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**Epistemologies of the State.
The Administration of Knowledge in France ca. 1800**

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Epistemologies of the State: The Administration of Knowledge in France ca. 1800

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1. The Empty Place of Authority

„Lorsqu'on donne à un enfant un de ces jouets qui exécutent des mouvements, inexplicables pour lui, au moyen d'un mécanisme intérieur, après s'en être amusé un moment, il le brise, pour voir dedans. C'est ainsi que les Français ont traité le gouvernement. Ils sont voulu voir dedans: ils ont mis à découvert les principes politiques, ils ont ouvert l'œil de la foule sur des objets qu'elle ne s'était jamais avisée d'examiner, sans réfléchir qu'il y a des choses qu'on détruit en les montrant.”¹

On the following pages I will suggest looking at state statistics during the time of the French consulat and the early empire as a material as well as philosophical effort to produce unity, and to invent a specific concept of administration. In this sense I consider what was to be defined as the *science of statistics* as an active means in producing the *unity* of the state. What I wish to stress is the specific importance of thinking the state and its scientific capacities as methods or strategies for materially and symbolically producing both the concept and practice of *order* and *unity* in society. It is this performative aspect of statistics that I wish to focus on.

During the period in question the basic principles of the state had been shaken such that a new relation of trust had to be established. The *coup d'état* of Bonaparte on 18th Brumaire Year VIII, and the foundation of a central bureau of information—later to be renamed the bureau of statistics—at the ministry of interior, exemplify this effort to produce unity. This situation is also illustrated in the position Joseph de Maistre, royalist and outspoken enemy of the revolution, who saw in it a turnover of the moral principles of government and authority. In one of his early works Maistre portrayed the events of the revolution as a dangerous demystification: Things which hitherto were rightly concealed from the masses had now become visible. The principles of government had been torn open like children breaking open a toy in order to glimpse into its inner mechanisms. De Maistre's argument was that through this act of unveiling these principles had been destroyed forever: the place of authority had been left empty. What De Maistre points out clearly, and what

¹ De Maistre, Joseph, *Lettres d'un royaliste savoisien à ses compatriotes* [1793], in: *Oeuvres complètes*. Hildesheim 1984: 38.

we can call the joint project of the different parties of the political field in France, is the idea that authority had to be based on a new foundation: what formerly had been based on “instinct” and “tradition” now had to be founded on “science”. The problem of order and authority had to be put into epistemological terms.² This “view of the inside” De Maistre judged so destructive became the research paradigm of the statistical vogue of the consulat and the early imperial years. In the first issue of the state-funded journal *Annales Statistiques*, the authors praised the science of statistics for producing a *statue* of a country, in Condillac’s sense. With this new science, however, the inside of this statue, would no longer be concealed: Statistics would enter into the entrails of the earth and ascend to the heights of the atmosphere to provide the kind of unity which in De Maistres eyes had been lost.³ For the authors of the *Annales* it was clear that the agent of this scientific unity of the country had to be the “Government”.⁴ It would provide the basis for a scientific ideal which would combine work on the ground with the work taking place in the cabinet of the sedentary researcher.⁵ Authority had become an object of a state-funded science of the state.

The question of how this unity should be conceived was an object of fierce contestation during the time of the consulat and the early empire. I suggest conceptualizing these debates in the framework of the statistical project with its epistemological perspective of unity as it was then

² Ibid. For a discussion of De Maistre's changing position towards „science” see Pranchère, Jean Yves, *L'autorité contre les lumières: la philosophie de Joseph de Maistre*. Geneva: Droz 2004: 77.

³ „[...] la *statistique* doit être à un pays, ce qu'une statue est à son original, avec cette différence, cependant, que la statue n'offre aux regards, que l'extérieur de son modèle, tandis que la statistique, outre ce principal avantage, descend dans les entrailles même de la terre, et s'élève jusques dans le sein d'atmosphère, pour satisfaire, tout-à-la-fois, la curiosité et l'industrie.” *Annales de statistique ou journal général d'économie politique, industrielle et commerciale; de géographie, d'histoire naturelle, d'agriculture, de physique, de hygiène et de littérature*, tome I. Paris: Valade 1802: xlv.

⁴ „[...] il n'appartient qu'au gouvernement, considéré dans toutes ses ramifications de réaliser un tel projet.” - *Annales statistique [...] 1802*: I, xlvi. For another statistical author like Jacques Peuchet, it was clear that statistics had become necessary through the division of the Territory and other basic transformations which the *première assemblée nationale* had effected. – Peuchet, Jacques, *Statistique Élémentaire de la France*, Paris: Gilbert 1805: 25f.

High expectations were linked to the scientific project of statistics: the number of the published texts are as telling as the contemporary convictions that the new science would somehow be able to be the science of the end of revolutions in general: „[...] quand cette science sera bien répandue dans le monde, la masse des citoyens n'aura plus à redouter ces révolutions subites et sanglantes qui, dans le cours de leur marché incertaine, dévastent et dévorent tout ce qu'elle rencontrent, et qui ne prennent que trop souvent leur source dans l'enthousiasme aveugle pour quelque système bizarre.” – Donnant, D.F., *Théorie élémentaire de la statistique*. Paris: L'imprimerie de Valade 1805: xxi. Donnant applied as well for a position in the bureau of statistics. In a letter he wrote on the 1. March 1806 to Degérando he stated: „vous verrez combien je dois aspirer à un emploi qui me mette à portée de cultiver avec succès une science, qu'un des premiers en france, j'ai embrassé par choix et par gout.” vgl. Archives Nationales (= AN) F20 103 1-2.

