Enlightenment and Dissent

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Special Supplement

Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: toward a politics of radical engagement*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. xiii + 181, ISBN: 0231126085, £14.50.

The events of September 11 2001 have prompted a widespread return to fundamentals. Some have embraced religious fundamentals with renewed tenacity while others have emphatically urged the need to stand by the secular principles which they regard as essential for progress. Bronner stands firmly in the secularist camp since, for him, the attack on the Twin Towers prompts a clarion call to proclaim clearly and unequivocally the centrality of the Enlightenment in shaping all that has been good in the West and as a source of hope and human betterment in the world at large.

This short book is, then, an unapologetic and deeply committed apologia for the Enlightenment. In the tradition of the Voltairian *écrasez l'infâme* it presents a critique of the claims of organised religion especially in its fundamentalist forms (though he retains some respect for a private 'religiosity' so long as it does not make claims on the public sphere). Reacting against the growing association of terrorism with religious fanaticism Bonner makes the claim that 'the larger mainstream religious organizations have - historically - opposed virtually every scientific advance, every new philosophical movement, and every progressive political development' (165). To employ inappropriately religious language, there is a Manichean quality about his depiction of the custodians of the faith of the Enlightenment as angels of light combating the forces of darkness. Virtually every progressive and indeed truly moral advance in modern Western society is seen as deriving from the Enlightenment. One of the more notable such advances attributed to the Enlightenment is the abolition of slavery: yet the well-documented and surely politically critical contributions of the Quakers and the Evangelicals led by William Wilberforce is overlooked. Theories of resistance are sheeted back to the Enlightenment (135) without any consideration of the ample literature on the role of the Reformation (and especially the Calvinists) along with the Counter-Reformation in promoting such theories. Since science is one of the major agents of progress, it follows that it is diametrically opposed to religion which again overlooks the growing volume of scholarship on the way in which these two modes of thought were historically intertwined despite points of

conflict (a useful guide to much of this literature being John Brooke's *Science and religion: some historical perspectives* [Cambridge, 1991]).

As a tract for our times this is a book that has its focus more on the present than the past and is less concerned with a scholarly analysis of movements of ideas in the eighteenth century than urging the application of what are considered the chief tenets of the Enlightenment in our own times. Central to the book, then, is the proposition that there was an identifiable and enduring core to the Enlightenment and that it can be equated with such central liberal tenets as the promotion of human rights, the separation of church and state and a respect for science both as a model of thought and a means, in the Baconian phrase, to achieve the 'relief of man's estate'. Bonner is impatient with the fissile tendencies of recent Enlightenment scholarship, with its tendency to discern multiple Enlightenments or to splinter the Enlightenment along national lines. Indeed, his committed and impassioned advocacy of the continuing importance of the Enlightenment message does provide some corrective to the tendency to weaken its historical importance by dissolving the Enlightenment into a range of different forms. The need for a decisive restatement of Enlightenment values makes Bonner give even shorter shrift to the critics of the Enlightenment whether they be post-modernists or those who, in the tradition of Adorno, connect the Enlightenment and its disenchantment of the world with the rise of twentieth-century totalitarian movements.

By contrast, Bonner retains a respect for Ernst Cassirer's classic but for many Enlightenment scholars rather dated *The philosophy of the Enlightenment* (German first edition, 1932). It is a work that meshes well with Bonner's concerns since it clearly conveys the unity of the Enlightenment and the way that the *philosophes*, for all their different backgrounds, contributed to a common project and a shared set of ideas. It also gives prominence to the German element in the Enlightenment □ something which is of considerable importance in this book since, as a Germanist, much of Bonner's analysis is refracted through the German responses to the Enlightenment. To readily follow such an analysis requires a familiarity with the major trends in German nineteenth and twentieth-century thought that not all from the English-speaking world might readily command.

Bonner's is a work that may not add greatly to the cannon of works on the eighteenth-century roots of the Enlightenment, but its committed and vigorous advocacy of Enlightenment values does much to illustrate the abiding value and the intellectual resilience of what the Enlightenment stood for. To Bonner such values are the only path to a better world and indeed he concludes his book with the assertion that the *philosophes* 'project the type of world that every decent person wishes to see' (167). One need not be a post-modernist to suggest that the there may be other paths to decency along with those prescribed by the Enlightenment, but Bonner's deep commitment both to a better world and to the values of the Enlightenment draws us back to some of the West's most central values. In the best traditions of the *philosophes* Bonner has put deep scholarship at the service of the public good.

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Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: contesting diversity in the Enlightenment and beyond,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. x + 260, ISBN: 052184 5025, £51.

Carey's rich and illuminating book is a contribution to a largely neglected aspect of the intellectual history of the British enlightenment. Its subject is diversity as reflected in moral differences from one culture or nation to another and the way three major philosophers acknowledged and responded to it. While the book's central theme is the relation of moral philosophy to cultural anthropology, part of its interest is that it also connects this theme to toleration and philosophy of mind, to name a few. It also links differences between Enlightenment thinkers, on the one hand, to debates in the ancient world between skeptics and stoics and, on the other, to debates in contemporary anthropology as well as reflection on multiculturalism and human rights. Both links, ancient and modern, help us to appreciate and take the measure of an enlightenment controversy. While there are differences between ancient, enlightenment and contemporary versions of the issues, they are for Carey variants of underlying themes.

Carey's starting point is Locke's acknowledgement and exploitation of moral diversity in the first book of his *Essay concerning human understanding* (*EHU*). There Locke draws on historical and anthropological evidence to show that such diversity exists. He uses its existence to support his argument against innate *principles* and *ideas* while at the same time he acknowledges that there are innate *inclinations*, notably the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. What distinguishes the latter, he argues, is that while they function as principles of action, they are not principles of knowledge for regulating action (I.3.§3). In short they illuminate human psychology rather than an agent's knowledge of what ought to be done.

As Carey notes, Locke has two basic arguments against innate principles and ideas. The first, independent of cultural diversity and the most fundamental, is that if principles and ideas can be accounted for by the use of our natural faculties as he claims they can, the argument for their innate origin collapses. From early on in *EHU* Locke connects morality to reason in particular (I.3.§1, 4), even if reason's current weakness requires human beings to rely on divine revelation in practice. For Locke, true morality consists of divinely ordained law subject to divinely administered reward and punishment, and is the subject of an underdeveloped demonstrative science; even if for critics his real agenda was to undermine morality by resolving it into nothing more than fashion and convention. After all, in book II of *EHU*, does Locke not provide an analysis of the idea of morality into what appears to be just that? For Locke, however, the scope of the *idea* of morality is one thing; the nature of true moral principles, quite another. What fashion and convention share with true morality on his view is the assessment of the rightness and wrongness of action from the standpoint of law and its enforcement.

In the first book of *EHU*, Locke's focus is on his second argument. He uses it not as a direct assault on innate principles and ideas, but to refute a common argument that convinced many who subscribed to them (I.2.§2). For, so the argument goes, there must be innate ideas because the universal acceptance of certain practical principles could not be otherwise explained. Against this argument, Locke invokes diversity including the differences between one individual and another within a single community, but, as Carey observes, cultural diversity strikes him as a far more conclusive consideration. For the evidence of such diversity, he

relies in large measure on anthropological accounts in works on travel, which, as Carey also observes, were a significant presence in his library. His disposition to accept such accounts Carey illuminatingly sees in light of the work of the Royal Society, and the project for a natural history of man as an off-shoot of its interest in natural history generally. As Carey also argues, however, Locke is sometimes disposed to run beyond the evidence his sources strictly provide, notably on the lack of universality in acknowledging God's existence. Carefully read, those accounts of remote societies frequently mitigate the claims they make elsewhere in the same work (76-85).

Locke is the starting point, but Carey's real focus is the debate his argument from diversity generated. He argues that we miss a significant source of Locke's thinking if we do not make the effort to see him through the eyes of those who opposed him. The chief representatives of that opposition are the third Earl of Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson. Shaftesbury is especially interesting to Carey as a notable champion of the ancients, Platonism and Stoicism in particular. His opposition to the views of his old tutor (although he takes care not to attack him by name in published work), encourages us to see Locke as drawing on argumentative modes and strategies reminiscent of the Skeptics, Sextus' tenth mode most notably which was designed to produce suspension of judgment in ethics by cataloguing the diversity of laws and customs. And, indeed, Locke uses examples such as cannibalism, as the Skeptics did. Even if Locke was not influenced directly by the ancient Skeptics, could they not have exercised their influence indirectly through more moderate modern Skeptics with whose thought Locke was certainly familiar? True, Locke may have been influenced by skeptical examples of moral diversity, for which Carey makes a good case. True, skeptics, ancient and modern, have directed such considerations against innate ideas and principles. But to see Locke as deploying characteristically skeptical *argumentative modes and strategies* in this context is perhaps to see him too much through the eyes of his critics. Unlike skeptics, Locke carefully limits his use of moral diversity and the arguments he develops to bolster it in support of counterexamples against an argument for innate ideas and principles without showing an inclination to challenge the power of our natural faculties to yield knowledge or their competence to discover true moral principles.

Carey is aware that Locke is generally not viewed these days as a fellow traveller of Hobbes, a skeptic or a relativist. The net effect of setting him in the skeptical tradition when it comes to morals, however, is to revive the interpretation which places Locke in the Hobbesian camp. And so it seems the structure of his overall account predisposes him. For when he later turns to modern anthropological counterparts such as Clifford Geertz and Ruth Benedict, they are positioned as relativists in line with Skeptical responses to the Stoics. So long as one remains clear that this is only Locke viewed tendentiously through the eyes of critics, there is perhaps little harm. Importantly, it should not obscure from us that the differences between Shaftesbury and Locke over morals, even when Locke is viewed outside the skeptical tradition, are striking enough and leave in place the issue of what the existence of moral diversity proves or fails to prove. Not that there aren't skeptical elements in Locke's thought or for that matter Shaftesbury's, but they don't appear to centre on the inferences to be drawn from the existence of moral diversity. Towards the conclusion of his book, indeed, Carey strikes a different note where the emphasis is on how Locke, unlike some contemporaries, finds no difficulty maintaining 'an anthropological awareness of diversity while remaining committed to natural law' (217), where Locke's commitment to reason constitutes the foundation from which he takes issue with Stoic inspired approaches.

Carey lists a series of significant differences that separate Shaftesbury from Locke on morals and religion. He views Locke as wrongly tying morality to religion, Christian Scripture, externally imposed law and the promise of rewards and punishments in a future life to motivate compliance. For Shaftesbury, moreover, what Locke's God ordains is good only because God ordains it, not ordained because it is good. By contrast, Shaftesbury claims morality needs an entirely different footing where it, jointly with the motives to act morally, emerge from a teleological account of human nature based on universal order and human sociability. For him moral action to count as such must be performed for its own sake and not for the promise of future rewards or threats of punishment. His aim is to separate morality and religion, finding in the former thus separated a source of stability that contrasts sharply with religion as a source of endless conflict and corruption. In drawing these contrasts, Carey represents Locke as committed to an 'unsociable portrait

of human motivation' (200). This, however, may be too easily assumed from Locke's epicurean view of human motivation. The pleasures Locke shows that he values such as those taken in rational conversation with a friend and the high value he sets on friendship point, on the face of it, to a different view of what he saw as his commitments. This query to the side, the account that emerges of Shaftesbury is illuminating.

For Carey, while Shaftesbury casts doubt on Locke's catalogue of *extreme* moral diversity, he accepts that moral diversity exists, but only as 'the product of art or accident' (117). For him, it is compatible with an underlying uniformity that manifests itself through prolepses, or what he is prepared to call innate ideas although he is also ready to abandon that expression. Shaftesbury's espousal of such a doctrine, accordingly, does not rest on universal consent. Neither, however, does Locke's case against innate ideas and principles rest on the existence of diversity, as was noted above. For supposing this uniformity exists, why wouldn't our natural faculties be adequate for arriving at the knowledge of it, particularly when Shaftesbury concedes that this knowledge may only arise following the development of reason? According to Carey: 'The real question [for Shaftesbury] was not whether "propositions" about right and wrong were innate but whether the inclination toward society was natural or the product of art or accident. Clearly he believed that if this trait of human nature were conceded, then the rest of his conclusions about the permanency of moral distinctions would follow' (117). So Shaftesbury may have believed, but just how would the rest of his conclusions follow, particularly given that he viewed this trait in its pure state as the exclusive preserve of an elevated class that shared his tastes? And if the view turns on inclinations, and not propositions, how do they function as 'criteria of truth' as the stoic inspiration for his view leads Carey to maintain? (122) There are loose ends here that Shaftesbury's general disinclination for argumentative rigour may have led him to overlook.

