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Response to Jeremy Popkin's Review of Jonathan Israel. *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014. viii + 870 pp. \$39.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-691-15172-4.

In his review of my book *Revolutionary Ideas*, Jeremy Popkin joins David Bell and Lynn Hunt in delivering a scathing demolition of my research on the French Revolution, arguing his case with formidable sarcasm and incisiveness. Major deficiencies, distortions and errors are exposed at every turn, "tortured arguments and misleading assertions throughout *Revolutionary Ideas*" are blazingly highlighted, and no merit whatever is attributed to the book.[1] Like Bell and Hunt, Popkin firmly links the work to my supposedly thoroughly defective series on the "Radical Enlightenment," all three treating the entire series of volumes in a dismissive, not to say scornful manner.

Let me note first the last sentence of Popkin's first paragraph. "Those who read Israel's reply to his critics," he writes referring to the lengthy H-France Forum debate of the winter of 2014, "will also know how intransigently he is committed to the proposition that ideas are the only real moving force in history." I am very far from being committed to the ridiculous proposition that "ideas are the only real moving force in history" and find this grotesque distortion typical of the review as a whole. There are many moving forces in history and innumerable causes of the French Revolution. I do think, however, that ideas and ideology are considerably more important when dealing with social grievances and great institutional transformations than many historians appear to think. I also believe intellectual history has often been conducted too much in self-imposed isolation and evince a keen interest in the processes involved around the intersection of ideas and ideology with political events and social developments. But again that differs greatly from the travesty Popkin attributes to me.

There is no reason why Popkin should hide his contempt for *Revolutionary Ideas*, but aversion readily becomes bias, and here it produces misrepresentation in the very first paragraph. According to me, states Popkin, the "moderate Enlightenment," which in my alleged definition "encompasses almost all of the major figures conventionally associated with the movement, including Locke, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau," not only "failed to make any major contribution to the campaign against superstition and ignorance, but essentially defended them." This, too, is perfectly absurd. Apart from the fact that I do not align Rousseau with the moderate Enlightenment and that many radical thinkers—Diderot, d'Holbach, Helvétius, Jefferson, Condorcet and Bentham—are conventionally considered major figures too, I regard Locke, Voltaire and Montesquieu as great Enlightenment personalities who enormously contributed to the fight for toleration and to weaken the clergy and curb bigotry, fanaticism, and superstition. As I repeatedly state, all enlighteners were committed to "renewing science, thought and culture, and in introducing toleration," and reforms, and "both 'moderate' and 'radical' enlightenment, whether in France, Britain, Germany, or wherever, center around the notion of 'revolution'. All enlighteners thought of the Enlightenment as something revolutionary in the sense of being a process wholly transforming our understanding of the human condition, effecting large changes in institutions and political life and in the relationship of ideas to reality [...]"[2] However, Voltaire and Montesquieu, like Hume, Adam Smith and Gibbon, did not develop ideas of popular sovereignty, or reject monarchy, or advocate democratic representative political systems, and they did not believe in

enlightening the masses. In other words, much social discontent and resentment was left untapped by their legacies.

If Popkin's review begins inaccurately, what follows is much worse. His review especially resembles those of Bell and Hunt in avoiding all explanation and discussion of the book's core arguments. So I shall take the opportunity he provides to put the reader in the picture. My argument is that two revolutionary ideologies reflecting the two main tendencies of the Enlightenment competed to dominate and shape the Revolution from 1788 to August 1792. Subsequently, the winning side, the democratic republicans—Brissotins, Dantonists and other democratic republicans including a handful of radical churchmen Grégoire, Fauchet and Lamourette—were challenged and eventually, in June 1793, overthrown or, as with Danton and Desmoulin, marginalized by a third “revolution,” a highly intolerant populist revolutionary culture reflected in the complex coalition of the Montagne which represented a quite different line of thought and influences and possessed a dramatically different character from the other two. Where François Furet viewed the Terror as the unavoidable outcome of a unitary Revolution possessing innate dictatorial tendencies (rooted in Rousseau's thought) from the beginning, I attempt to replace this with a sharply contrasting schema classifying the Terror as a flagrant contradiction of the veritable principles of both the “moderate” and the “radical” (democratic republican) Revolution as these applied down to the Montagnard *coup d'état* of June 1793. The Terror, in other words, is here conceived as much more than just the imprisonment and butchering of large groups of individuals, but rather as a quite distinct ideological phase and comprehensive repression deliberately reversing much of what had gone before, in effect partially wrecking the Revolution.