⁵ Bourguet, Marie-Noëlle: *La collecte du monde: voyage et histoire naturelle (fin XVIIème siècle - début XIXème siècle)*, in: Blanckaert/ Corsi et.al (ed.), *Le Muséum au premier siècle de son histoire*. Paris: Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, 1997: 163-196.

discursively formulated and materially produced. In order to do this, I distinguish between three epistemological positions with respect to what I term “statistical *unity*”,⁶ each of which is linked to a specific conception of the role of the administrator. In the second step I suggest linking this conflict to the emergence of a new kind of anthropology, which was partly connected to the project of the *Société des observateurs de l'homme* (SOH), through the efforts of Joseph-Marie Degérando—an anthropology that was discursively and practically founded on the figure of the administrator. This figure, I argue, made it possible to reinstitute and reconstruct the secret nature of authority and unity, which in the eyes of De Maistre had been lost. With Degérando, the concret relation between the effort to administratively produce the unity of the state and to philosophically produce the unity of the self can be shown.

2. The State as an Epistemological Problem: How to Produce Unity at the End of the Revolution

What I wish to stress is the specific importance of thinking the state and its scientific capacities as methods or strategies for materially and symbolically producing both the concept and practice of *order* and *unity* in society. It is this performative aspect of statistics that I wish to focus on. The literature on the statistics of the prefects has discussed different aspects of this scientific state-project. For the sake of my argument I would provisionally produce a distinction between three research traditions within that literature. The first is the research in the tradition of historical epistemology, following Foucault's late concept of a genealogy of the history of truth. This history of objectification has crystallized in relation to the quantitative aspect of statistics and the historical emergence of the idea of formulating the laws governing society.⁷ The time around 1800

⁶ Libby Schweber recently coined the french state building the project of a „statist-state”. – Schweber, Libby, *Disciplining Statistics. Demography and vital statistics in France and England, 1830-1885*. Durham-London: Duke University Press 2006.

⁷ Foucault, Michel, *Il faut défendre la société*. Cours au Collège de France, 1976. Paris: 1997; *Sécurité, Population, Territoire*, Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978. Paris 2004; *Naissance de la Biopolitique*, Cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979. Paris 2004; Krüger, Lorenz, Daston, Lorraine J., Heidelberger, Michael (Hg.), *The probabilistic revolution, Volume I: Ideas in History*. Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press 1990; Porter, Theo, *The rise of statistical, 1820-1900*. Princeton 1986; *Trust in numbers the pursuit of objectivity in science and public life*. Princeton 1995; Daston, Loraine, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment*. Princeton 1988; Hacking, Ian, *Taming of Chance*. Cambridge 1990; Desrosières/ Thevenot, *Investition der Form* 1989; Thevenot, Laurent, *Les investissements de forme*, in ders. (ed.) *Conventions économiques*, Paris 1986: 21-71; Desrosières, Alain, *The politics of large*

is here analysed as a critical period, in which a shift from a deterministic to a probabilistic worldview took place.⁸ The second research approach focuses on the protean character of the statistical projects in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which accentuated its relation to the early-modern idea of *historia*, during the phase of the epistemic transition to modern environmental and social sciences.⁹ Here the idea of a scientific voyage and the specificity of local observation came into play, giving room to a variety of studies which have placed local contexts and practices of observation into focus.¹⁰

A third research approach, under the auspices of Pierre Bourdieu, focused on statistics in relation to the developing state administration, and the production of what we have now grown used to calling the “modern state”.¹¹ What is at stake here is not so much the transformation of styles of “statistical reasoning,” but their relation to the production of the *unity* of the “modern state” as an epistemological entity.¹² This entity adds to the concept of the “imaginary community” a material body of institutions and practices.¹³ To think of the state as an epistemological entity means to take into account the different sciences of the state (among them statistics) as instruments for producing this idea of unity and its effective symbolic power.

In the following I would like to pursue this latter approach, as it allows us to differentiate between the ideal representations of the state as unified and continuous and the administrative practices by

numbers : a history of statistical reasoning. Cambridge 1998 [1993].

⁸ Ted Porter coined this direction of research focussed on the history of quantification the „cultural study of objectivity”. - (Porter 1995).

⁹ Jordanova, Ludmilla, Earth science and environmental medicine: the synthesis of the late Enlightenment, in: Porter/Jordanova (Hg.), Images of the Earth. Essays in the History of the Environmental Sciences 1995 (1979); Bourguet/Licoppe, Voyages, mesure et instruments. Une nouvelle expérience du monde au siècle des lumières, in: Annales. Histoire, Science Sociale 52,5 (1997): 1115-1151; Bourguet/ Licoppe/ Sibum (eds.), Instruments, Travel and Science. Itineraries of precision from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Routledge: London-New York 2002.

¹⁰ Vovelle, Michel, La Découverte de la Provence ou les primitifs de l'ethnographie provençale, 1750-1850, in: Vovelle, Michel, De la cave au grenier. Un itinéraire en Provence au XVIIIème siècle. De l'histoire sociale à l'histoire des mentalités. Quebec: Serge Fleury 1980: 407-470; Ozouf, Mona, L'Invention de l'ethnographie française: le questionnaire de l'Académie celtique. In: Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisation. 36, 2 (1981): 210-230; Bourguet, Marie-Noëlle, Déchiffrer la France. La statistique départementale à l'époque napoléonienne. Paris 1989.

¹¹ Bourdieu/ Christin/ Will, Sur la Science de l'État, in: Actes de la recherche en science sociales 133 (2000): 3-11: „Le propre de État bureaucratique est avoir suscité une inflation documentaire sans précédent une prolifération archivistique que les historiens ont beaucoup sollicitée sans interroger toujours sur les conditions intellectuelles et matérielles de sa production et de sa conservation.” See as well Brian, Eric, La Mesure de l'État. Paris 1993; Buton, François, L'administration des faveurs. L'Etat, les sourds et les aveugles (1789-1885). Rennes 2009; Bourdieu, Pierre, Sur l'État. Cours au Collège de France (1989-92). Paris: Seuil 2012.

