***Critics of Enlightenment Rationalism***

*Review One*—**Responses in bold**

*Introduction*

The introduction states some criteria for the inclusion of thinkers, but I’m wondering about the criteria for exclusion. There are lots of important thinkers typically understood to be part of this tradition who go unmentioned. The authors should probably say why, similar to their good remark about the exclusion of the postmodern tradition. The list is:

Herder; De Maistre; Carlyle; Taine; Michelet; Renan; Sorrel; Spengler; Maurras; Leo Strauss; Hannah Arendt; the Frankfurt School; many other post-war thinkers critique Enlightenment rationalism (Tracy Strong, Politics without Banisters, is useful on this). What about them?

In addition, for the introduction: it would be useful in a volume such as this for the editorial introduction to set the context in a bit more detail. I’m thinking particularly of the fairly large amount of scholarly literature both on the Enlightenment and its critics that has emerged in recent years. Scholars have, for instance, discussed whether there is such a thing at all as the “Counter-Enlightenment,” to use Berlin’s phrase. The editorial introduction could at a minimum flag the fact that the very tradition under discussion is a matter of scholarly dispute. If the editors wish, they could elaborate on what they take to be the key findings of recent scholarship in this area, e.g. to my mind the pluralistic nature of the “Counter-Enlightenment,” as well as the fact that it is not strictly speaking “counter” to the Enlightenment, but rather trying to get a bigger picture of the Enlightenment vision of the human being.

There still are critics of this new picture—e.g. Zeev Sternhell, The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition.

**Response—**

**See revised introduction.**

*Individual comments on essays*

My major piece of advice for the following essays is to situate the discussion in the scholarly work on the subject. **(I have placed the reviewer’s comments about the scholarly context under each specific thinker.)**

*Burke*

How different than Canavan and Pocock?

I’m not a Strauss expert, but my understanding is that Burke is the beginning of the historicist tradition in the second wave of modernity, i.e. not an irrationalist. The irrationalism begins in the third wave. Some more precision needed here.

I like the Aristotelian reading of Burke, but how does this make sense of the famous Platonic passage in the Reflections about society being a contract of all arts and sciences, of the living, dead, yet-to-be-born, etc.? Stressing the empiricist, skeptical elements in Burke threatens to downplay these flourishes. How does the author incorporate this?

**Response—**

**I addressed the criticisms with the new parts of the texts signed with yellow.**

**As for the relationship to Pocock and Canavan, I distinguished my interpretation from that of Pocock (less historical, more relevant for our present concerns) and from that of Canavan (presenting B. more embedded in the common law tradition, and less in the Thomistic one, while still remaining Aristotelian).**

**As for Aristotelianism and the widened concept of social contract, I included a passage in which I use this part of Burke to show that he believed that the findings of practical wisdom will always be in harmony with universal values.**

*Tocqueville*

Tocqueville—need to incorporate the long second footnote on scholarship into the main body—how do the authors contribute to this?

In the discussion of Democracy in America, there should be more attention paid to Tocqueville’s analysis of general ideas and the Cartesianism of Americans. Here T launches a criticism of rationalism. Also, little discussion here of religion, which is helpful to contextualize his critique of Enlightenment anti-religious tendencies.

**Response—**

*Kierkegaard*

A good paper, though perhaps a bit too narrowly focused? The author might consider at least referring to a text like The Present Age, which also touches on political theory.

**Response—**

**I believe the “narrow focus” cited by reviewer 1 is justified in order to bring to light Kierkegaard’s lesser-known and more political criticism of rationalism.**

**The only substantive comment from Reviewer 1 — that I might consider citing “The Present Age...” — will not require revising the mss.**

**My essay deals extensively with those sections of “Two Ages,” which Theodor Haecker (I believe) collected under the German title Kritik der Gegenwart and which Alexander Dru (I think) translated as “The Present Age.” I work from the Danish and cite the up-to-date translations, but it is not as if I do not use that material. In fact, it is most of the Kierkegaard that I cite.**

*Nietzsche*

Nietzsche (There is a bit of dabbling in the footnotes, but this is really well-trodden ground, that is, Nietzsche’s critique of reason. And in fact there are sophisticated developments that challenge the author’s thesis that Nietzsche is the radical critic of reason the author suggests (e.g. Sebastian Gardner)) The author really needs to contextualize his reading in the scholarly literature.

The main critique Nietzsche tends to make against modern figures is MORAL in nature, rather than epistemological (and the epistemological critiques tend to be downstream from the moral critiques). The author 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.

