Historicising the French Revolution
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................. ix

Preface ........................................................................................ xi
  Tim Blanning

Introduction .............................................................................. xiii
  Michael Sonenscher

Part I: The Revolution in Historical Perspective: Changing Attitudes to the Past, Present and Future

Revolutionary Violence and the End of History: The Divided Self in Francophone Thought, 1762-1914 .......................................................... 2
  Carolina Armenteros

The Refuse of the Revolution: Autograph Collecting in France, 1789-1860.................................................................................................. 39
  Tom Stammers

From Royal to Bourgeois: Augustin Thierry’s National Narrative ........... 64
  Matthew D’Auria

Making the Revolution History: Adolphe Thiers, 1823-73 ....................... 79
  Robert Tombs

Historicising the French Revolution in the Third Republic: The Case of Ernest Lavisse ................................................................. 96
  Isabel DiVanna

Part II: The Revolution and the Political Imagination

The Memory of the First Republic in Ledru-Rollin’s Political Thought ................................................................. 124
  Thomas Chewning Jones
The French Revolution from a Turkish Perspective: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and High Individualism ................................................................. 146
H. Ozan Özavcı

Memories of the République in Late Twentieth-Century France ........ 168
Emile Chabal

French Liberalism and the Legacy of the Revolution.......................... 189
H.S. Jones

**Part III: Remembering the Revolution in Policy and Political Action**

Rethinking the History of Ireland and the French Revolution ............ 206
Terrence Corrigan

The Educational Proposals of the French Revolution: A Case Study in the Intellectual and Cultural History of Expectations..................... 224
Adrian O’Connor

The Legacy of the French Revolution and the November Uprising in the Kingdom of Poland, 1815-31 .................................................... 245
Przemyslaw Milewicz

Remembering the Napoleonic Period in the French-Occupied Rhineland, 1918-30............................................................................... 266
Tom Williams

**Part IV: The Revolution in Historiographical Debate**

*Ex-Conventionnels* versus Historians of the French Revolution .......... 284
Mette Harder

The Continuing Historiographical Debate on the Cult and Festival of the Supreme Being ................................................................. 308
Jonathan Smyth

Des historiens contre la Révolution française au XXe siècle ............ 324
Christian Amalvi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Generously sponsored by the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Society for the Study of French History, St John’s College, Emmanuel College, the Centre for History and Economics and the Royal Historical Society, the two-day conference *Historicising the French Revolution* was held at St John’s College, Cambridge, in November 2007. This volume is a collection of selected essays elaborated from papers presented at the Conference. Its contents range from keynote lectures by leading historians of France, to the first published pieces of doctoral students.

We are almost embarrassed to be indebted to so many scholars, colleagues and friends. We would like to thank the following: Keith Michael Baker, Alan Forrest, Sudhir Hazareesingh, William Nelson, Lucy Riall, Martin Ruehl, Émile Perreau-Saussine, Gareth Stedman Jones and David Todd for their participation in the conference as chairs and/or keynote speakers. They contributed to the discussion sessions in a way that can only mean that much of what the final papers for this publication represent is a product much-improved by their suggestions. We would also like to thank Ambrogio Caiani, Thomas Jones, Pernille Roge and Tom Stammers (graduate students at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge) and Ludivine Broch, Iain Chadwick, Michael Stitt and Thomas Williams (graduate students at the History Faculty, Oxford University) for their help in organizing the conference.

We were the fortunate recipients of much good will in compiling this edition. We are especially grateful to the peer reviewers for helping us assure the quality and relevance of the articles here present to the overall project, as well as to Dr Glen Rangwala, for his helpful advice on arranging and presenting the volume. We would also like to thank Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their help and support. We have tried to be respectful of authors’ individual styles whilst at the same time ensuring that the volume reads well together, in form, content and approach.

The Editors, August 2008
If ever there were an episode that deserved the description “protean,” it was surely the French Revolution. Its ability to assume different forms for different people at different times has proved unmatched by any previous or subsequent upheaval. Unlike the Glorious Revolution of 1688 or even the American Revolution of 1776, it made good its claim to universality and became the model for modern revolutions. Moreover, unlike its most obvious rival—the Russian Revolution of 1917—it cannot be said to be over. Its vitality has both sustained, and been sustained by, France’s political instability since 1789—five republics, four monarchies and two empires (so far). This enduring topicality is revealed not least by the semiotic dimension that continues to exert such a grip on French politics. François Furet was wrong to suggest that the Revolution was over, but he was right about the importance of revolutionary signs and symbols. They were not “mumbo jumbo” (Thomas Carlyle) or “smoke” (Michel Vovelle) but the very currency of power. In this volume they are given their proper place, not just in grand festivals but also in such apparent trivia as “the refuse of the Revolution.” Also rightly prominent is the role of memory, both its power to inspire and its capacity for playing tricks. The revolutionary and Napoleonic armies conquered Europe, but then fell back exhausted in total defeat. It was left to revolutionary culture to make revolutionary achievements immortal. The richly various contributions to this volume make a powerful contribution to our understanding of how that came about.
The idea of historicising the French Revolution, the theme of this collection, seems to have three distinct, but related, senses.

