Déterminer l'influence des signes sur la formation des idées (i) par le Citoyen Roederer au nom d'une commission composée des CC. Naigeon, Volney et Guingéné, 19 Germinal An VII.

22 See the letters of Gérando to Roederer in the National Archives, here especially the one of 22 Floréal Year VII (11 May 1799), in: AN 29AP/10.

23 Constantin-François VOLNEY, *Catéchisme du citoyen français, ou la loi naturelle*, Paris 1798 [1793], p. 39.

24 See Maximilien ROBESPIERRE, *Sur la partie à prendre à l'égard de Louis XVI*, 1792, p. 222.

25 Jacques GUILHAUMOU, *Robespierre et la formation de l'esprit politique au cours des années 1780. Pour une ontologie historique du discours robespierriste*, in: *mots* (2009), p. 125–137; Yannick BOSC, *Robespierre et l'amour des lois*, in: *Jus Politicum* 10 (2014), <http://juspoliticum.com/article/Robespierre-et-l-amour-des-lois-729.html>, accessed 3 December 2019.

26 FORMIGARI, *Signs* (as in n. 18); ROSENFELD, *Revolution* (as in n. 18).

litical agent in the process of human regeneration²⁷. Had Jean-Jacques Rousseau been the figurehead of the first years of the Revolution, then, the years after the terror were marked by a rise of interest in the analytical and sensationalist epistemology of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac²⁸, whom Destutt de Tracy referred to as the »true founder of *Idéologie*«²⁹. During the decade between the fall of Robespierre and the rise of Bonaparte, the philosophy of Condillac, and the emphasis it laid on the malleability of the human mind, became the arena in which fundamental questions of republican pedagogy and social reform were negotiated. The first edition of Condillac's collected works in twenty-one volumes in 1798, as well as the edition of his unpublished manuscript »La Langue des calculs« (»Language of Calculus«) in the same year, bear witness to the acute political relevance of his works at the time³⁰.

Condillac's sensationalist doctrine had radicalised the epistemology of John Locke (1632–1704) and his rejection of the doctrine of innate ideas. In his »Essay sur les origines des connaissances humaines« of 1746 he had argued that not only human ideas but also the structure of human understanding and reason itself were products of an interdependent process of sensory experience and sign production³¹. Condillac assumed that the basic structure and function of human languages represented the logical structure, i. e. the workings of human thought itself³². The *discours* and its structure, the *grammaire générale*, was thus the medium in which human thought could be observed and analysed. For this reason, grammar could be understood as science of thought and at the same time as a guide and *prima philosophia* which taught correct thinking, or, as Condillac put it, as an »initial part of an art of thinking«³³. These two ideas, i) a semiotic explanation of the formation of the faculties of

27 One of the main reference points for this republican critique of language was Thomas Hobbes, who was praised as the »founder of the science of ideas« as political science. Destutt de Tracy translated Hobbes' »Logic« as an annex to the third volume of his »Éléments d'idéologie: logique« in 1805.

28 Jürgen TRABANT, *Der gallische Herkules. Über Sprache und Politik in Frankreich und Deutschland*, Tübingen, Basel 2002; JAINCHILL, *Reimagining* (as in n. 10), p. 16–17.

29 Antoine Louis Claude DESTUTT DE TRACY, *Projet d'éléments d'idéologie*, Paris 1801, p. 3.

30 Cf. Sylvain AUROUX, Introduction, in: Étienne BONNOT DE CONDILLAC, *La langue des calculs*, Lille 1981.

31 Pierre SWIGGERS, *La sémiotique de Condillac ou la pensée dans la pensée*, in: Jean SGARD (ed.), *Condillac et les problèmes du langage*, Paris 1982, p. 221–242; Hans AARSLEFF, Introduction, in: Étienne BONNOT DE CONDILLAC (ed.), *Essay on the origin of human knowledge*, Cambridge 2001, p. xvi.

32 For the influential 20th century revival of the tradition of the *Grammaire générale* see: Noam CHOMSKY, *Cartesian Linguistics. A chapter in the history of rationalist thought*. New York 1966. For the ensuing debate about the interpretation of early modern grammatical tradition see: Michel FOUCAULT, Introduction à la *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* de A. Arnauld et C. Lancelot, in: ID., *Dits et Écrits 1954–1988*, vol. 1, Paris 1994, p. 732–753; Sylvain AUROUX, *La sémiotique des Encyclopédistes. Essai d'épistémologie historique des sciences du langage*, Paris 1979; Hans AARSLEFF, *The history of linguistics and Professor Chomsky*, in: ID., *From Locke to Saussure. Essays on the study of language and intellectual history*, London 1982, p. 120–145; Ian HACKING, *Locke, Leibniz, language and Hans Aarsleff*, in: *Synthese* 75 (1988), p. 135–153.

33 Étienne BONNOT DE CONDILLAC, *Cours d'étude pour l'instruction du Prince de Parme*, vol. 1, Genève 1780, p. 2.

the human mind based on the use of language³⁴; and ii) the idea that every language represented an analytical method, that divided human thought into observable grammatical and semiotic forms to study the mind, found great resonance during the Thermidorian Republic. Published in 1798, Condillac's »Language of calculus« revived the cartesian idea of *mathesis universalis* as a blueprint for republican pedagogy. As a matter of fact, one of the essential novelties of the education reform implemented with the *écoles centrales*, the flagship project of republican pedagogy, was to introduce a compulsory course on general grammar into the curriculum, in order to teach the »art of thought« on a national level³⁵.

Most appealing in the years of the first Republic, was Condillac's semiotic model of the formation of human thought and society which combined rationalist and historic modes of explanation. The decisive moment in this emergence of human mental activity was the invention of »arbitrary signs«, which symbolised an act of signification independent of outside stimuli as their primary source³⁶. Only through the use of arbitrary signs, i.e. signs which were not formed upon the model of immediate sensation but depended upon choice the human soul gained »power over its faculties«³⁷. Without the development of arbitrary signs there was no reflection and consequently no choice, no freedom, no morality, no human soul.

Yet this combination of a rationalist and genetic account of human rationality created the problem of transition from the stage of a »pure passivity of the mind« and passive reproduction of natural signs, towards active use of arbitrary signs³⁸. Condillac solved this logical problem with a historical argument. Early humans, he stated, »insensibly managed to do with reflection what they had only done by instinct«³⁹.

- 34 I am following here the radical interpretation of Condillac's »Essay« as it has most prominently been put forward in the work of Hans Aarsleff: »Pour Condillac, toute connaissance humaine est fonction de langage, et le langage est fonction de la vie collective en société. Ainsi, les connaissances humaines sont fonctions de la société, et les progrès de la connaissance sont possibles uniquement par l'intermédiaire du langage« (AARSLEFF, Locke to Saussure (as in n. 32), p. 165). For an updated version of his argument concerning the importance of Condillac for the formation of Wilhelm von Humboldt's philosophy of language, see Hans AARSLEFF, John L. LOGAN, An essay on the context and formation of Wilhelm von Humboldt's linguistic thought, in: History of European Ideas 42 (2016), p. 729–807.
- 35 Cf. Catherine MÉROT, La Fréquentation des écoles centrales. Un aspect de l'enseignement secondaire pendant la Révolution française, in: Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes 145 (1987), p. 407–426; Yvonne WEILL, Le curriculum des écoles centrales de l'An IV, in: Annales historiques de la Révolution française 302 (1995), p. 539–553; for a repository of some of the elementary school books, see the online archive provided by Elsa LOUIS, Ilona PABST and Reinhild STEINBERG, Corpus de la grammaire générale dans les écoles centrales (1795–1802), https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/v/grammaire_generale/petite_bibliotheque, accessed 3 December 2019.
- 36 See the distinction between active and passive faculties in Condillac's work. The moment that »man starts to attach arbitrary signs to ideas«, i.e. signs »that he has chosen himself« the mind and foremost the faculty of attention emerges as an active agent. Étienne BONNOT DE CONDILLAC, Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines. Ouvrage où l'on réduit à un seul principe tout ce qui concerne l'entendement humain, 2 vols., Amsterdam 1746, vol. 1, p. 75–76.
- 37 Ibid. vol. 1, p. 75; ID., Traité des sensations à Madame la Comtesse de Vassé, 2 vols., London, Paris 1754, vol. 1, p. 30.
- 38 ID., Essai (as in n. 36), vol. 1, p. 166; ID., Sensations (as in n. 37), vol. 2, p. 146.
- 39 ID., Essai (as in n. 36), vol. 2, p. 8.