Hutcheson, who was more technically rigorous while sympathetic to Shaftesbury's approach to sociability and to the ancients, attempted to evade Locke's objections by viewing morality not as a product of reason, but of a moral sense 'which approved of benevolent actions instinctively' (154). He was inclined, accordingly, to accept that morality could be explained by reference to our natural faculties within the scope of natural

investigation from which, however, he believed that certain knowledge rather than mere Lockean probabilities could be achieved (160). As Carey remarks, however, the moral sense is not simply conceived as a passive faculty that registers impressions, but judges (166) and governs our inclinations (169-70). The pressing difficulty for him was to reconcile his account of the moral sense with the evidence of diversity, particularly given that on his view the moral sense took its rise 'prior to the exercise of reason' (217). His response was not to deny the existence of diversity, but to argue, following Shaftesbury, that it was not as widespread as sometimes supposed or that its basis was not fully understood. For him even the exposure of children might be explainable as arising from benevolence. Barbarous, it might be, but the barbarity resulted not from the moral sense, but from the misapplication of reason in assessing the consequences of possible courses of action (178).

In his book Carey combines synoptic vision with a very detailed appreciation of the origins and arguments of a variety of fundamental texts and inquiries from three historical periods into human knowledge and human nature. As such its appeal extends well beyond students of the enlightenment and engages an interest in an enlightenment controversy among those who may not have appreciated how deeply rooted their own controversies may be not only there, but in the ancient world as well.

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Robert DeMaria Jr., ed., *British Literature 1640-1789: An Anthology*, 3rd edition, Malden, MA and Oxford, Blackwell, 2008, pp. liv + 1135, ISBN: 1405119284, pbk., £24.99.

We live in an age of anthologies. Or so, at least, one can imagine some latter-day Hazlitt or Carlyle beginning a mordant diatribe. But head-shaking or hand-wringing are surely not appropriate responses to the undoubted proliferation of the form. Indeed, it might not be too much to claim that the best of these compilations have helped steer many literature students between the Scylla of mass civilization and the Charybdis of minority culture. The fat book in the rucksack has surely helped ensure

that *The rape of the lock* and *The rambler*, not to mention *The thresher's lament* and *The Negro's complaint*, still live in the twenty-first century.

Of course the format, like everything else sublunary, has its limitations. In the case of literature, the elephant which cannot get into the room is that loose, baggy monster, the novel — which is quite a consideration over these last three hundred years of English literature. Even important longer poems such as *Paradise lost* or *The seasons* may be considered to occupy too much precious space. Whole plays, which can hardly be excerpted, are often included, but two appears to be the absolute maximum (in the example under review *The way of the world* and *The school for scandal*). And it goes without saying that any anthology will disappoint most of its readers at least once by a particular exclusion or inclusion.

Yet the justification for the anthology as a teaching tool remains compelling. True, the internet now provides a vast number of primary texts for the eighteenth and other centuries. But these, by virtue of their dispersed quality and paucity of annotation, are paradoxically more useful to the postgraduate or established scholar than to the younger, more and interdisciplinary over these last few decades. While other electronically-nurtured student. The undergraduate — perhaps not too well-prepared and certainly pressed for time — needs focus, structure, consistent annotation, reading comfort in various situations. The large printed book, if it is not too heavy to carry, fulfils all these needs. One might envisage an electronic version of the same thing, it is true, but such an 'Ebook' would still be a book, and not an aleatory linking of infinite nodes. The average undergraduate has quite enough of that sort of laterally-branching material to hand.

More positively still, the edited anthology provides the opportunity for the anthologist to give an overall 'reading' of the culture in question. This reading will typically be far from authoritarian in tone. A good anthology is precisely an invitation to both teacher and student to answer: 'Yes, but…'. In this respect the eighteenth century has been fortunate in that literary scholarship on the period has been particularly vibrant. While period specialists, such as those on the Romantic era, have been rather cumbrously arguing about 'the canon', eighteenth-century scholars have fearlessly explored the borderlands of religious inspiration, ghostly apparitions, medicinal cures, Molly culture, Priapic cults, lives of crime, gardens and wildernesses, rationalistic utopias and much more. This in

turn has led them to conceptualize 'literature' as including Boswell and Gibbon, Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft, Stephen Duck and Olauduh Equiano. The editor of the Blackwell anthology, Robert DeMaria Jr., himself an expert on that polymath Samuel Johnson, is very much open to this variety.

Breadth and inclusiveness have been an obvious result of this. This Blackwell anthology includes Civil War newsbooks and Old Bailey trials as well as solid chunks of Hobbes, Locke, Burke and Paine. Even within the more traditional literary areas, such as poetry, we find expansion based on the spadework of many scholars (which DeMaria fully acknowledges and sensibly uses where appropriate). Of course, it is reasonable to ask whether this is an unmitigated good. To which the answer must first be that this opening out was entirely necessary. DeMaria himself reminds us of just how male-centred the average eighteenth-century anthology was thirty years ago. Mention of black or labouring class writers only reinforces our sense that much has been done to undo destructive cultural biases which had crept into eighteenth-century studies in the last two hundred years.

However, having acknowledged both the necessity of this greater inclusiveness and the sheer cultural riches it has yielded us (think of the revival of the reputation of Aphra Behn to go no further), we can see that some new rebalancing was needed when anthologies were becoming packed with fragmentary extracts from authors who could not realistically be taught on an undergraduate module, too little of their work was given and, even had more been given, a half-hour's seminar attention to them would have been insulting to their memory. DeMaria acknowledges this by reducing the number of authors in this third edition. But 'rebalancing' could be misunderstood. It does not mean reinstating the old, almost exclusively male, canon. What it means is greater selectivity across the new, wider canvas, so that major figures, 'old and new', male and female, can be set alongside each other. In short, we have much Aphra Behn to set alongside Dryden, tranches of Charlotte Smith to set alongside Cowper and good opportunities to cross the period from Astell to Wollstonecraft or from Locke to Burke. It is true that in the present case this does not quite 'do the job' in terms of what ideally needs to be there. DeMaria himself notes the need to do fuller justice to Equiano, for example. Then indeed, any further 'overflow' of the anthology could be

accommodated online, to allow the envelope to be pulled in a particular new direction, so achieving the best balance of printed and online materials.

Although one can always carp over details of anthology content, I shall not do that here beyond the case DeMaria himself mentions, simply because I recognize that every one of my claims could be met with an equally valid claim from the material included. While I personally might rather read Farquhar than Sheridan, I could equally imagine any 'contest' between them as an honourable draw. One more general negative one might suggest, though, is that the unusual 1640-1789 date-span of this anthology still doesn't entirely convince. Logic would suggest that either beginning and ending the anthology with tempestuous revolutionary and counter-revolutionary polemics (say, 1640-1797) or confining oneself more to the relatively calmer interval (1660-1789) in which Enlightenment and the *ancien régime* enjoyed an 'impossible' yet strangely fruitful *ménage à deux*, would both be more logical choices. But, within its chosen span, the anthology is finely chosen and excellently annotated. It was a simple, but superb, inspiration to make so much use of Johnson's *Dictionary of the English language* to illuminate the often subtle differences between eighteenth century usage and our own (e.g., 'familiar - affable; not formal; easy in conversation').

Indeed, it seems appropriate to conclude this review by quoting Johnson's Preface to that great work in relation to DeMaria work's on British Literature 1640-1789 (substantial extracts from the Preface can of course be found in the anthology). Johnson, even in his 'gloom of solitude' reminds us and himself that 'useful diligence will at last prevail, and there can never be wanting some who distinguish desert'. On DeMaria's revised anthology as on his own dictionary, Johnson also provides the wise, balancing conclusion: 'In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that likewise much is performed.' One suspects that DeMaria, the sage Johnson scholar, would content himself with that mutedly defiant claim.

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Jack Fruchtman Jr., *Atlantic Cousins: Benjamin Franklin and his visionary friends*, New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005, pp. 404, ISBN 1 56025 668 0; hbk £14.99, $26.00; pbk (2007) £11.99.

Jack Fruchtman Jr. has made some valuable contributions to the study of Enlightenment and Dissent though his book on *The apocalyptic politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley* (1983) and various articles, in particular one on David Hartley in this journal in 1992. Several publications on Tom Paine and Helen Maria Williams have established Fruchtman as an important scholar of trans-Atlantic radicalism in the age of revolution. This latest offering has a whiggish flavour □ this is not surprising, as it is something that provoked J C D Clark when he reviewed Fruchtman's biography of Paine in the *Times Literary Supplement.* The title suggests it is aiming at a similar audience to that which made Jenny Uglow's *The Lunar Men: the friends who made the future* (2002) very popular.

Atlantic cousins is an energetically written tale of how Benjamin Franklin and his 'visionary friends' worked to create the modern democratic world. Franklin is used as a starting point for a book that consists of chapters on some of his 'liberal' friends who 'wanted to achieve the end of tyranny, rank and privilege' (3). The book is structured around a series of mini-biographies linked together by a common association with Franklin. While anyone who has read the correspondence of Joseph Priestley will attest to the warm attachment between him and Franklin, the inclusion of some of the other figures are less easily justified. While Marat and Mesmer were undoubtedly visionaries of a sort who add colour to this book, it is probably stretching it a little to label them among Franklin's friends. Throughout *Atlantic cousins* characters are discussed in the light modern liberal values. Thus, George Whitfield's 'liberal ideas were blemished by an unfortunate reliance on slavery' (4) and Benjamin Rush 'had some rather intriguing and outlandish ideas … that are truly bizarre by today's standards' (57-58). Of the attack of on 'monarchy, rank and privilege' in Tom Paine's *Rights of man*, 'we would be hard pressed to find a more severe critique of these three evils' (125). Espousing 'ideas that seem progressive by twenty-first-century standards' Condorcet even 'supported gay rights, as

we call them today' (233). While Fruchtman is keen to highlight the contribution of his subjects to modernisation, he is nevertheless good at explaining the many distinctive features of their eighteenth-century thought; such as Priestley's apocalyptic belief that the return of Christ was near, assuring Thomas Belsham that 'you may probably live to see it; I shall not. It cannot, I think be more than twenty years' (166).

Atlantic cousins is an attractively produced book, illustrated with the portraits of eleven of the 'visionary men' with whom Franklin associated and 'whose liberal ideas and ideals have carried into our own time' (20). It reads with the energy and pace of a dramatic novel, and as a result there are inevitably generalisations and statements with which specialists might take issue. For example, Fruchtman has John Horne Tooke as 'one of the original founders' of the Society for Constitutional Information (160) □ this is technically incorrect as the SCI was founded in 1780 while Horne Tooke joined over a year later in 1781, and in E C Black's words he 'was strangely inactive during the initial phase of reform agitation, preferring to devote himself to the *Diversions of Purley* (*The Association* [Cambridge, Mass., 1963], 187n.). According to Fruchtman, the founding of the SCI 'provoked serious consternation and real fear in Westminster, because the authorities now realised these people were not merely quirky or loud-mouthed blokes like Wilkes. They were actually talking to each other about taking revolutionary action against the government' (155). While Eliga H. Gould has arguably underplayed the radicalism of this group in his important study of *The persistence of empire* (2000), Fruchtman probably exaggerates their revolutionary enthusiasm □ at least for the early 1780s. The problem is that they at times sounded more radical than they arguably were, but Fruchtman does convey well the challenging tone of British radicals.

This is a work of popularisation rather than original research. Intellectual history can be off-putting or inaccessible to undergraduate students, and Fruchtman has performed a valuable service in producing an engaging account of 'ideas in context' in a particularly interesting and important era. It is heartening to see a scholar aim beyond our specialist audience to introduce compelling figures like Price and Priestley to a wide audience and judging by the reader responses on Amazon.com, Fruchtman seems to have had some success. Full of interesting facts, anecdotes and

helpful explanations of eighteenth-century science, *Atlantic cousins* breathes the enlightened optimism that animated Ben Franklin and his friends in the revolutionary era.

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William Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment, 1600-1800: conflict and the rise of civic humanism in Taunton*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2007; ISBN-10**:** 3039109227; ISBN-13**:** 978-3039109227; pp.385, £42.

In this study of Taunton Professor Gibson sets out to chronicle the history of the town in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but his purpose is altogether more ambitious. His objective is to examine what he sees as an historical conundrum, the transformation of England from a turbulent and rebellious kingdom in the seventeenth century to one of political stability in the eighteenth, where change was determined at the hustings and in parliament. In summary he believes that 'at the heart of this book lies the assertion that the religious views of the people of Taunton motivated them politically' and, in a neat turn of phrase, that religion was 'a call to arms in the seventeenth century, and a call to abandon them in the eighteenth' (12). He sees religion as inflaming political militancy during the Civil War and Monmouth's Rebellion, but soothing and moderating opinion after the 1688 Revolution and channelling the citizens of Taunton towards constitutional methods. In his opinion the key to this switch from militancy to constitutionalism was the moderate and rational preaching of the town's Anglican and nonconformist ministers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed 'such rational and moderate preaching may represent the closest that provincial England came to the Enlightenment' (11).