At its most straightforward, it means, as François Furet put it, that the French Revolution really is over, and that it is possible to study it without wishful thinking, and without taking it to be the point of departure of liberalism, nationalism, socialism, communism, or any other characterisation of the politics of the modern world.

In a second, and related sense, historicising the French Revolution looks like an injunction to try to find out about contemporary assessments and evaluations of the political possibilities and constraints that began to open up, or close down, in France and elsewhere, from 1787 onwards. This, as Keith Baker put it in the first of his many trail-blazing essays, means trying to reconstruct French political thought before and after the accession of Louis XVI to start to get a clearer idea of the range of possible futures that, it could be claimed, were either available or unavailable in France, or Europe, or the wider world. In this second sense, historicising the French Revolution seems to involve finding out about eighteenth-century ways of thinking about history and politics, and the many different gradations lying between scripturally-driven historical conjecture, of the kind that was available in, say, Vico, and the somewhat more secular historical contingencies to be found in the works of Montesquieu, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau, Smith, Bentham, Sieyès or Kant.

Both these two senses of historicising the French Revolution then point towards a third, namely the question of what, historically, the French Revolution overturned. What was there before, and what came after? Historicising the French Revolution in this third sense not only means going back to the eighteenth century to get a clearer idea of whatever it was that the French Revolution overthrew—either absolute government, the feudal system, hereditary privilege, Machiavellian politics, or whatever else might once have been there; it also means going forward into the nineteenth century to find out what people thought might be the type of political system that, in the light of the French Revolution, now fitted the
political, economic, military or cultural conditions created by its failure. Many of the most interesting discussions of this question occurred in Germany, but a number of them also centred on either the British or American systems of government, or on the possibility that post-Revolutionary Europe might establish something different from both.

This third sense of historicising the French Revolution has some connection to Furet’s initial claim that the French Revolution really is over if only because Furet himself may not quite have believed all that he said. From time to time, the thought that there might have been a different, and happier, ending to the French Revolution remains alive in his work, accompanied by the further thought that this happier ending might have looked rather like a version of the modern British or American systems of government. Taking him at his word—that the French Revolution really is over—is likely to open things up even more. This is what the papers collected together in this volume are about.
PART I:

THE REVOLUTION IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: CHANGING ATTITUDES TO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE AND THE END OF HISTORY: THE DIVIDED SELF IN FRANCOPHONE THOUGHT, 1762-1914

CAROLINA ARMENTEROS

The nineteenth century wanted to end the French Revolution. France’s successive regimes—the Bourbon Restoration, the July Monarchy, the Second Empire, the Third Republic—politically disparate as they were, all shared the self-assigned mission of bringing the age of “the great crisis” to a close. Political theorists across the spectrum—utopian socialists, Orleanist liberals, republican radicals, but especially the sociological thinkers discussed in this paper—even sought to conclude revolutionary violence along with history itself. Indeed, for Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)—founders of sociology in a direct line of intellectual succession, and heirs of Rousseau’s social philosophy—the Revolution constituted the consummate historical event because it had generated violence in a manner and scale without precedent. These thinkers therefore believed that the Revolutionary “crisis” could be ended—along with historicity itself—once violence’s deep causes were understood. These deep causes, in turn, could be found, according to them, by investigating violence’s social dimensions and its relationship to religion. The French sociological project can hence be seen as a simultaneous attempt to arrest history, to finish the Revolution, and to integrate society by replicating and exercising the functions of the civil religion that Rousseau described in the Contrat social (1762).

1 I am indebted to Isabel DiVanna, Graeme Garrard, Émile Perreau-Saussine and Glen Rangwala for their very helpful and constructive comments on previous drafts of this paper.

2 The phrase belongs to Auguste Comte, who dated his Système de politique positive not “1851,” but “sixty-second year of the great crisis.”

3 On the Orleanists’ project to bring about the “end of history,” see De Dijn, French political thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville, 135. All translations provided here are my own.
French sociology’s reintegrative religious project and its roots in the conservative re-appropriation of Rousseau have remained unexplored in French and Anglo-American literature except in fragmentary fashion. Certainly, Robert Nisbet’s writings on the conservative origins of sociology made it possible to identify religious conservatives like Maistre and Bonald as sociological precursors: Mary Pickering, for one, mentions their influence in her intellectual biography of Comte. In France, in 1927, Léon Brunschvicg already posited both Maistre and Bonald as the originators of the “romantic synthesis,” or “the dogmatism of synthesis,” that merged with the Encyclopédie’s “Cartesian” or “critical analysis” to form French sociology’s philosophical framework. Paul Bénichou has likewise told the by now classic story of the nineteenth-century birth, “on the frontier of literature and philosophico-social speculation, of systems destined to explain France’s upheavals and to derive from them a formula for the future.” These systems were born of the post-Revolutionary quest for a spiritual power—a quest that sacralised literature, philosophy, sociology and even history, and laid the sacerdotal mantle upon writers and artists.