The first half of the book broadly consists of an attempt to explain why the *monarchiens* led by Mounier and Lally-Tollendal, and, after their departure from the scene, figures like Maury, Malouet, Bailly, Barnave, Lafayette and the Brothers De Lameth—the influential liberal monarchist groups who embraced Montesquieu and the British constitutional model and sought a more limited revolution than the republican democrats—proved unable to consolidate the Revolution they precariously dominated from 1790 to early 1792 on a constitutional monarchical basis. Why did they falter despite commanding more support in the National Assembly than the republican democrats and adopting an ideological stance not unlike the “aristocratic” revolution of John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and Gouverneur Morris in the United States? Of course, economic, religious and political factors all figured prominently in determining this outcome. Strictly political splits lacking significant intellectual aspects crucially helped undermine the liberal monarchist center (pp. 91-2, 144-9) and still more did purely economic factors (pp. 67, 110-15, 146-7, 175, 217, 220, 254-6, 285-6, 432-42) beside religious factors. But my primary concern in *Revolutionary Ideas* is to show how the intellectual and ideological aspects affected the outcome, and in this sense the book is an intellectual history of the Revolution.

The clearly stated objective in *Revolutionary Ideas* is not to analyze major texts like Condorcet's *Esquisse* and Volney's *Ruines* in depth as Popkin presumes. Rather, using an exceptionally wide range of sources and delving “deep into even the most obscure revolutionary pamphlets and publications” as one not particularly friendly reviewer noted,[3] the objective is to draw attention to a great number of generally “neglected individuals and texts” as another commentator expressed it,[4] so as to determine in detail how the three warring revolutionary cultures related to the Enlightenment and to each other, and especially show how they coexisted, fought each other and helped mold the course of events.

In the second half of the book I focus chiefly on the complex character of the Montagnard coalition and its war with the democratic republicans whom the several Montagnard factions (but not the Dantonists) did their best to destroy and why the coalition fragmented progressively as the months passed, again with particular emphasis on the ideological splits between the coalition's partners. A key concern also is with the distinction so vital to the late Enlightenment (and also Hegel) between “the people” as a general democratic concept and the revolutionary crowds or *sans-culottes* viewed, often negatively, as a pressure-group. I should explain also, since Popkin, like Bell, wholly ignores all of this and concentrates

much of his relentless assault on the exact degree and personal character of Robespierre's precarious domination of the Montagne at different stages, and the question of Brissot's personality and abilities, that these issues are wholly peripheral to the book's central arguments and have practically nothing to do with the basic reclassification and new framework I am trying to put in place. The main substance of the book is devoted to analyzing the controversies of the Revolution, the viewpoints of the newspapers and pamphlets of all factions, and examining the propaganda side of the great ceremonies, *fêtes nationales* and parades of the Revolution, and also to discussing the different ways the theater was used by the three contending revolutionary cultures. The *pantheonizations* of Voltaire and Rousseau exalting their roles as *philosophes* and in the Revolution, for example, receive more attention here than in any other one-volume account of the Revolution precisely because of their very high status as enlighteners as well as forerunners of the Revolution.[5]