¹² (Bourdieu 2000: 3)

¹³ Bhaba, Homi K. (ed.), Nation and Narration. 1990; Anderson, Benedict, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London-New-York: Verso 2006 [1984]; Hobsbawm/ Ranger (ed.), The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge 1983.

which this unity and continuity were reproduced. It thus allows us to relate the epistemological struggles for an order and unity of knowledge to struggles taking place in the consulat for turning the state into such an entity. Thinking of the state as an epistemological entity accentuates the symbolic dimension of science in the production of the idea of its unity.

3. State Statistics:

Three Competing Models for Conceiving Unity

Inside the modern French project of state statistics I want to present four main actors, each of whom, in his turn, tried to frame the role of the administrator: Claude Adrien Duquesnoy, Alexandre Deferrière, Emmanuel-Étienne Duvillard and finally, albeit less directly involved, Joseph-Marie Degérando. The *science of man*, as conceptualized by Joseph-Marie Degérando, will be introduced as the common denominator of all these positions, as it formulated an anthropology that explicitly accounted for the incommensurability of competing models of thought, based around the concepts of “harmony” and “unity of the self”.

Duquesnoy and the ideological paradigm

Let me begin with Duquesnoy, the emblematic figure of prefectural statistics under the consulate. As Stuart Woolf noted, in the 80's Duquesnoy belonged to a group which can be termed “technicians of the revolution”¹⁴. For Duquesnoy it was clear that within the government it was the ministry of interior¹⁵ that had to be regarded as the unifying principle. The kind of unification the ministry was trying to achieve was closely linked to the prefectural statistics of Jean-Antoine

¹⁴ Woolf, Stuart, Les bases sociales du Consulat. Un mémoire d'Adrien Duquesnoy, in: Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine 31 (1984): 597-618: 607; *ibid.*, Napoleon's integration of Europe. London: Routledge 1991: 4, 84. For the enquiries on the enquiries from Neufchateau to Chaptal see: Gille, Bertrand, Les sources statistiques de l'histoire de France: des enquêtes du xviième siècle à 1870. Genève: Droz 1964. INSEE, Pour une Histoire de la Statistique, tome 1/ contributions. Paris 1977; Perrot, Jean-Calude, L'Âge d'or de la statistique régionale française: an IV-1804. Paris 1977; *id.*(ed.), La statistique en France à l'époque napoléonienne. Paris 1981. Perrot/ Woolf, State and Statistics in France 1789-1815. New York-London u.a. 1984; Bourguet 1989.

¹⁵ Igor Moullier, the historian of the ministry of the interior shows the dependance of this ministry of interior to the *Maison du roi*, and the territorialisation of the french administration. He links the existence of the idea of an active and providing state to a police exercised from a central institution: „Cette nouvelle tâche passe par une meilleure maîtrise des ressources naturelles, un encouragement à la production agricole et manufacturière. Toute la tâche de l'Etat de police consiste à libérer les énergies et la créativité individuelles, tout en maintenant la cohésion du groupe.” - Moullier, Igor, Le ministère de l'Intérieur sous le Consulat et le Premier Empire (1799-1814). Gouverner la France après le 18 brumaire. Thèse pour obtenir le grade de docteur de l'Université Lille III, 2003.

Chaptal, as stated in the Circular Reports of the 19. Germinal year 9. The explicit goal was to provide France with a comprehensive and detailed study in order to create comprehensive, uniform knowledge of the state.¹⁶ Duquesnoy saw the ministry as the “thread linking all the different parts of state administration”; as the “most important” institution that to its “direct influence on the prosperity of the state”¹⁷. Giving up on this project of unity would undermine its authority as an organ that influences and determines public opinion. At the same time, the administration would be incapable to create unity, and lose its capacity to effectively lead society in the direction of the public good.¹⁸ The foundation of the Bureau of Statistics by Lucien Bonaparte and Chaptal after the 18th Brumaire can thus be seen as a way to claim this authority of the ministry of interior, and to undertake the project of unity through this new form of statistic knowledge.

This view was articulated by Duquesnoy in a *Rapport* to Chaptal from December 1802, titled *General and permanent system of information*.¹⁹ In contrast to the project of founding a central bureau of information based on transparency, which had been the project of Lucien Bonaparte, Duquesnoy in his *rapport* opted for the installation of a *secret* information system. The *Rapport* states that the role of the administration is to develop and circulate statistic knowledge of the state. The use of this knowledge was based on two epistemological tools : *immediacy* and *secrecy*.

In Duquesnoy’s vision the prefect had to serve as an observer of the people in his department, and it was his training in statistics that turned him into such an observer. Duquesnoy’s first operational principle meant that the state can never know too much or too early.²⁰ The science of statistics was the way to position the ministry of interior as the focal point of the knowledge of the state, and to transform the latter into a strong institution that directs and initiates changes. Duquesnoy’s position reflects the ‘encyclopedic desire’ for knowledge, a desire that exceeded the

¹⁶ Circulaire du 19. Brumaire an IX, AN F10 297; published in Bourguet 1989: „ Mais pour donner au travail que je désire l’uniformité et l’ensemble nécessaires, je pense qu’il faut former un corps complet de tous les renseignements recueillis, et donner enfin à la nation la connaissance exacte de ses ressources.” (Bourguet 1989: 413)

¹⁷ „[...] la plus importante de tous par son influence directe sur la prospérité de l’état.” - Rapport présenté au Ministre de l’intérieur, 30 frimaire an 11, AN F 103 1-2; after numbers given by Gayot the Ministry received in year 8 six thousand letters the month. Loiselet published a list of the complete correspondence of the ministry in year XIV.