The original passivity of the human mind ruled by instinct and habits as well as the semiotic activation of the mind through the use of signs, were the two pillars of Condillac's sensationalist philosophy that played a foundational role for republican epistemology. Among the many examples for the prominence of Condillac's theory of the mind during the First Republic was Gérando's colleague at the SOH and head of the National Deaf-mute Institution Roche-Ambroise Sicard. In his »Cours d'instruction d'un sourd-muet de naissance« (1800), Sicard claimed that the mind and the ideas of his pupils could be observed directly in their physiognomies. The deaf-mute was a »walking mirror« and every learned instructor could easily »translate« the natural grammar »on a blackboard« without any remaining »opacity«⁴⁰. Sicard's case offers an insight into the powerful ideal of the transparency of the human mind that guided the reception of Condillac during the First Republic⁴¹. The fact that Sicard himself was everything but a republican philosopher only underlines how ubiquitous Condillac's ideas of a semiotic activation and transformation of the blank and passive human mind were at the time.

*From the transparent mind to traces of an opaque force:
Gérando's science of the self*

From the outset, Gérando did not conceal that his work had to be understood as a direct attack on the republican project of semiotic transformation. Even though Condillac had opened the path to a genuine study of the human mind, his generalisation of language as the principal element in the development of the human intellect had led to a cultural policy that desired to shape the experience of its citizens directly⁴². A desire that ultimately had to rely on the conception of a passive, malleable and credulous subject of knowledge⁴³. Gérando's relation to Condillac's philosophy was thus split. With the republican philosophers Gérando saw Condillac as the founder of a consistent science of ideas, yet he assumed that its guiding principle – the theory of transformed sensations – was not only logically flawed but politically dangerous.

In order to critique and complement Condillac's model of the psyche as *tabula rasa* and original passivity, Gérando turned to the *psychologie* of the Swiss naturalist Charles Bonnet (1720–1793). In the opening passages of the »Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme« (1760), Bonnet had aligned himself with Condillac and his program to develop a natural history of the human mind that was based on observation. From a methodological point of view, there was no difference in the method of studying insects, plants or the human mind⁴⁴. However, psychology differed from

40 Roch-Ambroise SICARD, Cours d'instruction d'un sourd-muet de naissance pour servir à l'éducation des sourds-muets, Paris 1800, p. 443.

41 Martin HERRNSTADT, Laurens SCHLICHT, Language and history in the context of the Société des observateurs de l'homme (1799–1804), in: Miles MACLEOD et al. (ed.), Language as a scientific tool. Shaping scientific language across time and national tradition, New York, London 2016, p. 57–73.

42 Joseph-Marie DE GÉRANDO, Des signes et de l'art de penser considérés dans leur rapports mutuels, 4 vols. Paris 1800, vol. 1, p. xxi-xxii.

43 Ibid., vol. 3, p. 241.

44 »J'ai entrepris d'étudier l'homme, comme j'ai étudié les insectes et les plantes. L'Esprit d'observation n'est point borné à un seul genre.« Charles BONNET, Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme, Copenhagen 1760, p. i-ii.

other objects of study in natural history. Human thought, or the *soul* as Bonnet termed it, was not to be observed directly but only in its *milieu* and through the effects it created⁴⁵. In his »Considérations sur les corps organisés« (1762) he underlined that nature was not »subjected to extreme precision«, that the workings of nature had to be studied through »a certain latitude« that was discovered through »experience«⁴⁶. I will return to the concept of latitude and the political dimension of this term in Gérando's theory of administrative practice. For now, it is important to underline, that Gérando found in Bonnet a different model of knowledge that complemented Condillac's analytical program, with a »synthetic method«⁴⁷. The mind was not an object of knowledge whose faculties could be reduced to elementary sensations, it had to be understood as force or energy and to be studied through its effects in the world, and the phenomena it created. Soul, mind or what Bonnet called the self (*moi*) was to be understood as a »simple, indivisible« and active intellectual faculty. It was this idea of a force of the psyche or self as a »primitive and inexplicable fact«⁴⁸ that Gérando mobilised in his critique of Condillac and republican epistemology⁴⁹. In doing so, he introduced both a new subject (the *moi*) and a new object (»the inherent force of the psyche«) into the sensationalist philosophy of Condillac.

This had three major consequences for the post-revolutionary science of man. The first was the radical shift in the status of language and semiotics, from a potentially transparent medium of discourse towards sensible »traces of our thought«,⁵⁰ whose active principle eluded analytic knowledge. The human mind thus turned from a transparent »mirror« into an opaque source of force. The second and related consequence, was the introduction of an intrinsic activity or energy of the mind that did not depend on its external semiotic activation. Language, for Gérando, was not the origin of mental activity, but rather an essential instrument to guide and organise an intrinsic mental force, or »virtuality« of a self⁵¹. The third consequence concerns the level of method. Analysis of discourse ceased to be the general scientific method. Gérando sought to distinguish *observation* as the act of »noticing a fact« from *analyse*, as the act of »discovering by means of comparison the relations that exist between ideas«⁵². The »methods of observation« or »synthetic method« designated

45 »The soul cannot know itself; it only knows through the ministry of the senses; it does not know matter; it sees it only through a milieu; it only judges it in relation to its senses.« Ibid., p. xxii.

46 »La Nature n'a pas été assujettie à une précision extrême; il est dans sa manière d'opérer, une certaine latitude que le physicien doit étudier, & que l'Expérience lui découvre«. Charles BONNET, *Considérations sur les corps organisés*, 2 vols., Amsterdam 1762, vol. 2, p. 159–160.

47 DE GÉRANDO, *Signes* (as in n. 42), vol. 4, p. 199.

48 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 42.

49 See Gérando's distinction between the »judgement of observation« and the »judgment of comparison« and between »primitive« and »reflected facts« as he develops it on several occasions throughout his work. Joseph-Marie DE GÉRANDO, *De la génération des connaissances humaines*. Paris 1990 [1802], p. 203–204. This distinction is also the basis for his debate with Destutt de Tracy's »Projét d'idéologie«, developed in: ID., *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines*, 4 vols. Paris 1804, vol. 2, p. 355–357.

50 DE GÉRANDO, *Génération* (as in n. 49), p. 90.

51 Ibid., p. 109.

52 Ibid., p. 203.

a non-propositional form of knowledge that necessarily preceded knowledge produced by the »analytical method«⁵³. As Gérando put it, »abstract reasoning« should only be admitted »in a way that is subsidiary to the truths of observation«⁵⁴. Whereas analysis was situated on the level of discourse, observation referred to the existence of »immediate phenomena« and the »real properties of things« alike⁵⁵.

Inside the framework of Condillac's analytical doctrine, the activity of the self had been an effect of the use of arbitrary signs. In Gérando's treatise it appeared as an independent phenomenon and source of experience. However, he did not suppose the »active self« as immediately present through the act of pure intellection. On the contrary, it was encapsulated inside an immediate experience of the world. Every sensation was composed of both the experience of an object (»science d'observation«) and the perception of a subject of this experience (»science du moi ou conscience«)⁵⁶. The origin of knowledge was from the outset divided into the two branches of an »evidence of sentiment« and an »immediate intuition«⁵⁷. Language and signs were thus not primarily understood as a medium of representation, but as sensory impulses, »stimulators« (»excitateurs«), that could irritate and draw attention to an already existing mental activity⁵⁸. As Gérando stated in the first volume of his work, the synthetic potential of this active self, this productive self-attention could only be grasped

»[...] if we are exercised to reflect on ourselves [»reflechir sur soi-même«]. For one can only make use of a power [*pouvoir*] after having noticed that one possesses it; and at this moment, the faculty of reflection in the individual is still in an almost absolute inaction«⁵⁹.