The struggle between moderates and the more radical wing whom I term the "democratic republicans" was not just a fight between personalities and factions, but, especially when arguing political and social theory, a case of moderate enlighteners versus radical enlighteners with events and theory closely intertwined. Contrary to Popkin's contention, the book does not deny that the French center was fighting for more liberty, toleration, freedom of expression and less authoritarianism. Here Popkin mistakenly assumes, like another muddled critic, that my postulating two separate Enlightenment camps, moderate and radical, means only the latter was "fighting for freedom" and "against authoritarian institutions," while moderates sided "with the rulers" and defended the status quo.[6] But "moderate" enlighteners, heirs of Voltaire and Montesquieu, were revolutionaries too, ardently in favor of the post-1688 British constitution and broadly endorsing limited revolution elsewhere. The center, however, advocated revolution of a more restrained political and social character than the radicals and generally rejected the principles of equality and democracy. Where the democratic radicals advocated a completely free press, the moderates urged press restrictions but a considerably freer press than existed in France before July 1789, while the Montagne (apart from the Dantonists), like Napoleon later, wanted no press or theater freedom at all.

My account draws an important parallel with the American Revolution: where the "aristocrats" among the American Revolution's veteran leaders, headed by Adams and Hamilton, loathed the French Revolution's egalitarianism and democratic leanings but, much like the French moderates, admired Montesquieu, the British model and "mixed government," Jefferson, Madison, Paine, Young, Allen, Barlow, Palmer and their allies exalted the egalitarian French Revolution, scorning the eighteenth-century British constitution for being dominated by aristocracy and compromising excessively with Montesquieu and monarchy. Jefferson became just as critical as Condorcet of what they considered major defects in Montesquieu's political theory. In the French Revolution, the radicals pressed for a far more democratic outcome than Mounier, Maury, Malouet and the other liberal monarchists while the latter battled to resist the progressive drift toward democracy and toward reducing monarchical power virtually to zero. In other words, there is a basic parallelism of distinct, irreconcilable and warring moderate and radical revolutionary cultures infusing both the American and French revolutions in strikingly comparable ways down to June 1793 when the French democratic republican "Left" as Louvet and other contemporaries called it was toppled by the Montagne. Despite being almost continually at odds and incompatible blocs, both rival Franco-American ideological factions, moderates and radicals on either side of the Atlantic, correctly avowed adherence to the Enlightenment and proclaimed themselves "revolutionaries."

Having ignored all this, Popkin says next to nothing about the complex discussion of Rousseau throughout the book, and what he does say is wholly inaccurate. Rousseau, I demonstrate, was mobilized by all factions but in different ways, each bloc selecting the slices of his thought that suited them best. Only the authoritarian populists, though, continually lionized Rousseau in public and sought to build a veritable Rousseau personality cult, albeit selecting and highlighting only some segments of his thought as part of their ideology. The other factions were generally less ardent for Rousseau.

Condorcet, at the furthest opposite extreme from the Montagne, practically never mentioned Rousseau. In the Revolution's intellectual controversies, Montesquieu therefore generally functioned as a more immediately obvious category marker, though Rousseau did so equally where deployment of his ideas is examined carefully. Despite being accused of "spinozism" by some when *L'Esprit des Lois* first appeared, in 1748, and despite radical glimmerings in certain passages,^[7] during the post-1775 revolutionary era radicals mostly harbored strong reservations about Montesquieu, or rather about how his thought was employed by "moderates" to defend the principle of social hierarchy. Radicals objected especially to Montesquieu's relativism, defense of aristocracy and monarchy, and equivocal discussion of slavery, despising his praise for British "mixed government" while drawing their own inspiration, as I show, from very different sources.

"Although the new constitution hammered out by the National Assembly [in 1791] created a constitutional monarchy, Israel has no doubt," objects Popkin, that "the 'radical' wing of the revolutionary leadership was already uncompromisingly republican by 1788 (p. 24), a proposition for which he provides no evidence." If the rest of Popkin's review evades discussion of the core arguments and seriously distorts, the latter statement is totally untrue. Since practically all historians of the French Revolution agree there were scarcely any zealous, publicly declared republicans in France in 1789, I make a point of emphasizing this particular dimension,^[8] rendering it one of the book's principal features and a reason why scholars, even beyond the immediate field of the French Revolution, need to consider it. Extensive textual references are given to demonstrate that by 1788-9, partly under the stimulus of the American Revolution, leading radical enlighteners—that is "leading" in the press, club oratory, the Paris city government, and the National Assembly—were already firmly committed "republicans." Since Popkin, Bell and Hunt overlook this aspect too, I shall briefly summarize some of the evidence here.