¹⁸ The *mémoire* is a private one, which Woolf dates to September/October 1802. Would one give up the privilege, that the ministry of interior is the center for all the demands of the regional councils „le ministre perdrait la plus belle attribution, celle d’être organe de l’opinion publique, celle de la diriger vers un but patriotique et utile, et d’une autre, l’administration perdrait le seul point commun qui lui reste, elle n’auroit plus le seul centre que notre organisation lui conserve, personne ne pourroit ni saisir, ni diriger le fil qui lie toutes les parties et les coordonne vers un but commun.” (Woolf 1984: 614)

¹⁹ Rapport présenté au Ministre de l’intérieur, 30 frimaire an XI, AN F 20 103 1-2.

²⁰ In his eyes, as he expressed to Chaptal in a secret communiqué, the nation of the consulate, was unlike the one in 1789, less valuable than its government. (Woolf 1984: 617)

possibility of a fixed nomenclature.²¹ Statistics thus became an infinite task. The originality of Duquesnoy's perspective can be seen by the introduction of a special temporality to this new form of activity: an *immediacy* of state-knowledge which also implied an immediacy of the state. He named this new system *système permanente*: a statistical service which went beyond the periodical and contingent reports, to found a statistical journalism of the prefects.²² While achieving immediacy was hardly possible, given that it took around ten days for a letter e.g. from Lyon to arrive in Paris, a system of presence was introduced through the installation of ambulant secretaries or commissioners.

The flipside of this element of presence was its *secrecy*.²³ For the information delivered by the prefects to have truth-value, a relationship of trust between the prefect and the central authority had to be established. The administrator was in this sense a distinguished agent of a state in need of a complete set of knowledge. The basic assumption was here the untruthfulness of the subjects including the lower administration. As Francois de Neufchateau and after him Lucien Bonaparte had stated in their respective circulars some time before, the administrator should be the true mirror in which the active central authority would be able to recognize itself, and an agent for the implantation of the general ideas which emanated from the center.²⁴ The knowledge produced for

²¹ „Je joins ici le tableau des principaux objets qui doivent fixer votre attention. Je ne vous indique que les principaux; il est impossible de faire la nomenclature de tout.” - Projèt de circulaire au préfets, AN F 20 103 1-2

²² „These reports shall not have any periodicity. Their existence depends solely on the facts. The prefects won't let any interval in between their knowledge of the fact and the knowledge they are communicating to the ministry. This communication has to be fast, and foremost has to be constant, and the chosen order of the correspondance in this regard has to be followed invariably in all places and all times.”

„Ces comptes rendus par les Préfets ne doivent avoir aucune périodicité. Leur existence dépend de celle des faits, les Préfets ne mettront aucun intervalle entre la connaissance qu'ils auront acquise de ces faits, et la connoissance qu'ils en donneront au Ministre. Cette communication doit être rapide, elle doit surtout être constante, et l'ordre de Correspondance une fois adopté pour cet objet doit être invariablement suivi dans tous les lieux, dans tous les temps.” (Duquesnoy 1802)

While achieving immediacy was hardly possible, given that it took around ten days for a letter e.g. from Lyon to arrive in Paris, a system of presence was introduced through the installation of ambulant secretaries or commissioners. The series AN F 2(I) 122 contains confidential letters of the commissioners from the year X to 1815, where the system of the ambulant secretaries is abolished. The series contains a *Instruction confidentielle* adressée aux secrétaires ambulans. The earliest nomination of ambulant secretaries is found in the Département Pas du Calais in an Arrêt from 17 Fructidor year XII.

²³ cf. *Instruction confidentielle adressée aux secrétaires ambulans*; AN F 2(I) 122 - “Les secrétaires ambulans doivent se mettre en quelque mesure de fournir à leur sous Préfets des renseignements, non seulement sur tout ce qui concerne l'Administration ordinaire de la commune, mais encore sur tout ce qui peut intéresser leur tranquillité intérieure et le bon ordre général. Mais [...] pour parvenir à des résultats certains [ils] ne doivent point être aperçus. Cette considération détermine le Préfet à s'expliquer sur ces mêmes objets dans une instruction particulière et purement confidentielle. Le préfet compte donc à cet égard sur la discrétion ou la prudence avec laquelle MM les secrétaires ambulans s'acquitteront des devoirs qui vont être détaillés.”

²⁴ “Souvenez-vous qu'un Commissaire du Directoire exécutif doit être, en quelque sorte, une glace fidèle où le Gouvernement doit se voir réfléchir les objets tels qu'il sont. [...] Au surplus, cette instruction ne doit pas demeurer secrète; la dignité de votre état exige la publicité des ordres que je vous transmets; rend de ce que demande

the bureau of statistics was meant to grant the state its comprehensiveness and unity, and the ideal of transparency had to be held together by a secret surveillance system controlling the truthfulness of the accounts.

Deferrière: The mythical entity of the state and individual surveillance

Duquesnoy's ideological counterpart was the Chef of the bureau of statistics under Chaptal, Alexandre Deferrière. If Duquesnoy saw the government as the principle of community through mechanisms of control and guidance, with the ministry of the interior as the informational centerpiece of its ideological apparatus, Deferrière's position was opposite, emphasizing civil rights and individual property.²⁵ In a furious account dated between 1805 and 1806—the period of controversy regarding the work of the bureau— Deferrière criticized the epistemological principles Duquesnoy tried to promote. Deferrière's position is stated in his manuscript titled *De la Statistique et particulièrement de l'opération ordonnée en l'an IX sous le nom de Statistique Générale de la France*, which he circulated around the ministry before he resigned his position as head of the bureau.²⁶

According to this text, the project of general statistics and the role of the administrator which it produced created an image of the state as proprietor of the whole encyclopaedic variety of the country and people. The desire of the administration to know everything was in Deferrière's view a violent intrusion into the lives of people, which amounted to nothing short than the institutional continuity of the former, absolutist state.²⁷ He pleaded for a state that would take

l'administration générale et supérieure n'est fait pour être tu [...]; elle parle au peuple français le seul langage qui convienne et à ce peuple libre et aux autorités qu'il a instituées, c'est le langage de la loi." - Circulaire du Ministre de l'intérieur François du Neufchâteau du 21 fructidor an V, AN F1a 23.