Gérando thus remained faithful to the interactive concept of the generation of the human faculties outlined by Condillac, albeit under another guise. Whereas for Condillac the activity of the mind and the self were results of a specifically human use of signs and language, for Gérando, the self, or the human psyche and its inherent activity did not belong to a semiotic order and could not be reduced or dissolved into discourse.

*Beyond the epistemological myth:
Limits of representation and the realm of morality*

It was François-Pierre-Gonthier Maine de Biran (1766–1824) who noted the originality of Gérando's thought early on. In a letter to Gérando from 1802, Biran confirmed their shared philosophical intuition. The »principles of morality«, he wrote, would only find a true foundation if one recognized a »self« (*moi*) that was capable of a »force of reaction to modify itself« (»puissance de réaction pour se modifier lui-

53 DE GÉRANDO, *Signes* (as in n. 42), vol. 4, p. 187.

54 DE GÉRANDO, *Génération* (as in n. 49), p. 226.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

56 DE GERANDO, *Signes* (as in n. 42), vol. 1, p. 14.

57 *Id.*, *Génération* (as in n. 49), p. 204.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

59 DE GÉRANDO, *Signes* (as in n. 42), vol. 1, p. 56.

même»⁶⁰. To have »recognized this close alliance between psychology and morals«, Biran argued in a later work, was one of the main achievements of Gérando's philosophy⁶¹. In this respect, Gérando, whilst taking a critical stance towards the Kantian discourse, mobilised different idealist currents and their attention on the active *self* to limit the analytical program of republican epistemology.⁶² At the same time, he fiercely opposed the emerging transcendentalism à la Chateaubriand, de Bonald or de Maistre, which quickly regained popularity in France with the reinstatement of Catholicism as the state religion after the Concordat of 1801⁶³. Gérando's concept of the self was not conceived as a transcendental subject or as inner essence, but as a force that could be perceived immediately and that had to be guided through the establishment of active self-reflexivity. Language and signs played a formative role as instruments to guide and to provoke an understanding of this psychological fact, but they did in no way create it – as Condillac had claimed in his model of semiotic activation of the mind⁶⁴.

- 60 Letter from 18 October 1802, in: MAINE DE BIRAN, *Œuvres*, vol. 13-2/3, Paris 1996, p. 180–181. The early dialogue between the two is based on Biran's reading of »Des signes« as it can be reconstructed from his manuscripts and Gérando's positive review of Biran's »Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser« (1802) in the »Décade philosophique«. Together with their mutual friend André-Marie Ampère (1775–1836) they are a central point for the reflection and popularisation of the discourse of the »self« and its activity at the turn of the century. See among other examples a letter written to Gérando by Ampère, where this shared research question is spelled out: »Quelle est l'influence de l'activité propre de l'être sentant et pensant sur ses sensations, ses idées, ses jugemens, ses déterminations, et en général sur tous les phénomènes intellectuels et moraux qu'il présente?« Victor EGGER, *Une lettre de Bonald à Degérando. Une lettre d'Ampère au même*, in: *La Critique Philosophique* 3,3 (1888), p. 219–226. It's around these questions that post-revolutionary French philosophy will be reassembled. Cf. Pierre MAINE DE BIRAN, *Conversation avec MM. Degérando et Ampère le 7 juillet 1813 à Nogent-sur-Marne, sous berceaux de verdure*, in: *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 14,3 (1906), p. 393–469, 415. When Maine de Biran, Ampère and Gérando founded the first »société philosophique« and »académie psychologique« in France in August 1814, this society included the brothers Georges and Frédéric Cuvier, Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard (1763–1845) and the two young philosophers François Guizot (1787–1874) and Victor Cousin (1792–1867).
- 61 Pierre MAINE DE BIRAN, *Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie*, in: ID., *Œuvres inédites*, publiées par Ernest NAVILLE, vol. 1, Paris 1859 [1812], p. 109–110.
- 62 For the role of Gérando as a relay between German and French intellectual culture see foremost François AZOUVI, Dominique BOUREL (ed.), *De Königsberg à Paris. La réception de Kant en France (1788–1804)*, Paris 1991; Pierre F. DALED, *Le matérialisme occulté et la genèse du sensualisme. Écrire l'histoire de la philosophie en France*, Paris 2005; Ayşe YUVA, *La raison pure peut-elle être pratique? La figure du philosophe allemand au début du XIX^e siècle en France*, in: Anne BAILLOT, Ayşe YUVA (ed.), *France-Allemagne. Figures de l'intellectuel entre Révolution et Réaction 1780–1848*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 2014, p. 115–135. Building on these works I am arguing for the political importance of this early reception of German idealist thought as a basic resource to formulate a post-revolutionary science of man based on the notion of an »activity of the self«. Here lies as well one of the main shortcomings of the work of Bocquet, as it absorbs Gérando into a French philosophical culture without accounting for the different sources of Gérando's thought. Therefore, he ends up with macro-oppositions of »French universalism« versus »German singularity« (BOCQUET, *Spiritualisme* (as in n. 12) p. 169–170), which are exactly the kind of oppositions at stake when studying a trajectory like the one of Gérando.
- 63 Cf. Waldemar GURIAN, *Die politischen und sozialen Ideen des französischen Katholizismus 1789/1914*, München-Gladbach 1929; FORMIGARI, *Signs* (as in n. 18).
- 64 It would be of interest to relate the conception of the self as it is articulated in Gérando with re-

Gérando's philosophical project rested upon this vital demarcation between active subject of thought and methods of abstraction that regarded the self as a mere aggregate of elementary sense perceptions. Biran further spelled out the importance of this difference in his »Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie« (1812):

»The characteristic of this reflected concept [the subject that perceives itself, M. H.] is that it has no direct sign of manifestation: the evidence of the principle is immediate, completely interior, without anything external being able to demonstrate it [...]. The signs we use in metaphysics can awake and excite the immediate sensation of this evidence, inherent in each spirit [...] but these signs, always arbitrary, conventional, have no relation with the signified subject: they produce inner evidence, but do not create it; the inner evidence is before them, and they would not exist without it«⁶⁵.

Gérando's philosophy, as Maine de Biran's, developed in close dialogue around 1800, represents a peculiar attempt to reconcile Condillacism and idealism. This strategy to combine an independent activity of the human mind with a sensationalist understanding of sense perception as the two active and irreducible sources of knowledge, outlines the basic conundrum that I wish to call Gérando's *interactive science of man*⁶⁶.

If others have pointed to the specificity of Gérando's concept of an activity of the mind⁶⁷, its consequences and its socio-political implications have until now rarely been taken into account⁶⁸. Therefore, after this conceptual reconstruction of Gérando's philosophical position, I will turn to the question of how his epistemological critique and interactive approach to the science of man translated into a program of

cent research in France on the different genealogies of the concept of the self in 18th-century philosophical discourse. Cf. Jacques GUILHAUMOU, *Sieyès et le moi. De la dignité sociale à la duperie mondaine*, in: Augustin GIOVANNONI (ed.), *Figures de la duperie de soi*, Paris 2001, p. 43–62; Jan GOLDSTEIN, *Post-revolutionary self. Politics and psyche in France, 1750–1850*, Cambridge 2005; Franck SALAÛN, *Le genou de Jacques. Singularités et théorie du moi dans l'œuvre de Diderot*, Paris 2010 (*Fictions pensantes*). For an overview of the arguments see Jacques GUILHAUMOU, *Résister à la duperie de soi. De Rousseau à Sieyès*. *Revue critique*, in: *Révolution française*, <https://revolution-francaise.net/2011/03/13/427-resister-a-la-duperie-de-soi-de-rousseau-a-sieyes> (13.3.2011), accessed 3 December 2019.

