

Revolutionary shocks: the French human sciences and the crafting of modern subjectivity, 1794–1816

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Between 9 August and 9 October 1793, the French city of Lyon was besieged by military forces of the central authority in Paris. Earlier that year, the Jacobin municipality at Lyon had been overthrown by a counter-revolutionary insurrection. Subsequently, the *ville rebelle* was besieged by the National Convention in Paris and ultimately defeated. The Hôtel-Dieu hospital at Lyon was reduced to ruins in the battle. Three years later, in 1796, Antoine Petit, a surgeon who was present during the siege, gave an account of that disturbing episode in the inaugural lecture of his anatomy course at the rebuilt Hôtel-Dieu on the 'Influence of the French Revolution on public health'. Petit believed in the healing effects of the Revolution: rather than emphasising his mental or physical suffering at the hands of the revolutionary forces, he used his medical training to highlight what he regarded as the positive political and therapeutic aspects of fear and terror. The first and most necessary function of political revolution, according to Petit, was radically to change the existing social and political habits of the populace in order to clear the way for new and better ones:

Revolutions are, for the political body they shake, what medicines are for the impaired human body whose harmony they must restore. In both cases, the first effect is a disorder, the first sensation pain.¹

Petit thereby claimed that the 'shock of all passions' which had been inflicted by the Revolution had revealed hitherto unknown powers of

the mind.² It was, he argued, the reign of malicious customs among the enslaved peoples in particular – causing a ‘moral fever’ – that had led to the outbreak of Revolution.³ He believed that women, especially, offered proof that ‘moral affections’ contributed to healing, providing the example of a case of dropsy stemming from puffiness in the legs.⁴ As Nina Gelbart has shown, doctors during the Revolution were increasingly expected to understand and cure not only individual but also social diseases and the Revolution thus was seen as a ‘medical event’.⁵ The French and American Revolutions thereby created spaces within which this new expertise could be practised and which provided material for reflecting on the behaviour of people during what George Rosen has termed ‘social stress’.⁶ As a part or result of these reflections, a new way of thinking about the human mind was formed, whose empirical study became a task for the emerging human sciences. According to Robert Wokler, they replaced the speculative anthropology and conjectural history of the eighteenth century.⁷ One part of this project of creating an empirical knowledge system was a rearrangement of philosophical reflections about the human mind through the lens of medical and pedagogical expertise. When most administrative and pedagogical systems of the *ancien régime* for organising people were abolished or deeply transformed during the French Revolution, this necessitated at the same time a new way of thinking about the human mind, of new systems of control, of disciplining and organising people: the ‘citizen’ of a ‘republic’ was a different kind of subject, a subject at the same time demanding ‘equality’, ‘liberty’, and individuality.⁸ As Jan Goldstein has shown, after 1800 one new version of subjectivity consisted of a separation of the enigmatic inner world and the phenomenal appearance of the soul, which I will refer to as one version of ‘modern subjectivity’.⁹ By focusing on interpretations of the shock of the Revolution I want to show how in the beginning the positive potential of the collective shock was a discursive option, while after 1800 shock as a medical intervention became an instrument of experts in controlled spaces.

Petit’s short text is only one example from a series of interpretations of the political shocks inflicted on the French population, from the outset of the French Revolution in 1789 until the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) to power in 1799. In 1789, for example, the

well-known physician Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) observed in the *Journal de Paris* that, from the viewpoint of a ‘physician observer’, it was impossible to ignore the ‘salutary effects of the progress of liberty’, which had injected ‘vigour’ and ‘energy’ into the ‘animal economy’. Like Petit, Pinel discussed this topic through the lens of gender, expressing his belief that ‘moral causes’ like the Revolution especially affected the ‘weaker sex’, that is, women.¹⁰ Pinel also did more than any other physician in France to disseminate the concept of ‘moral treatment’, which was based on the assumption that ‘moral causes’, in contrast to ‘physical’ ones, could cure mental diseases.¹¹ In 1805, his student Jean-Étienne Esquirol (1772–1840) introduced the concept of the ‘moral shock’ (*séousse morale*), which relied upon the notion of moral treatment and made further suggestions on how to strategically use moral shocks to cure types of insanity.¹²

This chapter argues that the therapeutic, educational, and scientific approach to the moral shock that arose after 1800 was only possible in a new framework for treating the human mind within spaces of expert knowledge and control such as the asylum and the school. Furthermore, this framework depended on a specific assessment of the history of the French Revolution. At various stages of the Revolution, optimistic interpretations of the shock were discarded. In the beginning, the universal concepts of equality and liberty had opened up the possibility of conceiving of a comprehensive shock as an equalising force that would create something like a *tabula rasa*.¹³ After the fall of Robespierre in 1794, however, this essentially positive image of the ‘people’ became questionable, since it was precisely the ‘people’ who had been seduced by leaders of the Terror into committing appalling crimes, as the now ascendant Thermidorians believed. While these leaders still used a medical vocabulary to interpret the shock of the Revolution and to suggest a means of pacifying France, they no longer believed in the universal goodness of human beings and suggested avoiding immoderate affects.¹⁴ After Napoleon’s *coup d’état* the idea of the shock was again transformed.¹⁵ Within the new interpretative scheme, which redefined the ‘mind’ and subjects’ relation to it, a relegitimation of moral shock became possible in the form of the intervention of medical or educational experts within spaces of control, or of research strategies for finding something out about the enigmatic content of the mind. This

chapter aims to show that this version of modern subjectivity was defined, on the one hand, as a semi-autonomous unit that came to be called the ego, the *Moi*. It was understood to be visible through careful introspection only and had an inexhaustible content. On the other hand this modern version of what Jan Goldstein has called the 'mental stuff' allowed for a sphere of scientific and administrative expertise, dealing with observing, experimenting on, and controlling the modern self and its deviations.¹⁶ Unlike, for example, 'the citizen' at the beginning of the Revolution who, in Sieyès's eyes, could deal with 'good shocks', this kind of modern self was vulnerable, irritable, and principally unstable.¹⁷ While the shock as a conscious intervention therefore had to be controlled by medical experts, the regime of inwardness was a prerogative of bourgeois subjects, and administrative professionals took over the control of spaces in which passions arose as threatening forces. What I call the 'modern subject' here, has to be understood as a result of these three agencies of acting on an inner zone.

Advocates of the evolving human sciences believed that the mind was characterised by some specifically human essence, some core, that was at least partially invisible.¹⁸ The moral shock was thereby confined to spaces where it was used to encourage the development of individual human beings or groups of human beings and to find out something about their specific potential. From the perspective of moral shock, it is thus possible to show how, in the treatment of the human mind, a specific relationship between experts and subjects evolved on the basis of modern subjectivity and contributed to its production.

The first two sections of the chapter describe the first phase of revolutionary shock after the Terror, while the following three sections analyse the interventions of experts during the Consulate (1799–1804) on the basis of whether they rejected or adopted the technique of moral shock for the treatment of *sourds-muets* (deaf or hard-of-hearing persons),¹⁹ the 'wild boy' Victor, and the insane. The moral shock and political disruption of the French Revolution led ultimately, the chapter concludes, to a new consciousness of the passions and the harmonies or disharmonies of the inner self, and to an evolving scientific practice directed towards an essentialised sphere of individuality. In the concluding section, I focus on the question of how these examples might help elucidate our understanding of a version of modern subjectivity.