But the insights of these scholars, while leaving signposts, have not led to an investigation of Rousseau’s silent paternity of sociology, or of the ways in which his heritage informed sociological attitudes to historical violence and the social uses of religion. The reasons for this omission are

---

4 See Nisbet, The sociological tradition.
6 Brunschvicg, Le progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale, 546, 564.
7 “[À] la frontière des lettres et de la spéculation philosophico-sociale, des systèmes destinés à rendre compte des bouleversements de la France moderne et à en tirer une formule d’avenir.” Bénichou, Le temps des prophètes, 7.
8 Bénichou’s work explores early sociology’s status as the vehicle of a new religiosity, but not in connection with Rousseau or historicism. The same is true of recent research on the relationship between civil religion and early sociology. For Comte, see Wernick, Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity. For Durkheim, see Schoffeleers, “Clan religion and civil religion.” More recently, Prades has presented Durkheim as moved by an anthropocentric religious faith strikingly reminiscent, to this reader, of Comte’s Religion of Humanity, but without drawing on the connection between the two, or on the link to the Contrat social. See Prades, “Religion civile et religion de l’humanité.”
various. Among them is Durkheim’s own proclamation of his new discipline as the Third Republic’s liberal, secular—and, in the opinion of some, eminently un-historical—ideology. An additional, and related, reason is that the idea that the Counter-revolution legated Rousseau to sociology has remained largely obscure and counter-intuitive for historians because early sociological thinkers themselves did not advertise their debt to Rousseau. After all, Maistre defamed Rousseau frequently; Comte mentioned him rarely and disparagingly; and it was Montesquieu whom Durkheim hailed in his Latin thesis as sociology’s Enlightened forefather. Raymond Aron acknowledges this latter fact implicitly when preceding his study of Comte with his study of Montesquieu. Yet, as Georges Davy has pointed out, Durkheim was very critical of Montesquieu—sometimes unfairly so—and admitted that Rousseau could also write like a sociologist.

It is time to redress the balance, and identify sociology’s Rousseauvian sources. This essay uses the neglected theme of the duplicitous self as an original and untold exemplum of how nineteenth-century Francophone sociologists drew on Rousseau’s philosophy in order to end what Comte called “the great crisis,” and create a society at the end of history capable of minimising and normalising violence. Their purpose in so doing was primarily to “heal” France, since it was that country that manufactured national and international violence in the form of war and revolution throughout the century. But France’s repeated crises also inspired early Francophone sociologists to believe—by notable contrast with their British counterparts—that violence is, at bottom, a universal problem rooted in humanity’s conflicted self. The end of history they envisioned was therefore premised on resolving political crisis by quelling the disorder emanating from the depths of the individual. In this sense, Francophone ideas of the end of history are quite unrelated to the Hegelian dialectical concept more familiar to English-speaking readers. Concretely, Francophone social thinkers intimately associate history with violence and political crisis, and refer to its end as a future social state dually characterised by the absence of political and social conflict, and by the individual’s self-overcoming. They do this regardless of whether they believe that this state is actually achievable.

9 See below for a discussion of the relationship between historicism and Durkheimian sociology.
10 On Durkheim’s secular and Republican aspirations for sociology, see Lukes, Émile Durkheim, 77.
11 See Durkheim, “Montesquieu’s contribution to the rise of social science.”
The idea of the divided soul had, of course, a long past in Western philosophy, and especially in the Augustinian tradition. If I trace it back to Rousseau here, this is firstly because, as Arthur Melzer has argued, “a major element of Rousseau’s originality was his restoration, on modern principles, of the philosophical concern with the state of men’s souls.” Rousseau was the only major representative of the Francophone Enlightenment who appealed to the notion of the human contradiction—a symbolically apt reflection of the bipolarity that characterised both his mode of philosophical reasoning, and his personal mood swings between emotional extremes. Indeed, the dualistic theory of human nature—especially in its Augustinian and Jansenist formulations—was key to Rousseau’s rebellion against classical political philosophy, especially Platonism. The *philosophes*, instead—and this is one reason for their final intellectual distance from Rousseau—portrayed a unitary humanity naturally guided by reason.