Professor Gibson is one of an increasing number of historians who have demonstrated the continuing importance of religion in the eighteenth century. The difficulty comes with the nature of Gibson's particular thesis and the evidence marshalled to support it. We are told that during the period, between 1689 and 1740, 'in both Anglican and Nonconformist sermons … there was an over-whelming emphasis on reason, rationalism, moderation and tolerance' (266). 'The significance of this theology was

that it bombarded and influenced the people of Taunton as strongly as had the rigid discipline of Biblical texts of Newton and Alleine' earlier in the seventeenth century. 'The religious impetus that fired and propelled the people of Taunton violently to demand religious changes from Charles I and James II had been replaced by one which taught the civic virtues of moderation, reasonableness and tolerance' (267). But preachers reflect, and perhaps follow, the opinions of their congregations as much as they lead. Ministers who advanced unpopular views either preached to bare walls or were dismissed. Indeed can historians rely upon published sermons to provide evidence of what was actually said? Surviving collections of manuscript sermon notes would suggest that the handful published were untypical of the sermons that were delivered from the pulpit week by week. What did hearers make of such sermons? Did they absorb the particular message that the historian has identified? At least from sermon notes we know what some of those in the pew thought was important.

There are further doubts about the evidence. Though noting the doctrinal divisions amongst Dissenters in Taunton, this is not taken into account by the author when discussing the impact of this 'rational and moderate preaching'. There was strong opposition to such preaching leading to a secession from Paul's Meeting as the author notes in passing. Moreover, Henry Grove, whose advanced philosophical ideas are discussed in detail, was a tutor rather than a minister, and never served a pulpit in Taunton. How did his ideas 'bombard and influence' the inhabitants of the town? Perhaps in answer to this question the author follows those historians who see the Dissenting academy as a vehicle for the spread of heterodox ideas amongst Dissenting congregations through the ministers they trained. He quotes Peter Toon's claim that academies such as Taunton, Bridgwater and Exeter were 'the greatest contributing factor to the growth of Arian and liberal doctrines' (249), but Toon is hardly an authority on the Dissenting academy. In turn Gibson believes that students trained at Taunton, in an unfortunate phrase, 'spread like spores' among the Dissenting congregations of the West Country and beyond, carrying 'with them the rational and heterodox teachings of Warren, Grove and Amory' (274). Micaih Towgood, educated at Taunton, and described by F J Powicke as being responsible for the introduction of Arian ideas to Exeter, is used as an example (277), but Towgood's role is

exaggerated. He was only one of a number of Arians in Exeter by this date, as Alan Brockett's book *Nonconformists in Exeter* makes clear. Nor can the closure of Taunton Academy under Amory be attributed to 'a decline in the number of Dissenters locally and nationally, and a surplus of academies training ministers' as Professor Gibson believes (272). Not only was Warrington Academy opened in 1757 to supply the loss caused by the closure of so many other academies, but Presbyterians in particular failed to train enough ministers throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. Similarly orthodox claims that Dissenting academies were responsible for the spread of heterodox ideas have been challenged by more recent studies. Academies had to reflect the needs and requirements of Dissent. If they failed they lost support and closed as happened at Taunton under Amory when the academy was perceived to be too heterodox. Indeed Gibson quotes Richard Clarke's letter to Doddridge that the Academy under Amory 'grows more and more out of repute daily' (251). Evangelical and Calvinist academies could not prevent an embarrassing number of expulsions or withdrawals for heterodoxy. Similarly those academies which rejected religious subscription educated students who became high Calvinists and some who even conformed. Gibson notes that the orthodox John Enty was a student at Taunton and there are other examples. We are told that the Dissenting academies 'were the powerhouses of liberal Arian thought in the eighteenth century' (253). The picture is altogether more complex.

The contrast drawn between the militancy of Taunton's inhabitants in the seventeenth century and the moderation claimed for the eighteenth also seems overdrawn. The Restoration appears altogether a more convincing break, but would not of course fit the author's thesis since he sees the changes in preaching as taking place in the eighteenth century. Yet Quakers gave up their earlier militancy and adopted a peace testimony at the Restoration as a means to ensure their survival, and although there were a series of uprisings in the early years that alarmed the new regime, the threat from the soldiers of the former republic amounted to very little. Professor Gibson will rightly point to the involvement of the town in the Monmouth Rebellion and the Glorious Revolution, but the catalyst in both cases was an invading army rather than local militancy. The absence of violence and extra-parliamentary action in eighteenth-century Taunton can also be overstated. Professor Gibson himself describes various forms

of popular protest, including direct action and riots, such as the disturbances associated with the 1754 election. His account of the tribulations that the radical Unitarian Joshua Toulmin faced in the early 1790s as a result of his support for the French Revolution and unpopular reform movements underplays the violence Toulmin and his family actually experienced.

If Professor Gibson's ambitious thesis for the role of religion in transforming the outlook of the inhabitants of Taunton can be questioned, his account of its continuing importance in the eighteenth century is convincing. The book offers a good narrative history of the town in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, covering the development of Protestantism and later Dissent, as well as an account of its politics and the cloth trade that formed the basis of the local economy for so much of the period. It is a work of synthesis rather than of original research. It therefore relies upon a range of secondary sources of varying quality and age, some of which are not perhaps sufficient for the interpretation placed upon them. The final quarter of the eighteenth century receives less attention. For example, although an account is provided of freemasonry in Taunton it is never really developed. Did Dissenters and the better sort of craftsmen in the woollen manufacture spawn the clubs and associations that John Money has so successfully explored for Birmingham? The absence of a newspaper for Taunton in the eighteenth century removes an obvious source of information, but presumably the town's news and advertisements were carried by other papers? The religious changes at the end of the eighteenth century, with the evangelical revival and the emergence of Unitarianism are never really explored. Nevertheless the book does bring home the significance of Dissent in Taunton. It is clear Dissenters formed a much greater proportion of the population of Taunton than probably of any other town. As a consequence, though excluded from the corporation, they came to dominate parliamentary elections as well as the local economy.

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Jonathan I Israel, ***Enlightenment contested: philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man 1670-1752,*** Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. xxiv + 983; hbk. ISBN 97801 9927922, £30.00; pbk. ISBN 9780199541522, £19.99.

The fruit of massive scholarship, Jonathan Israel's work (surely the *mot just*) places the historiography of the Enlightenment on a new plane and, with it, our understanding of the forces which have shaped modernity. Building on his earlier *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity* (2001), Israel spells out programmatically and with a virtuoso command of sources across the breadth of Europe a new understanding of the Enlightenment - and, indeed, also foreshadows a second weighty volume which will trace these themes across the second half of the eighteenth century. For Israel the true essence of the Enlightenment and the source of its lasting vitality and dynamism lies in the Radical Enlightenment of which the three great exemplars were Spinoza, Bayle and Diderot and the main areas of incubation the late seventeenth-century Dutch Republic and early eighteenth-century France - though with some support from Italian thinkers such as Vico as well as some hitherto little known German critics of revealed religion. In Israel's analysis these figures were radical to the core and sought the wholesale demolition of the religious bases on which European society had been built. The view that figures like Bayle or Vico maintained some remnants of religious belief which, in the face of the vigorous assaults of Enlightenment rationality, moved towards a form of fideism is decisively dismissed by Israel.

The characteristics of the Radical Enlightenment were the advocacy of goals which meant a root and branch reform and, where necessary, overthrow of existing society. In the place of religion there was to be reason, which totally and unequivocally dismissed any claims to revelation; and in the place of political authority based on hereditary principles and a hierarchical ordering of society, there was to be democracy predicated on notions of the equality of humankind. From these premises followed other fundamental changes: patriarchal authority was to be abolished to allow equality of men and women including sexual freedom and forms of imperialism based on racial or cultural superiority were to be eradicated.

In Israel's account one of the main obstacles to achieving the goals of the Radical Enlightenment was the Moderate Enlightenment which, with its concessions to the forces of traditional religious and political authority, acted as a brake on the fundamental challenge to, and eventual demolition

of, the pillars of belief and hierarchy on which the Old Regime was built. In contrast to the Continental origins of the Radical Enlightenment the Moderate Enlightenment was largely of British manufacture though it was exported and had very considerable influence particularly in France of the 1730s and 1740s becoming virtually the ideology of much of the French establishment. Its hold, however, was to be weakened there by the resurgence of the Radical Enlightenment in France which provided, in Israel's account, the seed bed for the ideology of the French Revolution. This resurgence gathered momentum from the period 1748-52 in large measure because of the increasing influence of one of the key figures of the Radical Enlightenment, Denis Diderot, and of his great Encyclopaedia. It is the conflict between these two forms of the Enlightenment, Radical and Moderate, which provides much of the central structure of this substantial work and accounts for its provocative foretitle, *Enlightenment contested.*

Such a view of the Enlightenment brings to the fore much that has been neglected in Enlightenment studies. The contribution of nations other than Britain, notably the Dutch Republic, Italy and the Germanic lands (including Scandinavia), is given greater prominence as are early eighteenth-century French freethinkers like Meslier or Boulainvilliers. The increasing tendency to make British figures such as Locke or Newton central to the Enlightenment and to its heritage is actively contested. For Israel, Locke is a key example of the way in which the Moderate Enlightenment failed to break decisively with the forces of tradition which held back the full realisation of the goals of the Radical Enlightenment. This was particularly true since Locke retained a deep and continuing commitment to theological values. Israel, then, energetically espouses a dualistic understanding of the Enlightenment in which his sympathies are very plainly with the radicals. Israel makes no secret of the fact that a central objective of the book is to promote the values he associates with the Radical Enlightenment. For his close scholarship is intended to demonstrate that it was the Radical not the Moderate Enlightenment which is the true core of the Enlightenment and its shaping influence of the modern world.

Yet such dualism has its dangers. In the first place the distinction between the true Radical and the compromised Moderate Enlightenment risks discrediting the Enlightenment as a meaningfully unified historical

concept and of thus working against the espousal and promotion of Enlightenment values which is one of Israel's central objectives. Israel, himself, in a rather different context, decries the 'danger in the fashion for stressing the plurality and diversity of the Enlightenment' (864). If we are to understand the Enlightenment as comprising two antagonistic movements with only one really embodying 'the true Enlightenment' we are left with a house divided against itself which, we are told (admittedly by a source very much at variance with the Radical Enlightenment), cannot stand. Given the messiness and provisional character of individuals' attempts to make sense of the world in terms of the ideas they have both inherited and acquired, it surely makes more sense to speak of a spectrum of Enlightenment outlooks with (to be simplistic) undiluted radicals like Spinoza on the left and adherents of the 'Christian Enlightenment' (a phrase employed by Israel) on the right and with all manner of gradations in between.

For ideas to have purchase in the social and political arena they have to be given forms which will have meaning to those whose lives are shaped by the institutions and practices of the world into which they have been born. There may have been some brave spirits who advocated a total overthrow of the existing ideological order, but in practice even a figure such as Diderot had to make his compromises to sustain his own life and that of those around him - Diderot the advocate of a sexually freer society also wrote letters to his daughter forcibly warning her of the dangers and social costs of premarital pregnancy. What made the Enlightenment a movement that changed the world was that it provided the intellectual resources to reshape existing institutions as well as, on occasions, the ammunition to destroy them.

For the Enlightenment to take root and to influence so many its central ideas had to be translated into forms which could be disseminated through existing institutions. Tracing this social basis to the spread of the Enlightenment has been the work of a generation of scholars of the Enlightenment but, in Israel's view, this preoccupation with the social setting of Enlightenment ideas has gone too far. One of the reasons his book is so important and innovative is that it seeks to re-establish the importance and primacy of ideas. Yet for the complex ideas of a figure like Spinoza to have an impact on a larger public they had to be translated into more palatable forms which had meaning to those reared on

traditional intellectual frameworks. One of the main tasks of those whom Israel associates with the term the 'Moderate Enlightenment' was to meld the old and the new in ways which had meaning to their contemporaries and to introduce them in contexts (which could even include traditional institutions like universities and even churches) where they could influence a greater public than the few who had the time and expertise to read complex learned texts. Though Israel's book is a useful corrective in pushing the pendulum back from the social context to the ideas themselves there is room for taking further the issue of the filiation of ideas from text to practice with rather more recognition of the existing literature on the social context of the Enlightenment.