What exactly, asked Desmoulins in his *La France Libre* (1789) had *la philosophie* demonstrated? It had proved, he averred, that the nobility were the worst of pests, that all the laws of every country needed rewriting, that the monarchical was not the best but the worst form of government, that monks were useless, and religion was in need of fundamental reform.^[9] Kings, he wrote, had turned France into a land of despotism, but even the most downtrodden peoples produced a few republican-minded souls for whom love of liberty outweighed all existing institutions. Despite the prejudice inculcated by religion and "lies of orators and poets," the eternal eulogies of kingship pronounced by priests, publicists and "all our books," he declared, in August 1789—actually earlier, since he wrote the piece some time before—he himself burned with republican zeal impelling him towards liberty. "What society needed was not just a republic but a democratic republic: 'je me déclare donc hautement pour la démocratie.'"^[10] Through their writings and the press, concurred Brissot, in 1782, the *philosophes* could conquer "l'opinion publique," and "l'opinion publique" would before long "prove stronger than kings." The true, authentic *esprit philosophique* Brissot contended, "necessarily brings also *l'esprit républicain*."^[11]

The French revolutionary Left in 1789 launched a vehement, wholesale onslaught on the principle of kingship combined with insistence on wresting virtually all power away from kings and replacing it with popular sovereignty expressed through the national legislature.^[12] An important segment of the Revolution's leadership were not just republican in Mirabeau's sense of wanting to deplete monarchy as much as possible, making the national legislature the main source of power while retaining the monarch merely as a figure-head rendered much less powerful than the British monarch, but in the sense of rejecting the entire culture and mystique of "monarchy." Desmoulins' outright democratic republican stance is demonstrated in detail, especially from pamphlet and newspaper articles, to have been shared by 1788-9 throughout the revolutionary democratic vanguard by Condorcet, Carra, Kersaint, Dusaulx, Mandar, Lanthénas, Gorsas, Brissot, Pétion, Chamfort, Kervélegan, Volney, Pierre-François Robert, Bonneville, Rutledge, Louvet, Paine (who joined the French revolutionary leadership in the autumn of 1792), and the prominent playwright, Marie-Joseph Chénier. More tentatively, I show, one can here also add Lafayette.^[12]

This widespread, comprehensive, *philosophique* republicanism that Popkin, Bell and Hunt ignore, was proclaimed by one prominent revolutionary journalist, Pierre-François Robert (1762-1826), in the very title of his pamphlet *Le Republicanisme adapté à la France* (Paris, 1790).^[13] Jean-Louis Carra (1742-93), among the most prominent revolutionary journalists of 1789-93, and in 1789 a key opponent of the royal veto, published his republican *La Raison, ou le Prophète philosophe* (“Londres,” 1782), seven years before the Revolution began. There, he contended that all men groaned under universal oppression, describing humanity as the prey of kings. Europe’s monarchs, he avowed, principally owed their crowns “à la stupidité, à la crainte, à la barbarie, à la perfidie, et à la superstition—voilà vos titres.”^[14] One could hardly evince less respect for kings. Like the others, Carra also rejected conventional religion and the principle of nobility vigorously and outright. In his 1789 pamphlet, Carra again lambasted monarchical despotism adding: “L’Indépendance de l’Amérique nous a fait ouvrir les yeux sur la vraie destination des peuples, sur leurs droits naturels, et sur l’égalité des droits de tous.”^[15] In other words, these men are shown to have affirmed their democratic republicanism so often and resoundingly that only the most obtuse reader could possibly fail to perceive the force and importance of this strand of the book’s core argument.