The shock of the Revolution after the terror, 1794–99

The idea of moral shock was, from the onset, a political one that also had therapeutic, educational, and institutional corollaries. Its basic argumentative premise can be summed up as follows: despotic regimes, such as the *ancien régime*, have the tendency to keep the general populace in ignorance in order to keep it subordinate. This ignorance prevents people from reasoning well enough, for example, to identify their natural rights and interests. Therefore, some kind of shock has to break down these rigid structures and open up the possibility of creating new ones. Fundamental to this notion of the political shock of the Revolution was the belief that the nation's individuals could become alienated from their inner, rational, and universal mind that nevertheless remained intact even under very unfavourable external and internal conditions.²⁰ As the views of Pinel show above, the idea of insanity as a kind of obstruction of the principally undamaged rational mind also inspired a medical analysis of the early history of the Revolution.

At the beginning of the French Revolution, the inner self corresponded in many ways to the classical sensationalist theory of mind, especially as it was expressed by Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–80) and, based on his theories, Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836).²¹ In his essay on the origin of human knowledge (*Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines* (1749)), for example, Condillac provided an explanation of the mind that relied solely on the faculty of sense perception and the mind's basic capacity for 'attention'. Within this framework, the mind was continually affected by three possible causes: impairment of the sense organs, different ways of processing sense perceptions, and types of storage and connection of these perceptions in the form of ideas.²² His basic hope, and that of Destutt de Tracy as well, was to discover laws governing the workings of the human mind that were analogous to the laws of physics. The intervention of the expert on the human mind should one day be based on the knowledge of these laws of, for example, 'morals', that is for Destutt de Tracy, the 'knowledge of the effects of our inclinations and our sentiments on our happiness'.²³ In Destutt de Tracy's eyes then, these experts would, on the basis of such 'human laws', help to create the optimal conditions for human social life.²⁴ While Destutt de Tracy wrote this after the fall of Robespierre, when he had embraced a moderate stance highlighting the

dangerous potential of any kind of disturbance, before 1794 the positive effects of shock had been more pervasive in both political and scientific discourses.

The idea that shocks could heal was not without precedent, especially in medical circles, where the practice of curing patients by inducing a state of terror in them had existed since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century. A professor of medicine at Leiden University, for instance, Johannes Oosterdyk Schacht (1704–92) had supposed, with reference to Stoic philosophy, that even if terror (*terrore*) were a rather devastating disturbance of the soul (*perturbatio animi*), submerging an ill person in cold water could induce a shock that might cure rabies.²⁵ This kind of shock was adopted by the evolving psychiatric discourse at the end of the eighteenth century, as Philippe Pinel popularised the idea of the ‘moral treatment’ through his work at the Bicêtre hospital, claiming that doctored interventions – that is, those not involving direct physical contact – could cure insanity. In Pinel’s case, as Goldstein argues, these moral interventions were understood to be effective because the faculty of imagination seemingly had an organising effect on the mind and could be affected by every external stimulus (including pictures, theatre plays, and sounds).²⁶ It was not absurd to transfer this idea of the effects of the imagination to the interpretation of the shock of the Revolution, which, for the advocates of the Revolution, could be interpreted as salutary, while in the eyes of its critics it was detrimental.²⁷

The Thermidorians’ stance

As Bronisław Baczko has demonstrated through sustained analysis of political debates after the Terror, providing a plausible explanation as to how a freed people could have succumbed to the seductive voices of the discourse of the Terror, and especially to that of Robespierre, became a central task of the post-Terror period.²⁸ The figure of a people easily seduced gained in prominence during this period, and the idea of the gentle and uniform progress of reason was delegitimated. Instead, the discourse of the Thermidorian Convention (1794–99), which had replaced the regime of the Terror, betrayed a deep-seated anxiety that the people might again be seduced by ‘tyrants’ (referring mainly to

Robespierre and Louis XVI). One of the central figures of this Thermidorian reaction, Jean-Lambert Tallien (1767–1820), made this stance very clear in his speech soon after the fall of Robespierre, on 28 August 1794.²⁹ While speaking about the concrete system of Terror that was, in his eyes, instituted primarily by Robespierre and Saint-Just, he drew attention at the same time to the medical concept of terror:

the terror is a general and regular shock, an exterior shock that affects the most hidden fibres, which degrades man and reduces him to a beast. It is the shock of all physical forces, the concussion of all moral faculties, the disturbance of all ideas, the reversal of all feelings (*affections*). It is a genuine disorganisation of the soul, which, because it leaves the soul only the ability to suffer, robs it of both the sweetness of hope and of the resources of despair.³⁰

Several texts published soon after the end of the Terror presented narratives similar to Tallien's, which utilised vocabulary of the human sciences in order to demonstrate how the people had been either deceived or driven mad by the abuse of passions or of words (the so-called *abus des mots*).³¹ In 1798, for example, Destutt de Tracy published a series of articles in the *Mercure de France* in response to a prize question posed by the Class of Moral and Political Sciences at the National Institute, one of the first institutionalisations of the 'human', 'moral', 'political', or 'social' sciences.³² The question read: 'What means should be considered to establish morality among a people?' (the question was later modified, so Destutt's essay did not enter the competition). Referring to the disturbing experiences of the Terror, de Tracy sharply criticised faith in the gentle progress of reason and instead put forward the thesis that the basic social and political operations of humanity are defined by the conflict of interests. To mitigate these conflicts one had, in his eyes, not to convince people by the force of arguments, but rather to 'indoc-trinate' them, to 'use every indirect means to influence the dispositions of its [the people's] members'.³³ Morality, Destutt contended, is not something 'out there'; it must be produced through a knowledge-based process aimed at changing people's customs (*habitudes*) by instituting good laws, promptly executing these laws, and furnishing the requisite material resources. For Destutt, the transition from one system to the other always generates a 'crisis where one experiences all the

problems of both systems', which could, if prolonged, lead to 'irremediable disorders'.³⁴

One of the major figures of the Thermidorian reaction was Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), a staunch defender of the ideals of moderation and harmony. Constant considered the idea that the Terror was a necessary phase and ingredient of the Revolution influential and dangerous enough to be opposed in detail. Terror, for Constant, reinstated the arbitrary (as opposed to the 'natural') political regime of the past by establishing a distance between the government and the people on the basis of fear.³⁵ Furthermore, by using misleading words (such as 'justice' for unjust actions), it contributed to the confusion of things, words, and ideas, thereby creating a gap between the sacred law of nature and the arbitrary imaginations of despotic rulers:

[The Terror] has habituated the people to hearing the most sacred words being pronounced to motivate the most abhorrent actions. It has confused all notions, accustomed [the people's] minds to despotism, inspired disdain for manners (*formes*), and prepared the ground for acts of violence and crimes in all directions.³⁶

The impetus for Constant's criticism was a book by Adrien Lezay-Marnésia (1769–1814) entitled *Of the causes of the Revolution and of its results* (1797), which defended the Terror as a necessary episode of the Revolution. Like Petit, Lezay considered the Revolution a 'complete change of customs, habits, circumstances, properties'.³⁷ He situated his analysis of the shock of the Terror within a broader interpretation of historical forces, that is, the progress of enlightenment, which he believed had led to Revolution. In his own words, 'enlightenment and corruption progress together, which is why every popular revolution brought about by the progress of enlightenment is necessarily violent'.³⁸ Lezay-Marnésia was convinced that in order to destroy ancient customs ('anciennes habitudes'), an excessive despotism ('despotisme outré') had been necessary to prepare the ground for a free constitution.³⁹ Drawing once again on the field of medicine to furnish an analogy, the Terror was for Lezay-Marnésia a kind of 'fever', whose tremors would be felt even after the actual political event had subsided.⁴⁰ The despotism of the Terror had in this way made a 'new people' who could only attain liberty through 'shocks', even if those shocks were inflicted by 'criminals'.⁴¹

After the *coup d'état* in 1799

Dominant figures in the burgeoning field of the human sciences after the establishment of the National Institute in 1795 presented a rather different analysis of the people in periods of violent political circumstances. The physiologist and materialist philosopher Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis (1757–1808), for example, believed that the practice of the human sciences could contribute to avoiding revolutionary violence and that it was only the anachronism of the political regime, as compared to the progress of enlightenment, that caused the excesses of the revolutionary struggle. Indeed, this violence could be avoided through careful attention to the people's state of mind (*état des esprits*).⁴² For Cabanis, the human sciences would provide a means of governing that would allow social institutions to avoid friction between the people's state of mind and the nature of the social institutions that had produced the revolutionary violence in the first place. One way or the other, these advocates of the human sciences sought to produce situations in which the progress of the mind and the state of societal institutions did not show any difference in development. These could be called 'regimes of contemporaneity', and such regimes were regarded as the foundation of a harmonious society.

