Introduction:

The reviews of my chapter focus on two topics. Reviewers 1 and 2 suggest the chapter is insufficiently engaged with the broader scholarship. Reviewer 1 takes a more critical view of this topic than reviewer 2. Second, Reviewer 1 claims the chapter presents Nietzsche as an epistemologist rather than moral critic. In order to address these claims, the general structure and point of the chapter needs to be stated.

The chapter begins by asking the following question, clearly modeled on the opening aphorism of the third essay of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*: “What is the meaning of reason and its relationship to American democracy?” The goal of the chapter is to answer this question. It does so by referring to a person widely recognized as having something definitive to say about the rational/Enlightenment underpinnings of American democracy, Thomas Jefferson, and a thinker who is deeply critical of reason as such but especially its modern versions, Friedrich Nietzsche. In other words, this chapter is not solely focused on Nietzsche or Jefferson. Both are invoked to answer the opening question of the chapter, and it is only those elements in each thinker directly related to answering the chapter’s question that are examined here. The significance of this chapter is nowhere more concisely stated than in a paragraph on page 16.

Nietzsche, Jefferson, and the Scholarly Literature:

With the general point and argument of the chapter in mind, the reviewers’ claims about secondary literature do not seem likely to strengthen the chapter. Reviewer 1 argues my use of established Nietzsche scholars such as Clark, Leiter, Deleuze, Nehamas, Detwiler, and Reginster covers “well-trodden ground.” I agree to some extent with the reviewer on this point, but I make no claim in the chapter to comprehensive, original, or groundbreaking analysis in terms of Nietzsche’s critique of reason. My chapter is not part of a sole-authored book on Nietzsche, nor is it part of an edited volume devoted exclusively to Nietzsche. In such works, the audience mainly would be Nietzsche scholars, and one would expect a broader and deeper engagement with the scholarly literature on Nietzsche. The volume under review has not been written for experts in any of the thinkers treated in the chapters. Thus, while some readers may be deeply knowledgeable about the secondary literature in Nietzsche, many will not be. Providing readers who do not know Nietzsche well with a foundational orientation to significant interpretations of his critique of reason is a reasonable choice. With Reviewer 2, the value of the chapter’s analysis of Jefferson is in the primary source interpretation. Compared to Jefferson, Nietzsche is a much more challenging thinker, and notes orienting the reader to interpretations in the scholarship are appropriate. While the chapter might not be weakened by adding several notes regarding the scholarship on Jefferson, it does not seem that the novel line of interpretation pursued in the chapter would be improved by such a move. The requests for revision in terms of deeper exploration of the secondary literature would add unneeded length to the chapter and ultimately distract the reader from the argument presented.

Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Morality:

Reviewer 1 seems to be under the impression that I am arguing Nietzsche is primarily an epistemologist. I make no such claim. The chapter’s focus on reason is driven by the importance of reason to Jefferson and his understanding of morals and politics. I do claim that Nietzsche’s critique of reason might be the most radical in the proposed volume, and that is a comment the editors of the volume have seen and support. In other words, that claim is relative to the other chapters and is not a statement that Nietzsche is first and foremost a critic of reason. Further, this reviewer claims Nietzsche is primarily a moral critic and that his epistemological considerations are downstream from moral valuations. I say as much on page 7 in the discussion of how Nietzsche believes “rational” perspectives are determined by pre-existing value commitments. In fact, most of the chapter is an exploration of how Jefferson’s rational, Enlightenment morality and politics is just a different version of the moral system Nietzsche despises most, Christianity.

More specifically, Reviewer 1 writes I “should consider at least referring to Nietzsche’s critique of the morally corrupting effects of the democratic tendency in modern life that is manifest in Jefferson.” The chapter has done more than at least refer to this point. The section of pages from 9-14 demonstrate how Jefferson’s ostensibly optimistic vision of democracy, ethics, and the human person is saturated with the kind of apocalyptic despair Nietzsche identifies with world hatred and *ressentiment*. Immediately following this section, the connection between Jefferson’s democratic rationalism and the problem of nihilism is made. The chapter concludes with hints as to how the nihilistic underpinnings of American democracy may be driving moral decline in the present. The revision regarding the corrupting influences of democracy this reviewer would like to see is unnecessary because more than what the reviewer has requested is already present.

To conclude, I do not believe the recommendations for revision regarding scholarly literature will strengthen the chapter and its place in the volume. The recommendation to address Nietzsche and the corrosive effects of democracy speaks to an issue already covered in the chapter.