My second motivation for portraying Rousseau as a fountainhead of the sociological idea of split mankind is that, as I hope this paper will help demonstrate, he influenced sociology’s Francophone precursors, and especially Maistre and Comte, much more deeply than did any other theorist of human duality. His thought had a particularly important impact on early sociology’s attitude to the integrative role of religion—an impact that remains unexplored in both French and Anglo-American literature, even that dwelling on the religious dimensions of early sociology. Lastly, Rousseau’s status as an intellectual precursor of the French Revolution renders his account of soul-rooted duplicity particularly germane to

---

13 Agnès Antoine is possibly the only scholar to have remarked on the importance of the Augustinian notion of the divided, desiring being for nineteenth-century French political thought. See Antoine, “Democracy and religion,” 135.
15 See Wahl, “La bipolarité de Rousseau.”
16 On Pascal’s influence on Rousseau’s theory of the self, see Harvey Mitchell, “Reclaiming the self.”
17 Melzer, *The natural goodness of man*, 17, 21-2, 59-70, 76. As will become clear below, this paper at once follows and diverges from Melzer’s interpretation of Rousseau’s idea of human duality.
18 Wernick, for one, mentions Rousseau but sparingly when discussing Comte’s religious project, despite the great similarities that unite the two men’s sociologies of religion. The references to Rousseau in *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity* are limited to pages 93, 123, 124 and 257.
19 On the influence of Rousseau’s thought on the French Revolution, see Swenson, *On Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered as one of the first authors of the Revolution* and Furet, “Rousseau and the French Revolution.”
nineteenth-century attempts to refashion history so as to save humanity from the violence the Revolution had unleashed. In what follows, I trace the vicissitudes of the idea of the divided self from Émile (1762) to Durkheim’s essays on Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse (1913-4), recounting how early sociologists re-designed the human soul in response to political and social crises, and to new historical prospects and needs.

**Rousseau: the vicar’s torment**

“The profession de foi du vicaire savoyard” in Book IV of Émile (1762) contains a passage, rarely cited by commentators, that summarises lyrically Rousseau’s anthropology, expressing with characteristic clarity the thesis of human dividedness that informs thoroughly, if implicitly, Rousseau’s moral and political thought. Explaining to his pupil (the mythical younger ego of Emile’s governor) how he arrived at the idea of the soul by observing the disparity between the order of nature and the disorder of the human realm, the vicar reminisces:

In meditating on the nature of man, I believed I discovered in it two distinct principles; one of which raised him to the principle of eternal truths, to the love of justice and of moral beauty, to the regions of the intellectual world whose contemplation is the wise man’s delight; while the other took him back basely into himself, subjected him to the empire of the senses, to the passions which are their ministers, and through these hindered all that the sentiment of the former inspired in him. Feeling myself carried away, caught up in the combat between these two contrary movements, I said to myself: “No, man is not one. I want and I do not want; I sense myself at once enslaved and free; I see what is good, I love it, and I do what is evil; I am active when I listen to reason, passive when my passions carry me away; and my worst torment, when I succumb, is to feel that I could have resisted.”

---

20 The French original reads “je veux et je ne veux pas.” The French verb “vouloir” can mean both “to want” and “to will.” Rousseau’s usage here may therefore be interpreted as carrying a dual denotation relevant to the close relationship between human duplicity and voluntarism posited by the thinkers discussed in this paper.

21 “En méditant sur la nature de l’homme, j’y crus découvrir deux principes distincts, dont l’un l’élevait au principe des vérités éternelles, à l’amour de la justice et du beau moral, aux régions du monde intellectuel dont la contemplation fait les délices du sage, et dont l’autre le ramenait bassement en lui-même, l’asservissait à l’empire des sens, aux passions qui sont leurs ministres, et contrariait par elles tout ce qui lui inspirait le sentiment du premier. En me sentant
The vicar portrays an inner combat within the soul whose loss is “torment,” and this is notable, since Arthur Melzer has argued that Rousseau describes divided, civilized men “as ‘floating’ rather than violently torn;” as “having extensive, restless, and frivolous desires but not deep, powerful, or tormenting ones.” This is certainly true of the passages elsewhere in *Émile* that Melzer cites; but not of the Savoyard vicar’s faith. The distinction is important for us, since “torment” announces the violence of the passions; and it may be partly explained by the fact that the vicar, as a Catholic clergyman with Calvinist penchants, has a more pessimistic view of the inner human contradiction than *Émile*’s probably lay narrator. The violence he speaks of is an intense force rooted in the soul’s depths, and that as such is personal, intimate—and, as we shall see, historically productive—in the most primal way conceivable. Significantly, the vicar has abandoned traditional anthropologies that seek the origins of the human contradiction in the struggle between such entities and faculties as mind and body, reason and the emotions. Rather than locate the origins of good and evil in different essences, and rather than find these essences on a map of the soul, Rousseau’s cleric reduces everything to qualitative sentiment. His “contrary movements” are feelings like love, hatred, concupiscence. They are subjectively intense, and intimately knowable as good or bad. But they are ontologically vague—in keeping, as we will see, with the fictive world of the novel in which Rousseau exposes them, and to which he confines them.