Further on in his review Popkin adds that I do not define what I mean by “republicanism.” Again, this is manifestly untrue. There are many passages, like those cited above, where the republicanism of the radicals is defined as a commitment to democracy and universal and equal human rights, in sharpest possible distinction to the aristocratic republics of the *ancien régime* like those of Venice, Genoa, the Swiss cantons and the Dutch Republic. Was the monarchical constitution of 1791 to the liking of the Left leadership? Hardly. The influential Assembly deputy, Jerome Pétion, a republican and admirer of the American Revolution already in 1788 as we see from his pamphlet *Avis aux Français sur le salut de la patrie* (Paris, 1788), affirmed his principal objections to the 1791 monarchical constitution in April 1791: firstly, that the king, in his opinion and that of his supporters, should have no role in legislation whatever, not even a limited veto; secondly, the election system should be democratic and not restricted; thirdly, it was insufficient that the nation’s finances should be *mainly* out of the king’s hands, but should be *entirely* out of monarchical hands.^[16] By this eminently clear, uncompromising and unmistakable definition, the *philosophique* revolutionary leadership I highlight were, as a group, solidly republican in 1788-9 in strikingly sharp contrast to figures like Marat, Hébert, Robespierre, and Saint-Just, figures who evinced no particular inclination toward republicanism until late 1791 or 1792, another noteworthy strand of the book demonstrated with solid evidence.^[17]

“So obvious does the wisdom of the revolutionaries’ principles appear to Israel,” remarks Popkin sarcastically, “that he does not even bother to explain them.” But I nowhere say anything about “wisdom,” and his aversion does not entitle Popkin to ignore the fact that the “principles” of the democratic republican bloc *are* systematically analyzed and explained not just with respect to kings, aristocracy and religion, but also education, religious minorities, women’s rights, and black emancipation, the latter figuring in large stretches of text. Black emancipation gets twenty-four pages while education theory, contrasting Rousseau’s theories with those of Condorcet and the Brissotins too, gets an entire, separate chapter. I also demonstrate how exactly the radicals’ comprehensive rejection of monarchy is connected to their pre-1789 rejection of aristocracy and Christian doctrine, indeed all conventional religion. The main bloc of the Left revolutionary leadership in 1789 both disavowed Christianity (whether from a deist or atheist-materialist standpoint) *and* as a bloc abjured the principles of monarchy and aristocracy, either completely, like Carra, Brissot, Gorsas, Pétion and Desmoulins or, as with Mirabeau and Sieyès, in the sense of diminishing the monarch’s power to the absolute minimum (in sharp contrast, once more, to the moderates). Popkin makes contemptuous jokes about “sheep and goats” which doubtless will impress some, but his remarks will look otiose to anyone grasping that profound ideological differences do matter during revolutions. These ideological rifts do not preclude individual shifts. One complicated case, I show, was that of Lafayette who, full of enthusiasm for the

American Revolution, in 1788-90 privately proclaimed himself a “republican” but, from 1791, shifted to a doggedly constitutional monarchist stance.[18]

In one of his most dismissive passages, Popkin deplores my treatment of Marat and Robespierre whom I supposedly turn into the “despotic populist arch-villains” of my narrative. He complains of the “monotonous regularity” with which they are denounced “on page after page, despite one passing concession that “even Robespierre” scorned the “odious and despicable” *L’Ami du peuple*” (p. 417). Why is that a “passing” or indeed any sort of “concession”? Practically everyone with any education, in all three camps, thoroughly despised Marat, though that did not prevent his being immensely popular until 1794. Nowhere do I claim “Robespierre completely dominated the revolutionary government” as Popkin, almost as much as Bell, mistakenly insists. On the contrary, a key argument is that the Montagnard dictatorship was *always* a seriously divided group dictatorship,[19] a complex coalition, that until the spring of 1794 including the Dantonists and Hébertistes, and that this multi-faction coalition little by little disintegrated. “Israel,” says Popkin, “uncritically repeats the accusations made at the time by Robespierre’s bitterest enemies, such as the Girondin deputy Louvet and the Thermidorians, about his dictatorial authority. An émigré pamphlet from 1794 is the source for the claim that the other members of the Committee of Public Safety were “more often... like Robespierre’s ‘secretaries’ than colleagues” (p. 503). This has little to do with the book’s core arguments even were it true that I rely on such evidence for forming my judgments. But of course, I do not. Far from taking “Louvet’s invective at face value,” I use Louvet only as an engaged onlooker highlighting the vote-rigging and other dictatorial practices described in Robespierre’s own writings and in his clearly documented actions. There is abundant evidence to prove Robespierre’s concerted effort to exclude all electoral candidates in Paris not approved by the Jacobins during the national elections of September 1792, some of it from his own texts, conversations and speeches.[20]