In these circumstances, a heterogeneous group of actors gathered in Paris to establish a learned society, the Society of the Observers of Man (*Société des observateurs de l'homme* (1799–1804)). Its forty-five resident and sixteen corresponding members included physicians (Félix Vicq d'Azyr and Philippe Pinel), orientalists (Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838)), mathematicians (Auguste-Savinien Leblond (1760–1811)), naturalists (Aubin-Louis Millin de Grandmaison (1759–1818)), and philosophers (Pierre Laromiguière (1756–1837)). The society was established just after Napoleon's *coup d'état* in 1799 and promised to generate a range of useful knowledge for safeguarding the new political regime against instability. One of its main actors, Joseph Marie de Gérando (1772–1842), believed that the general shock to 'all beliefs' that had been caused by the Revolution necessitated a profound reflection upon the rights and duties of human beings and the place of each being in French society.⁴³ Therefore, he argued, a new and universal science of human beings should form the basis of a harmonising knowledge system, providing insight into the workings of the human

mind, and the effects of education and various external influences, such as climate.⁴⁴

The most visible activities of the Society were concentrated at Paris's *Institution nationale des sourds-muets*, which was a central revolutionary institution because it could demonstrate the moral power of education in very tangible ways during the public sessions which were attended by many, sometimes famous, visitors (such as the Pope, who attended a public session in 1805).⁴⁵ Visitors to the school could admire its realisation of the Enlightenment's educational utopia, which promised to render every human being equally rational.⁴⁶ This programme was based on a conception of human beings as naturally good and virtuous, and it maintained that only the aberrations of history, that is, arbitrary developments, could corrupt these natural qualities. One of the more remarkable means of corrupting people was the above-mentioned misuse of words, the *abus des mots*, which is why advocates of this position were highly interested in reforming language.

The school's director, Roch Ambroise Sicard (1742–1822), claimed to have developed a 'methodical sign language' that was able to replace the sign language normally used by *sourds-muets*, by which he meant that every sign would unequivocally represent only one idea, which, in turn, was connected to only one type of thing in the world.⁴⁷ While there is not space to discuss this idea in detail here, Sicard's basic strategy was to base the signs of the methodical sign language on what he thought to be a natural analysis of the parts of speech, a natural grammar, which therefore represented the structure of things in the world perfectly in language. Hence, Sicard believed he could translate the order of things into an order of words and preserve this order in a language unobstructed by tradition, creating a new language of a new people, the methodical sign language. Contemporary critics of Sicard pointed out that he had entirely overlooked the fact that *sourds-muets* generally already had an elaborate language and that he failed to sufficiently deal with its structure – a disregard that remained a characteristic aspect of the marginalisation of the Deaf Community.⁴⁸

For Sicard's admirers, on the other hand, his methodical sign language seemed ideally suited to eliminating the *abus des mots*, which, for Tallien as well, was crucial to explaining the power accumulated during the Terror. He enjoyed significant success with his programme. A high-ranking official of the Interior Ministry, Jean-Pierre Barbier de Neuville

(1754–1822), mentioned Sicard's public lessons and 'discovery' of the methodical sign language in a letter of recommendation to the Interior Minister, because Sicard was hoping for a pay rise: 'Mr Sicard is well known to the learned foreigners who all frequent his lessons, and who rank his discovery among the achievements upon which our nation prides itself and which elevate it above the others.'⁴⁹ One admirer of his work, the Abbé Pierre David, claimed that Sicard's methodical sign language could form the basis for a much needed clarification and purification of the political vocabulary. Terror, he argued, had managed to deceive people through the misuse and perversion of words such as 'equality' and 'democracy', which would not be possible in a 'natural' language such as Sicard's.⁵⁰ Sicard had influential supporters from the outset. Charles-Maurice Talleyrand (1754–1838) surmised in his 1791 report on public education that Sicard's methodical sign language might help create a universal language 'which will be for thinking what algebra is for calculation.'⁵¹ An archival report of the Committee of Public Assistance in 1796 proposed that 'the analytical signs of the school of the *sourd-muets* might become 'the universal language of educated men of all nations'.⁵²

Sicard was also active, under the pseudonym of 'Dracis', as a writer for the *Annales religieuses*, where, in 1797, an account was published of his experiences during the September Massacres of 1792. This piece described a riot involving the slaughter of imprisoned enemies of the Revolution, including so-called 'refractory priests' like Sicard who had refused the civil constitution of the clergy. Here as well, Sicard painted a picture of an 'irascible' people whose misguided actions stemmed solely from their dependence on the opinions of their leaders.⁵³ The people were susceptible to the voice of reason, but they also listened to those who wanted to inflame unjust passions – they were, ultimately, dependent on the whims of the elite.

Sicard believed that *sourds-muets* represented a perfect natural state prior to the onset of education. They were therefore ideal objects for an 'experimental metaphysics', which he believed could demonstrate how, from the raw, natural state of humanity, an enlightened educational practice would produce enlightened and peaceful citizens.⁵⁴ Sicard's project effectively responded to the Consulate's need to build up a coherent system of knowledge that allowed for the creation of a functioning society through a series of prudent educational and administrative

interventions.⁵⁵ The figure of the *sourd-muet*, also referred to at this time as the ‘savage’ or the ‘automaton’⁵⁶ because of an alleged lack of communication, was conceived as a being without history and therefore deemed suitable for the implementation of a perfect system of customs, habits, and signs. Many audience members at Sicard’s regular public lessons at the *Institution nationale des sourds-muets* shared this conviction; one of them even believed he had attended the ‘creation of man.’⁵⁷ Sicard’s perspective also existed in governmental contexts, as demonstrated by this unpublished report of the *Director General of Public Instruction* (c. 1795–99):

It is less by communicating words that are only ever used to signal ideas, than by helping to beget ideas themselves, that it is possible to proceed with some success in the teaching [of *sourds-muets*]. It is as if there is a sort of world map on which the philosophical genius of the teacher establishes, between the ideas that are supposed to be covering the surface, connections that tie them together.⁵⁸