**Response—**

**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.**

*Eliot*

Eliot (Is it that many take him to be a reactionary, but author argues he is not?),

Interesting discussion of tradition, but mostly focused on culture. There should be some attempt to connect this to politics, or how culture can have political implications.

**Response—**

**I don’t plan to revise much, because one reviewer basically said, "is this the point” and my response is “yep”. I I feel it says so on every page. The other asked for better connection to politics, which is fair, but can only be done rather briefly (which is my plan) or by an extensive rewriting, which is not feasible. Neither took great issue with anything, so I hope that an approach where I just acknowledge and make a bit more explicit the connection between culture and politics will do.**

*Wittgenstein*

“Since all language games are equally legitimate…” What does legitimate mean here? How can language games find legitimacy without reasons? If it is just a matter of use and habitual acceptance, this seems different than legitimacy. Does W use this term? How is it different than justification?

I don’t follow how the arbitrariness of linguistic signifiers undermines normativity. I think most rationalists would agree that words are arbitrary. The key point is whether the world—human or otherwise—admits of rational description, no matter what language we use to describe it. I’m missing this here.

**Response—**

**As written, the relevant clause read "mathematics, joking, and singing are not different in kind, insofar as they are all equally legitimate—equally paradigmatic examples of language in use." By calling a language-game "legitimate," I mean that it is a paradigmatic example of language in use. However, the reviewer may be right that this is not obvious. I've merely deleted the word "legitimate," which no longer appears in my essay.**

**I don’t follow how the arbitrariness of linguistic signifiers undermines normativity. I think most rationalists would agree that words are arbitrary. The key point is whether the world—human or otherwise—admits of rational description, no matter what language we use to describe it. I’m missing this here.**

**I fear that the reviewer has misunderstood my point. It is not that words are arbitrary—obviously, they are—but rather that entire language-games are arbitrary. In other words, there is a sense in which, according to Wittgenstein, the world does not admit of rational description. Just so, there is another sense in which, according to Wittgenstein, the world does admit of rational description. Threading this needle is the point of my essay: our rationality is rooted in our form of life—such that another linguistic community, with a radically different form of life, would describe the world in a radically different way (and would not be wrong to do so). (To be frank, this misunderstanding seems so elementary that I've made no alteration to my essay in regard to it.)**

*Heidegger*

How does the author build on Glazebrook?

The author might consider expanding on the conclusion on the effects of scientific culture on modern politics.

**Response—**

**Regarding my chapter in your collection, the reviewer wrote, "The author might consider expanding on the conclusion on the effects of scientific culture on modern politics." This feels rather perfunctory. Given that the essay is horribly long already, and given that the essay does not address politics, a conclusion that offered a meaningful comment on politics would require a significant addition. Any discussion of Heidegger and politics must address his connections to national socialism. This is a legitimate concern, but if I bring it up, I must dig in deep. It is possible that the reviewer wants some nod to Heidegger's politics. Or, it is possible that the reviewer wants me to consider how the connection between science and technology created a sort of technological determinism that governs politics. This idea can be found in the philosophy of technology that is rampant these days. But this would necessarily take the essay in an entirely new direction.**

**I could, if you think it appropriate, add a footnote referencing a book or books on Heidegger's connection to national socialism. I could also add a footnote referencing Heidegger's impact on contemporary philosophy of technology.**

**In the final paragraph of the essay, I attempted to illustrate the broad implications of Heidegger's worries regarding modern, scientific reasoning: "We need only consider our current affinity for STEM education, wedding science to technology, engineering and mathematics, in order to satisfy the needs of a community as determined by a reductionist, economic theory, and reducing the student to an economic resource. Under these conditions the truth of nature is replaced by the truth of practical experience, economic calculation, political shrewdness, scientific research, religious belief or art."**

**This seemed a need way of alluding to these issues without writing a second chapter on the subject.**

*Marcel*

How do others conceive of him? Do other scholars think of him as a “pessimist” or a “reactionary,” as the author suggests he is read? That way, the article can get more of a critical-scholarly purchase.

**Response—**

**In terms of the reader report, I reframed the paragraph on Marcel's politics at the end of the essay. I moved Iris Murdoch's comparison of Marcel to Burke and Oakeshott up out of the footnotes. I should have put it there from the beginning given Burke's and Oakeshott's place in this collection.**

*Polanyi*

Another nice paper on a thinker I know very little about. Since I know little about some of these figures, I’ll simply comment again on the use of scholarly material. I don’t think the appeal to the scholarship should be extensive, but there should be some engagement here as in some of the other papers with what others have said already about these figures.