65 MAINE DE BIRAN, *Fondements* (as in n. 61), p. 103.

66 For a philosophical discussion of this peculiar tradition of thought that links Malebranche, Leibniz, Condillac, Gérando and Biran with the phenomenological tradition of Henri Bergson and beyond, see Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY, *The incarnate subject. Malebranche, Biran and Bergson on the union of body and soul*, New York 2001.

67 KÖSTER, *Degérando* (as in n. 14); Günther PFLUG, *Henri Bergson. Quellen und Konsequenzen einer induktiven Metaphysik*, Berlin 1959; SCHWARTZ, *Idéologues* (as in n. 14); BRAUNSTEIN, *Le social* (as in n. 16); BOCQUET, *Spiritualiste* (as in n. 12).

68 An exception to the rule can be seen in the introduction to the edited volume on Gérando »La force des esprit mous« which sets the scene for a more comprehensive understanding of Gérando's thought and practice. An attempt for the implementation of a comprehensive perspective is made by VINCENT, *Histoire naturelle* (as in n. 16), yet as he puts the emphasis on the »taxonomic« side of Gérando's thought he does not grasp what I argue is the epistemological key to Gérando's interactive approach.

observation, as exemplified in his reaction to the case of Victor of Aveyron. Then, I will outline the implications for socio-economic policies as well as administrative practices in post-revolutionary France.

III. Activating the post-revolutionary empire of the self: The moral observation of Victor de l'Aveyron

In Winter 1799, shortly after the Coup of 18 Brumaire, a dyer from the remote community of Saint-Sernin in the Aveyron Department south of the Massif Central found a naked youngster in his barn. It was said that the boy had been living in the forest for years, that he had been caught in the neighbouring department of Tarn two years ago, and that he should be considered a feral child. The nine to ten-year-old boy soon gained notoriety in the French capital as »Victor the young savage of Aveyron« or simply Victor of Aveyron⁶⁹. In this critical moment, the future of the Republic was at stake. The discovery of the boy produced a cascade of events, briefly turning him into an *experimentum crucis* for the transformative potential of republican epistemology and Gérando's interactive approach to the sciences of man. In the course of the year 1800, the Society of observers of man was entrusted with the task of examining the boy.

Long neglected, the political history of the study of Victor of Aveyron has most recently been reconstructed in depth by Jean-Luc Chappey⁷⁰. In his study, Chappey shows how the concept and understanding of human nature underwent »rapid and radical changes« during the political transformation of the First Republic into the Napoleonic Empire⁷¹. The most apparent and widely recognized feature of the debate is the way it provided an opportunity to publicly attack the political anthropology of the Revolution and its ideal of human regeneration grounded in the assumption of a virtuous state of nature and human perfectibility⁷². Prominent actors of the republican science of man, Philippe Pinel and Georges Cuvier, who had been active in promoting the republican ideal of human regeneration, took the boy's case as an opportunity to turn against this very ideal. As Pinel claimed in his »Report to the Society of the Observers of man concerned with the child known under the name savage from Aveyron« given late in 1800, Victor marked the limit of educational capa-

69 For materials on the case of Victor and a good introduction cf. the works of GINESTE, Victor (as in n. 2). For the epistemological function of wild children in general and studies on Victor in particular see among others MORAVIA, Ragazzo (as in n. 2); Julia V. DOUTHWAITE, The wild girl, natural man, and the monster. Dangerous experiments in the Age of Enlightenment, Chicago, IL 2002; Adriana Silvia BENZAQUÉN, Encounters with wild children. Temptation and disappointment in the study of human nature, Montreal 2006; Patrick McDONAGH, Idiocy. A cultural history, Liverpool 2008. I refer as well to the digital exhibition of »Les enfants sauvages – Les enfants sages. Langue et société en France autour 1800«, that has been conceived by Ilona PABST and published in the context of the proceedings of the international colloquium »Idéologie – Grammaire générale – Écoles centrales« held from 29 March to 2 April 2001, <http://www.necessaire.com/exposition>, accessed 3 December 2019.

70 CHAPPEY, Sauvagerie (as in n. 2).

71 Ibid., p. 220.

72 Ibid., p. 78.

bilities and had to be seen as an idiot, who much more resembled the inmates of the Charenton mental asylum than the model of the noble savage⁷³. Gérando on the other hand defended the potential of Victor's reintegration into society on the grounds of a thorough practice of observation⁷⁴. His particular position in the debate around Victor is revealed in his critical stance towards both the boy's classification as an incurable idiot and the republican horizon of universal regeneration of mankind. Opposing Pinel's diagnosis, he took sides with Jean Itard (1774–1838), a young doctor assigned to supervise Victor. Itard promoted an idea of observation and education of the child that Gérando saw as a realisation of the critical framework he himself had established in his treatise on »Signs and Ideas«⁷⁵. In March 1802, Minister of the Interior Jean-Antoine Chaptal (1756–1832) pushed for a decision and asked for Sicard's judgement on the case⁷⁶. The same day, Gérando intervened in the debate with a letter to the head of the interior section of the newly established Conseil d'État, his former patron and supporter Pierre-Louis Roederer, claiming that Sicard's methods were flawed and that Victor's faculties could not be observed by use of the elements of general grammar. First, they had to be activated through the creation and direction of physical needs. These, in turn, would allow Victor to direct the force of attention towards himself and to develop his capacity to reflect. Observation of the savage mind was thus tantamount to the multiplication of his »needs in order to expand his ideas, and to fix his attention in order to teach him to account of himself [*se rendre compte*], which is the only means to enable him to give an account of himself to others«⁷⁷.

In Victor's case, observation appeared as an instrument of intervention, as a form of applied semiotics that aimed to activate a self-reflective relationship in the object observed. Observation was not only an instrument to produce knowledge *of* the self but a technique to promote the sense of self *in* the object observed. Of particular interest is the episode that recounts Itard's attempt »to put [Victor's] heart to the test« (»mettre le cœur à l'épreuve«) and to observe the development of the »interior senti-

73 The first and the second »Rapport fait à la Société des observateurs de l'homme sur l'enfant connu sous le nom le sauvage de Aveyron« by Pinel are reproduced in Gineste's collection of materials, GINESTE, Victor (as in n. 2), p. 324–338 and 351–360. For a comprehensive summary of the dispute see chapter 4 »Le pari d'Itard et l'idéal de perfectibilité« of CHAPPEY, Sauvagerie (as in n. 2). See as well the Dossier Itard in the Archives of the Institut National des Jeunes Sourds à Paris (INJS) and i. a. Chaptal's letters from 8 April and 10 December 1801 (18 Germinal Year IX, 3 Nivôse Year X) cutting the funds for Victor's education, cf. Archives INJS, Dossier Itard (Docteurs) Manuscrits.

74 For a detailed account see also Nicolas PETHES, »Victor, l'enfant de la forêt«. Experiments on heredity in savage children, in: Staffan MÜLLER-WILLE, Hans-Jörg RHEINBERGER (ed.), Heredity produced. At the crossroads of biology, politics, and culture, 1500–1870, Cambridge, MA 2007, p. 399–419; SCHLICHT, *tabula rasa* (as in n. 3).

75 In a letter to Roederer Gérando connects the (initial) success of Itard's work with Victor to his epistemological treatise: »Mon ouvrage lui [Itard] tomba sous les mains, il découvrit la marche indiquée par la connaissance des facultés humaines. Il le tenta, il réussit.« Gérando to Roederer, 22 March 1802, in: AN 29AP/10.

76 »Je vous invite de me faire passer à la fin du mois courant l'avis du C^m Sicard sur la possibilité ou l'impossibilité d'instruire cet individu, afin que je prenne une détermination sur son sort.« Letter of 14 March 1802, in: Archives INJS, Dossier Itard.