What makes this book both a work of great scholarship as well as of passionate engagement is Israel's conviction that the values of the Radical Enlightenment are of far more than historical interest since he sees them as fundamental to the project of modernity and of a truly civilised society. 'The social values of the Radical Enlightenment', he vigorously affirms, 'in short, have an absolute quality in terms of reason which places them above any possible alternative …' (869). In his account there is a fundamental nexus between such truly humane values based on equality and the dismissal of any notion of the transcendent and the replacement of dualism by monism by Spinoza and other figures of the Radical Enlightenment. One can certainly see how such radical undercutting of the religious bases of the Old Regime could serve as an acid which ate away at its values. Less evident is the issue of how belief in a non-teleological mechanistic/hylozoic world view could provide the basis for a new set of values. Some of the most radical figures of the French Enlightenment like La Mettrie or, in a more provocative form, De Sade, did not think so and cheerfully took the view that materialism and amorality went together. Not surprisingly, since it is an issue that lies at the core of the book, Israel engages closely with the debates that surrounded La Mettrie's position but, in arguing against the conclusions which La Mettrie drew, some form of teleology seems to creep back. 'Diderot', writes Israel, 'no less than Spinoza or La Mettrie banishes all teleology from our world-view … nevertheless, there remains a physico-moral quasi teleology…' (812).

This, then, is a work which enriches our view of the Enlightenment and puts back into clear view many of the figures who have been lost and

obscured in our traditional accounts. It provides a ringing endorsement of the importance of the Enlightenment and its values not only in shaping the world since the eighteenth century but also of its critical importance in providing moral balance in the world of today. That it occasions debate as well as admiration is a tribute to its embrace of the critical reasoning which is one of the most enduring and valuable bequests of the Enlightenment.

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John Issitt, *Jeremiah Joyce: radical, dissenter and writer*, Ashgate, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2006, pp. 202, ISBN 0 7546 38006, £55.00; Ashgate Online: £49.50.

This is a welcome biography of an important Unitarian activist. In the pages of this journal D O Thomas once took J H Plumb to task for making Priestley's views on the poor stand for those of Dissenters in general (*Enlightenment and Dissent*, 4 [1985], 65-67). The figures of Price and Priestley have long loomed large in our view of late eighteenth century Unitarianism. But we should avoid automatically assuming that the views of these two intellectual clergymen were representative of other Unitarians (or rather, to underline the point, other Arians and Socinians). Given the volume, quality and influence of their work, Price and Priestley will no doubt continue to attract attention. But there are many other interesting Unitarians who can provide material for at least one modern scholarly biography that would enrich our understanding of Enlightenment and Dissent. With attention in recent years turned toward the social and cultural aspects of Enlightenment politeness, sociability, the book trade, gender relations, and so on, detailed biographies of what we could call 'sub-canonical' or 'B-grade' intellectuals and activists have become more valuable. Biographies of figures such as Theophilus Lindsey, Andrew Kippis, Joseph Towers and Capel Lofft could add to our understanding of 'ideas in context' and the lived culture of Enlightenment in England. Viewed in his light, John Issitt's biography of Rev. Jeremiah Joyce will be a useful source for scholars working across a range of fields and interests.

This is a clearly written book that provides a very good guide to Joyce's life and prolific publishing. The book is divided into three parts that discuss Joyce as political radical, Unitarian Dissenter, and science writer. On the whole the book is well structured, with each part broken into a number of chapters, and with sub-headings used liberally within chapters. There are also a number of illustrations reproduced from Joyce's educational writings. While Issitt has included a useful list of Joyce's published works, it is a pity there is no general bibliography. While there is little attempt to speak to the hotly contested broader historiography on the nature of religion and politics in eighteenth-century Britain, Issitt has read carefully in the primary sources and makes good use of specialist scholarship by the likes of Grayson Ditchfield, R K Webb and articles from *Enlightenment and Dissent* and *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*.

Born the son of a wool comber in Hertfordshire, Joyce attended sermons at the Essex Street Chapel while completing a seven-year apprenticeship as a painter of glass. With the support of Hugh Worthington and a bursary, Joyce trained as a Unitarian minister at the New College Hackney. While he often delivered sermons at Essex Street, Joyce failed to secure his own ministry until near the end of his life and had to rely on a combination of patronage and a highly industrious output of popular educational texts. Issitt is clearly sympathetic to the fortunes of this tradesman turned intellectual:

> To move from being an artisan who got his hands dirty, to a minister, a profession ring fenced by the middle and upper classes, represented a major elevation on the social ladder. This move presented him with the stark realities of social class, realities he never wholly overcame. Throughout his life Joyce was never to be fully accepted into the community of middle class Dissenters and remained perpetually alienated from the community surrounding him … Whilst Joyce never tried to hide or distance himself from his origins, the society in which he moved would never let him forget it (18).

His blunt manners could be off-putting to some, but others were attracted to his candour, and during the period of his most intense literary output in the early 1800s Joyce was frequently in the company of William Godwin.

Issitt makes good use of fragmentary and circumstantial evidence to outline a close relationship between Joyce and Lord Stanhope, by whom he was employed as a family tutor. Issitt argues that Joyce may have to some extent acted as Lord Stanhope's political agent, noting that Stanhope resigned from the London Revolution Society in August 1790, which was around the same time that Joyce joined. The aristocratic cousin of the prime minister seems to have withdrawn in order to protect his social standing, while maintaining contact through a tutor whose address in the minute book of the Revolution Society is listed as 'at Earl Stanhope's' (see mss. in the British Library). In 1794 *The Times* newspaper reported the arrest for 'treasonable and seditious practices' of Rev. Jeremiah Joyce, identifying him as 'private secretary to Earl Stanhope and tutor to the present Lord Mahon' (49). Issitt is thoughtful in his assessment of the relationship between the two citizens, noting that 'although it is impossible to ascertain the precise relationship between Joyce and Stanhope, from the evidence of Joyce's subsequent literary production … Stanhope came to function more as Joyce's patron than his employer, and may have felt to some degree indebted to Joyce whom he might well have judged had borne the brunt of some of Pitt's fire that had really been intended for himself' (61-62).

While Issitt has made little use of the vast body of scholarship that the early 1790s has inspired, he does a good job of narrating in detail the fortunes of Joyce during his arrest for treason. I, for one, had not noticed until reading this book that among the swag of radical literature in Joyce's possession seized by the authorities were six copies of the anonymous *Two pennyworth more of truth for a penny* (1793). Written by Ann Jebb, a Unitarian and widow of a founder of the Society for Constitutional Information, this pamphlet was a forthright reply to the Loyalist Association's *One pennyworth of truth* (see A Page, 'A great politicianess', *Women's History Review*, 17:5 [2008]). This may explain why she seems to have published nothing more after that. For their part, Joyce and Lord Stanhope went quiet politically after 1795.

Joyce provides an excellent example of a radical Unitarian tendency to respond to Pitt's 'terror' by turning attention to the long-term 'improvement' of society via education. Part 3 of this book provides a very useful outline of the impressive range of Joyce's publications in the early 1800s. He produced condensed versions of works by the likes of

Adam Smith and William Paley that were a combination of abridgement and paraphrase, and high selling works that popularised science. Joyce clearly worked long hours for little recognition, with many of his writings anonymous and the genre of educational and popularising text sniffed at as unoriginal hack-work by the leading literary lights of the romantic era.

This good book unfortunately contains some errors. Interestingly, Issit makes the same mistake as Jack Fruchtman Jr.: while John Horne Tooke did much in his busy life, he was not a founding member of the Society for Constitutional Information (see my review of *Atlantic cousins* in this issue). Issitt incorrectly states that Richard Price delivered his *Discourse on the love of our country* at the 'Reform Society' in November 1789 (32), where he should have written 'Revolution Society'; but gets it right a few pages later (39). But such minor errors aside, this is a valuable book that will prove of use to scholars of Enlightenment, Dissent, politics and print culture.

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Michael R Lynn, *Popular science and public opinion in eighteenth-century France*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006, pp. ix + 177, ISBN: 0719073731, £50.00.

Michael R Lynn has written an informative overview of the popularization of science in pre-revolutionary France. Until a generation ago, the history of science in eighteenth-century France was most often treated as an annex of intellectual history. Studies by historians, philosophers, and literary scholars focused on debates between Cartesians and Newtonians, for example, or linked developments in natural philosophy to the broader cause of the *parti philosophique* after mid-century. The recent interdisciplinary work of Ken Alder, Jessica Riskin, Mary Terrall, J B Shank, and others, however, has moved science studies during the French Enlightenment from the rarified air of the royal academies and the abstract struggles between reason and faith to the everyday preoccupations of many French subjects throughout the kingdom.

Lynn continues this trend by situating the popularization of science within at least three current historiographical tendencies. First, he views

scientific demonstrations by 'mid-level savants' before enthusiastic audiences as a constituent component of the eighteenth-century French public sphere, a concept initially articulated by Jürgen Habermas and endlessly elaborated by historians over the last three decades. Second, he traces the commodification of science over the century, both in terms of the public lectures for which popularizers charged fees and in terms of the instruments and scientific paraphernalia available for sale. Daniel Roche, Colin Jones, Cissie Fairchilds, and Michael Kwass, have insisted in recent years on the importance of a consumer revolution in France in the years before 1789. At the high end of the social scale, Lynn informs us, Madame de Pompadour owned 'more than fifty scientific instruments, models or machines' (52). The royal mistress's interest in science underscores Lynn's last point: the importance of women in the new audience for physics and the other natural sciences. Curious women in many ranks of society were not just reading novels and going to the theatre; they were also attending public science lectures and purchasing memberships in the end-of-the-century *musées* where popularizers presented the newest ideas about nature. The story of French women and eighteenth-century science does not begin and end with the philosopher in Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Conversations on the plurality of worlds* trying to seduce a scientifically-minded marquise by moonlight, nor with Madame du Châtelet whispering sweet Newtonian nothings into Voltaire's ear.

Popular science and public opinion in eighteenth-century France is an adroit mix of generalization and case study. The first three substantive chapters discuss the careers and aims of the scientific popularizers; the composition, economics, and geography (largely Parisian, in Lynn's presentation) of their audiences; and the institutions, such as the *salons*, *lycées*, and *musées*, that brought them together. The final two chapters study the history of rabdomancy, or the use of divining rods, and the spectacle of ballooning in the 1780s. Much like the popularizers he studies, Lynn revels in presenting the spectacle of their performances in these chapters. Jean-Antoine Nollet, for example, active at mid-century, specialized in displays of the 'electric kiss', an experiment in which a young boy would be suspended from the ceiling by silk cords, then electrified by means of a machine, causing him to act as a magnet. Nollet would then dim the lights, and encourage a young girl in the audience to

approach the boy and kiss him. Amused onlookers would watch as the two youngsters came close enough for sparks to fly between their lips (31). But audiences were also drawn by the potential utility of the new scientific displays. At the beginning of the century, diviners not only disclosed underground water and mineral deposits, but also uncovered criminals and recalcitrant Huguenots. The commercial and military applications of ballooning were immediately evident to onlookers, even if the huge hot-air contraptions proved resistant to navigation. The French interest in eighteenth-century science was not limited to its amusement value. Like Diderot and d'Alembert in the *Encyclopédie*, who insisted on including the trades alongside the arts and sciences, both popularizers and their audiences were interested in the practical, commercial applications of their displays. Lynn's work contributes to the pre-history of technology and its industrial applications in France, just as the studies of Larry Stewart, Jan Golinski, and Margaret Jacob have illuminated the cultural origins of British industrialization.

Some readers may be dissatisfied with Lynn's chronology. Although the chapter on divining rods features a strong contrast between Jacques Aymer, a peasant rabdomancer circa 1700, and Barthelemy Bléton, another well-known diviner in the late 1770s and 1780s, most of Lynn's discussion is less carefully postmarked. While some examples are drawn from the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV (1643-1715 and 1715-1774, respectively), most of the book's evidence comes from the last fifteen years of the Old Regime. The *musées*, for example, are clearly a phenomenon that began in the late 1770s, and the Montgolfier ascension which inaugurated the Atlantic-wide ballooning craze occurred in 1783. In fact, debates over the uses and abuses of public science were only beginning to heat up in 1789. In a brief conclusion, Lynn notes that popular science changed during the Revolution due to the professionalization of science education, the new focus by the state on the utility of science, and the desire of the *savants* to work directly for the nation (148). But Paul Metzner's recent book *Crescendo of the virtuoso: spectacle, skill, and self-promotion in Paris during the age of revolution* (California, 1998) suggests that men like Nollet, Bléton, and the Montgolfiers were not entirely absorbed by the needs of the Revolutionary state after 1789, and the presence of Mesmerism,

Swedenborgianism, and other illuminist and quasi-occult practices in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Paris argues that the boundaries between the popular and the academic were still quite porous in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

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Emilio Mazza & Emanuele Ronchetti eds., *New Essays on David Hume*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2007, pp. 480, ISBN 13: € 27.00.