As for Robespierre’s many blatantly false accusations, like his lambasting Brissot, in September 1792, before the Paris Commune for selling France to Prussia, and decrying the Dantonists in 1794 as disguised Brissotins, these are confirmed by too many sources to be doubted in any way. The evidence for Robespierre’s selecting only the most criminal and ruthless types for his police chiefs, mayors of Paris and other main operators are matters of documented fact that have nothing to do with depositions of Brissotin opponents. Robespierre’s repeated attacks on Condorcet and the *philosophes* generally as a new kind of “aristocracy” are found not in one but in a whole series of Robespierre’s own speeches. That Robespierre was complicit in many crimes of the Terror may need demonstrating to Popkin, Bell and Hunt, but most scholars know this is thoroughly substantiated by a wide variety of sources. So is Robespierre’s lack of commitment to republican and democratic values. That Robespierre was a monarchist until well into 1792 emerges from his own newspaper. That Marat in 1792-3 was constantly calling for a “dictator” and that that “dictator” should be the “incorruptible” requires no further substantiation than the pages of Marat’s own *L’Ami du peuple*.

Popkin fiercely objects to my “unsustainable glorification of Brissot” and emphasizing Robespierre’s faults. But besides the fact that this is again irrelevant to the book’s main arguments, Robespierre undoubtedly was, or became, a “monster.” I do not claim there was anything glorious about the comparatively mediocre Brissot. The only reasons for giving Brissot greater prominence than figures like Roland, Gaudet, Barbaroux, Kervélegan or Bonneville, are his political leadership of the “Girondins” during 1792-3 and his having written even more during the 1780s, before the Revolution, as well as during 1789-93 about republicanism, human rights, black emancipation, Jewish rights and press freedom than practically any other major revolutionary figure who was a radical enlightener with the possible exception of Mirabeau. Arguably, he did so more forthrightly. As Carra expressed it in 1789, Brissot’s “excellents et nombreux ouvrages n’ont jamais eu pour objet que la liberté des peuples et le Bonheur de l’humanité.”[21] Popkin (rather dubiously) specifies the “stands that made Robespierre a hero to the Left in the Constituent Assembly” as his insistence that “all citizens, regardless of wealth, should have the right to vote, his opposition to martial law and the death penalty, his opposition to the

Feuillant scission after the king's flight." But Condorcet, Pétion and Brissot pressed for universal suffrage and republicanism much earlier and arguably more sincerely. Robespierre, after all, was the man who, in August 1793, suspended the world's first democratic constitution, much of which Condorcet had written. Robespierre condoned the Montagnard suppression of press freedom, and while he may have been a kind of hero to Napoleon, he was exceptionally slow to become even nominally a republican—and like Napoleon was never a true republican.