77 Letter from 23 Ventôse Year 10 (14 March 1802), in: AN AP29/10.

ment of justice«, i. e. the moral order inside his pupil⁷⁸. For Itard (and Gérando), both the self and the realm of morality could not be observed or analysed directly. Complying with rules and obeying orders did not mean that the observed individual understood the reason for the rule and shared its spirit. To explore Victor's »interior sentiment of justice« meant to test his capacity to actively commit himself to a moral order. The object of study was Victor's responsiveness to acts of »hateful and appalling« (*odieuse et révoltante*) injustice inflicted on him⁷⁹. Itard chose a day when Victor had behaved particularly well to punish him, dragging him to a room in which Victor had been locked up during the time of his early education while observing his reaction. Itard created an experiment in which Victor had to use the »forces of his attention« and his body to revolt against his »powerlessness«. When Victor used force to resist him, Itard took this »act of legitimate vengeance« as »proof« of the »sentiment of justice and injustice« in the boy. He concluded that »by giving him this sentiment, or rather by provoking its development«, he had »raised the savage man to the full status of the moral man [...]«⁸⁰. For my argument it is essential to underline Itard's clarification: the elevation of Victor to a »moral man« was not Itard's doing, as he himself admits, but Victor's active response to the experiment. The observation of man was an act of at times violent intervention that sought to foster self-reflective capabilities in the subject and in doing so nurture the spontaneous creation of a moral order. Gérando himself had already formulated this principle, as the moral bottom line of his epistemology in autumn 1800:

»It is not to the philosophers that we must complain, if we are led astray; there is only ourselves, our own weakness to blame. Here all precepts of logic fall within the realm of morals. They are related to the advice which is very easy to be demonstrated but very difficult to follow: »conserve the empire of the self«⁸¹.

The imperative of »conserver l'empire de soi-même« conferred a crucial role upon observation and self-observation as practices that established an independent domain of morality belonging exclusively to the responsibility of a self⁸². Victor's case

78 Jean ITARD, Rapport fait à son excellence le ministre de l'Intérieur sur les nouveaux développements et l'état actuel du Sauvage de l'Aveyron, Paris 1807, p. 73.

79 Ibid. Laurens Schlicht has recently shed new light on the technique of the »moral shock« and its place in the medico-political discourse at the turn to the 19th century. Laurens SCHLICHT, Revolutionary Shocks. The French human sciences and the crafting of modern subjectivity, 1794–1816, in: Sally SHUTTLEWORTH et al. (ed.), Progress and pathology. Medicine and culture in the nineteenth century, Manchester 2020, p. 27–55.

80 ITARD, Rapport (as in n. 78), p. 68, 75–77.

81 DE GÉRANDO, Signes (as in n. 42), vol. 3, p. 24.

82 As is well known, the connection between observation as a form of knowledge and its individualising function has been one of the pillars of Michel Foucault's genealogy of the modern self. My reading of the post-revolutionary science of man responds to Foucault's work but is as well an attempt to point to its limitations. For Foucault, the architectural fiction of an uninterrupted external view is the engine behind the production of the modern self. Cf. Michel FOUCAULT, La vérité et les formes juridiques [1974], in: Dits et écrits. 1954–1988, vol. 2, Paris 1994, p. 538–646, 596; Thomas NUTZ, Strafanstalt als Besserungsmaschine. Reformdiskurs und Gefängniswissenschaft 1775–1848, Munich 2001, p. 95–96. What is lacking in Foucault's genealogy and his thesis

is exemplary in understanding Gérando's critique of republican epistemology and the value he attached to the formation of an independent, i. e. moral space of individual activity over the direct access on the part of the observer. Establishing interactive relationships between observer and observed presupposed the formation and promotion of an irreducible activity of the object of study. As we will see, this program of an *interactive* science of man did not only apply to a single individual but was related to a program of creating new social conditions, especially the organization of civil society and the state.

IV. How to use a moral force? The »empire of the self« and the creation of interactive administrative structures: industry, philanthropy, centralization

In order to further understand the socio-political implications of Gérando's concept of an »empire of the self« it is necessary to turn to his involvement in the socio-political transformations after the Brumaire. First of all, I will turn to the establishment of economic and philanthropic associations as integrated features of the post-revolutionary socio-economic fabric; in a second step I will turn to Gérando's practice as secretary general of the Ministry of Interior between 1804–1811 and his theory of administrative centralisation. I argue that both his associationism and his administrative practice were inspired by a concept of self-restriction of authority used as an instrument to foster the independent activity of citizens and administrative agents alike. The epistemological principle of »conserving the empire of the self« translated into a practice of government and administration that sought to establish »latitudes«, i. e. spaces in which intellectual, moral and economic forces of their subject could develop independently.

Cultivating the »moral forces«: The Society for the encouragement of national industry

Bonaparte's coming to power was not only an authoritarian shift in politics. It was at the same time marked by a liberal transformation of political economy, mostly characterised by the emergence of a new institutional form in France by the name of *associations*. Post-revolutionary associationism was a response to the abolition of the guild structure and generally all corporations of *Ancien regime* society that had been put in effect by the revolutionary Le Chapelier laws in 1791. This liberation of individual productive activity subsequently created the problem of an alternative form of its regulation⁸³. The crucial question was how economic regulation was possible

of the panopticon, is precisely the interactive aspect, the mutual relation between observer and observed, and the spontaneous element of self-reflection that characterize Gérando's specific effort to circumscribe the outlines of a post-revolutionary self. For a general critique of the grand narratives of the self from Michel Foucault to Charles Taylor see Jerrold E. SEIGEL, *The idea of the self. Thought and experience in Western Europe since the seventeenth century*, Cambridge 2005. Following this critique my reading of Gérando tries to contextualize the »empire of the self« as a concrete epistemological as well as a political response to the crisis of the post-revolutionary social order.

83 Michael SONENSCHER, *Work and wages. Natural law, politics and the eighteenth-century French*

that was not based on direct political control? Associations were supposed to function as »intermediary bodies« operating between the central administration and the individual citizens and acting as a place of mediation and reconciliation of diverse and conflicting individual interests. They recently have become a case to study the history of the emergence of the concept of *association* as well as structures of civil society in France⁸⁴. Gérando's role in this process has been noted⁸⁵, yet the systematic connections of his associationism and his interactive concept of the post-revolutionary science of man have until now not been considered.

His leadership in the creation of the Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale (SEIN) in Paris in 1801 can thus serve as a first example, to show how the epistemological principle of an independent force and productivity of the human mind translated into the project to encourage industry. The SEIN constituted a novel kind of association in France with the goal to establish a network of information between the different local producers in the Départements and the political and economic elite in Paris⁸⁶. It promoted an essentially practical understanding of knowledge that aimed to merge the theoretician and the practitioner inside the novel figure of the *entrepreneur*, with the Minister of the Interior Jean-Antoine Chaptal (1756–1835) as its epit-

trades, Cambridge 1989; William Hamilton SEWELL, *Work and revolution in France. The language of labor from the old regime to 1848*, Cambridge 1995; Steven Laurence KAPLAN, *La fin des corporations*, Paris 2001. From the point of view of a political epistemology it is essential to note that the moment the epistemological principle of *association*, and the general validity of the encyclopedic order of knowledge is put into question, these principles reappear in the socio-political and administrative realm as elements of re-institutionalisation of the social.