This new set of essays on David Hume is a welcome initiative of the editors of the *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*. The essays are grouped under the rubrics 'Of the Understanding', 'Of Morals and Criticism', 'Of History, Politics and Religion' and 'Hume Novelties'. The last rubric is ironic, because it contains a preview of David and Mary Norton's critical edition of the *Treatise of human nature*, which has already been published. It gives me the opportunity to warn the reader that the Norton's have taken a number of unwarranted liberties with the text (See my *Een dialoog over Hume, Over zijn herschrijving van het Traktaat over de menselijke natuur* [Amsterdam 2007: Boom], noot A; the English version *A dialogue on David Hume: on his revision of a treatise of human nature* is available online and in book form at Amazon.com)

Peter Jones' contribution is an oddity rather than a novelty. He reviews another set of essays on Hume edited by M Frasca-Spada & P J E Kail (*Impressions of Hume*, Oxford, 2005) and comments near the end: 'The almost uniformly feeble and superficial commentary on Humean matters by members of literature departments over the last thirty years must be deplored as much as the indefensibly jargon-ridden opacity of philosophers, whose work is inaccessible outside the charmed circles' (455). If he wishes to apply his commentary to the *New essays* as well he would be killing two birds with one stone.

Jones' comment on the charmed circles of philosophers is not totally inappropriate. The epistemological essays by Marina Frasca-Spada ('Simple Impressions in the Treatise'), Catherine Kemp ('Contrariety in Hume'), P J E Kail ('Leibniz's Dog and Humean Reason') and Dale Jacquette ('Hume on the Infinite Divisibility of Extension and Exact

Geometrical Values') are neither jargon-ridden nor opaque, but the impartial spectator may wonder how they fit in with Hume's intentions. The worst offender is Charles Pigden. He writes that 'it is the legendary Hume and his fallacious arguments that I discuss in this paper. I reserve the real Hume for another occasion' (199). I hope that when he returns to the real Hume he will learn to quote Hume correctly. The italicized addition to his quotation that 'reason is, *and ought only to be* the slave of the passions' (L A Selby-Bigge ed., revised P H Nidditch, *Treatise of human nature* [Oxford, 1978], III, 3, iii, 415) seems relevant for the analysis of moral belief and motivation.

Kemp argues that if two seemingly similar events have contradictory outcomes this is a way to discover the real cause of either event. That is a helpful comment, but as it is about the only piece of formal causal analysis should we not ask why Hume, who spent pages on how we acquire beliefs and why all beliefs are causal, remains silent on how we discover causes? Frasca-Spada gives a useful account of the many problems provoked by Hume's definition of a simple idea as being the copy of a simple impression. She concludes by writing 'that simplicity, just like resemblance, is not a brute fact about some of our perceptions, but rather results from our mind's reflecting on the operations of its own selective attention' (54). I wonder whether Hume would have agreed with this opportunistic interpretation of his *minima sensibilia*. His point was that what we cannot experience is a sophism and that hence the idea of infinite divisibility is absurd. Jacquette defends 'Hume's positive doctrine of spatial extension as finitely divisible more specifically into sensible extensionless indivisibles' (99). I cannot see how he can save Hume from being a dogmatic atomist who argues that because no one can see, hear, or feel beyond a certain minimum reality must exist as indivisible particles. At stake is Hume's thesis that 'reason alone can never give rise to any original idea' (*Treatise of human nature,* I, 3, xiv, 157). So mathematics by itself cannot discover things that are useful and real. The career of mathematics at the core of the sciences proved Hume wrong. Discussing the sections on the reason of animals Kail explains Hume's view on the limitations of inductive reasoning in man and animal. He forgets to mention Hume called reason 'a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls' (*Treatise of human nature,* I, 3, xvi, 179). That

instinct must make some difference between man and animal, even to Hume.

The problem with the essays I have just cited is that they refer to an epistemological system, which remains implicit and does not necessarily refer to Hume's system. The literary and historical essays in this volume are certainly not superficial and can stand on their own, because they do not need a system for explanatory purposes. Emilio Mazza ('In and out of the Well: Flux and Reflux of Scepticism and Nature') displays a wonderful erudition in dealing with sceptical sources. He notes that the *Enquiry concerning human understanding* curtails the role of scepticism to 'durable' and 'useful' results (128). 'Yet, the *Treatise* is more dynamic: it describes the movement from within, rather than its results from the outside. In the *Enquiry* speculative curiosity goes hand in hand with the "useful"' (129). He lets the sceptic ask whether what 'can be known by common prudence and discretion' will satisfy the philosopher. Hume evidently thought so, because 'the only one [relation], that can be traced beyond our senses, and informs us of existences and objects, which we do not see or feel, is *causation*' (*Treatise of human nature,* I, 3, ii, 74). So there is hope for the researcher and the philosopher. (We should keep in mind that *philosophy* in Hume's days could also mean a formal scientific approach or just science). In a first-class essay Roger Emerson ('Hume and Art: Reflections on a man who could not hear, sing or look') presents us with a Hume that is deaf to music, does not notice the niceties of buildings or landscapes and uses art to concentrate on philosophical problems and who ignores the art (257). Hume was a philistine in matters of taste. Annette Bayer ('Hume's Excellent Hypocrites') writes a delightful piece of literary criticism. Hypocrisy in Hume's *History* often fulfils a useful function and is sometimes necessary to save faith as when Queen Elizabeth displayed grief and dismay at the news of Queen Mary's execution.

What we need in the first place is a firm view of Hume's intensions and in this respect the fact that Hume rewrote his *Treatise* is helpful. Even in this new set of essays the authors tend to disregard the fact that he wrote 'that the following Pieces [the two *Enquires*] may only be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles' (*Enquiry concerning human understanding*, ed. T L Beauchamp [Oxford, 2000],

1), in this way repudiating his *Treatise*. A clear understanding of what is going on in the process of rewriting would be helpful in deciding the long standing polemic about Hutcheson's influence on Hume. Norton (following Kemp Smith) maintains that Hutcheson was a formative influence on the young author of the *Treatise*. In his essay published in this volume Moore ('The Eclectic Stoic, the Mitigated Skeptic') presents an array of arguments to prove that their philosophical approaches were so different that there can be no question of a formative influence. Luigi Turco ('Hutcheson and Hume in a Recent Polemic') comparing certain Hutcheson texts with the *Treatise* clinches the matter in favour of Moore. He ends his essay with: 'Lastly, it is not so obvious, at least in the eyes of an eighteenth-century philosopher, that one can nonchalantly claim - as Norton does - that that there are similarities of views on the question of morality, regardless of religious attitudes' (197). Indeed Hume and Hutcheson lived in different worlds: a world with and a world without God. However, I do not think this is the end of the story. With some exaggeration we can say that Hutcheson is at the end of Hume's philosophy when Hume demonstrated how we can have a civilized morality without an appeal to God, in this way joining the school of Hutcheson on his own terms.

James Harris ('Hume's Four Essays on Happiness and Their Place in the Move from Morals to Politics') adds a novel note to this polemic. In his essays on the 'Stoic', 'the Platonist', 'the Epicurean' and 'the Sceptic' Hume distanced himself from the Ancient schools of philosophy and their modern followers in his attempt to establish an empirical science of man. Perhaps we should be a bit careful in using the categories of Stoicism and Epicureanism to characterize eighteenth-century thinkers. Moore has some strong arguments for Hutcheson's attachment to Stoicism, but the fact that he calls him an eclectic Stoic may mean that even for Hutcheson the paradigm of Stoicism had become threadbare.

Then we have a set of essays, which deals with the reception of Hume's ideas. In a conversation, which takes place in Heaven (?), Hume takes John Rawls to task for his theory of justice. Flavio Baroncelli ('Rawls and Hume: a Fable') gives an amusing account of their conversation. Rawls gets the worst of the argument and the reader, down here on earth, will take sides with Hume, if only because Rawls gave a rather poor lecture on Hume - see his *Lectures on the history of political philosophy*

(S Freeman ed. [Cambridge Mass., 2007], 159 ff). Mark Spencer ('Hume's Reception in eighteenth-century Philadelphia') tells us that the Philadelphia audience was surprisingly receptive to Hume's thought. 'Even Hume's reputation as an infidel was not sufficient to rule out a significant readership or a sympathetic reception, especially for Hume's political and historical writings' (307-308). Already in 1751-1752, 'Hume's name was starting to trickle out in criticisms of the essay on miracles' (313). This is one of the many interesting details in M A Stewart's essay ('Hume in the Service of American Deism') and is proof of Hume's rapid success in colonial America. The main gist of his story is that Hume's essay 'Of the Liberty of the Press' was put to use in a controversy over an allegedly piece of deist propaganda. Of course Hume's guarded appraisal became distorted. The intervention of William Smith, a Scot who immigrated to America and who became an influential educational reformer, is also of some interest. That Hume's analyses of the civil war and the revolution of 1688 were used by counter-revolutionary writers during the French Revolution of 1789 was already known from Laurence Bongie's study. Emanuele Ronchetti ('Appropriating Hume: Joseph de Maistre, Benjamin Constant and the "History of England"') adds to this the amusing account how Joseph de Maistre used Hume's *History* for counter-revolutionary and Benjamin Constant for revolutionary purposes. The appeal proves the strength of Hume's historical account. Next to Jones' this volume publishes a second review by Alice Cohen - 'The making of a Philosophical Classic: the Reception of David Hume in Europe'- of a collection of essays edited by Peter Jones (*The reception of David Hume in Europe* [London-New York, 2005]). She concludes that Kant eclipsed Hume during the nineteenth-century and that it was logical positivism that revived the interest in Hume. As she deals with the *Treatise* in particular it is odd she fails to mention that the *Treatise* was virtually unknown during that century and it was not the logical positivists who rediscovered Hume's crucial text but Norman Kemp Smith in 1905/1906.

This leaves John Wright's essay ('Kemp Smith and the Two Kinds of Naturalism in Hume's Philosophy') to be discussed. It comes first in this volume, but I kept it to the last, because it allows me to make a concluding remark on how the *Treatise* is a key to unlock Hume's philosophy. Kemp Smith, Wright argues, noticed a Newtonian naturalism in the first book of

the *Treatise*. This means that we can claim reliable knowledge through causal analysis. Then in book II and III Hume developed another kind of naturalism in which - like Hutcheson - he appealed directly to human nature in his analysis of the passions and consequently of morality. According to Kemp Smith these two types of naturalism were at war with each other, which according to Wright is not necessarily the case. Wright's final question is why Kemp Smith reinterpreted Hume's philosophy in the way he did. He writes: 'Like T H Green he was opposed to the subjectivism he found in the empirical philosophers of the latter half of the nineteenth century, but unlike Green he thought their most famous eighteenth-century forerunner had actually overcome subjectivism' (36).

Kemp Smith had an enormous influence on generations of Hume scholars and his influence has not been entirely beneficial. The crux of the matter is that Hume's philosophy is uncompromisingly subjectivist and it is this subjectivism that allows him to make the easy transition from a kind of positivist interpretation of belief to an analysis of human passions, which have no basis in facts of the outside world. The switch is heralded by that famous sentence in the Conclusion to book I: 'Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose' (*Treatise of human nature*, I, 4, vii, 269). His positive message in book I is that through causality we can derive reliable information about the outside world. On the other hand beliefs remain entirely subjectivist and Hume has to admit that 'liveliness' as a criterion for the conviction of truth is unreliable and does not allow us to make the distinction between 'belief' and 'fiction'. In book II Hume is no longer interested in this distinction. At the beginning of the *Treatise* Hume distinguishes 'the impressions of sensation and of reflexion'. Book II deals with the passions as the impressions of reflexion, but Hume does not explore the relations between the two types of impressions. He is content with the message that through the passions human beings can manage to develop a functional morality. Don Livingston has quite rightly made the simplicity of Hume's messages the focal point of his philosophy (D W Livingston, *Hume's philosophy of common life* [Chicago 1984]).

It is important to see, I think, that these two positive messages were the

only ones that interested Hume. He was not an empiricist, not a logical positivist, not a phenomenologist, not even an idealist. Hume's philosophy is unique in this respect, because he stands alone. The secret of his complicated philosophy is its practical application.

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Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, eds., *Joseph Priestley, Scientist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 252; ISBN, 978-0-19-921530-0; £45.00; $90.00.

As the editors point out, Joseph Priestley was given two entries in the original *Dictionary of National Biography*, but when the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was issued in 2004, a single entry had become possible. That change was owing to the explosion of Priestley scholarship in the past forty years, notably among historians of science who have done so much to place Priestley's science in the context of his religious and philosophical views. But immense strides have also been made in elucidating his non-scientific career, not least by contributors to this journal. Priestley's touching and sometimes exasperating eagerness for controversy meant that he laid about him over many areas of the eighteenth-century intellect and usually got as good as he gave, so the progress of knowledge in that broader arena has in turn widened and deepened our understanding of Priestley himself.

Studies of Priestley are now so voluminous that, a great synthesist himself, he in turn demands synthesis. But it is characteristic of present-day scholarship that the summing up of a vast subject will most likely be done collaboratively, in this case in the first volume of a series from Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies. That is entirely appropriate. While Priestley was Unitarian in theology from the end of the 1760s, Unitarianism as a denomination did not exist in his lifetime; rather, he saw himself first as a spokesman for, and goad to, Dissent as a whole.