Certainly, he was never a hero to most of the Left, not the Brissotins, the Dantonists or the independent *sans-culotte* leaders (as I emphasize in the book), or, indeed, to the Hébertistes. Condorcet was undoubtedly a far more serious and sophisticated intellect than Brissot. But Popkin uses the undeniable difference between their respective styles of thinking and writing, with Brissot being closer to a kind of "common sense," to suggest that these two hardly agreed about anything apart from the 1792 war policy: "on one crucial issue, however, Brissot and Condorcet did arrive at the same conclusion," he states misleadingly, "although it was one that was hard to justify in terms of abstract reason. They both supported a tactical alliance with the king in 1792 in order to push France into war with Austria." I am not sure what "abstract reason" has to do with it as I never mention any such thing, but Brissot and Condorcet were by no means just allies in the drive for war against Austria. They were allies throughout much of their revolutionary careers on a very wide range of topics fighting for causes toward which Robespierre and the Montagne were either hostile or largely indifferent. As the author of an excellent book on the Haitian Revolution, Popkin surely knows as well as I do that Condorcet and Brissot were the two leading figures in forming the *Amis des Noirs* in 1788-9 and shared together in heading the revolutionary fight for black emancipation. Equally, both battled, even if in different ways at different times, for republicanism as opposed to constitutional monarchy (with Robespierre still a monarchist) in 1789-92, and fought more than most for a free press and for the world's first democratic constitution.

I do not conceal the fact that ordinary political calculation played a part in their collaboration (in politics when does it not?). They believed an ideological war against Europe's monarchs would unify and stiffen the legislature, further weaken the monarchy, and show up the counter-revolutionary treachery of the king and Marie Antoinette, but my purpose was especially to bring out the ideological significance of what David Jordan aptly calls the "fervent crusading zeal proclaimed by the war party in 1792."^[22] These political leaders showed in their speeches and memoranda at this time that they were moved by Condorcet's conviction that the American revolutionary war against British monarchy and tyranny had hardened, purified as well as extended the American Revolution. They adhered to the general conviction, shared by Danton but resisted by Robespierre, that war with monarchy, aristocracy and the Papacy was anyhow entirely inevitable being inherent in the business of liberating the masses, and that if the French Revolution had all the monarchies and aristocracies against it, the oppressed peoples of Poland, Hungary, Ireland, Belgium and so forth would rise and support the "General Revolution" as Paine called it against their Russian, Austrian and British masters.^[23]

Explaining how the most radical and innately weakest of the factions in terms of popular support, the democratic republicans, got as far as they did is the principal aim of my book and I give as the foremost reason that, from the fall of the Bastille onwards, they heavily dominated the pro-revolutionary press, and other media such as the theater, until the summer of 1793. This striking and unprecedented phenomenon is absolutely fundamental to the book's argument. The chapter on the "revolution of the press" is supplemented by numerous additional sections on the press (pp. 34-52, 92-6, 163-7, 295-6, 423, 429, 471) as well as on the theatre (pp. 68-70, 73, 430-1, 460, 518-22) and revolutionary ceremonies. The radicals' control of most of the pro-revolutionary media in a context of genuinely free expression which they created is indeed a truly remarkable phenomenon, the factor which contributed more than any other to boosting them and defeating the moderates as well as establishing a key arena ferociously contested between them and the Montagne. The decisive role of the newspapers in shaping the three distinct revolutionary cultures is almost entirely submerged in most accounts of the Revolution, but

here is shown to be the chief means of diffusing the radicals' ideological and philosophical views and the reason they were able to do so for a time with considerable success. Needless to say, Popkin, like Bell and Hunt, is not the least interested in any of this and skirts entirely around it.