Sicard’s experimental metaphysics was an answer to the challenge of regeneration, that is, of how a society with a history, with traditional customs and habits, might be regenerated without violence or shock, on the sole basis of the laws of nature, thereby avoiding the arbitrary abuse of power witnessed during the Terror. He framed this reference to nature within a sentimental narrative depicting education as an unimpeded discovery and development of immanent abilities through the enjoyment and admiration of nature. In Sicard, we therefore often find emotional descriptions of Jean Massieu (1772–1846) – one of his most famous pupils – hard at work classifying various natural phenomena, but we are very seldom privy to scenes of conflict.⁵⁹ Sicard here reflects the wide-ranging discourse about ‘nature’ that blossomed during the French Revolution, a discourse that highlighted its harmonious, normative, and tender aspects. Roederer, one of the architects of Napoleon’s *coup d’état* and an outspoken champion of Sicard’s method, shared Tallien’s perspective on the Terror, regarding it as a ‘disease where the moral and the physical constantly influence each other.’⁶⁰ Since that system had relied on the ‘arbitrary’ whim of despots, the appeal of an educational technique that promised to reinstate the ‘natural’ order had a special appeal. If, as Roederer believed, the ‘natural’ was intimately tied to the good and the beautiful, then a

concrete technique for attaining the 'natural' was a way to avoid the regression to Terror and the moral and physical distress associated with it. In 1799, he was therefore already staunchly critical of any approach to interpreting the Terror as a necessary phase of the Revolution, regarding it instead as the work of 'some villains' who had merely seized the opportunity to deceive an 'impatient and blind people'.⁶¹ Sicard's version of enlightened education thus fulfilled at least two functions: first, it served as a rhetorical device to criticise the regime of the Terror as 'unnatural'; second it created the possibility to relate to a positive concept of 'nature' serving as a tool to preserve a normative stance towards the concept of 'humanity' without giving up the secularised anthropology. While this latter provided orientational knowledge to situate the new 'citizen' within a sphere of new possibilities for action, it defined human beings as self-referential and developing systems of processing sense perceptions. In order still to be able to claim for ethical norms the actors followed different paths: one, Sicard's and Roederer's, was to add to this self-referential image a concept of 'nature' that already implied the values in question; another, Gérando's and Maine de Biran's, was to define a centre, which was at the same time empty and invisible and could be used to found and legitimate ethical and political norms. Both options were taken to deal with the challenge of a human being as part of nature without transcendence, but which should at the same time serve as a means to formulate a knowledge system for creating a new society. Winfried Wehle has put forward the thesis, that it was precisely this latter conflict (*Zerrissenheit*) to form a centre but not to fill it out that formed the basic concern of the 'modern subject'.⁶²

Victor, the 'wild boy'

So far, I have shown that protagonists of the *coup d'état* of 1799 rejected the interpretation of the Terror as a necessary phase of the Revolution. However, the year 1800 saw a different version of shock within the human sciences emerge in rather local circumstances, when a so-called feral, or 'savage' ('sauvage') child was transferred to Paris's school for deaf mutes.⁶³ This child, approximately twelve years of age, who was later named Victor, initially served the same functional role as the figure of the *sourd-muet*. The Society of the Observers of Man had high hopes

that Sicard's educational methods would succeed in integrating him into society.⁶⁴

Sicard withdrew from the case the same year. Eventually, the task of educating Victor was taken over by Jean Marc Gaspard Itard (1774–1838), the school physician and a student of Pinel, who worked with the boy for five years, gave him his name, and wrote reports on his progress for the Interior Minister. His reports of 1801 and 1806 stand out in the history of feral children because, compared to other cases, they are quite long and very precise in their descriptions of his educational interventions.⁶⁵ Itard started out in his education of Victor from Sicard's conviction that Victor's supposedly natural condition would allow for the 'creation of man', the harmonious unfolding of his pupil's faculties through his classifications of nature. Since, for Sicard and Itard, nature was generally good and virtuous, transferring the natural order to an order of signs and ideas meant safeguarding nature for society.

It is clear from his early report that Itard, like Sicard, began his work assuming that education was the most powerful means of moulding human beings and, furthermore, that humanity owed everything it had to education.⁶⁶ It is clear from his later report of 1806, however, that Itard increasingly deviated from his initial convictions. He saw Victor more and more as a particular, unique research object, who could not serve as a model for all human beings, for he could be compared only to himself.⁶⁷ Within this new framework, the once joyful classification activities were abandoned in favour of a new ensemble of techniques designed to act on Victor's mind, including punishing and surprising Victor, as well as traditional medical treatments such as hot and cold baths. Itard's report of 1806 illustrates how a different version of the sensualist self was taking shape in educational and research practices. While he still believed that sense perception was highly important in moulding human beings, he also used techniques aimed at producing unexpected results, an approach we do not find in Sicard. The kind of self Itard tried to act on was therefore defined at least in part as an area that could only be made visible by an experimental approach in the modern sense. In some way or the other, Itard had to shock Victor's inner self; for while the self itself may be invisible, its effects could, in Itard's view, be made observable. In carefully designed experimental

spaces, moral shock thus made perfect sense. Sometimes, Itard also used his personal bond with Victor to experiment with the effects of emotions:

I approached Victor; I spoke affectionately to him, expressing myself in terms suitable for him to grasp their meaning, and adding even more intelligible signs of friendship. His tears redoubled, accompanied by sighs and sobs. Increasing the intensity of my caresses, I drove the emotion to its highest point and, if I may say so, made tremble the moral Man unto his last fibre.⁶⁸

With interventions like these, Itard was trying to stimulate Victor into active and inventive, especially linguistic, performances. His strong focus on Victor's activity was due to his reading of Gérando's book on the generation of ideas, in which Gérando proposed a transformation of Condillac's conceptualisation of the human mind.⁶⁹ The focal point of this transformation was the mind's passivity or activity.⁷⁰ Gérando concentrated here particularly on the faculty of attention. One of the central claims of his philosophy is that the human being has an active ability to create hitherto unknown combinations of ideas. Attention and invention were means of staking out a specific terrain proper to being human, for – as Michel Foucault has shown – classical sensualist philosophy lacked an argumentational device for defining a particular being called 'man': every totality capable of processing sense perception, of generating ideas and signs was indistinguishable from 'man' (this also partially explains the excitement about 'automatons' and the question of whether they could potentially become human).⁷¹ Gérando chose a path that enabled him to define the essence of human beings within a sensualist vocabulary while dispensing with Condillac's commitment to the absolute emptiness of the mind before education. He called this essence the *Moi*, the ego. It was consciously characterised as an active principle. In the first lines of his *Des signes (On signs)*, Gérando thus defines the verb 'to think' as analogous to the verb 'to act'.⁷² This activity of the ego begins with the faculty of attention, which is the moral counterpart of physical sensation. While sensation comes from the outside, Gérando claims, attention comes from 'us', meaning that there is a structuring principle which we cannot alter (the system of the nerves, the sense organs etc.) and an active principle

dependent on the ego. On the first pages of his prize-winning essay, Gérando observes that both principles had to be treated as unknown variables. This was attractive for philosophers like Victor Cousin (1792–1867), who embraced this concept of the human being with a specifically human core, as well as for other researchers, since the existence of such a core ultimately called for the existence of a research programme.