"Toute idée d'administration et d'ensemble serait détruite, si chaque Préfet pouvait prendre pour règle de conduite son opinion personnelle sur une loi ou sur un acte du Gouvernement. Il devient simple citoyen, quand, au lieu de se borner à exécuter, il a une pensée qui n'est pas celle du Gouvernement, et sur-tout quand il la manifeste. Les idées générales doivent partir du centre; c'est de là que doit venir l'impulsion uniforme et commune. [...] le Gouvernement connaîtra par des résultats positifs et réels, ceux d'entre vous qui sont les plus dignes de sa confiance. Imiter l'exemple qu'il vous donne: il fait des actes et non des écrits: il gouverne, mais il parle peu." - Circulaire de Lucien Bonaparte du 6 Floréal an VIII sur les Fonctions des Préfets, in Recueil des lettres circulaires, instructions, Arrêtes et Discours Publics émanés des [...] Ministres de l'intérieur, tome III. Paris: Imprimerie de la République 1802 (an X): 182.

²⁵ For this distinction see as well: Staum, Martin S., *Minerva's Message. Stabilizing the French Revolution*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1996. 184. For the archetypal distinction of *universitas* and *societas* and the debate on the role of government and central authority in France cf. Koehane, Nannerl, O., *Philosophy and the State in France. The Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. New Jersey: Princeton 1980: 451ff.

²⁶ Deferrière, Alexandre, *De la Statistique et particulièrement de l'opération ordonnée en l'an IX sous le nom de Statistique Générale de la France*, Manuskript ohne Datum (Bourguet dates beginning 1806), AN F20 101.

²⁷ „Nous ne sommes donc pas des pupilles, et les hommes les plus disposés à étendre la attribue du Gouvernement monarchique n'ont jamais été en effet jusqu'à nous supposer tous en tutelle.” (ibid.)

laissez faire as its highest principle, and would refrain from intervening in the daily issues of the citizens. For the sake of this discussion, I would like to focus on Deferrière's reflection on the performative power of the *statistique tableaux* in the production of what he called "the ideal being which we designate by the word *Gouvernement*."²⁸ He observed that the claim for transparency and the pedagogic mission of statistics was in fact producing the opposite effect. The encyclopaedic curiosity of the project of general statistics provoked the active dissimulation of citizens, subjecting the very idea of citizenship into the logic of the scientific knowledge, framed by the concept of social unity and governmental control. Statistics, he claimed, transformed the relations between administrator and the administered into an economy of secrecy, whereby the administrator always stood "on guard"²⁹, while the administered were forced to conceal themselves from governmental intrusion and its scientific gaze.

In this new economy, the place of the local administrator is of interest for the debate about how the unity of the state was produced. Deferrière's text offers a lucid analysis of the performative power of the statistical study that exceeds the simple notion of truthfulness. As he described it, the local administrator, who was responsible for producing the statistical account, found himself in a conflict between his duty to the administration and his allegiance to the administered. Looking at the columns of tables in front of him, and the order of completeness it embodied, the administrator who only partially responded would either ridicule the unanswered questions of the authority or appear to have failed his duty to produce a full account. Consequently, the subordinate would go on to respond to all questions asked by the authority.³⁰ For Deferrière, the demand for the completion of tables, for a well-ordered descriptive whole, had itself become an object of suspicion. Deferrière based his observations on conversations he held with local administrative prefects and on critics

²⁸ „L'êtré idéale que nous désignons par le mot *Gouvernement* [...] ne possède rien en propre, n'use de ce qu'on lui confie que d'après des règles qu'il ne peut violer sans crime, et ne pouvant être ni marchand ni propriétaire, n'a réellement pour son propre compte rien de disponible à risquer et aucun *avoir* à acquérir.” (ibid.)

²⁹ „Il lui faudra toujours être au guet pour épier toutes les variations qui surviennent, et découvrir celles qu'on lui voudrait cacher.” (ibid.)

³⁰ „To answer just a part of the question posed by the supreme Authority means either to produce an indirect satire of the questions which remain unanswered [...] or to indicate that one has not made an effort to satisfy the *Gouvernement*, which is not conceived of as giving orders which are impossible to fulfill. As the subordinate is placed between these two cliffs, he has a vivid interest in circumnavigating both, and does not see any other option than to respond to everything, even if his sincerity has to suffer.”

„Ne répondre qu'à une partie seulement des questions faites par l'Autorité suprême, c'est de deux choses l'une, ou faire la satire indirecte des questions restées sans réponse, le silence du subordonné en pareil cas faisant présumer l'inconvenance ou l'insolubilité des questions en elles-mêmes, ou c'est donner à penser qu'on n'a pas fait tous ses efforts pour satisfaire en tout point le *Gouvernement* qui est toujours censé n'avoir rien ordonné qui ne soit faisable. Placé entre ces deux écueils le subordonné est vivement intéressé à les éviter l'un et l'autre, et pour ce faire, ne voit pas d'autre partie à prendre que de répondre à tout, dût sa bonne foi en souffrir.”(ibid.)

like Jacques Peuchet. The question he presented was simple: How was it possible that someone who knew about the essential incompleteness of the specific materials accumulated in statistic tables nevertheless believed in the validity of his own invention? Deferrière suggested that the regularity of the columns as well as their ordered numbers produced a certain “disposition,” encouraging a belief in the possibility of truthfulness, as well as the completeness, of the information conveyed.³¹ The detailed, encyclopaedic tables were not destroying the *esprit de système* as Duquesnoy argued. With the help of the government they were in fact “naturalising” it in a new way.³² In addition, the detailed questionnaires produced a general climate of suspicion and mystification concerning the statistical project of the state. In order de-mystify statistics and the state, the administrator had to be restricted in his responsibilities.