The invocation of the intimacy of violence and the harrowing awareness of inward moral evil may surprise many of Rousseau’s readers, accustomed to his vindication of the natural goodness of man. Melzer himself, though emphasising dividedness as the crux of civilised man’s evil, has followed Ernst Cassirer in maintaining that Rousseau’s idea of the state of nature is a device destined to emphasise degeneration as a feature of context, without embracing the dogma of original sin. Similarly, in Jean Starobinski’s reading, evil in the *Discours sur l’inégalité* (1755) emerges as humans lose their initial, natural openness to each other in the process of association, and when encountering obstacles (like resource scarcity) imposed by the natural world. The result is the loss

---

entraîné, combattu par ces deux mouvements contraires, je me disais: Non, l’homme n’est point un: je veux et je ne veux pas, je me sens à la fois esclave et libre; je vois le bien, je l’aime, et je fais le mal; je suis actif quand j’écoute la raison, passif quand mes passions m’entraînent; et mon pire tourment quand je succombe et de sentir que j’ai pu résister.” Rousseau, *Émile*, 362.

22 Melzer, *The natural goodness of man*, 64.

23 Cassirer, *The philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 156.
of our primeval purity and transparency, the breakdown of true communication with our fellows and general disorder. John Hope Mason has likewise argued that “la succession des temps” and “les circonstances” are the primary mechanisms that Rousseau proposes in the Discours to explain the alteration of man’s original constitution. Elaborating on these interpretations, Melzer sees Rousseau subverting the Christian and Platonic doctrine of the divided self (and the doctrine of original sin associated with the former) by positing a primevaly unitary, self-loving man, who is only broken in two, and divided by “selfish selflessness,” following his socialisation, and his concomitant internalisation of the contradiction of personal dependence.

Rousseau’s accidentalist tendencies in matters of evil are readily acceptable. Yet the vicar’s exposition of the struggle within confirms Mark Cladis’ insistence on Rousseau’s Augustinianism, and especially on his belief that “humans naturally gather and court harm” as a result of their invariable abuse of God’s gift of freedom. In Cladis’ view, Rousseau stands at the crossroads between Enlightened and Augustinian morality, ascribing evil, certainly, to convention and corrupt institutions, but seeing also that “the movement of the Fall springs, in part, from the individual’s breast.” Timothy O’Hagan perhaps evokes the tension best when distinguishing between Rousseau’s two explanations of depravity. The Rousseau of the first explanation is the familiar naturalist who maintains that man is born good, but that institutions render him wicked. The second, far less known Rousseau is Cladis’ Rousseau, the Rousseau whose spirit animates the vicar, the Augustinian pessimist who proclaims the rifted humanity of religious tradition whereby “the spiritual element within us is enslaved by the physical, and then ‘I become depraved and finally prevent the voice of the soul from being raised against the law of the body.’” It is this last Rousseau who stands apart from the philosophes, defending innate characteristics against Helvétius.

It might be objected, of course, that the second explanation is best expressed by the vicar, who as a fictional character may not convey the most intimate persuasions of Rousseau himself. Yet, while the vicar’s

24 See Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
25 Mason, “Individuals in society,” 90-1 and passim.
26 Melzer, The natural goodness of man, 75-6.
27 Cladis, “Tragedy and theodicy,” 182, 189 and passim.
28 Ibid., 191.
29 Quoted in O’Hagan, Rousseau, 272.
30 On this debate, see Bloch, “Rousseau and Helvétius on innate and acquired traits,” 21-41.
confession of faith offers Rousseau’s most systematic rationalisation of inward evil, the same explanation re-appears throughout the Rousseauvian corpus as a deep personal conviction. O’Hagan, in fact, sees this conviction as the basis for the “morality of duty” that is constantly in tension with the “morality of the senses” in Rousseau’s thought (and that, importantly, still rejects the doctrine of original sin, seeing the Fall instead as the victory of the body over the spirit). Moreover, what is most important for our purposes is the great influence that the second explanation had on Rousseau’s successors. The vicar’s Augustinianism helps us to understand why, firstly, the Francophone social thinkers who owe so much to Rousseau continually return to the divided self when founding sociology’s moral tenets—in contradiction of the common opinion, continuously voiced in the secondary literature, that early sociology is anti-individualist. The vicar is likewise key to why, despite French sociologists’ empiricist and behaviourist ambitions to minimize evil by reforming institutions, they persisted in relating history and social change to the violence associated with the human contradiction, hoping that its resolution would bring about history’s end.

In Émile itself, however, the conflicting impulses of civilized man serve more to explain the roots of disorder and inspire adherence to the good, than to ponder the precise worldly manifestations of evil. The vicar strives to convince the wayward young man that a true inner freedom and a “demonstrable morality” exist because human beings have souls, so that virtue is still worth attaining. His intuition of the soul’s duality is enveloped in Rousseau’s introspective world of myth: it is part of the vicar’s fictive, pedagogical biography, inserted within the even larger fiction of Rousseau’s new genre—the ideal educational novel. In this artificial, dreamt-up world, human duplicity is strictly morally instructive, useful in enlightening us about our inner state, and in prompting us to choose benign amour-propre over “inflamed” amour-propre or vanity, since it is this latter passion that divides us and robs us, in the social state, of our natural and rational unity of soul.