- 84 Cf. Pierre ROSANVALLON, *Le moment Guizot*, Paris 1985 (Bibliothèque des sciences humaines); ID., *Le modèle politique français. La société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours*, Paris 2004 (L'univers historique); Igor MOULLIER, *La société civile dans l'État. Organismes consultatifs, expertise et représentation de la société civile sous le Consulat et l'Empire*, in: Anne Marie SAINT-GILLE (ed.), *La société civile organisée aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles. Perspectives allemandes et françaises*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 2010 (Histoire et civilisations), p. 261–274; Christophe CHARLE, Julien VINCENT (ed.), *La société civile. Savoirs, enjeux et acteurs en France et en Grande-Bretagne, 1780–1914*, Rennes 2011 (Collection Carnot); Peter COLLIN, Sabine RUDISCHHAUSER, *Regulierte Selbstregulierung. Historische Analysen hybrider Regelungsstrukturen*, in: *Trivium. Revue franco-allemande de sciences humaines et sociales* 21 (2016); Steven Lawrence KAPLAN, Philippe MINARD, *Der Korporatismus, Ideen und Praktiken. Die Streitpunkte einer Dauerdebatte*, in: *Trivium* 21 (2016). The issue of *Trivium* is to be found online: <https://journals.openedition.org/trivium/5229>, accessed 3 December 2019.
- 85 Andrew J. BUTRICA, *The Founding of the Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale. Yesterday and today*, in: *The Public Historian* 20 (1998), p. 21–42; as well as the introduction to CHAPPEY, MOULLIER, CHRISTEN, *Connaître et reformer* (as in n. 12), p. 26–29.
- 86 Largely because of the bad condition of the archives the early history of the SEIN is not object of extensive research. Cf. Andrew J. BUTRICA, *Historical Collections in Jeopardy. The Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale*, in: *Isis* 88 (1997), p. 296–301. In what follows I am relying mainly on the accounts of Pietro REDONDI, *Nation et entreprise. La Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale, 1801–1815*, in: *History and Technology* 5 (1988), p. 193–222; Serge CHASSAGNE, *Une institution originale de la France post-révolutionnaire et impériale. La Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale*, in: *Histoire, économie et société* 8 (1989), p. 147–165; BUTRICA, *Founding* (as in n. 85); GILLISPIE, *Science and polity* (as in n. 6); Daniel BLOUIN, *Animer et inciter. Jomard et la Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale (1815–1862)*, in: *Bulletin de la Sabix* 54 (2014), <https://journals.openedition.org/sabix/1126>, accessed 3 December 2019.

ome and president.⁸⁷ At this point I do not want to enter into the details of this particular association; I rather want to highlight its administrative logic and its goals as they were laid out by Gérando.

As his biographers point out, the idea of creating the SEIN was developed by Gérando together with the politician and fellow *exilé* Camille Jordan, as well as the inventor of the hot-air balloon Joseph Michel Montgolfier.⁸⁸ In a programmatic paper from late 1800 that outlined the goals of the SEIN, Gérando argued that the achievements of the »political movement« to establish the »fundamental idea of liberty« had to be supplemented by an economic movement that aimed to »awaken« (*éveiller*) the »moral powers« of the individual as a »second power« to the central authority of government⁸⁹. For him, the authoritarian framework that Bonaparte's coup and the law of 28 Pluviôse Year VIII had put into place was the »ideal moment« to liberate these powers. Eventually, Gérando's efforts were successful. He convinced the Minister of the Interior Chaptal to integrate the SEIN as a central element into the post-Brumaire economic policies and to become himself the president of the association. Gérando wrote the charter of the SEIN and became its secretary general, a position he would keep until his death in 1842.

As secretary general he gave the inaugural address to the first assembly of the SEIN on 1st November 1801 in which he sketched out the fundamental logic that an economic policy based on the force of the individual had to rely on:

»The best government can neither see everything nor do everything. The wish to do everything by itself does not even suit its wisdom. It must protect rather than act. To be effective, its influence must be general; it is harming itself by going down into details [...]. Essentially distinct from the work of the administration, the institution that you have founded completes the work of the government, far from contradicting or competing with it.«⁹⁰

The creation of the SEIN reveals a form of government for which direct control and direct regulation of individuals does not seem appropriate but detrimental. The scheme used by Gérando to describe the government's self-limitation was »protect« (*protéger*) rather than »act« (*agir*) and »general influence« rather than interference in »details«. The essential element was not the expansion of the central administration and direct intervention, but the delegation of action and activity to areas that were »essentially distinct« from the state. The government created a space which had to be

87 Cf. Louis BERGERON, *Les Capitalistes en France (1780–1914)*, Paris 1978.

88 See Joseph-Marie DE GÉRANDO, Notice sur M. Joseph Montgolfier membre de l'Institut [...], in: *Bulletin de la Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale* 13 (1814), p. 91–108 ; see as well BAYLE-MOULLARD, *Éloge* (as in n. 12), p. 53.

89 Cf. the unpublished and undated »Projet pour la formation d'une société libre d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale«, probably written in late 1800. The manuscript is to be found in the Archives of the SEIN which are still situated in their historic premises at Saint-Germain-des-Près. I hereby thank Daniel Blouin for having brought these documents to my attention.

90 Joseph-Maire DE GÉRANDO, Discours prononcé à la séance d'ouverture de la Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale le 9 Brumaire An X, in: *Histoire de la Fondation de la Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale*, Paris 1850, p. 16.

essentially withdrawn from its gaze and direct control. The newly founded institutions such as SEIN functioned as free bodies that stood in no »contradiction« with the »work of the government«, but »complemented« it. To put it differently, Gérando's idea was that in order to govern, the state or central administration had to create spaces and institutions that were beyond direct control. The secret of the new regulation was precisely not to control but to »direct« the »natural« forces of the actors themselves. Paradoxically, the effectiveness of central government relied on the »independent society« (»société indépendante«) of those it was supposed to govern.

As I have touched upon before, Gérando was well acquainted with the Scottish tradition of moral science through the translator of Adam Smith, Pierre Prévost⁹¹. Gérando's effort to create and lead an association that promoted industry allows us to place his epistemological critique of Condillac in the context of political economy. The concept of industry and the profound change in the theory of value it entailed challenged the dominant economic doctrine that agriculture was the single source of value production. This doctrine, famously developed by the Physiocrats, can be understood as the economic equivalent to Condillac's epistemology. In Condillac's epistemology, the source of human understanding and the condition of production of ideas is the »pure passivity« of sensation and its continuous transformation⁹². Likewise, the first economic principle of Physiocracy states that soil is the source of all value, and agriculture the sole form of productive labour⁹³. By contrast, arguing for an independent productive activity, or an *energy* of the mind, sought to establish the moral forces and human industry as sources of value in their own right. It was the political economy of Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832) that most resonated with the program of the SEIN as its president Chaptal underlined in a eulogy of Say's »Traité d'économie politique«, first published in 1803. As he pointed out, Say had founded the science of political economy on the observation of the capacity of human activity to »create value« and »wealth«⁹⁴. Thus, human industry did not refer to a specific form of production, but to a productive force that lay in the producer and consumer. Say put this claim of his post-Brumaire and anti-physiocratic economic agenda into the form of a principle: »The material movement of the commodity is nothing to us. The moral movement, that which occurs only in the minds of the contractors, is all«⁹⁵.

Say had already presented his critique of political economy in his utopian outline of a new society entitled »Olbie, or an Essay in the Means of Improving the Morals of a Nation« (1800). Say's Olbians captured the fact that no good republican was

91 SCHULTHESS, *École écossaise* (as in n. 11), p. 103–104.

92 Cf. François QUESNAY, *Évidence [Métaphysique]*, in: Jean LE ROND D'ALEMBERT, Denis DIDEROT (ed.), *Encyclopédie*, Paris 1756, vol. 6, p. 146–157, 147.

93 Anne Jacques ROBERT TURGOT, *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*, 1766.

94 Jean-Antoine CHAPTAL, *Rapport sur un ouvrage de M. Say, intitulé: Traité d'économie politique*, in: *Bulletin de la Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale* 13 (1814), p. 146–147.

95 »Le mouvement matériel de la marchandise n'est rien pour nous. Le mouvement morale, celui qui ne se passe que dans l'esprit des contractans, est tout.« Jean-Baptiste SAY, *Traité d'économie politique ou simple exposition de la manière dont se forment, se distribuent, et se consomment les richesses*, 2 vols., Paris 1803, vol. 2, p. 64.

made by pointing a »pistol to his neck«⁹⁶. Force could »conquer appearances« but was detrimental to the actual goal. To generate attachment and loyalty meant not to make people *do* things, but to make them *want* to do things⁹⁷. Government had to operate through encouragement and the creation of needs in order to foster and manage the moral forces of individuals.