The unity of the state envisaged by Deferrière was not a goal in itself, one which had to be achieved through the possession of all the facts. It was rather a concept of distributed knowledge, linked to an idea of the state based on the *laissez faire*. He thought of the state as “custodian” and “general agent of distribution and accounting”. This was no longer the performative power of statistical knowledge as an ideological state apparatus aimed at unity, but a distributed power aimed at empowering the citizens.

Duvillard – Condorcets heritage and the ideal of political arithmetic

While Deferrière and Duquesnoy were both promoting a descriptive and non-quantifying idea of statistics, actors like Emmanuel-Etienne Duvillard introduced calculations and the concept of statistical laws.

When the Bureau of statistics came into crisis, Duvillard was asked by Joseph-Marie Degérando to evaluate its work. In a well-known memorandum to the Bureau he criticized its work as devastatingly as Deferrière did, albeit from a different perspective. He accused the Bureau for not having a conception of the necessary relations between the accumulated facts and the

³¹ „[...]all this ordered numbers one under the other [...] if not rigorous are at least possible, very possible, so possible that there is no other motive of thought, which could prefer others which would be different altogether.”

„[...] tous ces chiffres si bien rangés les uns sous les autres [...] s'ils ne sont pas rigoureusement exacte sont au moins possible, très possibles, tellement possible qu'aucun motif valable ne se presente à la pensée pour en préférer d'autres tout à fait différents.” (Deferrière 1805/06)

³² „Les statisticiens vont se trouver ici bien loin de compte, si on leur prouve que les notions qui leur seraient dues, loin de détruire l'esprit de Système, lui donneraient un aliment nouveau, et le naturaliseraient en quelque sorte parmi nous, pour peu que le Gouvernement se laissât entraîner à leur influence.” (ibid.)

conditions they related to, and for not being able to formulate general social laws.³³ For Duvillard it was necessary to have a measure by which the various official accounts could be falsified by the central authority, i.e. the Bureau. A general statistics of the empire would only be possible if a central “calculation agency” was put into place.³⁴ This was not a new claim: in the preliminary debates about the foundation of the *Bureau d'arithmétique politique*³⁵ in 1789, Condorcet had formulated the ideas which served as basis for Duvillard's criticism of the *Bureau of Statistics*. He made a distinction between two possible ways of handling empirical data. The first was only to follow and record current facts and events; the other was to treat them as input for formulating universal laws. The latter approach implied a science of society that would make it possible “to perceive the future in the present and in each single law the complete system of social order”.³⁶

Unlike the problem of collecting facts, Duvillard was focusing on the question of the relation between facts. Like Duquesnoy he believed that in order to produce a real unity of the data gathered it was necessary that the *Bureau of Statistics* professionalised as a *Bureau of Scientific Calculations*—would give up the claim for transparency and publicity in order to establish a truly scientific account.³⁷ Inside the administration a specialized corps of calculators should be established, which would unify statistical data under generalizable laws. Unlike Jacques Peuchet

³³ „Il paraît que personne dans ce bureau n'a soupçonné que les faits puissent se vérifier les uns par les autres. Cependant tous ont des rapports associés et nécessaires entr'eux. Les mêmes causes qui modifient les uns apportent aussi des différences dans les autres. Après avoir considéré attentivement leurs relations, on peut souvent représenter leur loi par des équations” Duvillard, Emmanuel-Étienne, Mémoire sur le travail du bureau de la Statistique [1806], in: *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1977): 439-443: 440.; For research on Duvillard see foremost Bardet, Jean-Pierre, *Aux origines du bureau de la statistique en 1806*, Duvillard du Durand, 1755-1832, in: *Population et société* 4(1980): 154-164; Bourguet, Marie-Noëlle, *Décire, Compter, Calculer: The Debate over Statistics during the Napoleonic Period*, in: Kruger et.al. 1990: 305-316; Thuillier, Guy, *Le premier actuaire de France: Duvillard (1755-1832)*. Paris 1997; idem (ed.), *À propos des papiers d'Emmanuel-Étienne Duvillard (1755-1832)*, in: *Études & documents*, tome I, (1989): 425-436; (Hacking 1990); Cole, Joshua, *The Power of large Numbers. Population, Politics, and Gender in nineteenth-century France*. Ithaca 2000.

³⁴ Ibid. 443.

³⁵ Duvillard eventually was appointed the director of the bureau by Condorcet. See as well Kang/ Thibeaud, *Innovations financières et creuset révolutionnaire*, in *Reveu d'economie financière* 17 (1991): 207-219.

³⁶ „Vous savez qu'il existe deux manières de traiter les objets politiques. L'une consiste à suivre le cours des événements; [...] L'autre méthode est dans la nature éternelle de l'homme et des choses, que ceux qui suivent cette méthode cherchent des principes inaltérables et universels. S'ils s'arrêtent à discuter les questions que les événements font naître, c'est toujours pour en ramener la discussion à ces principes généraux. Ils voient l'avenir dans le présent, et dans chaque loi particulière, considèrent le système entier de l'ordre sociale” - Condorcet, *À Monsieur *** sur la Société de 1789*, in: Arago, M.F. (Hg.), *Oeuvres de Condorcet*, tome dixième. Paris: Firmin Dido Frères 1847: 67-76: 71.