At first sight, these rationalisations of feeling, so abstracted and mythified, seem to have no consequences for social organisation. Yet the resolution of human duplicity is at the core of the “virtue as self-extension” that Nannerl Keohane describes as exceeding “virtue as self-

31 See O’Hagan, Rousseau, especially Chapters I, VII, XI and XII.
denial” in Rousseau’s morality. Melzer recognises this fact when he states that “[t]he protection or restoration of unity is [...] crucial to maintaining or increasing our existence,” and that Rousseau’s virtuous patriot is precisely “a man who escapes the evils of disunity.” This is where Rousseau departs from the French Enlightenment. Whereas the philosophes, and especially Voltaire, viewed society as a rational and free association of integral individuals, Rousseau thought of it as a fundamentally compulsive organisation that could be either badly ordered by the selfish passions, or rationally organised by the natural compassion and benign amour-propre that always compete with those passions to command the souls of broken men. Indeed, it is on this concern with the divided soul that rests much of Rousseau’s originality, as well as his parenthood of French sociology.

All of Rousseau’s social and moral philosophy, in fact, may be seen as designed to unify souls. The good man he describes remains whole by developing his natural pity and amour de soi into the larger and stronger feeling of humanity. With much greater effort, Rousseau’s virtuous man deposits himself emotionally within the polity by doing violence to his selfish impulses, and subjecting his passionate self to the empire of the rational and the good. In this way, he acquires a single identity. Yet Rousseau also believes that there is a limit to what individuals—at least those who do not seek solitude—can do on their own to be one again. That is why he recommends that reintegration be aided by the artifices of the Contrat social’s quasi-divine Legislator, whose laws and religion regenerate the passions, purging them of vanity, and placing them in a right relationship with reason. Thanks, in fact, to the just environment created by the society of the general will, the “combat of [the] two contrary movements” within can end, and the virtuous man, transported out of himself, is freed from his senses and into the rational activity of his soul.

---

33 See Keohane, Philosophy and the state in France, 432.
34 Melzer, The natural goodness of man, 45 and 64.
35 The crucial passage on pity’s transformation of amour de soi into humanity and virtue is in the second Discours’ note 15 (O). See Rousseau, Discourse on the origin of inequality, 115.
36 On the good man/virtuous man dichotomy in Rousseau’s thought, see Bloom, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau,” 535.
37 On the theme of humanity’s animal-passional and semi-divine-rational natures in the Contrat social, and on the roles played by the Legislator and the civil religion in reconciling these natures, see Bertram, Rousseau and The social contract, 20, 31-2, 126.
Crucially, however, none of these modes of soul re-integration benefit from time or history. Rousseau’s fear of the future, another idiosyncrasy that set him apart from a century that placed its hopes in progress, translated philosophically into his mythical “temps mort[s],” his temporal “nulle part[s]” untouched by aging and by history. He saw no connection between change and virtue, least of all in relation to the soul.

In short, in the fictive, introspective world of Rousseau’s vision, human duplicity lacked any consequence more concrete than moral disorder writ large, or any solution less sweeping than the invention of a new society with the moral power to repair the fractured soul. The vicar himself saw in the two-ness at the heart of human nature no more than a moral lesson, a warning that humanity is inherently deceitful and an apt motivation for a hesitant young man to lead a virtuous life. His simply feeling, contemplative dual self was well suited to the solitary world of personal escape that Rousseau conjured in his novels, and that contrasts so starkly with the social solution of extreme interdependence offered in his political works.

The vicar himself exemplifies perfectly the characters of Rousseau’s novels, who are not made for public life. They live mostly in an attempt to be at peace with themselves, with God or with nature, and for these quiet purposes it suffices to attend to, and to reflect upon, the “contrary movements” so as to minimise emotional suffering. The social conditions of the Contrat social and of Émile’s last books are different: there Rousseau is clearly “on the side of the self’s submission to the general interest” although he never details the specific forms that this submission should take, and does not advocate political violence to ensure it. But when the Jacobins used his language of regeneration to proclaim that France must be bathed in blood, one of Rousseau’s Counter-Revolutionary readers began to ponder more carefully what, precisely and empirically, the divided soul could do, in society and in history. In doing this, he put the vicar’s primeval impulses back on the Platonic and Christian map of the multipartite soul.

38 See Kelly, “Rousseau, Kant, and history,” 349, 358.
40 On the Revolutionary usage of Rousseau’s language of regeneration, see Furet, “Rousseau and the French Revolution.”
41 On Rousseau’s abandonment of the model of the multipartite character of human nature, see Melzer, The natural goodness of man, 69.
Maistre, sacrifice and the two souls

Without question, the political thinker of the Revolutionary period who reflected most deeply on the problem of duality was Joseph de Maistre. Maistre responded to the Terror by reading and refuting Rousseau’s philosophy, which he held responsible for Revolutionary violence. I have argued elsewhere that, in this process of rebutting, Maistre came to owe much more to Rousseau than he would probably have liked, and that Rousseau’s philosophy in fact provided the foundations of Maistre’s political thought. 42 Here I would like to highlight the influence that Rousseau exerted on Maistrian anthropology, as the Savoyard diplomat still strove to explain historical and social violence, fifteen years after the Terror’s end. The subject is important, since Maistre’s anthropology pervaded his social and political thought, including his masterpiece Du pape (1819), the work of the “école rétrograde” that Comte most admired.