In an introduction as remarkable for its brevity as for the clarity of its distillation, the editors lay out the complex evolution - legal, political, and doctrinal - of English religion in the hundred years or so before Priestley

began to write. The first chapter, by David Wykes, is an admirable summary of Priestley's life, from his Yorkshire origins through his crucial education at Daventry Academy and the inauspicious beginning of his ministerial career at Needham Market to its capstones at Leeds and Birmingham, and then through the long, unhappy denouement that began with the Birmingham Riots in 1791 and ended in his exile in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, where he died in 1804. Due note is taken of the two periods of absence from the pulpit, as a teacher at Warrington Academy in the 1760s, and in his service as librarian (and resident intellectual) to Lord Shelburne in the seventies, the most productive periods in an active life.

The second chapter, by W H Brock, is a superb survey of Priestley's scientific work, from his early fascination with electricity and optics to his eventually settling on research in the nascent study of airs. Brock places Priestley's accomplishments firmly in the context of other scientific inquiry of his time and succinctly dismantles the superior attitudes of earlier historians of science who tended to dismiss him for not having arrived at the conclusions of other, later practitioners, especially Lavoisier. Brock lays out the context of the 'phlogiston problem' and explains Priestley's resistance to Lavoisier's views (whose potential value he recognized), at least in part, by his inability to reconcile them fully with what he had himself demonstrated. Brock helpfully places Priestley's scientific inquiries in the intellectual and social context of his role as a public intellectual, and makes clear the currents in recent historical inquiries that have affected reconsideration of Priestley's work. This essay is a perfect example of what the kind of synthesis represented by this volume should be.

James Dybikowski's similarly effective chapter places Priestley's work as a metaphysician and philosopher of religion under three main heads - associationism, necessarianism, and materialism - while laying out Priestley's obligations to others (notably Hartley) and setting him in the philosophical context of his time. Here pride of place goes to the Scottish common-sense school associated with Thomas Reid, whose criticism gave Priestley opportunity for slashing criticism in return; a less prominent role is assigned, rightly, to the sceptic David Hume. Dybikowski, like Brock, also places Priestley helpfully in the context of recent historical work. One quibble: there appears to be a contradiction

between Dybikowski and Brock on the origins of Priestley's materialism (pp.81-2, 67-8), in particular the place of Roger Boscovich in that conversion. Brock seems to me to be right. A small point perhaps, but it suggests a lapse in either the collaborative format or in editorial oversight.

Martin Fitzpatrick's chapter on Priestley's political philosophy is constructed around a revealing series of distinctions, notably Locke's conservative position on popular sovereignty as against Priestley's radicalization of it (with extended reference to H T Dickinson's revisionist work) and the intellectualist cast of Priestley's radicalism against the more overt activism of many contemporaries. Fitzpatrick rescues Priestley from the older view of him as 'a footnote to the development of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism', while making clear, without the fruitless search for an exact citation, why Bentham professed himself obligated to Priestley; but he does not neglect the elements in Priestley's thought that could underpin an activist role for government when circumstances required it. The chapter demonstrates Priestley's more sweeping, yet pragmatic views of civil liberty as against Richard Price's more restricted interpretation, and the broad views of religious liberty that distinguished Priestley from most of his contemporaries, extending to his advocacy of liberty for Roman Catholics and even to his willingness to think about the ultimate absorption of Christianity in something grander. This last point is placed in the context of Priestley's distinctively apocalyptic views, which (with due attention to parallels in Priestley's master Hartley) are admirably accounted for. Towering over all is Priestley's commitment to the ultimate power of religious freedom. Finally, Fitzpatrick argues importantly against deriving too much from Priestley's extensive controversial writing instead of his major reflective works.

G M Ditchfield's chapter marks a shift in strategy. He does not offer primarily a summary and interpretation of Priestley's views in the light of recent research; rather, an essentially monographic essay on a contextual problem faced by Priestley and likeminded contemporaries. Ditchfield's argument centres on what thirty years ago we might have called a *conjoncture*: the campaign of 1772-4 for relief from the obligation to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, in the Feathers Tavern petition and a parallel Dissenting agitation. Priestley's part in the controversy is shown in a pamphlet war with Benjamin Dawson, a Dissenting minister who had turned Anglican in 1758 and who, while remaining a sympathizer with his

old brethren, was an active promoter of the anti-subscription movement. Priestley did not approve of halfway houses and, even though Dawson was a contributor to Priestley's *Theological Repository,* he did not shrink from dramatically accusing Dawson of hypocrisy in seeking the advantages that might come from conforming and in daring to maintain Socinian views while having subscribed to the Articles.

More broadly, Ditchfield addresses the question of the difficulties of collaboration between Anglican Latitudinarians and Rational Dissenters. He illustrates the point with the refusal of Francis Blackburne, who like many others in the Establishment could not share Priestley's wider interpretation of toleration, to take part in the Feathers Tavern agitation. But Ditchfield's principal and most revealing demonstration is the long, principled reluctance that preceded the departure of Theophilus Lindsey, Blackburne's son-in-law, from the Church for Unitarianism, a dilemma to be found again (as Ditchfield points out) in a succession of nodal points in the Victorian church. This case rests, of course, on Ditchfield's own admirable scholarship, as the footnotes make plain.

The last two chapters in the book rely similarly on the authors' own work, for the simple reason that, with minor exceptions, the rather meagre existing scholarship does not demand the kind of synthesis displayed in the first four chapters. The first of the two, by Alison Kennedy, deals with Priestley's views of history, a vital component of his intellectual outlook that, though not unrecognized (again, notably, by Martin Fitzpatrick in this journal in 1998), has had to wait until now to be surveyed with the proper breadth. Kennedy does not deal with Priestley's scientific histories, well covered in Brock's chapter; rather, she admirably assesses the sources and impact of Priestley's historical work in his Warrington years. (Oddly, neither she nor Brock notes that Priestley's historical work, specifically the *Chart of biography* of 1764, was a primary justification offered for his election to the Royal Society in 1766.) Of course, Kennedy's principal concern is Priestley's historical approach to theology. She demonstrates his affinity with German thought, usually thought to gain relevance only in the next century, and, above all, traces the effects of Priestley's historical outlook on Unitarian theologians of his own time and, most importantly, on the later, influential Unitarian historian John Kenrick. This chapter makes one eager for Kennedy's forthcoming book.

Jenny Graham likewise has the subject of Priestley's years in the United States largely though not entirely to herself. Her chapter is essentially an abstract of her 'Revolutionary in Exile: The Emigration of Joseph Priestley to America, 1794-1804,' published in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* in 1995, with additions from subsequent work, including her own two-volume study of English reform politics in the last two decades of the eighteenth century (2000). Particular note should be taken of her attention to English emigration to the United States in the middle 1790s, a subject she does not own but has told us more about than anyone else to date. One regret: Priestley's nemesis in America, William Cobbett, gets relatively less attention in this chapter than Graham gives him in the monograph. It would have taken only a few words to demonstrate the brilliance of Cobbett's opportunism, his masterly English style, and his astonishing later, in some ways redemptive, career back in England. In a perverse way, he was a worthy opponent who here seems an isolated, inexplicable phenomenon.

The authors and editors of this volume, Dr. Williams's Centre, and Priestley scholars generally are all to be congratulated on its appearance. If not the first book to which future generations of students should turn - they should certainly start with Priestley's own account of his life and Robert E Schofield's biography - it will be an essential next step in understanding a towering, wide-ranging, and too often underestimated figure in the English Enlightenment and, indeed, in the following century.

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Robert Rix, *William Blake and the cultures of radical Christianity*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2007, pp. 182, ISBN 978-0-7546-5600-5; £55.00, $99.95; Ashgate Online: £49.50.

If it is a truth universally acknowledged that William Blake was a religious radical, it is also a truth which until recent times has been more textually inferred rather than biographically established. A great step forward in terms of establishing Blake's radical milieu was made by Jon Mee in *Dangerous enthusiasm* (1992), though the emphasis there was on radical politics in the 1790s. But the book set a precedent in closely

tracing links between what had previously been condescended to as by-ways of cultural history and Blake's prophetic texts. It is a great strength of Robert Rix's new study that it similarly makes a coherent narrative out of Blake's interaction with radical religious cultures over a rather longer period.

On the one hand, previously taken-for-granted connections of Blake's work - such as his embracing of, and rejection of, Swedenborgianism - are given precision and temporal direction. On the other, clear connections are shown between spiritual influences which were somewhat atomistically seen by earlier scholars. These links might in turn be either within or between the acknowledged leading influences on his work. With Swedenborgianism, for example, we learn both of its internal connections with animal magnetism and supporting scientific theories, and on the other of its competition with Priestley and the radical dissenters for the loyalty of religious seekers. In both cases we are seeing late eighteenth century movements of thought as more porous and interconnected than we might earlier have thought. For readers of this journal in particular the tracing of overlapping public interest in the 'rational enlightenment' of (say) Kant, Price and Priestley and the 'enthusiastic sects' around Swedenborg and others will doubtless be of particular interest.

The Swedenborg connection is traced interestingly. We see in detail the early schisms of the New Church - some of these dissensions being early- and well-buried by the victors in the controversies - and the ways in which the antinomian tendencies of Blake were probably shared with a dissident tendency within the connexion. It is true that the general grounds of Blake's dissatisfaction with Swedenborg have been extensively discussed elsewhere (as one might expect, given Blake's trenchant and increasingly negative marginal annotations of the sage). But literary-critical books on Blake often leave one with the slightly unsatisfactory sense that Swedenborgianism was an early delusion, easily transcended by an artist already on his way to the status of innovative visionary. Rix, on the other hand, with typical precision and persistence, shows us grounds both for Blake's initial enthusiasm and for the enduring, if by mid-life denied, influence of Swedenborg on him. A key example could be the important issue for that time of eternal damnation. Swedenborg's universalism, his

holding to the idea that God could not be angry with his creation, and that hell must be much more 'the mind's own place' than a pre-existing pit for sinners, would clearly remain a linchpin of Blake's own thought.

At other times we see brought together material otherwise reasonably well-known but not necessarily connected with Blake. The visit of John Wright and William Bryan to the millenarian society at Avignon in early 1789 was recounted two hundred years ago by Southey in his *Letters from England*, as was the career of the prophet Richard Brothers. But Rix is particularly good at tracing the interconnections between these figures. Bryan, for example, had been an apprentice under William Sharp, Blake's fellow radical London engraver, while Wright had heard Swedenborgian preachers Ralph Mather and Joseph Salmon during their progress through the north of England. Both would come under the influence of Brothers in the 1790s. We can see clearly here the process of radicalization of some 'left' Swedenborgians at the same time as Robert Hindmarsh and others were ensuring that the New Church itself became known for its loyalism. The career of John Clowes, rector of St John's, Manchester, illustrated how Swedenborgianism could point both ways, towards loyalism and dissent. Clowes opposed the separation of the New Church from Anglicanism but was still accused (though cleared) of heresy on the grounds of anti-trinitarianism.

All this does help us to situate Blake more firmly in a complex map of shifting and overlapping subcultures (the plural in Rix's title is precise), even if it cannot bridge the gap between our copious knowledge of those cultures and our often fragmentary biographical knowledge of Blake himself. After all, we are still being surprised here: most scholars would not have suspected until recently that Blake would still be involved in the production of a radical material around 1820. However, what Rix does do is rid us of false dichotomies. Blake as influenced by Moravianism or not, Blake as Swedenborgian or not, Blake as totally anti-Priestley or not: all these dichotomies come to seem unreal as we see how many of his contemporaries would move from one radical stance to another, would mix religion with natural philosophy, would combine coherently things that have come to seem separate. The search to uncover the corruptions of true Christianity, and to reveal the true message of religion for the contemporary world, could closely bind Priestley and Swedenborg, for

example, despite the vast differences in their philosophies. The eclecticism which we have come to find in Blake's prophetic works turns out to have been almost mainstream in the radical religious culture of the 1790s. It is not to make a rash move of triangulation to claim that what we find both in Blake's works and in the lives of his contemporaries was also likely to be found in the undocumented hours of Blake's life in Lambeth.

It is not the aim of Robert Rix's study to provide detailed commentary on the prophetic works - indeed, its main job is done if it provides us with a more stable starting-point for reading them at all. But it does throw particular light on certain neglected aspects. Thus, for example, Book One of Blake's aborted poem 'The French Revolution' is well-known to have been an intended publication of radical publisher Joseph Johnson in 1791. (The proofs tell us that the intended price was the relatively accessible one shilling). But it is less well-known that Johnson had sold from his bookshop some Swedenborg-influenced work before 1790 such as that of Thomas Thorild and would publish in that year a Latin hymn to the revolution by Alexander Geddes. It seems then that Blake's poem would be excluded from Johnson's publishing catalogue not because of its millenarianism but because of a conscious attempt of the rational dissenters around 1790 to dissociate themselves from any confusion with religious enthusiasts (a review of Thorild in Johnson's *Analytical Review* made clear both the shared ground and the sharp divisions). A rational vision of a new heaven and new earth were now to be very clearly distinguished from a non-rational one such as Blake's.