I contend that it was precisely this human core that also underpinned Itard's subsequent research activities at the *Institution nationale des sourds-muets*. Sicard's ideal rational Enlightenment subject was replaced by a subject whose rich interiority was difficult to locate and to expound.⁷³ This was also the interpretative framework that Itard used in his larger work on the education of *sourds-muets*.⁷⁴ Itard thereby particularised the notion of 'civilisation', so important for revolutionary discourse, and applied it to partially discrete zones of action. The *Institution nationale des sourds-muets* was one such zone, characterised by its unique progress of reason and sensibility. As in the 1806 report on Victor, this particular civilisation of the school's pupils could only be measured against its own zone of action; there could be no comparison with the universal progress of enlightenment.⁷⁵

This version of modern subjectivity as a local challenge of negotiation within local developments necessitated a concomitant interpretation of the place of individuals within their wider social collective. In an 1802 manuscript about insanity, Itard introduced a concept he called the 'spirit of the present time' ('esprit du temps actuel'), which, he argued, constituted the most basic measure of mental health and illness.⁷⁶ Sanity could thus only be defined as a function of the development of a more general, sometimes national, spirit. Political revolutions were comparable to the 'blind anger of a maniac during the most terrible attack', a 'universal and contagious exaltation of every human passion' to the level of 'national mania'.⁷⁷ At the same time, Itard assumed that a diagnosis of mental illness was closely linked to the ensemble of 'national customs'.⁷⁸ Cabanis and Itard shared a perspective on the historicity of nations and of individuals that diverged from the universal narratives of progressive enlightenment.⁷⁹ In their view, the prerequisite for a morally and physically sound relationship between the individual and their more or less extensive community was the synchronous development of their mental progress.⁸⁰

Esquirol and the insane

Itard's friend Jean-Étienne Esquirol (1772–1840), who also was a student of Pinel, published his influential medical dissertation on the human passions in 1805. Esquirol was one of the first physicians in France to reflect systematically on how the passions might be used to cure the insane.⁸¹ In addition, he introduced the concept of 'moral shock' ('*sécousses morales*') to this framework and added to the history of medicine several striking case studies of moral shock at work.⁸² Esquirol believed that the Revolution, and especially the Terror, had produced devastating effects on the mental, emotional, and physical state of the French people:

The political shocks, by bringing all the passions into play, by stimulating artificial passions, by overemphasising violent passions, by multiplying the needs of certain individuals, by depriving the others of the fortune which had become necessary for their habits, the political upheavals have increased the number of the insane. It is what was observed after the revolution in England, it is what has been observed in France since our revolutionary turmoil.⁸³

Throughout his dissertation, Esquirol generally criticises the effects of every sort of disturbance, such as the increasing levels of noise produced within European cities; but at the same time, he believes that the calculated interventions of medical experts in the form of moral shocks may have salutary effects. In many cases, these interventions are arranged analogically to theatrical plays, in order to convey to the insane an understanding of their illness and escort them back to their rational selves. Esquirol uses every means of dissimulation and disguise to induce the necessary moral shock and to break the delusions of insanity:

We have never pretended we could cure [the insane] by arguing with them. This pretension would be contradicted by daily experience. Do the passions give way to reasoning? [...] [T]o treat them with dialectical formulas and syllogisms would be to misunderstand the course of the passions and the clinical history of insanity.

Esquirol argues that it is 'only by giving a moral shock, by placing the insane in a state opposite and contrary to that in which they were before' that they can be cured.⁸⁴

In 1816, Esquirol drew on his intellectual and medical forebears – the physicians Cabanis, Moreau de la Sarthe, and Pinel – in order to strengthen his hypothesis that insanity was caused by an imaginary passion, which, by means of moral shock, could be substituted with a real passion.⁸⁵ To achieve this, the physician first had to master the art of reading the signs of physical and moral disorders (physiognomic signs, for example, but also specific kinds of fever etc.) in order to contrive a specific and individual form of intervention. This would result in breaking the ‘veil’ that separated the interior world of a ‘vicious chain of ideas’ from the outer world.⁸⁶ While individually tailored moral shock could be a legitimate means when carefully controlled by a medical expert, Esquirol considered abrupt changes of habits, ‘dangerous innovations’, and the loss of ancient forms, especially among the lower classes, to be particularly dangerous.⁸⁷ Republican and democratic regimes, in particular, encouraged insanity, according to Esquirol, who, in this particular text of 1816, criticised the whole course of the Revolution.⁸⁸

In summary, in the texts describing the medical interventions of Itard and Esquirol, two types of shock can be distinguished: a political shock, which is harmful, and a therapeutic shock induced by a medical expert, which can be helpful. In the texts of both doctors, the invention of a certain relationship between experts of the mind (psychiatrists, physicians, educators) and objects of this expertise can be retraced. This relationship was characterised by the reification of the objects of medical intervention and the attempt to confine the use of the passions to controlled spaces, while the more general and public zones of action were to be kept free of the excessive shocks linked especially to the Terror. An article by Michel Gourevitch tells of a case that illustrates this dissipation, in the new expert regime, of the Enlightenment’s conviction that every human being is a rational decision-maker with regard to her or his own mind. In 1812, Gourevitch notes, a dispute between the administrator and the physician of the asylum for the insane at Charenton was brought before the police commissioner. The two men disagreed on the question of whether only the physician or also the administrator had a right to make decisions on curing insanity. The police commissioner decided in favour of the physician and thus, as Gourevitch argues, in favour of the consequential growth of ‘medical power’.⁸⁹

Conclusion: modern subjectivity and moral shock

By using moral shocks physicians such as Itard and Esquirol adopted a perspective on the relationship between the individual and society that entailed specific assessment of the individual's capacity for freedom and the right of social and scientific elites to exert control over individuals. This type of scientific and therapeutic activity was marked by constant reflection on the regime of the Terror. In 1789, Pinel had put his trust in the justice of the heated passions of the people, which had shaken off a 'long lethargy' through an eruption of the human spirit, and 'could no longer be oppressed'.⁹⁰ But the Terror had shown human scientists that the moulding of a republican people was not as easy a task as they had hoped. The people were understood to have proven themselves deceivable and seducible, and their passions had been easily manipulated by the leaders of the Terror.

Itard and Esquirol are only two examples of an array of administrators, physicians, and educators (such as Gérando, Pinel, and Cabanis) who were active in discussions about the human and social sciences around 1800, who, especially after the downfall of the universalist hope for a unified *science de l'homme*, helped to develop new medical and scientific spaces for controlling and adjusting the passions. They mistrusted the naturalistic narrative espoused by figures such as Lezay-Marnésia and Petit, who tried to include the Terror in a civilising story of progress. Instead, they advocated an elitist regime that would harmonise the violent passions of the people. For this reason, institutions like the asylum and the school – and, as Michel Foucault has shown, the prison – became important centres comparable to laboratories, where experiments on the control and analysis of the passions could be carried out.⁹¹ Within these spaces, a system of control was established that might be labelled an 'elitist regime', as it was based on the figure of the expert who controlled different aspects of the people's behaviour. This elitist approach held that the people may have a rational and, to some degree, free will, but in cases of deviance, an administrative or scientific expertise is needed to explain, control, and limit the discrepancies.

There are, of course, other anthropological reactions to the challenges of the restructuring of French society, such as clearly mystical or religious answers, that, like the ones presented in this chapter, took up the modern challenge to define human beings as part of nature and at

the same time to formulate normative (ethical and political) claims. This chapter has pointed out that the kind of subjectivity espoused by the human sciences around 1800 explicitly reacted to the experiences of the French Revolution and the anxiety that the people might again fall prey to an instrumentalisation of their easily heated passions. The advocates of Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 1799 therefore rejected the universalist hope for a complete regeneration of 'the people' and 'the mind' and instead tried to install spaces of control within which subjects might exercise their rights freely as long as they did not conflict with basic governmental interests. These spaces made possible a transformed concept of *difference*: at a governmental level, a single, homogeneous layer of education, wealth, or power was no longer necessary; there could be differences everywhere, as long as they were kept within a certain tolerance range. Within these zones of action, attempts were undertaken to establish regimes of contemporaneity. The idea of the civilising mission, so important for the eighteenth century, was thus transformed and used to establish a general scheme of administration.