The character of the count in Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg (begun 1809) converses on double humanity in a way that vividly recalls the Savoyard vicar’s exposition of the same topic. Like the vicar, the count discusses man’s inner two-ness as something that intuition divines, and the voice of conscience discloses. Also like the vicar, Maistre’s character presents inner duplicity as a great wellspring of moral anguish:

[Man] gravitates […] toward the regions of light. No beaver, no swallow, no bee wants to know more than its predecessors. All beings are calm in the place they occupy. All are degraded, but they do not know it; man alone has the feeling of it, and that feeling is at once the proof of his grandeur and of his misery, of his sublime rights and of his incredible degradation. In the state to which he is reduced, he does not even have the sad happiness of ignoring himself: he must contemplate himself without cease, and he cannot contemplate himself without blushing; his very greatness humiliates him, since the lights that elevate him toward the angels serve only to show him the abominable tendencies within him that degrade him toward the beast. He looks in the depths of his being for some healthy part without being able to find it: evil has soiled everything, and man entire is nothing but a malady. 43

42 Armenteros, “Parabolas and the fate of nations: the beginnings of conservative historicism in Joseph de Maistre’s De la souveraineté du peuple.” Relatedly, Graeme Garrard has argued that Maistre’s engagement with Rousseau helps demonstrate that the latter was an intellectual precursor of the Counter-Enlightenment. See Garrard, “Maistre, judge of Jean-Jacques.”
43 “L’homme] gravite […] vers les régions de la lumière. Nul castor, nulle hirondelle, nulle abeille n’en veulent savoir plus que leurs devanciers. Tous les
The pessimistic Augustinian count speaks of degradation and abomination to paint a picture of humanity’s moral state far more dire than the Savoyard vicar’s. Conscience here serves only to contemplate the destructive power of the passions. More equably, however, Maistre’s count also displays an interest, quite absent from Rousseau’s cleric, in viewing duplicitous humanity as part of the great chain of being. The irony is that he does this by following Rousseau in the Cartesian tradition that vindicated humanity’s unique possession of conscience against the libertines, who tended to emphasise the continuities, rather than the qualitative breaks, between the human and animal worlds.

These two innovations of *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*—the gloomier vision of conscience as humanity’s powerless witness of depravation, and the interest in humanity’s position vis-à-vis other beings—are important for our purposes. The first results in an utter pessimism regarding the ability of reason, when unaided by divine love, to reconcile humankind with itself. The vicar had already intimated this by associating the good more closely with sentiment than with reason—and Rousseau’s entire philosophy proclaims that virtue and the moral good must ultimately spring from feeling, whose rightness reason must simply understand. But the count seems to lend to reason no role beyond the contemplation of evil. *Les soirées’* second innovation results in a greater awareness of the precise workings of human duplicity in nature and society. “Contrary movements” no longer suffice to explain evil; and “torment” vaguely conceived cannot capture the full extent of its consequences. A more complex soul with more concrete socio-historical functions is needed, and Maistre describes it in what turned out to be the first treatise on the sociology of violence.44

The *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices* (1821) opens by refuting the Lucretian attribution of religion to fear, and by associating religion with...
the highest human sentiments. Humans, writes Maistre, worship out of joy. Yet, he concedes, the question of the origins of religion is irremediably paradoxical, and the fear thesis demands some credence: “One must confess […] that history shows us man persuaded in all times of this frightening truth: That he lived under the hand of an irritated power, and that this power could be appeased only with sacrifices.” As deists like John Toland and John Trenchard had done before him, Maistre locates the terrors of religion in a bodily source—“in the sensitive principle, in life, in the soul […] so carefully distinguished by the ancients from the spirit or intelligence.” Yet where deist psychologies of religion rationalised religion as the aberrant explanation of pain by reason, or as a communication blockage between the individual and the world, Maistre deems bodily impulses like pain primal, determining and not susceptible of modification or assimilation. He allows that religious fear arises from the movements of the “sentient principle” or soul seated in the body; but he considers that these movements are naturally and irreversibly contrary to those of the spirit, and that the best humanity can do is not to assimilate them, but to quiet them through sacrifice.