The fullest textual commentary in the book however is fittingly on *The marriage of heaven and hell*. Again, Rix scores by his precision. That *The marriage* is a satire on, or parody of, Swedenborg has long been a critical commonplace. But here we see how precisely Blake reverses the Swedenborgian equations. Swedenborg in *The true Christian religion* recounts himself converting Luther from his doctrine of by faith alone, whereas Blake shows his narrator as confronted by an Angel who condemns him in the name of the Law. The narrator calmly suggests a journey to the spiritual world to see who is right. Very often the prophet's own formulations are turned back on him. Swedenborg's condemnation of the old churches as being like 'stagnant water' is redirected towards what Blake sees as the dogmatism of New Church legalists. It should be

noted that this is not just a matter of claiming that Blake's references in *The marriage* are precise in historical terms. That is not the key point, and indeed could lead to a narrow legalism in Blake interpretation. The deeper point which Rix establishes in relation to *The marriage* is that its stance towards the world it critiques is not one of broad, rhetorical gesturing, or indeed of postmodern play, but one of precise, forensic exploration. Here we do seem to come near the real Blake of active engagement, painstakingly engraving his letters and his designs one after the other.

There are occasional stylistic or proof-reading lapses, but overall the editing standard is good and the writing is distinguished by an unusual pace and concision which incorporates wide-ranging scholarship without clogging narrative momentum. If the price per page seems high we should perhaps reflect that this may now be the literal price we have to pay for the continued health of the printed academic monograph in an age prone to emphasizing synoptic overviews or online sources. Whatever the merits of these, Rix's study triumphantly demonstrates that there is no substitute for a well-researched, well-shaped monograph. This book, a fitting companion to Mee's pioneering study, will surely still be being borrowed from libraries and read with interest and profit by scholars and students several decades hence.

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Paul Russell, *The riddle of Hume's 'Treatise': skepticism, naturalism, and irreligion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 448, ISBN-13: 9780195110333, £54.00.

David Hume's religious thought has long been a topic of controversy. For Hume's contemporaries, that debate is nicely summarized by a conversation reported to have taken place at the time of Hume's funeral. As Hume's body proceeded from his home on St. David Street in Edinburgh to his burial site at Calton Hill, someone in the crowd is said to have remarked, 'Ah, he was an Atheist'. To which another replied, 'No matter, he was an *honest* man'. The starting point for this closely-argued book about Hume's religious thought is the tension between skepticism and naturalism lying at the heart of David Hume's *A treatise of human*

nature - something Hume scholars will recognize as Richard Popkin's 'Humesproblem'. It is this 'core tension' that 'constitutes a deep riddle lying at the heart of the *Treatise*' and, therefore, any 'acceptable interpretation of this work must aim to solve it' (vii). Arguing against the 'standard historiography', Russell maintains that 'it is problems of religion, broadly conceived, that hold the contents of the *Treatise* together as a unified work' (viii). That is the foundation of his 'irreligious interpretation' of Hume. Moreover, from this perspective Hume's *Treatise* 'must be judged as one [of] the great works of the Radical Enlightenment, deserving a prominent place within an anti-Christian philosophical tradition that includes works by Hobbes, Spinoza, and their freethinking followers in early eighteenth-century Britain' (viii). To support that case, Russell aims - in clear, jargon-free prose - to reconstruct the various contexts informing a better understanding of Hume's *Treatise* and his thought as a whole.

In Part I, Russell peals back the layers of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century English, Scottish and continental European philosophical thought. He gives particular attention to the importance of the Boyle Lectures for understanding British philosophical thought of the time as one divided between 'religious philosophers' and 'speculative atheists'. We might think of Russell's project in part as an attempt to inject Hume into the context of Jonathan Israel's 'Radical Enlightenment', a context in which Hume ought to be considered 'the *jewel in the crown*', even though Israel has made little mention of him in his account thus far (although Israel's volume on the later Enlightenment no doubt will). But Russell also delves into Hume's more immediate intellectual influences. Pierre Desmaizeaux is important here, and even more interesting are Russell's sections on philosophers who lived close to the Hume family home at Chirnside (in the Scottish Borders), especially Andrew Baxter (a more likely author of the *Specimen*, Russell argues, than William Wishart who is commonly thought to have written that attack on Hume's *Treatise*) and William Dudgeon, who has 'claim to be Scotland's most active and prolific radical freethinker at this time' (45). Russell's argument for Dudgeon's potential influence on Hume is compelling, nevertheless it would have been much stronger had Hume at any place in his published books or surviving papers mentioned Dudgeon by name.

Parts II through IV are largely concerned with arguing for the influence on Hume of other writings often overlooked by Hume scholars - especially Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *The elements of law*. Russell's evidence here is far-ranging, including Hume's own references to Hobbes, some of which come from Hume's *History of England*, although Russell skips a passage therein where Hume writes that Hobbes, '[t]hough an enemy to religion … partakes nothing of the spirit of skepticism; but is as positive and dogmatical as if human reason, and his reason in particular, could attain a thorough conviction in these subjects' (William B Todd, ed., *The history of England, from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* [Indianapolis, 1983], vol. 6, 153). While Hume may have been more critical of Hobbes than Russell lets on, Russell's main point, that this Hobbesian context allows us to better appreciate that even though Hume rarely mentions 'God' by name in the *Treatise*, 'the debate concerning our idea of God is implicated and involved in almost every aspect of Hume's project *throughout* the *Treatise*' (96) - is noteworthy. Here and throughout, Russell is critical of those who approach the *Treatise* from the perspective of current philosophical problems and concerns, rather than from the historical perspective to which they belong. For instance, on the question of Hume on space and time, Russell explores the context offered by Samuel Clarke and John Toland. Russell's discussions of 'atheists' and 'sceptics' are equally attuned to eighteenth-century understandings of those terms: 'Clearly', he argues, 'the skeptic's procedure does not result in dogmatic atheism, but only in reusing to affirm the existence of God' (219). Reviewing the debates of Hume's time, 'skepticism versus naturalism, egoism versus benevolence, reason versus feeling, artificial versus natural, optimism versus pessimism', Russell concludes, 'what we find is that Hume, faced with almost every one of these dichotomies, consistently takes a middle or moderate view' (263). Russell's interpretation is not so far removed from those who (without reference to Hume's 'irreligion') aim to solve the riddle of Hume's *Treatise* by presenting Hume as a 'mitigated sceptic'.

Part V offers a summary of the book's main arguments and also sets out some of the implications of those conclusions. Russell finds a 'fundamental *unity* and *coherence*' underlying Hume's *Treatise*: what holds Hume's thought together 'is the mission to discredit religious

philosophy and morals and to replace them with a secular, scientific understanding of moral and social life' (270). It would have been interesting to have Hume's *Essays, moral and political* and his six-volume *History of England* included more fully in that assessment, but those writings are beyond the purview of the book under review. Asking 'Was Hume an "Atheist"?', Russell answers with a degree of ambiguity. The term he uses most often to describe Hume's intentions is 'irreligious'; however he also suggests that Hume in the *Treatise* develops a 'godless worldview' which may be thought of as 'atheism'. Hume's mission was 'to persuade his more enlightened readers of the narrow limits and weaknesses of the human understanding, and, thereby, to turn their attention and energies to matters of "common life", where *real remedies* for improving the human condition can be found'. Interestingly, while Russell claims that mission could 'only be accomplished in social circumstances or conditions where there *already* exists a tolerable degree of liberty (as was more or less the case in mid-eighteenth-century Britain)' (296), many of Hume's own disappointments and troubles in life, as well as the published responses to his thought, might be seen as evidence to the contrary. Russell's book will be requisite reading for all Hume scholars, but it will also be of great interest to many other readers of *Enlightenment and Dissent*.

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Robert E Schofield, *The enlightened Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1773 to 1804*, Pennsylvania State University Press University Park, Pennsylvania, 2004, ISBN 0271024593, £40.95; $58.00.

Was there an Enlightenment in eighteenth-century England? The question is far from straightforward. If there was, then the multi-talented Joseph Priestley epitomised it, or one form of it. Yet Priestley came to think that England was, in crucial respects, anti-Enlightenment. One of its most 'enlightened' cities, Birmingham, rejected him violently, in riots that the Prime Minister, Pitt, called 'an effervescence of the popular mind'. Many of his contemporaries reviled him. The Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, said of him: 'Long have you been the Danger of this country, the Bane of its Polity and Canker-worm of its Happiness'. Priestley doubted

'whether any person in England (the prime minister for the time being excepted) ever had so much of what is commonly called abuse' as he had experienced.

Yet his first forty years, up to 1773, which Robert E Schofield charted in *The enlightenment of Joseph Priestley* (1997), had been largely free of public controversy. The central theme of that period was his gradual conversion from Calvinist orthodoxy to Unitarianism - a form of liberal Christianity, based on the historical reality of the Resurrection, that for the most part he had had to fashion for himself. His life had been a story of successes on various fronts. By 1773, he had become an author of college textbooks, a teacher at Warrington Academy, a member of the Royal Society, an admired historian of science, a recipient of an honorary doctorate, a leading political thinker, and a friend of many in both London and provincial scientific and liberal circles.

Schofield has now completed the story of his next three decades, aptly entitled *The enlightened Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1773 to 1804.* It is a story of perpetual controversy, set in a time of political and intellectual upheaval. The 'Enlightened' Joseph Priestley suffered very mixed fortunes. The younger Priestley had forged a philosophy of steady reform and progress. The older man had to battle with forces unforeseen by his Enlightenment self-education. His way of enlightenment antagonised the Anglican clergy, the conservative part of the aristocracy and monarchy, some of his fellow scientists, and some of his fellow intellectuals.

In 1773 Priestley moved from Leeds to work with and for Lord Shelburne in Calne and in London, thereby strengthening his national prominence. Disputation surrounded him not just on the religious and political fronts. His name is today best-known for his discovery of oxygen in 1774-75, yet even this achievement stands at the centre of what was a very turbulent 'chemical revolution'. In fact what Priestley discovered was dephlogisticated air. He himself never referred to it as oxygen, the term invented by Lavoisier that signified 'acid-maker'. The two had met in Paris in 1774, when he demonstrated his new discovery. Priestley never accepted the theoretical basis for Lavoisier's redescription, and continued to present his side of the argument up to his death. The question of how to conceptualise this and the other newly-found gases was gradually won by Lavoisier and his followers. Priestley's remarkable further work on

gases, photosynthesis, respiration and the composition of water was not enough to entirely rescue his ultimate reputation. Schofield's final word on the problem is startling: 'Priestley was never a chemist; in a modern, and even a Lavoisian, sense, he was never a scientist. He was a natural philosopher, concerned with the economy of nature and obsessed with an idea of unity, in theology and in nature' (193–94). This seems to say that science within a theological framework is not science.

The second controversial front was metaphysical. Priestley abandoned Calvinist predestination early in life, but he at all times defended determinism on the grounds that belief in free-will contradicted the doctrine of universal causation. In the 1770s he abandoned 'the hypothesis of the soul', including its modern version, Cartesian dualism. This story also had French connections. In Paris he had met Baron d'Holbach, the principal exponent of atheistic materialism. Priestley thought materialism the appropriate metaphysic not for atheists but for rational Christian theists. In the subsequent controversies, his antagonists were his friend Richard Price and, more distantly, Thomas Reid. His debate with Price was a model of good-tempered Enlightenment dialectics. Price and Reid demonstrate how deeply entrenched dualism had become in their version of Enlightenment philosophy. Priestley's challenge to dualism found very few followers. Schofield's account gives his philosophical enterprise a fair hearing; it is perhaps the aspect of his thought least well-explored in the secondary literature. His account fails to note Reid's unpublished preoccupation with Priestley's materialism, but he does point out the curious connection with the voluminous works of Lord Monboddo, who aspired to be Priestley's metaphysical antithesis.

The third set of controversies broke out in the 1780s, about the definition and formation of orthodox Christian doctrine. Priestley set himself the task of rewriting the history of his religion, to demonstrate that Unitarianism was the norm in the earliest church and that subsequent doctrinal development was driven by Platonic and Gnostic influences. On this front his antagonists were, on the orthodox side, Bishop Samuel Horsley, and, following a very different agenda, Edward Gibbon. Priestley took the Trinitarian position to be internally incoherent; he used his materialism to support his denial of Christ's pre-existence; and he argued his case historically, from the text of the New Testament and the evidence of early Jewish Christianity.