³⁷ „[...] Si un bureau de statistique n'est, en même temps, un Bureau des calculs scientifiques, où on vérifie les faits les uns par les autres, où l'on cherche par l'Analyse mathématique leurs rapports nécessaires, leurs loix et à en déduire ceux qu'on ne peut avoir immédiatement par l'observation, le Bureau, loin de remplir le but de son institution, ne peut qu'accréditer des erreurs funestes, faire rétrograder la science et compromettre les lumières de l'administration par la publicité de ses travaux.”- Thuillier, Guy, *Duvillard et la création d'une chaire de Mathématiques sociales au collège de France (1813-1814)*, in: *Etudes et Documents*, tome II, 1990: 462.

who was supporting the descriptive ideal of statistics, Duvillard opted for the professionalisation of the state employees. Only through this kind of calculation would it be possible to attach all the individuals in a society based on property to the “preservation of the social order,” and the Empire would be able to intervene for the public good.³⁸ Statistics should no longer be an illusionary authority over the *presence of things*, as represented in descriptive tables, but a *unifying principle* of society through the establishment of an authority over the future. The state in its capacity to gather data and centralise it in a *Bureau of political calculations* became a guarantor for the prevision of the future under the principle of social coherence.³⁹

Three models of administrators and unity have been highlighted so far: (1) the encyclopedic administrator-observer who should be the agent of an active presence of the State and its intervention; (2) the social administrator-custodian, who played a passive role, with the strong conviction that the state should not be more than an *ideal being*; and (3) the professional administrator-mathematician, whose duty was to formulate laws of society and to establish a scientific authority which could turn the state into a machine to produce future.

4. Joseph-Marie Degérando:

The Philosophy of Administration and the System of Harmony

Degérando's philosophy and his idea of a science of man can be read as an attempt to integrate these conflicting and incommensurable epistemological positions into a new unitary epistemology.⁴⁰ My reading is motivated by the *persona* of Degérando and his involvement in the state administration, public welfare projects, and the evaluation of the Bureau of Statistics. As someone positioned at the intersection of different traditions of thought, I suggest that his fusion should be interpreted in relation to the coinage of a new type of administrator-philosopher, who could harmonize conflicting epistemological approaches. Degérando termed the framework through which his

³⁸ *ibid.* 463.

³⁹ *ibid.* 465.

⁴⁰ In the restricted literature on Degérando see foremost: Braunstein, Jean-Francois, *De Gerando, le social et la fin de l'idéologie*, *Corpus revue philosophique* 14/15 (1990): 197-215; Azouvi, François, *De Königsberg à Paris: la réception de Kant en France (1788-1804)*. Paris 1991; Daled, Pierre F., *Le matérialisme occulté et la genèse du “sensualisme”*: écrire l'histoire de la philosophie en France. Paris 2006; most recently Park, Peter J., *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon, 1780–1830*. Albany 2013.

science of man should be understood as the *philosophy of experience* or *experimental philosophy*.⁴¹

What he developed for this science of man was a program similar to what the statistical projects should do for the history of France, i.e. a system of facts which would finally comprise a comprehensive knowledge of man⁴². His method consisted in providing a *historic table* of the different systems of philosophy not in relation to some preestablished philosophical convictions, but with respect to their own status. For Degérando, all doctrines had been built up on “essential questions” which, once inventoried correctly, would open the possibility for their comparative analysis. A historic table of these essential questions, Degérando argued, would form a kind of meta-philosophy, a geographic map of different doctrines.⁴³ This *geography of human thought* that the science of man provided should circumscribe the space of thought itself, the space of attention folded back on itself, which Degérando conceived of as a “geography of boundless space”.⁴⁴ In the nomenclature of generation of human ideas, the act of folding back attention was the act of reflection. Reflection, in contrast to the passivity of the senses, was considered the active principle of human understanding: the possibility of observing man’s own acts of knowing. Inside this transcendental geography, all sciences could be integrated as “ramifications” of this one integrating “system”.

The empirical side of this “experimental philosophy” of Degérando can be seen in the famous anthropological text he prepared for the expedition of Baudin, one of the prestigious projects of the *Société des observateurs de l’homme*. For Degérando, the “savage” represented a being which was untouched by the history and the aberrations it had left on language. The way to conceive of the “savage” as being without history was precisely his dispossession of the ability to relate to himself, which Degérando saw in his underdeveloped faculty of reflection⁴⁵. Conceiving

⁴¹ In his treatise on Signs published in 1800, he invites his audience to read his considerations on the sciences of man as a way to link abstract metaphysics to the concrete world of the social. „J'aime à le dire; l'espérance de rendre enfin la science de nos idées tributaire du bonheur commun, de rétablir quelques communications entre ce monde intellectuel qu'habitoit la métaphysique, et ce monde social que parcourent les sciences positives [...] est la seule pensée, qui m'a donné la confiance d'en produire les résultats.” Degérando, Joseph-Marie, *Des Signes et de l'art de penser considérés dans leurs rapports mutuels*, Tome 1-4. Paris: Gujon fils An VIII (1800): I, xii

⁴² Degérando’s works, including *Considerations on the observation of savage people*, his work on the *Generation of human knowledge* and his *History of philosophical Systems* were meant to produce an inventory of the different systems of human knowledge from a “neutral” position. Cf. Degérando 1800: IV, 265; Degérando, Joseph-Marie, *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines*, Tome 1-3. Paris: Henrichs 1804 (an XII). Tome I, xxxvi.

⁴³ *Ibid.*: I, xx.

⁴⁴ Degérando 1804: III, 11.

⁴⁵ Degérando, Joseph-Marie, *Considérations sur les diverses Méthodes à suivre dans l'observation des peuples sauvages*, in: Jamin/ Copans (eds.), *Aux origines de l'anthropologie française: les mémoires de la Société des observateurs de l'homme en l'an VIII*. Paris 1994: 95. Without this ability to reflect, as Degérando stated in his

the “savage” as devoid of these basic qualities of relating to himself, Degérando could further construct the savage as an ideal research object. As fundamentally empirical being, “the savage” became a laboratory of the formation of human ideas, a place where they could be observed without being occulted by circumstances. This form of reasoning which Degérando called *empirical metaphysics* was an effort to combine and pacify⁴⁶ two conflicting schools of thinking, a philosophical peace treaty as he wanted it.⁴⁷

The Administration of Science

But to dismiss Degérando as an actor in the history of philosophy, would miss the point. His effort to provide an integrative system of the sciences of man should be considered in relation to his engagement in the administrative practices of his time. Namely as a member of the public administration, secretary general of the *Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale*, and later as the secretary general of the ministry of the interior and supervisor of the reform of the bureau of statistics in 1806. His work on the science of man can thus be read as an answer to the problem of unity and stability that became an issue after the time of Brumaire.