Another expert, who has been the focus of this chapter, was the medical expert. As pointed out, medical experts like Pinel, Itard, or Esquirol built on a discourse about the effects of the shock of the Revolution to formulate a new version of medical intervention. Esquirol thereby distinguished the political and harmful shock from the medically controlled and curative shock. The kind of modern subjectivity informing this stance towards shock rested upon the figure of the vulnerable and unstable subject on the one hand and the medical, administrative, and political expert systems taking care of mitigating the impact of unstable political and social constellations on the other. Thus, this version of the modern subject was basically semi-autonomous, being unobstructed as long as kept within a tolerance range, and becoming the object of expert systems of control when transgressing the boundaries of situatively defined norms of the tolerable. As Herrnstadt has shown at length, the establishment of the Napoleonic version of authoritarian administration was based on a comparable concept of semi-autonomous units, which was itself based on a transformed version of sensualism.⁹² We thus find the same kind of shift – from transparency predicated upon a universal scheme towards opacity predicated upon a semi-particularised scheme – at the level of the individual, as well. On this individual level, the education of the passions within controlled

spaces was supposed to form the basis for a general harmonisation and pacification. There emerged in this regard a new type of experimental object within the traditional field of the 'analysis of ideas', a specifically human being, with an opaque inner zone called the *Moi*, which enabled the renewed application, now in the context of 'moral treatment', of an old approach to curing physical diseases through shock. We can therefore distinguish two kinds of shock: a universal and revolutionary shock, which is uncontrolled and therefore extremely harmful, and a local shock used to heal the mind or to find out something about the interdependence of the physical and the moral. The kind of subject proffered by the human sciences was marked by an authoritarian relation between experts and the human beings whom they viewed as objects of research, who were at once potentially dangerous and in need of care. This combination of anxiety and care enabled the emergence of two approaches to the problem of control: welfare and the human sciences. And this modern subject, conceived on the basis of mistrust, accordingly reappears as an object of research and as an administrative unit.

Notes

- 1 'Les révolutions sont au corps politique qu'elles agitent, ce que sont au corps humain altéré les médicamens qui doivent y rétablir l'harmonie. Dans l'un comme dans l'autre, le premier effet est un désordre, la première sensation une douleur'. M. A. Petit, *Essai sur la médecine du cœur* (Lyon: Chez Garnier/Chez Reymann, 1806), 116. If not otherwise stated, the translations provided in the text are my own.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 123.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 127–8. Petit tried to show that there was a range of illnesses that had arisen from weakness. Although he did not explicitly limit these cases to women, most of the case studies he presented related to women with forms of diseases stemming from weakness that were cured by the revolutionary shock. In his speech Petit therefore gives various examples of women being cured during the Revolution, but also some of feeble men. It is not easy to say whether Petit was assuming an essential difference here. But I think he was more inclined to believe that there was a difference between men and women based on education. Thus, on p. 124, he explained that women had been brought up in softness and idleness and that the Revolution had put

- these harmful habits aside. According to Petit, women had been 'transformed' into 'new beings' who faced the new demands.
- 5 N. Gelbart, 'The French Revolution as medical event: the journalistic gaze', *History of European Ideas*, 10:4 (1989), 417–27 (p. 417).
 - 6 G. Rosen, 'Social stress and mental disease from the eighteenth century to the present: some origins of social psychiatry', *Millibank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 37:1 (1959), 5–32.
 - 7 R. Wokler, 'From the moral and political sciences to the sciences of society by way of the French Revolution', *Annual Review of Law and Ethics*, 8 (2000), 33–45 (p. 35).
 - 8 See I. Wallerstein, 'Citizens all? Citizens some! The making of the citizen', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45:4 (2003), 650–79.
 - 9 J. Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
 - 10 *Tableau des opérations de l'Assemblée nationale d'après le Journal de Paris*, 2 vols (Lausanne: Chez Hignou & Comp., 1789), vol. 2, 227.
 - 11 For a comprehensive overview, see J. Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
 - 12 J. É. D. Esquirol, *Des passions considérées comme causes, symptômes et moyens curatifs de l'aliénation mentale* (Paris: Didot jeune, 1805), 82.
 - 13 For Robespierre's idea of the *tabula rasa* see D. Wahrmann, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). According to Wahrmann, "The notions of "regeneration" and the "new man", after all, stood at the center of the French revolutionary project. No one was a better spokesman for the malleability of identity than Maximilien Robespierre, who in true Lockean fashion proclaimed children to be mere *tabulae rasae* that the revolution could fashion as it pleased. It was also Robespierre who remarked that the revolution had transformed the French, in comparison to other European powers, "as if they had become a different species" (313).
 - 14 S. Wahnich, *Les Émotions, la Révolution française et le présent. Exercices pratiques de conscience historique* (Paris: CNRS Éd., 2009).
 - 15 As Martin Herrnsdtadt has shown, on a governmental level, the administration was no longer interested in generating an absolutely homogeneous framework, but tolerated zones that were partially independent. See M. Herrnsdtadt, 'Verwaltung des Selbst – Epistemologie des Staates. Joseph-Marie de Gérando, die Wissenschaft vom Menschen & der 18. Brumaire des Jahres VIII' (PhD dissertation, Frankfurt am Main, 2017).
 - 16 J. Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 104.

- 17 E.-J. Sieyès, 'Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?' (s.l., 1789), 172–3.
- 18 This allowed for the famous advent of the 'human', which Michel Foucault analysed in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970). See, in particular, Chapter 10.
- 19 Within Deaf History, the concept of the 'sourd-muet' – the 'deaf-mute' has been considered offensive. In this text I therefore use the original French name as a quotation.
- 20 As Marcel Gauchet argues, it was exactly this concept of the rational self that in this period also made it possible to believe in the curability of insanity. It was possible to establish a discourse with the insane because behind their insanity, the rational self was believed to be still intact. See M. Gauchet, 'De Pinel à Freud', in G. Swain (ed.), *Le Sujet de la folie. Naissance de la psychiatrie* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997), 7–57 (p. 23).
- 21 Goldstein argues that after the Revolution, the philosophy of Cousin provided the opportunity to establish a new regime of the 'self' that differed from that of Condillac and Destutt de Tracy. See Goldstein, *Post-Revolutionary Self*, 11. See also pp. 80ff. concerning the implementation of the sensualist philosophy in public education.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 21–60.
- 23 A. L. C. Destutt de Tracy, *Quels sont les moyens de fonder la morale chez un peuple* (Paris: Agasse, 1798), 19.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 25 J. O. Schacht, *Dissertatio medica inauguralis de terrore ejusque effectis in corpus humanum* [...] (Utrecht: Alexander van Megen, 1733), 2; 35.
- 26 See E. Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). On the history of the 'moral treatment', see A. Benzaquén, *Encounters with Wild Children: Temptation and Disappointment in the Study of Human Nature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 147ff.
- 27 Roederer therefore claimed that the positive aspects of recent history had been caused by philosophy, whereas revolution was harmful. P. L. Roederer, *De la philosophie moderne et de la part qu'elle a eue à la Révolution française* (Paris: Imprimerie de Journal de Paris, 1799), 23–4.
- 28 B. Baczko, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 [1989]), 41.
- 29 A. Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 204. See also K. Margerison, 'P. L. Roederer: political thought and practice during the French Revolution', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 73:1 (1983), 1–166.