Schofield's research in the literature of theological history fails to find any recognition of Priestley's extensive (though repetitive) contribution to this field, and he expresses his surprise at this anomaly. The standard narrative passes straight from the English deists to the German scholars Semler and Michaelis, with no mention of their English contemporary's output of a dozen books and 15,000 pages. In Schofield's view, a century after Priestley's death his arguments had become 'part of generally accepted ideas among liberal philosopher-theologians' (238).

There is a fourth theme pervading Priestley's works. He set himself to defend theism and the basics of Christianity as he understood it against the 'infidels' or 'philosophical unbelievers' □ d'Holbach, David Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Thomas Paine, Volney and Dupuis. These apologetic writings run through the whole of his later career. He saw no good reason why Enlightenment should entail atheism. He supposed the opposite, that advances in science and liberty suggest all the more grounds for belief in a good Providence. Curiously, few of his Christian contemporaries (before William Paley, at least) joined him in fighting this good fight in defence of 'the rational doctrines of revelation'.

Priestley's career of controversies culminated in the great debate over the French Revolution with Edmund Burke, and continued on a much lower plane later in America with the young William Cobbett. His *Essay on the first principles of government* of 1768 had articulated with notable clarity the distinction between civil and political rights, in a very moderate statement of Enlightenment political philosophy. He was no democrat, being mainly concerned to separate religion and government. But by the 1790s the political world had changed, and he and his friend Price were at the centre of the storm.

His *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* of 1791 were admired by one contemporary as 'by many degrees the ablest and most masterly' of the many replies to Burke (278n). Schofield wastes no sympathy on Burke; his political inclinations are with Priestley, even when he is only paraphrasing his position. He dubs the trial of the Birmingham rioters 'a travesty' (288), and observes that a proposal for a government inquiry into the riot was finally defeated in the House of Commons 189 to 46, a mark of the ill-will felt towards 'the great heresiarch'.

Despite all this, Priestley's virtues did not go unrewarded. For all his intellectual intensity, he made and kept many friendships, including Richard Price, Benjamin Franklin, Theophilus Lindsey, Josiah Wedgwood, Thomas Bentley, Joseph Johnson, Matthew Boulton, James Keir, James Watt, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, and Thomas Cooper - an impressive assortment. He epitomised the Enlightenment ideal of intellectual sociability. Burke's was one of the few friendships he lost. He had correspondents from all over Europe, and was a member of every major scientific society. His idea of human progress and perfectibility was widely shared. For a time, the younger generation looked up to him as a guide and sage.

Schofield's two volumes are the only full-scale biography of their subject ever attempted, and they now form the only such biography that will ever be needed. Little about Priestley cries out for psychological analysis. A less eccentric personality would be hard to imagine; equanimity was his trade mark, even in the stresses of the 1790s. Yet he is not an easy subject to portray. Schofield's great achievement is to have not been daunted by Priestley's polymathic complexity. He has not been unnerved by the task, though it has taken up a large part of his career. The work exhibits the meticulous scholarship and indefatigable archival research characteristic of all his writings. It is a 'Life and Letters' biography - the man and his works, as seen especially through a blow-by-blow account of his controversies.

Such an exact narrative is invaluable in itself. On almost every page I found interesting new details, even in areas familiar to me. His footnotes often link to older scientific and theological scholarship well worthy of mention. But the question inevitably arises of the wood and the trees. His account is of course well organised. Even so, do the details overwhelm the overall story? Does he have a general view of what makes Priestley count as "Enlightened"? Why was Priestley so detested by at least some of his social superiors? What does this up-and-down career tell us about his times? I would have liked Schofield to have left us a biographer's 'general scholium', but that is not his style, and perhaps it can't be done well for a subject so multifaceted.

At the centre of all Priestley's controversies - as Schofield observes - is his faith that controversy generates more light than heat. Schofield calls it a dialectical faith. One well-known statement puts it this way: 'No

maxim may be more depended upon than that, whatever is *true* and *right* will finally prevail, and the more violent the opposition, the more firmly will it be established, in the end; because opposition excites attention, and this is all that is necessary to the perception of any truth, in minds free from prejudice; and in time one prejudice will so balance another, that true candour will prevail in the world'. However, this particular version, though it sounds so Priestleyan, may not be authentic; it comes from *A political dialogue* of 1791, and Schofield questions its authorship.

We can see the heat that nearly caused Priestley's destruction (and that actually caused Lavoisier's), but how much of his light endured? Writing of his scientific career he commented that 'like a meteor, it may be my destiny to move very swiftly, burn away with great heat and violence, and become as suddenly extinct'. The metaphor has little application to his scientific reputation, but it seems fairly apt for his other intellectual enterprises. His theistic materialism came to nothing. His Unitarianism remained at most a minority denomination, not a new kind of mainstream Christianity. Schofield suggests that the legalisation of Unitarianism in 1813 was 'quite as much a belated apology for a political wrong as an acknowledgment of Priestley's achievement in theological opinion' (263). Priestley's political liberalism came to fruition, he thought, in America, which had a constitution in which 'every evil incident to society is, to appearance, as well guarded against as human wisdom could devise'. Yet French attempts to create a counterpart constitution had ended very differently.

Priestley's life, though filled with disputation, is not itself very controversial from a biographical standpoint, but we have never before been able to see all its dimensions. With Schofield's guidance, we can now do what Augustus Toplady proposed: 'Give me the person whom I can hold up as a piece of crystal, and see through him. For this, among many other excellencies, I regard and admire Dr Priestley'. The questions that remain mysterious about him are of a different sort; they are questions not so much about his life as about his 'enlightened' times, in which he was both able to flourish so remarkably and made to suffer hostility and injury also so remarkably.

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Giovanni Tarantino, *Lo scrittoio di Anthony Collins (1676-1729). I libri e i tempi di un libero pensatore*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007, pp. 532, ISBN: 8846486919, €32.

Giovanni Tarantino is the latest in a line of distinguished Italian scholars of early modern English free-thinking and unbelief. He has already published a full-length study of Martin Clifford (*Martin Clifford 1624-1677. Deismo e tolleranza nell'Inghilterra della restaurazione* [Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2000]), examining the English and European debate provoked by Clifford's radical plea for toleration, *A Treatise of humane reason* (1674). Tarantino's new book on Anthony Collins is a re-organised and extended version of the dissertation for which he obtained his doctorate at the Università di Firenze, an edition of the catalogue of Anthony Collins' library, with three substantial introductory chapters. The book's title, which roughly translates as 'the writing-desk of Anthony Collins', suggests an ambition to explore how Collins drew on his remarkable library when at his desk. Opportunities to show how ownership of books, reading and writing interacted are indeed rare, and the prospect of such a study is an exciting one.

The first of the three chapters is an overview of the life and successive writings of Collins, accompanied by a thorough commentary on the scholarship already devoted to them. Distinguishing broadly between earlier philosophical works and later writings more directly addressed to religious questions, Tarantino picks out Collins' differences from as well as his debt to Locke, before making it clear that he understands Collins to have been a committed, disbelieving freethinker, whose occasional professions of Christian faith were not to be taken seriously. Here as in the following two chapters, Tarantino develops his own argument in dialogue with other scholars, quoting liberally from their works in the main body of the text as well as in footnotes. The volume of such secondary quotation may disconcert readers accustomed to Anglo-American scholarly practice; but it is not unusual in Italian dissertations. By this means Tarantino affirms his identification with the line of interpretation developed by David Berman, Pascal Taranto, and Silvia Berti, all of whom have emphasised Collins' irreligion, and his opposition to the older interpretation of Father James O'Higgins, for whom Collins was still sufficiently a believer to be regarded as a 'Deist'.

The second chapter then challenges one of O'Higgins' specific claims, that Collins was influenced by the Latitudinarians. Against this Tarantino offers an analysis of Collins' debt to two quite distinct traditions which, when drawn together, undermined the interpretation of the New Testament on which the Latitudinarians relied. The first debt was to ancient scepticism, as elaborated by Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus, and mischievously adapted by Catholic controversialists to discredit Protestant confidence in the principle of *sola scriptura*. The other was to Jewish anti-Christian polemic, which demonstrated that Christ had not fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies regarding the advent of the Messiah. Like Bayle, Collins concluded that scepticism left Christians with no rational basis for their beliefs; a simple fideism, based on acceptance of the revelation of Scripture, was their only resort. But by following the Jewish critics, Collins was also able to discredit that revelation, by exposing the discrepancies between the Old and New Testaments.

Chapter three is specifically devoted to Collins' library, which contained over 10,000 titles. There is an opening overview of the scale of the collection, the balance of its contents, the extent to which Collins followed the prescriptions of Gabriel Naudé in constructing his library, and how it compared with other contemporary private libraries. Tarantino finds that works of philosophy, theology and religion predominate; but that the collection was also rich in Greek and Latin classics, in travel literature, in history, political writings, and biography. By contrast, it was relatively light in natural philosophy. These comments, however, are not followed by a systematic analysis of the library's contents. Instead, Tarantino devotes subsequent sections of the chapter to categories of books which he takes to reflect, or to have informed, Collins' free-thinking interests. These include various contributions to the English and continental debate over toleration and liberty of conscience which followed the Revolution of 1688; older, heterodox works deriving from the period of the Renaissance and Reformation; the works produced during the 'Socinian controversy' of 1687-97; and the debate over the mortality of the soul which had broken out during the Civil War, and was resumed in the first decades of the eighteenth century. Tarantino ends by observing that Collins also possessed a good number of books relevant to his official occupation as a J.P. and magistrate. If there is a puzzle here -

one might wonder how Collins could continue to serve a civil government whose religious establishment his writings held up to criticism and ridicule - it is not pursued.

The catalogue itself is a printing of the manuscript catalogue held in King's College, Cambridge. In order to reproduce it, Tarantino has divided the catalogue into three parts. The first part reproduces the list of books completed in 1720. The second part is a list of subsequent acquisitions from 1720 until 1729, when Collins died; these titles were entered on the even pages of the manuscript catalogue, which had presumably been left blank for the purpose. Finally there is an appendix made up of two separate lists from the odd and even pages at the end of the manuscript catalogue; many of the titles are anonymous, and it is not clear whether these were titles to be incorporated into the main catalogue, or lists of books lent or borrowed. In each part the listing is in the order of the manuscript, and thus reproduces mistakes in the alphabetical ordering of the original. Editorial intervention has concentrated identifying authors and titles, expanding entries between square brackets to make the identification. While facilitated by the availability of electronic catalogues, EEBO and ESTC, the labour involved in this work should not be undervalued. Each entry also includes the title's shelf mark in the library. In this form, Tarantino observes, the printed catalogue can readily be used alongside the manuscript original. Readers who do not have the manuscript original to hand, however, will need to understand the relation between the two versions, and visualise the pre- and post-1720 manuscript lists on facing pages. (Although there are illustrations of the manuscript in the introductory chapters, it is a pity that there is no illustration of facing pages of the manuscript, to help readers grasp how Collins compiled it.) Moreover the absence of indexes to the catalogue means that readers of the printed as of the manuscript catalogue are left to do the work of cross-referencing and correlating authors and titles for themselves. As they stand, the printed lists are unquestionably useful: scholars interested in Collins and his circle, and in religious heterodoxy and free-thinking, will be able to explore the rich contents of his library without travelling to read the manuscript. This is a book, therefore, which should be acquired by research libraries. But it is not a bibliographer's edition of the catalogue, and those who use this version should do so aware of its limitations.

When the catalogue and the introductory chapters of this book are put together, how far has their author succeeded in fulfilling the promise of his title? The model which Tarantino appears to have had in mind is Justin Champion's recent study of John Toland (*Republican learning. John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture 1696-1722* [Manchester and New York, 2003]), in which Toland's reading practices are analysed alongside his own writings. As Tarantino acknowledges, however, the listing of a book in the library catalogue is not a guarantee that Collins had read it himself: the point is nicely illustrated in a letter from Collins to Locke, which Tarantino quotes from Champion. Collins offered to lend Locke Limborch's *Vita Episcopii*, observing 'I have the book and I will read it upon your recommendation'. But Tarantino has been unable to undertake a sustained study of Collins' correspondence with Locke (or anyone else) for evidence of his reading habits, and there do not appear to be copies of Collins' books with his own or other readers' annotations, another form of evidence which Champion was able to use to illuminating effect. As a result, we cannot really be said to see Collins at work at his writing desk, taking books down from his shelves, reading them, discussing them with friends, and then writing his responses to them in his own works. What Tarantino can offer, as in the extended analysis of Collins' debts to scepticism and to Jewish critiques of the New Testament, is a perfectly plausible version of intellectual history, based on what Collins wrote and on his explicit and implicit engagement with arguments found in books which his library catalogue shows him to have possessed. This is certainly worthwhile; but it is not all that the title of Tarantino's book seems to promise.

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