**Response—**

*Lewis*

I’m a little unclear what the difference between “looking along” and “transposition” are. The author has elaborated on their similarities, but what are the differences? Both seem to involve limitations on the part of our rational capacities to grasp the experience, and these convey them.

Is the limitation of our rational capacities that we cannot grasp basic phenomena in their fullness, or that we can’t grasp them at all? Or that we can grasp them but can’t communicate them?

Structure of essay needs work. What is the relationship among the differing major parts of the essay? How are they organized?

**Response—**

**- RE: Recent scholarship. I will add a section I cut from the original draft about Lewis's debate with Elizabeth Anscombe in 1948 about his apologetic work in Miracles. For decades scholars said that this was a watershed moment of psychological trauma for Lewis as he found the Christian faith rationally untenable and fled to fantasy, writing the Narnia books in the 1950s. This thesis has been overturned but it remains a popular depiction of Lewis. My work strengthens and ties into the new thesis (i.e. Ward and McGrath). This discussion will help to clarify the scholarly context of the essay in Lewis scholarship.**

**-Also, Ward and McGrath, who I cite repeatedly, have done the best work on Lewis's understanding of the imagination in recent years IMO. Other work has focused on his relationship with Tolkien and the other Inklings (i.e. Bandersnatch, Diana Glyer) or his political thought (i.e. C.S. Lewis on Politics and the Natural Law, Dyer and Watson) but I didn't find much there that contributed to what I am saying about Lewis. Did I miss something?**

**- RE: "looking along"/transposition. Add language distinguishing between "looking along"/"looking at" and the transposition ideas. They are closely related but in the latter essay Lewis is elaborating on how theological truths are more difficult to grasp in rational language. His main point is that we can grasp truths intuitively or spiritually that we cannot communicate in an accurate manner rationally, which does not diminish the reality of the truths, but the distinction between "looking at" and "looking along" is not that "looking along" is more sophisticated, but that it is prior to "looking at." In "Transposition" Lewis is sying that "looking along" some truths may be more sophisticated than "looking at" them. Anyways, I'll clarify this.**

**-RE: structure. I think some clarifying language in the intro and conclusion and transitioning language throughout will clear this up.**

*Hayek*

The legacy of Hayek seems to miss a glaring opportunity: the critiques of neo-liberalism that see him as the forefather. Wendy Brown has a new book out arguing that Hayek is basically behind the rise of populism (!). This is a good opportunity to defend Hayek (perhaps?) as not so irrationalist after all.

**Response—**

**Honestly, I am struggling to work out what to make of my comments. I don't know much about Wendy Brown's position and didn't think it central to my project. I don't think 'neoliberal' is a discrete enough term to say whether Hayek was one or not.**

*Gadamer*

A dense and sophisticated essay. It seems, though, the author shifts from Gadamer’s response to rationalism to Gadamer’s response to the late Heidegger. What is the relevance of the latter to the project of responding to rationalism?

**Response—**

*Voegelin*

A bit too much overview about the Enlightenment, can be shortened.

**Response—**

**I read the readers' comments. One suggests that I cut some of the introductory material on the Enlightenment. I think it best to keep that material in the essay for two reasons. 1) As one of the readers notes, there is debate about what the Enlightenment is. My introductory material is intended to provide basic definition and context. 2) Students reading the essay may benefit from basic description of the Enlightenment. Why assume they know more than they probably do? The basic material is a stepping stone to the deeper theoretical material.**

**The other reader's comment about Voegelin is incoherent as far as I can tell. Voegelin gets lumped into a group of thinkers in a run-on sentence that makes little sense. No reasonable scholar would argue that Voegelin is not an anti-rationalist or that his anti-rationalism stems from his analysis of the Enlightenment.**

*Oakeshott*

This essay could be clearer. For example, I do not follow the connection between the critique of moral rationalism—as emphasizing reflection over habit—and that of political rationalism. Ditto for the critique of scientific rationalism. There should be a clearer integration here (e.g. expand p. 8 on the summary points)

This essay is quite short and pays a lot of attention to essays other than Rationalism in Politics, which is somewhat odd. It would be helpful to justify this choice, perhaps because the literature pays insufficient attention to these other texts?

**Response—**

**He/she is puzzled about the connection between various forms of rationalism. The answer is what Oakeshott calls the “poetic character of human activity,” or what I call the creative character of experiential reality. All make the same error of failing to see that the form and context of all experiential reality is poetic rather than prosaic, and arise simultaneously and condition one another reciprocally. That is, MO's critique of modern rationalism is essentially an ontological one, and the reason why I start the essay with a discussion of “Experience and Its Modes.” As for the brief length of the essay, it is the word count requested by both the publisher and the editors. I hope that when the reader sees this explanation, the essay will become clearer for him/her.**

*Berlin*

An excellent essay. The only question I had was the distinction Berlin sometimes draws between the fox and the hedgehog, probably deserves a mention (the hedgehog) in a discussion of monism.