I propose reading Degérando’s work as an attempt to provide a philosophical foundation for administration, which, like the statistical project of Duquesnoy, albeit in an altered form, was built upon historical work.⁴⁸ Degérando himself wanted his work to be seen in this light, when at the outset of his *History of philosophical systems* he quotes Bacon in order to place his work in a context of an “administration of science.”⁴⁹ The goal of his philosophy was “to put up an historical table [...] and by giving an analysis with a severe critique, to be able to *determine* the most general *causes* of the way of the human spirit” and to “convert these observations into a practical code *for the*

treatise on the formation of ideas, there was no possibility to conceive of change and movement and therefore no grounds on which the sense of history could be established. - Degérando, Joseph-Marie, *De la Génération des connoissances humaines. Mémoire qui a partagé le prix de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Berlin sur la question suivante: Démontrer d'une manière incontestable l'origine de toutes nos connoissances [...]*. Berlin: George Decker 1802. 256.

⁴⁶ Degérando 1804: II, 395f.

⁴⁷ „The philosophy of experience holds in some sort the balance between the different systems. It is immutable, because it is placed on the point of rest, whereas the extreme doctrines agitate in oposed directions [...] without being able to find the big law of equilibrium.”

„La philosophie de l'expérience tient en quelque sorte la balance entre les systèmes. Elle est immuable, parce qu'elle est placée au point d'appui, pendant que les doctrines extrêmes s'agitent en de sens contraires [...]faute d'avoir su rencontrer la grande loi de l'équilibre.” (ibid. 397)

⁴⁸ Kingston, Ralph, *Bureaucrats and Bourgeois Society: Office Politics and Individual Credit in France 1789-1848*. New York 2012.

⁴⁹ Degérando 1804:I, ix.

administration and application of science, by extracting out of [philosophy] the rule of a *better regime* for our spirit.”⁵⁰

In this sense, the treatise on signs by Degérando can be read as a demonstration of the impossibility of inventing a precise and everlasting system of signs which would not be exposed to the changes of history. The quest for order was then a local and specific task always based on the individual collection of facts. An example of what this kind of regime would look like can be found in his text on the administration of the poor and State welfare entitled *The Visitor of the poor*. There he designed an informational system to observe the changing state of the poor through a team of travelers.⁵¹

L'état c'est Moi

The “point of rest” on which the different systems of signs could be posed, indeed the clue to Degérando’s thought, was the concept of the *moi*, the self. The *moi* can be seen as the point where the empirical and the transcendent side of his experimental philosophy came together to establish a concrete entity that could only be known through the mediation of the senses yet was itself not empirical. In order to see unity in the world, Degérando stated, it was necessary first to set up one’s own “identity as the measure of all the others.”⁵² Unity could only be found in the *moi* and not inside the world of the assemblages of objects.⁵³

One of the first to recognize the novelty of Degérando’s approach was François-Pierre-Gonthier Maine de Biran, himself a local administrator, who got his position through the protection of Degérando as Secretary general. In a review of Degérando’s work from 1802, he claimed to have read a report on the “true metaphysics”. In a letter to Degérando from the same year, he wrote that “the principles of morality find their true foundation in the one who recognizes

⁵⁰ Ibid. xviii

⁵¹ „Au bureau de bienfaisance viendront converger et se réunir toutes les informations; de ce foyer partiront tous les genres de soulagement et d'assistance; nos visiteurs en seront comme les rayons disséminés de toutes parts.” Degérando, Joseph-Marie, *Le Visiteur du pauvre* [...]. Paris: Colas 1820: 125. As well cf. “organiser comme condition fondamentale, un bon régime d'information et de surveillance, tel est le véritable et le seul moyen de perfectionner le système de secours publique.” (535)

⁵² Degérando 1802: 249

⁵³ „We will see that unity is not perceived in the object. But many distinct perceptions which the object is transmitting, and which affect us simultaneously, unify and associate in our self (*moi*). There they receive the seal of unity [...]. We have to distinguish between unity and assemblage: outside of ourselves we see assemblages; we only see unity in ourselves.” *ibid.*

the *self*, which is capable of a force, a power of reaction to modify itself.”⁵⁴ The unity of the *moi* was a stable entity which could not be reduced to one definite type of theoretical expression. It was, moreover, an action of the mind on itself, which in turn produced a unity outside the realm of language.

If we now go back to the question with which we started, the question of our famous catholic reactionary—how can the moral authority of the new regime be reconstructed and re-legitimized in *scientific* terms—we find one successful answer in the authority of the *moi*. While the different types of administrators were favouring particular doctrines of thought, such as the empirical techniques of the tableau of natural history, or the mathematical theories of probabilistic laws, Degérando's philosophy of administration claimed to bring these different concepts into harmonious relationship. With his science of man and its *active self* he inverted the direction of thinking unity. Unity was now not produced by a collection of objects and their analysis, but by a pre-existing activity to relate to oneself which was constitutive for the historical reality.

In this sense, Degérando's *science of man*, and the anthropology which was to be conceptualised around this term, offered a moral as well an epistemological foundation to think about the *unity* of the self and, at the same time, the unity of its government.

⁵⁴ Biran, Maine de, *Correspondance philosophique* [letter to Degérando on 18th October 1802], in *Oeuvres* XIII-2/3. Paris 1996: I,180f.