Reading Gérando's post-revolutionary science of man alongside Say's science of economy allows to position the concepts of an independent intellectual energy and the empire of the self in both their political and economic contexts. With associations like the SEIN, a new type of institution appeared in France that sought to harness the self-government of local actors both as independent sources of economic and moral value as well as a novel instrument of state regulation. Gérando's observation of men complements a larger programme of setting up self-limiting institutional and administrative environments in order to activate, foster and use the moral forces of their subjects.

Administrative centralisation and the creation of latitudes

The focus on the moral and economic activity of local agents was part of a more general shift in the understanding of the functioning of central administration. As Igor Moullier has put it, »the revolutionary cult of will was superseded by the cult of the administration as a political agent«⁹⁸.

Gérando entered into state service in August 1800 amidst a general administrative reform to implement the law of 17th February 1800 (28 Pluviôse Year VIII) which had consecrated the prefectorial system in France⁹⁹. The Minister of the Interior Jean-Antoine Chaptal, Gérando's later colleague in the ranks of the SEIN, was a main actor in this reform. During this process Gérando quickly rose to the position of secretary general of the Ministry of the Interior to which he was appointed by Chaptal's successor Jean-Baptiste Nompère de Champagny (1756–1834) in November 1804. In the archives of the ministry persist different traces of his administrative work, even though the original authorship of ministerial reports, acts, etc. is usually not easy to verify¹⁰⁰. Among these traces, one is clearly attributable to Gérando: the reorganisation of the *Registration office* (*bureau d'enregistrement*) and its method of

96 ID., *Olbie, ou, Essai sur les moyens de réformer les mœurs d'une nation*, Paris 1800, p. 15.

97 »Si l'on veut que telle manière d'être, telle habitude de vie s'établisse, la dernière chose à faire est donc d'ordonner que l'on s'y conforme. Voulez-vous être obéi? Il ne faut pas vouloir qu'on fasse: il faut faire qu'on veuille.« Ibid. For recent readings of Say's treatise see: David DENBY, *Sentimental narrative and the social order in France, 1760–1820*, Cambridge 1994 (Cambridge studies in French, 47); Michael SONENSCHER, *Before the deluge. Public debt, inequality, and the intellectual origins of the French Revolution*, Princeton, NJ 2009.

98 MOULLIER, *Ministère* (as in n. 17), p. 59.

99 Clive H. CHURCH, *Revolution and red tape: The French ministerial bureaucracy 1770–1850*, Oxford 1981; Jean Claude PERROT, Stuart WOOLF, *State and statistics in France 1789–1815*, New York, London 1984; Francesca SOFIA, *Una scienza per l'amministrazione: Statistica e pubblici apparati tra età rivoluzionaria e restaurazione*, Roma 1988; Catherine KAWA, *Les ronds-de-cuir en Révolution. Les employés du ministère de l'Intérieur sous la Première République (1792–1800)*, Paris 1996; Stefano MANNONI, *Une et indivisible, Storia dell'accentramento amministrativo in Francia*, vol. 1, *La formazione del sistema (1661–1815)*, Milano 1994; MOULLIER, *Ministère* (as in n. 17).

100 See among others MOULLIER, *Ministère* (as in n. 17), p. 69; KINGSTON, *Bureaucrats* (as in n. 17).

classifying and distributing the daily correspondence between the different bureaux of the ministry¹⁰¹. Although the exact method has not been preserved, the general spirit of the »Système de Mr. Degerando« [sic]¹⁰² can be reconstructed from the documents. Important problems of registration were loss of time and work-force through false distribution of correspondence among the different ministerial bureaux. This problem was made all the more serious by poor archiving of ministerial decisions and a not yet strictly defined division of tasks between the bureaux. To solve this problem, Gérando's reform of the registration was composed of two parts. The first was the creation of an »Indicative and summarised collection of administrative jurisprudence« (»Recueil indicatif et sommaire de jurisprudence administrative«), a classification system designed to orient the employees of the different bureaux as well as guide the work of the ministry¹⁰³. As the later Minister of the Interior and close friend of Gérando Jean-Pierre de Montalivet (1766–1823) put it, the »division of labor« and the mechanisation of administrative work it produced had to be balanced by clerks who possessed or had access to »general knowledge of all the parts« based on the ministerial archive, a »complete collection of all the circular letters« as well as decisions taken in each bureau¹⁰⁴. Clive Church has noted that the implementation of the prefectoral system was accompanied by the administrative centralisation of the ministry itself. The *Registration office*, the *Repository of registers* (*dépôt de registres*) or later the Archival office (*bureau d'archives*) were not only tools to order administrative work but perhaps foremost instruments to consolidate the authority of the Ministry of the Interior itself¹⁰⁵.

If the registry and the work of classification was essential for administrative centralisation, the work of the administrators had to be re-evaluated, too. Herein lay the second aspect of Gérando's reform which aimed at reforming administrative reading and writing. The work of the administrator, from the simple clerk to the chef of the bureau required »good writing« at each level, an »understanding of public economy« (»intelligence d'affaires«) and independent »judgment«¹⁰⁶. Their work had to be based on »sound judgment, prompt writing, and the utmost attention« in order to give an accurate »analysis« of the document, to classify it correctly and to forward it to the relevant bureau¹⁰⁷. As the chef of the Registration office stated, in many cases the texts of the petitions were »mazes of gibberish«, inspired by traditional forms of narrating one's desires and complaints before the authorities. The employee had to

101 »Le système de Mr. Degerando [sic] est bon, nous l'avons adopté, et cela même nous devons le continuer, il serait d'ailleurs difficile d'y rien changer sans établir une confusion telle qu'on ne s'y reconnaîtrait plus«. AN F1a/2, Règlements, mémoires, correspondances relatifs à l'organisation du travail dans les bureaux du ministère de l'Intérieur, An II–IX and An IX–1824.

102 Règlements, mémoires [...], in: AN F1a/2.

103 Arrêté, 18 January 1806, in: AN F1a/3.

104 Instruction générale pour les divisions du ministère de l'Intérieur, Paris, septembre 1812, in: AN F1a/1.

105 CHURCH, Red Tape (as in n. 99), p. 155; MOULLIER, Ministère (as in n. 17), p. 114–115.

106 Note by Gérando, ca. 1806, in: Règlements, mémoires [...], AN F1a/2.

107 As the chef of the *bureau* Edouard Loiselet (1754–?) stated, the number of the ministerial correspondence registered and processed by the four employees of the bureau around 1807 was about 500 000 pieces a year, see: Cabinet du Ministre, travail intérieur des bureaux, 1790–1836, AN F1a/5.

decipher it using the »spirit of analysis« to »complement the judgement of the petitioner« with his own¹⁰⁸. Gérando and others emphasized that administrative centralisation had to be based on the independent intellectual and moral capacities of both its subjects and its agents.

One request to the Minister of the Interior by the Philanthropic society in winter 1805 further illustrates how Gérando's epistemological critique resonated with administrative thought and practice after the Brumaire. The inquirers were de Montmorency, Benjamin Delessert (1773–1847) and François de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt (1747–1827), all companions and colleagues of Gérando in the SEIN¹⁰⁹. Their request referred to a circular issued by the Minister of the Interior calling on the Philanthropic Society to share their knowledge and experience to assist in the reform of state welfare institutions (»établissements d'humanité«). Before any suggestions and observations could be made, the authors ascertained that it was »indispensable to first know« the spirit of the reform and the status of the regulations it aimed to establish. Did the reform aim to set »a mode exactly uniform« for the administration of welfare institutions or did it rather aim to establish regulations that »left latitude« for the local agents »to apply these principles« according to specific »circumstances«¹¹⁰. Interior minister Champagny noted his reply on the margins of the letter, stating: »the last part is the one I decided on«¹¹¹. In his further remarks, the minister indicated that it was not the task of central government to delve into details. Uniformity was necessary as a guiding principle and for formal administrative procedures, but it did not apply to the practice of local administrative agents. In order for central regulations and general principles to function, it was necessary to create latitudes in which the activities of local actors could develop.