- 30 'La terreur est un tremblement habituel, général, un tremblement extérieur qui affecte les fibres les plus cachées, qui dégrade l'homme et l'assimile à la brute; c'est l'ébranlement de toutes les forces physiques, la commotion de toutes les facultés morales, le dérangement de toutes les idées, le renversement de toutes les affections; c'est une véritable désorganisation de l'âme, qui, ne lui laissant que la faculté de souffrir, lui enlève dans ses maux et les douceurs de l'espérance et les ressources du désespoir'. J. L. Tallien, 'Speech before the Comité de salut public', *Moniteur* (Tridi, 13 fructidor an II = 30 August 1794, no. 343), 613.
- 31 See L. Formigari, 'Les Idéologues. Philosophie du langage et hégémonie bourgeoise', in W. Busse and J. Trabant (eds), *Les Idéologues. Sémiotique, théories et politiques linguistiques pendant la Révolution française* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986); S. Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problems of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).
- 32 M. Staum, 'The Class of Moral and Political Sciences, 1795–1803', *French Historical Studies*, 11:3 (1980), 371–97.
- 33 Destutt de Tracy, *Quels sont les moyens*, 12; 15.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 35 B. Constant, *Des effets de la terreur* (s.l., 1797).
- 36 '[La terreur] a accoutumé le peuple à entendre proférer les noms les plus saints pour motiver les actes les plus exécrables. Elle a confondu toutes les notions, façonné les esprits à l'arbitraire, inspiré le mépris des formes, préparé les violences et les forfaits en tous sens'. Constant, *Des effets de la terreur*, 31–2.
- 37 'changement total de mœurs, d'habitudes, de conditions, d'intérêts, de propriétés', A. Lezay-Marnésia, *Des causes de la Révolution et de ses résultats* (Paris: Imprimerie du Journal d'économie publique, 1797), 5.
- 38 'Les lumières et la corruption font leur progrès ensemble: c'est pourquoi toute révolution populaire, amenée par le progrès des lumières, est nécessairement violente'. Lezay-Marnésia, *Des causes*, 20.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 43–4.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 31; 35.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 44–5; 65–6. On the widespread idea of the 'new people' see M. Ozouf, 'La Révolution française et l'idée de l'homme nouveau', in C. Lucas (ed.), *The Political Culture of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1988), 213–32.
- 42 'Les chocs révolutionnaires ne sont points, comme quelques personnes semblent le croire, occasionnés par le libre développement des idées: ils ont toujours [...] été le produit inévitable des vains obstacles qu'on lui oppose imprudemment; du défaut d'accord entre la marche des affaires et

- celle de l'opinion, entre les institutions sociales et l'état des esprits.' ('Revolutionary upheavals are not, as some appear to believe, caused by the free development of ideas: they have always [...] been the inevitable product of the vain obstacles which are imprudently opposed to it; of the dissonance between the development of affairs and that of opinion, between social institutions and the collective state of mind.') P. J. G. Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme* (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1844 [1798]), 50.
- 43 J. M. Gérando, *Des signes et de l'art de penser considérés dans leur rapports mutuels*, 4 vols (Paris: Chez Goujon, 1800), vol. 3, p. 20.
 - 44 The most comprehensive interpretation of the Society of the Observers of Man is J. L. Chappey, *La Société des observateurs de l'homme (1799–1804). Des anthropologues au temps de Bonaparte* (Paris: Société des Études Robespierriennes, 2002). On Gérando see Herrnsstadt, *Verwaltung des Selbst* and J. L. Chappey, C. Christen, I. Mouiller (eds), *Joseph-Marie de Gérando. Connaître et réformer la société* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014).
 - 45 With regard to the school's public sessions, see S. Rosenfeld, 'The political uses of sign language: the case of the French Revolution', *Sign Language Studies*, 6:1 (2005), 1–37.
 - 46 This trust is especially visible in Claude Adrien Helvétius' (1715–71) book *De l'homme*. Helvétius wanted to reveal a 'great truth to the nations', that is, that human beings were merely the product of education. C. A. Helvétius, *De l'homme, de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation* (London: Société typographique, 1773), 5–6.
 - 47 See Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language*.
 - 48 See A. Quartararo, *Deaf Identity and Social Images in Nineteenth-Century France* (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 2008).
 - 49 'Mr Sicard est très connu des étrangers instruits qui tous fréquentent ses leçons, et comptent sa découverte parmi les titres dont notre nation s'honore et qui l'élèvent au dessus des autres'. Archives nationales, Paris, F/17/1145, Dossier 7.
 - 50 See, for example, P. David, *Épître à l'abbé Sicard, sur les mots avec lesquels on nous a gouverné pendant la Révolution* (Paris: Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés, 1801), 10.
 - 51 'qui devint pour la pensée ce que l'algèbre est pour les calculs', C. M. Tall-eyrand-Périgord, *Rapport sur l'instruction publique fait au nom du Comité de constitution à l'assemblée nationale* (Paris: Baudouin/Du Pont, 1791), 99.
 - 52 'les signes analytiques de l'école des muets à devenir la langue universelle des hommes instruits de toutes les nations'. Archives nationales, Paris, FN/15/2584.

- 53 R. A. Sicard, 'Relation adressée par M. Abbé Sicard, Instituteur des sourds et muets, à un de ses amis, sur les dangers qu'il a courus les 2 et 3 septembre 1792', in P. J. B. Buchez and P. C. Roux (eds), *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française* (Paris: Paulin, vol. 18, 1835 [1797]), 72–103 (p. 101).
- 54 This expression stems from the editor of Sicard's *Cours d'instruction*; see R. A. Sicard, *Cours d'instruction d'un sourd-muet de naissance, pour servir à l'éducation des sourds-muets* (Paris: Le Cere, 1799/1800), Avertissement de l'éditeur, p. x. The word 'metaphysics' might be misleading for the modern reader. Gérando, for example, believed that metaphysics was nothing else than an 'art to produce an inventory of our knowledge', Gérando, *Le génération des connoissances humaines*, 23. For Sicard, metaphysics was most probably the art of analysing the association of ideas.
- 55 Which is why, as Baczkowski shows, the Thermidorians' reaction already assumed a technical attitude towards the use of the passions and of rumours in controlling the people. Baczkowski, *Ending the Terror*, 17–32.
- 56 'c'est un être parfaitement nul dans la société, un automate vivant, une statue, telle que la présente Charles Bonnet, et d'après lui, Condillac; une statue dont il faut ouvrir, l'un après l'autre, et diriger tous les sens, et suppléer à celui dont il est malheureusement privé.' ('it is a being entirely null within society, a living automaton, a statue, as described by Charles Bonnet and, following him, Condillac; a statue whose senses must be opened up one by one and guided, and compensate for the one of which it has unfortunately been deprived.') Sicard, *Cours d'instruction*, pp. vi–vii.
- 57 Cf., e.g., a report of a public lesson in the *Bulletin de l'Europe*: 'J'ai assisté aux leçons de Sicard, c'étoit assister à la création de l'homme [...]. Au milieu des discussions les plus abstraites, lorsque Sicard faisoit entrer dans la tête de ses jeunes élèves les idées les plus subtiles de la métaphysique, il les ramenoit toujours d'un monde idéal dans le monde que doivent habiter des enfans, des frères et des amis [...]', *Bulletin de l'Europe* (26 fructidor an VII = 12 September 1799).
- 58 'C'est moins en communiquant des mots qui ne doivent jamais arriver qu'au signal des idées, qu'en faisant naître les idées qu'on procède avec quelque succès dans cet enseignement [of the deaf mutes]. C'est là que comme sur une sorte de Mapped monde le génie philosophique de l'Instituteur établit entre les idées qui sont censées en couvrir la surface, les rapports qui les lient entr'elles.' Archives nationales, Paris, F/17/2500: École des sourds-muets.
- 59 'Ah! combien la nature lui [Massieu] paroissoit grande et superbe dans ses reproductions! Il classa donc les plantes des jardins, les arbres des vergers, ceux des forêts; chaque genre dans un feuillet particulier, chaque série dans sa colonne, comme les noms d'autant d'amis avec lesquels il étoit empressé