Clearly, the vicar’s “movements” are still present in this scheme. The difference is that they now each have their own “seats” within the human individual—the soul and spirit of ancient Platonic ontology. The spirit, rising up to the universal and moving toward unity, brings mankind to perform its duty without hesitation: Homer says that Jupiter, having determined to make a hero victorious, has weighed his decision “in his spirit; he is one: there can be no combat within him.” But the soul, descending toward the particular, moves to divide man; so that, if “long agitated between his duty and his passion, [a] man has been on the point of committing an inexcusable violence, he has deliberated in his soul and in his spirit.” The body alone is passive, the object for whose control spirit and soul contest. Man is thus either dual or tripartite in Maistrian

---

45 “Il faut cependant avouer […] que l’histoire nous montre l’homme persuadé dans tous les temps de cette effrayante vérité: Qu’il vivait sous la main d’une puissance irritée, et que cette puissance ne pouvait être apaisée que par des sacrifices.” Maistre, “Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices,” 283 (original emphasis).
47 Manuel, The changing of the gods, 44-5.
48 “[D]ans son esprit; il est un: il ne peut y avoir de combat en lui,” “longtemps agité entre son devoir et sa passion, [un] homme s’est vu sur le point de commettre une violence inexcusable, il a délibéré dans son âme et dans son esprit.” Maistre, “Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices,” 287 (original emphasis).
anthropology, depending on whether the body and its passions are assimilated to the soul, or whether soul and body are separate. But regardless of the number of divisions, what Maistre is keen to emphasise is that hypocrisy results from division, that being two, at once wanting and not wanting, loving and hating evil, attracted and repelled by the same object, the human self cannot possibly be true to itself or about itself. It must necessarily be duplicitous. Hence the cry of Augustine, confessing the command that old ghosts still wielded over his soul: “Then, Lord! Am I ME? No, without doubt [replies Maistre], he was not HIM, and no one knew it better than HIM, who tells us in the same place: there is such a difference between MYSELF and MYSELF.”

The theological roots of Rousseau’s torments resurface here, accompanied by a “fascination with the sources of deception and dissimulation in human conduct” that Harvey Mitchell has claimed is at the core of Rousseau’s hypocrisy-centred philosophy, and that Jerrold Seigel reports occurring as early as 1749 in Le persifleur, a text Rousseau co-wrote with Diderot. For Maistre, hypocrisy, both self- and other-directed, deliberate and unwitting, is intrinsic to the human condition, and especially inevitable in social relations. The difference is that whereas Rousseau is primarily preoccupied with the deceiving self’s existential status, Maistre’s soul theory can be used to explain history, revolution, and the realm of unintended and paradoxical consequences to which they both belong. Specifically, Maistre’s state of submission and self-sacrifice is the only state in which the soul can be both completely self-aware, and in a position to arrest history.

Like hypocrisy, the idea of submission echoes Rousseau, who “spoke of the annihilation of the self as desirable,” and presented the self as “the agent, with the assistance of God’s grace, of its own extinction.” But, again, Maistre innovates on his maligned predecessor by lending historicising powers to the self-destructive self. In this, he expands upon the Augustinian and especially Jansenist tradition from which Rousseau’s
concept of the self also emerged. For while Maistre is probably the first Western thinker to associate human duplicity and historical vicissitude so explicitly, the idea was already in germ in Augustine—who could not, nevertheless, develop it any more than could most of his heirs, due to the absolute separation he posited between the City of God and the City of the World.

Pascal was one of these heirs. He too had reflected on the human contradiction, commenting that the “so visible” “duplicity of man” had led some to believe that we have “two souls.” Maistre criticizes this point, observing that the difficulty is not to explain the “sudden varieties” of a “simple subject” as Pascal claimed, but his “simultaneous oppositions.”55 The observation may seem pedantic, but can make a big difference to historical explanation. An inconstant character like Pascal’s is developmentally unconstrained. But a subject consistently incongruous carries within her the paradox necessary for the generation of history: she is a vessel, so to speak, of concentrated time. Again, the stream of Augustine’s inheritance had also run through Rousseau, who in his bipolarity had followed Pascal in invoking diametrical opposites devoid of historicising potential: Jean-Jacques recommended that we gather, summon and concentrate ourselves; and alternately that we extend our beings, giving ourselves up to expansive sentiment.56

Building on these ideas, and echoing especially Rousseau’s insistence on submission, Maistre argues originally that duplicity is resolved by sacrifice, which expiates the guilt accumulated as a result of the contrary movements of spirit and soul. “[L]ife itself being guilty,” a life less precious can be offered up in its stead—a soul for a soul, the vicaria anima, literally the “substitute soul.” Sacrifice, in turn, is efficacious in direct proportion to the innocence of the victim’s blood—an observation that Maistre justifies by invoking Origen’s (ultimately condemned) speculation that the “soul of the flesh resides in the blood.”57 Maistre then describes victimal innocence in greater detail. He points out that the ancients never immolated any wild beasts, beasts of prey, serpents, fish, stupid animals or animals alien to humankind. Rather, “among animals,

57 For an account of Origen’s doctrine of the soulfulness of the blood and its final condemnation, see Origen, Entretien d’Origène avec Héraclide.