**Response—**

**I'll incorporate a reference to the Hedgehog and the Fox as the reviewer requests when I get back to Montreal (currently visiting my folks). Should have it done by the end of January for sure.**

*Kirk*

What have commentators missed about him? This essay reads as more of a basic introduction to his thought.

Burke mentioned frequently here. How is Kirk different than Burke? What is added here?

**Response—**

*Jacobs*

Framing needs work, to frame the paper in the context of the volume as a whole.

Why are these three consequences most important for urban design?

Constructivist theories of urban design: I don’t follow the transition to this section, nor the point of its inclusion in an essay on Jane Jacobs. Why not spend more time on her approach?

This is quite a long essay, and also departs from the others in its emphatically particularist approach (urban planning). I only note this for the editors, since this one is out of place, and so the framing could use some work to massage it into place with the others.

**Response—**

*MacIntyre*

My memory from AV is that MacIntyre’s claim that the human telos is to look for a telos is connected to his proceduralism about my particular quest. That is, the universal human telos is that each of us have our own particular teloi. Not sure if this helps, but goes some way to possibly responding to the charge of an unwarranted monism.

**Response—**

**MacIntyre’s work after AV is much more focused on developing a naturalistic teleology of a Thomistic kind. His account of the human telos in AV as a quest for a quest has been criticized as being more or less vacuous as an account of teleological ethics. His move toward a more substantive telos, especially in *Dependent Rational Animals*, was, in part, the result of a desire to offer a more theoretically satisfying (but, to my mind, not convincing) account of the human telos.**

*Review 2*

I appreciate the opportunity to review this extremely interesting and probing selection of studies. The variety of topics considered, the range of thinkers included, the odd and ultimately illuminating juxtaposition of approaches combine to cast, not a spotlight, but a multiplicity of points of light on a rich selection of important thinkers from the later-modern period. I recommend publication of the manuscript in its current form.

The great virtue of the manuscript is the very broad section of thinkers being treated. It is not unusual to see collections that treat one portion or another of these figures together, say Nietzsche and Heidegger with a selection of continentals, or Burke and Kirk, say. But the inclusion of Wittgenstein with this array of thinkers, of Polanyi, of Eliot, Gadamer, Lewis all together: this blend is really a valuable contribution to the growing interest in what might be called modern critiques of modernity, or as the editors have formulated it in their title, “critics of enlightenment rationalism.” The on the whole very high and even quality of the essays is of course to be commended.

My chief hesitation is on the issue of whether, as the editors put it in their introduction, the variety of approaches represented by the authors amount to “divergent streams” that “flow together into a river, rather than meandering out to the sea like the channels of a delta.” On the basis of reading the essays in the volume, it seems to me that the diagnosis of what ails modern rationality offered by the various figures under consideration share manifest similarities, but they are never identical; likewise, their prescriptions or therapies for the ailment of modern rationality are multiply and variously divergent. It would be hard to say that Gadamer is critiquing the same thing as C. S. Lewis, or even Burke. That being said, I see the variety of not merely approaches but of targets, so to speak, as a strength of the volume, and am sure that placing these divergent analyses of modern rationality in proximity to one another will provoke reflection and renewed consideration by scholars for years to come.

There is some variation in how the essays engage with scholarship. Some have such unique formulations—e.g., the combination of Thomas Jefferson and Friedrich Nietzsche—that it is appropriate that they relate to the general literature available; others speak to debates and approaches shared by only a segment of the literature on a thinker (e.g., Tocqueville, Lewis) but the contribution is of sufficient incisiveness to justify this focus; others still refer to the literature in quite a broad and illuminating way (e.g. Kierkegaard, Gadamer), making a contribution of real weight and significance. On the whole I am impressed by the uniform seriousness with which the authors treat their scholarly areas, the quality of the scholarship, and the novelty of their contributions.

The writing is uniformly good. The book as a whole is sensibly organized and the material well-presented. I think this contribution is at the leading edge of an area that will only become more important in the years to come, given the specific character of political ferment in the world and a developing scholarly interest in critiques of enlightenment. I am not aware of the previous publication of any part of the manuscript.

I would say the formatting and notes still varies some between essays—I presume the copy editor for the press will attend to discrepancies of this sort.

**Response—**

**Thank you for the kind review.**