- de former une liaison qui devoit durer autant que le sens qui en avoit remarqué les analogies et les différences'. ('Ah! how great and magnificent nature seemed to him [Massieu] in his reproductions! And so he classified the garden plants, the trees of the orchards and those of the forests; each genus in an individual leaflet, each series in its own column, like the names of as many friends with whom he was eager to establish a relationship which should last for as long as the very intuition which had identified the analogies and differences.') Sicard, *Cours d'instruction*, p. 32.
- 60 'Maladie où le moral et le physique étaient continuellement en action l'un sur l'autre'. P. L. Roederer, *L'Esprit de la Révolution de 1789* (Paris: Chez les principaux libraires, 1831), 201.
- 61 Roederer, *De la Philosophie moderne*, 30, 31.
- 62 W. Wehle, 'Kunst und Subjektivität. Von der Geburt ästhetischer Anthropologie aus dem Leiden an Modernität – Nodier, Chateaubriand', in R. Fetz, R. Hagenbüchle, and P. Schulz (eds), *Geschichte und Vorgeschichte der modernen Subjektivität* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 1998), vol. 2, 901–41 (p. 931).
- 63 There exists an extensive literature on Victor; I want to point to two books which are based on a wealth of material: T. Gineste, *Victor de l'Aveyron. Dernier enfant sauvage, premier enfant fou* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2004 [1981]); A. Benzaquén, *Encounters with Wild Children: Temptation and Disappointment in the Study of Human Nature* (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 2006).
- 64 This section is highly indebted to the work of Jean-Luc Chappey, in particular his thesis that the perspective on human beings after 1800 is characterised by what he calls 'fixism', that is, the idea that the identity (of 'women', 'men', *sourds-muets*, 'idiots') cannot change easily or in fact at all. See J. L. Chappey, *Sauvagerie et civilisation. Une histoire politique de Victor de l'Aveyron* (Paris: Fayard, 2017).
- 65 Bonnatere, who wrote the first report on Victor, supplemented the list of *hominini ferri* given by Carl Linné in different editions of his Natural History. None of these cases was documented extensively; sometimes there were only a few lines testifying to the existence of a supposedly 'wild' individual. See Benzaquén, *Encounters with Wild Children*, part one.
- 66 See Helvétius, *De l'homme*, 5–6.
- 67 J. M. G. Itard, 'Second rapport fait au Ministre de l'intérieur sur les nouveaux développements et l'état actuel du sauvage de l'Aveyron', in J. M. G. Itard, *Rapports et mémoires sur le sauvage de l'Aveyron, l'idiotie et la surditité* (Paris: Progrès Médical, 1894 [1806]), 60.
- 68 'Je me rapprochai de Victor; je lui fis entendre des paroles affectueuses, que je prononçai dans des termes propres à lui en faire saisir le sens, et

- que j'accompagnai de témoignages d'amitié plus intelligibles encore. Ses pleurs redoublèrent, accompagnées de soupirs et de sanglots; tandis que redoublant moi-même de caresses, je portai l'émotion au plus haut point, et faisais, si je puis m'exprimer, frémir jusqu'à la dernière fibre sensible l'homme moral', Itard, 'Second rapport', 80–1.
- 69 This is at least what Gérando himself says in a letter to Roederer (22 May 1802), Archives nationales, Paris, 29AP/10.
- 70 Herrnsstadt, *Verwaltung des Selbst*, 56–8.
- 71 See S. Klinge and L. Schlicht, 'Differenz Automat. Ein Ausschnitt aus der Geschichte des Menschen: Taubstummenforschung (um 1800) und Kybernetik (1946–1953)', in M. C. Gruber, J. Bung, and S. Ziemann (eds), *Autonome Automaten. Künstliche Körper und artifizielle Agenten in der technologisierten Gesellschaft* (Berlin: trafo, 2014), 103–34.
- 72 Gérando, *Des signes*, vol. 1, p. 2.
- 73 'One trajectory of the argument of Isolate Cases follows the self-sufficient inward subject who is the protagonist of Locke's Essay from an enlightenment origin as a figure of normativity, a theoretical model for all minds, to its nineteenth-century manifestations as tragic anomaly – as a monster who has the upbringing of a philosopher as a philosopher made monstrous by preternatural cultivation of the mind alone'. N. Yousef, *Isolated Cases: The Anxieties of Autonomy in Enlightenment Philosophy and Romantic Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 8.
- 74 J. Itard, *Traité des maladies de l'oreille et de l'audition* (Paris: Chez Méquignon-Marvis, 1821).
- 75 *Ibid.*, 427–9.
- 76 J. Itard, 'Vésanies', in Gineste, *Victor de l'Aveyron*, 431.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 431.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 433.
- 79 One of the most explicit versions of this unidirectional narrative can be found in M. J. Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain. Ouvrage posthume de Condorcet* (Paris: Agasse, 1795).
- 80 At the same time, as Fritzsche argues, the category of 'contemporaneity' gained prominence: P. Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
- 81 There are in fact some earlier texts, e.g. F. C. G. Scheidemantel, *Die Leidenschaften als Heilmittel betrachtet* (Hildburghausen: Johann Gottfried Hanisch, 1787).
- 82 Esquirol, *Des passions*, 82; see also Scheidemantel, *Die Leidenschaften*. Scheidemantel states that in earlier times the 'passions' were regarded as a cause rather than as a means of treating illness (p. ii).

- 83 'Les secousses politiques en mettant en jeu toutes les passions, en donnant plus d'essor aux passions factices, en exagérant les passions haineuses, en multipliant les besoins de certains individus, en privant les autres d'une fortune devenue nécessaire à leurs habitudes, les commotions politiques augmentent le nombre des aliénés; c'est ce qu'on a observé après la révolution d'Angleterre; c'est ce qu'on observe en France depuis notre tourmente révolutionnaire'. Esquirol, *Des passions*, 15.
- 84 'on n'a jamais prétendu les guérir en argumentant avec eux, cette prétention serait démentie par l'expérience journalière: les passions cèdent-elles aux raisonnemens? [...] les traiter avec des formules dialectiques et des syllogismes, ce serait mal connaître la marche des passions et l'histoire clinique de l'aliénation mentale. [...] [C]e n'est qu'en donnant une secousse morale, en placant l'aliéné dans un état opposé et contraire à celui dans lequel il était avant de recourir à ce moyen'. Esquirol, *Des passions*, 82.
- 85 J. É. D. Esquirol, 'De la folie', in J. É. D. Esquirol, *Des maladies mentales considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal* (Paris: Baillière 1838 [1816]), 133.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 133.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 49–50.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 54.
- 89 M. Gourevitch, 'La Psychiatrie sous l'empire', *Histoire des sciences médicales*, 23:1 (1989), 27–32 (p. 31).
- 90 *Tableau des opérations de l'Assemblée nationale d'après le Journal de Paris*, 228.
- 91 For prison see M. Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
- 92 Herrnsstadt, *Verwaltung des Selbst*, 272–3.