Years later, in the opening lecture to his course on the science of administrative law at the Paris faculty of law, which he held from 1819 to 1822, Gérando put forward a systematic definition of this practical insight¹¹². To maintain and foster the energy of administration meant to create spaces where the independent activity of the agents could unfold. He claimed – »even though that maxim could surprise at first sight«¹¹³ – that administrative *latitudes*, including latitudes for error, were essential for good government and the functioning of the administrative apparatus as a whole: »[The administration] has its own freedom and an indispensable freedom, because one can-

108 Loiselet, Rapport à son Excellence le ministre de l'Intérieur, ca. 1806, in: Règlements, mémoires [...], AN F1a/2. For the reevaluation of the registration office and its practice as guided by an *esprit d'analyse* see as well Chaptal's project to reorganise the Ministry of the Interior, cf. Chaptal, Organisation des bureaux du ministère de l'Intérieur, 1800: in AN F1/bI 10¹.

109 DUPRAT, Philanthropie (as in n. 15), vol. 1, p. 317.

110 Cf. Letter to the Minister of the Interior, 14 Frimaire Year XIV, (5 December 1805), in: Dossier »Questions proposées aux administrations des établissements de bienfaisance«, AN F15/106.

111 Ibid.

112 For the history of the debates on the reform of the Paris law faculty, the development of administrative law by Gérando and its significance for the consolidation of the Restoration Constitution after 1815, see: Fabian RAUSCH, *Konstitution und Revolution. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Verfassung in Frankreich 1814–1851*, Berlin, Boston 2019 (Pariser Historische Studien, 111), p. 118–124.

113 Joseph-Marie DE GÉRANDO, Discours d'ouverture du Cours de Droit public et administratif, in: *Themis ou Bibliothèque du jurisconsulte 1* (1819), p. 66–89, 81.

not act without being free of its movements, and action is its essence. In fact, it even has a certain latitude to err [...]«¹¹⁴.

Leaving a space for the independence and active judgement of the local functionary conferred »trust« and »responsibility« and constituted the agent as an epistemic as well as moral subject in its own right. In this sense, a government of freedom was replaced by an administration of latitudes, which delegated authority to a self, thus activating and promoting it. The »legitimate supremacy« of the central state was based on a »necessary latitude«, which was the precondition to promote the productive energy of the individuals as well as their capacity to »do good«¹¹⁵. Gérando's involvement and experience during the reform of the Ministry of the Interior and his continuous work for a codification of administrative practice were thus the basis for the creation of an administrative science, the elements of which he published in four volumes as »De la bienfaisance publique« in 1839.

In a now forgotten article from the »Encyclopédie des gens du monde« (1835), Gérando based the insight of his interactive administrative theory on the distinction between »centralisation« and »concentration«¹¹⁶. If the idea of concentration already presupposed the existence of a centre, then centralisation had to be understood as a foundational act of »creating centers« as preliminary work for any form of »organisation«¹¹⁷. Concentration on the other hand, was an »abuse of centralisation« because it expressed the desire for excessive unity and direct rule that »erased individuality«. Concentration was thus the flipside of the *empire de soi même* as it »suffocated the principles of life, the seeds of fertility« and »undermined an independence that it would have been appropriate to respect«¹¹⁸. Reasonable centralisation, however, was an instrument to create individuality and aimed to establish a centre in each of its parts. For proponents of post-revolutionary science of man like Gérando, Roederer, Pierre-Claude Daunou, Benjamin Constant and others, administration and individuality, centralisation and self-organisation were not mutually exclusive terms, but the two foundational principles of a post-revolutionary social order. The creation of interactive administrative structures in the economy, welfare system and the state depended on the supposition that »centralisation was not only useful, but necessary for freedom«¹¹⁹.

114 »[L'administration] a sa liberté et une liberté indispensable, car on ne peut agir sans être libre de ses mouvements, et l'action est son essence. Nous dirons plus [...], elle a même une certaine latitude pour errer [...]. Ibid., p. 80–81.

115 »In exercising its legitimate supremacy, the state will take care not to abuse it. It will not impose strict and geometric uniformity which does not imply the diversity of circumstances; it will not turn guardianship and control into tyrannical humiliation; it will be able to give just trust to subordinate administrations, promote their zeal and give them the necessary latitude to do good.« Joseph-Marie DE GÉRANDO, *De la bienfaisance publique*, 4 vols., Paris 1839, vol. 3, p. 589.

116 Cf. Joseph-Marie DE GÉRANDO, Art. »Centralisation«, in: *Encyclopédie des gens du monde*, vol. 5,1 (Car–Cha), Paris 1835, p. 238–243, 238. The administrative work of Gérando had a strong impact on the German Historical School. Among others, Lorenz von Stein (1815–1890), in his manual of economics refers to Gérando as the founder of the »economic-administrative school« (»volkswirtschaftliche-administrative Schule«): LORENZ VON STEIN, *Lehrbuch der Volkswirtschaft. Zum Gebrauche für Vorlesungen und für das Selbststudium*, Vienna 1858, p. 182.

117 DE GÉRANDO, *Centralisation* (as in n. 117), p. 238.

118 »[O]n étouffe les principes de vie, les germes de fécondité, en portant atteinte à une indépendance qu'il eût été juste de respecter.« Ibid., p. 241.

119 »On comprend généralement que la centralisation n'est pas l'anéantissement de toute individu-

V. Conclusion

To close I want to resume the different stations of my study of Gérando and then turn to the implications of this case for a more general understanding of the history of the human sciences around 1800. I started with Gérando's critique of language and the distance he took from a universal ideal of human regeneration. Against the presupposition of a *tabula rasa* from which the *citoyen*, the new political man, should be built, he introduced the concept of a »self«, as understood as a pre-linguistic and non-propositional activity of the mind. The distinction of *observation* and *analysis* as two independent realms of judgement and knowledge was connected to the assumption of an independent moral force of the psyche that could not be analytically explained or demonstrated. The object of Gérando's post-revolutionary science of man was thus the independent activity of the mind that needed to be directed by means of controlled self-reflection. I have argued that the idea of the *empire of the self* has to be regarded as the key to combine both Gérando's epistemological critique as well as his moral, economic and administrative practice. Against the grain of recent scholarship that casts Gérando as an intellectual opportunist, I emphasise the remarkable coherence as well as the persistence of his interactive program of observation and administration of men from the Brumaire moment up unto the July Monarchy. As for the assumption of a demise of the *science of man* during the Napoleonic Empire, I suggest a different narrative. Post-revolutionary associationism, the reform of the central administration and the creation of an *administrative science* can all be reconstructed as fields of practice to which techniques and concepts of the science of man migrated. This transfer as well as the emerging economic and administrative *latitudes* did not contradict the authoritarian political transformation of the Napoleonic Empire but complemented it.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the vantage point of this epistemological reconstruction of Gérando's project of a post-revolutionary science of man. The first concerns the misunderstanding of Gérando as an unoriginal author. This judgement is connected to a fractured reading of Gérando as either philosopher, government official or philanthropic activist engaged in different associations. As I have argued, these elements should not be regarded separately. The second conclusion follows from this insight: A comprehensive picture of Gérando's intellectual and political development shows how he transformed Condillacian sensationalism and integrated it into a comprehensive project to create an interactive environment of social institutions and administrative practices based on the *empire of the self* and the *observation of man*.

alité, de toute indépendance; que tout lien n'est pas une chaîne, qu'un nœud peut être un appui, que l'harmonie n'est pas l'oppression, que l'isolement ne constitue pas l'indépendance, que la tutelle protège et n'éteint pas l'individualité. [... L]a Centralisation est non-seulement utile, mais nécessaire à la liberté.« Ibid., p. 242.