

self. The very definition of the given as "given" seems to suggest as much. Even for Kant, as for all of the philosophers considered here, the given is not really a meaningful given. Thanks to this assumption, it may be called a myth, a presupposition, an abstraction, namely, something that one must assume.

In favor of McDowell, let me say that for him there is no such thing as a nonmeaningful given. However, in order for this to be so, he adds to it conceptuality. Thus the given is not really given, since its meaning is the result of an interpretation. In my opinion, on the contrary, the given is rather the starting point of interpretation. The given must be meaningful even when devoid of conceptuality. Otherwise, we could not explain how a cat is able to jump on a table.

McDowell, who does not distinguish between the experience of sense perception (or content) and conceptual content, believes that judgments are always conceptual. Evans, who does distinguish between sense perception and conceptual content, believes, just like McDowell, that judgments are always conceptual. Neither of them, then, distinguishes between judgment and conceptual content. This crucial distinction must not be ignored, however. Though there are indeed conceptual judgments, there are also perceptual ones that are not conceptual. Moreover, though there are indeed conceptual judgments, there are also conceptual contents that are not judgments, namely, concepts that do not involve evaluating the content, but entail only conceptual understanding.

Second, in accordance with the general tendency in current epistemology, McDowell's general aim is to find justification for knowledge against the pursuit of excuses, or rather, exculpations. The question of justification, however, deals rather with the content of knowledge and not with its form, namely, with the way we know and with the individual and historical development of knowledge. Thus, in our times, discussion of knowledge has become a discussion on the ontological status of what we know. As a result, there is no debate whatsoever about the meaning of knowledge itself.

McDowell's book is rich with fine distinctions and shows an erudite handling of current epistemological discussions. It can be recommended to all those who see philosophy as something built out of fruitful dialogue.

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**Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution.** By Albert Boime (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) The Princeton Series in Nineteenth-Century Art, Culture and Society xv + 234 pp. \$19.95, £14.95 paper.

In this innovative work, Albert Boime seeks to uncover the association between the social and political experience of the Paris Commune and the artistic work of Impressionist painters. Challenging the idea that for them the Commune was merely an aside, or something to be gotten over quickly in order to return to their essentially apolitical work, Boime suggests that it was a fundamental formative experience, and that the political point of view that lay behind the subsequent school of Impressionist painting can best be understood in light of the Commune. Among other possible descriptions, the Impressionist school can be understood in political terms as a republican answer to the twin menace of civil war and class struggle embodied in the Commune.

The political point of view represented by the Impressionists was moderate republicanism. They had been anti-Bonapartist during the Second Empire of Napoleon III, and due to their middle-class background and prejudice were unsympathetic to the Commune, although they were opposed to the severity of the treatment of the communards by the republican national government. The underlying political objective in their art was to reestablish a sense of order and security. Through painting workers at work, and members of the middle classes engaged in bourgeois activities, they presented a soothing picture of social harmony in bright color, with each in his or her rightful place. Boime points out the irony of the endeavor to recreate the prewar, preCommune, Haussmanized Paris that they had previously criticized, brought about by the desire to soothe after the overwhelming shock and destruction of the Commune: "The basic contradiction of the conservative Third Republic is that it springs from protest against the Second Empire and Bonapartism and yet is forced by the commune to reconstitute them in their cultural guise." (pp. 39–43). Through the artistic language of painting, the Impressionists sought to answer the challenges raised by the Commune. They hoped to appear modern and positivist, while at the same time returning to the cultural ideals of leisure and pleasure common before the war and the Commune.

It was not merely through the style and subjects that Impressionism represented the ideology of

moderate republicanism defined in part through a reaction to the Commune, but in the sites chosen for depiction as well. Boime demonstrates the recurrence of certain Parisian locations, such as Montmartre, which were key places of destruction and conflict in 1870–71. By portraying rebuilt Paris, they symbolically recaptured each piece of social space from the Communards, and freed it from the memory of the past (p. 96). The portrayal of specific rebuilt bridges and reconstructed neighborhoods contributed to the sense of relief and reconstituted order that the middle classes needed in the aftermath of the Commune.

In order fully to characterize the political motivations behind the Impressionist movement, Boime describes how the movements that followed had a different perspective with respect to the Commune, and different social and political objectives to go with it. Unlike the Impressionists, those younger painters who had either been children or not lived through the Commune at all were seized by the ideals of social change and equality that it had represented. This younger generation “wanted to aid in the formation of a new order on the ruins of the old” (p. 173). To do so they incorporated these ideals into their art, portraying, for example, a worker’s leisure time, where the Impressionists would have painted him or her at work, and thereby not ruffled anyone’s feathers with new social perspectives, thus contributing to the preservation and reestablishment of the old order.

Throughout, Boime’s argument is well supported with examples from the Impressionist school and others of the period. The book contains 240 black and white images, including illustrations from newspapers, posters, maps, and photographs, in addition to the numerous paintings. It is an important book on three levels. It contributes to a deeper understanding of Impressionists and their work, collectively and individually, by examining one key formative element of their political background that has been ignored up to now. It provides an enhanced picture of post-Commune France and the political and psychological forces at work in the early Third Republic by demonstrating how the emotions of the dominant class were reflected in the principal artistic movement to emerge in the period. Finally, in a more general way, it offers an interesting, nuanced example of the relationship between artistic expressions and socioeconomic *rapport de force*. It shows how political ideas can be reflected in artistic ones, and how evolution in art is not uniquely a product of the minds of artists, but consists of reflections, not

even necessarily conscious, of the dominant social and political feelings of the period.

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**Individual Choice and the Structures of History: Alexis de Tocqueville as Historian Reappraised.** By Harvey Mitchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 290 pp. \$54.95, £35.00 cloth.

Harvey Mitchell explores the work of Alexis de Tocqueville by illustrating how the problem of history—in this case, the question of the relationship between individuals and larger structures of history—was a central and crucial problem for Tocqueville throughout his life and various works. This organizational constant, which facilitates Mitchell’s attempt to “do justice to” (p. 7) the totality of Tocqueville’s thought, goes beyond simply forcing the diverse writings of Tocqueville into a feigned unity of thought. Rather, Mitchell provides a productive and informative means of fleshing out the continuities and the tensions that intersect in Tocqueville’s various writings.

Tocqueville’s self-historical remembrances in the *Souvenirs* as well as his personal correspondence offer, for Mitchell, an inroad to understanding how Tocqueville’s notion of the historical practice evolved. In Mitchell’s analysis, the context of the revolutionary crisis of 1848 and Tocqueville’s understanding of and interrelation with that context allowed him to articulate more fully the relation between individual experience and the framework of history in which that individual thinks and acts. Thus, Mitchell argues that the tension between the historical and the meta-historical, between the immediacy of individuals and events and the currents of long duration, as well as between the particular and the general were of deep concern to Tocqueville. This concern can be appreciated by viewing Tocqueville’s sense of narrative as multivalent.

Mitchell’s focus on the autobiographical writing as it puts into play and illuminates the author/work relationship is potentially the most innovative aspect of his treatment of Tocqueville. I suggest that there is need for further integration of Mitchell’s own theoretical program and the substantial discourse community that has focused on the question of autobiography, or textualized memories and narrative, since Benjamin. This would have tied his overarching thread to the rich and detailed essays that constitute the bulk of the