Popkin, Bell and Hunt reject my placing Marat, Robespierre and the main adjutants and allies, such as Hébert, Billaud-Varenne, Saint-Just, etc., in a category that was not just ideologically ceaselessly opposed to that of the republican democrats but also morally separate in being far more heavily marked by deceit, corruption, despotic traits and monstrous political crimes. Quite apart from the abundant evidence supporting my view against theirs, the whole question raises a major issue in Enlightenment studies that my critics once again scrupulously avoid but which remains of major importance. Every single enlightener, *philosophe*, and *Aufklärer* on both sides of the Atlantic who publicly supported the republican and democratic goals of the French Revolution as proclaimed in 1789-93, without any exception, condemned both Marat and Robespierre as despots and wreckers of the Revolution, and the latter as a depraved monster. Like Hegel, they firmly distinguished between a revolution for "the people" and a revolution of the *sans-culottes*. This is true of Paine, Cloots, Korais, Forster, Gorani, Fichte, Priestley, Cooper, Wollstonecraft, Thorild, Herder, Jefferson, Barlow, Wedekind, Gerrit Paape, Irhoven van Dam, William Short, Volney, Constant, and not least Condorcet, as well as Hegel. There was no more passionate republican in Germany than the philosophical poet Hölderlin, a key ally of many of the democratic republican conspirators at the time in southwest Germany. He rejoiced when Charlotte Corday stabbed the "abominable tyrant" Marat to death in his bath,^[24] Paine execrated and despised Robespierre (as well as Billaud-Varenne) more than he did Washington, while the Swedish poet, democrat and internationally known critic of Montesquieu's conservatism, Thomas Thorild, renowned as the French democratic Revolution's foremost supporter in Scandinavia, in early 1794 denounced Robespierre as an "all-consuming crocodile" (p. 698). Besides Wollstonecraft, all other important feminists of the Revolution—Olympe de Gouges, Etta Palm, Claire Lacombe, Sophie Condorcet, Helen Maria Williams, again without exception—were both at odds with, and were executed, imprisoned or persecuted by, the Montagne.

Since without exception every pro-Revolution enlightener and every revolutionary feminist condemned Robespierre as "a monster," either the democratic Enlightenment injudiciously and scandalously erred in its judgment of Robespierre and the Montagne, and in its conclusions about the Revolution, or else Popkin, Bell and Hunt have muddled everything thoroughly. Even if, hypothetically speaking, Popkin, Bell and Hunt are proved right that there was little to choose morally as between these two rival revolutionary cultures (which I would suggest is inconceivable), that too would still be highly significant. It would be an immense coup for the Postmodernists and multiculturalist foes of universal equality and human rights everywhere, confirming that the entire radical democratic republican tendency of Europe and North America in 1792-5 prominently including Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine championed an enlightenment which they not only hopelessly divided and weakened but profoundly misjudged and misunderstood while throughout despicably rejecting and despising the true authors of the people's Revolution: Marat, Robespierre and the agents of the Terror.

The "idea that France needed a declaration of rights" in 1788-9 was indeed shared by numerous writers and orators of several different shades. Yet, Popkin's comments on the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* err just as much as the rest of his critique. He says the "final result included contributions from many deputies. Part of the document's success was undoubtedly due precisely to the fact that it did not appear to express the ideas of a small coterie of philosophical radicals but instead was worded in such a way that people of many different views could accept it." In fact, the debate in the National Assembly dragged on for many weeks due to fierce clashes between moderates and radicals, the latter then led by Mirabeau, and outside the Assembly, in the Paris city government and the press, by Brissot. A major point of dispute was whether there should be limits on freedom of expression to protect the Catholic Church. Popkin here joins Hunt and Bell in agreeing with Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* was not chiefly the work of Mirabeau, Brissot and the

radicals as I maintain but mainly of the vehemently anti-Semitic chairman of the *Sixième Bureau*, the bishop of Nancy and his conservative allies striving to dilute and reduce universal human rights as much as they could.[25] Although the conservatives and moderates were not wholly defeated in defending Catholic religious authority and on the crucial issues of the free press and freedom of thought, Mirabeau and Brissot eventually had the best of the encounter. As the pro-Revolution newspapers proclaimed at the time, Mirabeau and Brissot (then outside the Assembly but prominent in the Paris city government) were the two individuals who did most to secure the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* in the format in which we have it.[26]

Robespierre's "populism" is another point in question. It is not clear why Popkin thinks I "insinuate" Robespierre was aiming at dictatorship from the start since I say nothing of the kind: "If he was, as Israel insinuates, aiming at dictatorship from the start, it is certainly curious that he introduced the famous 'self-denying ordinance' that prohibited all deputies in the original assembly, including himself, from running for seats in its successor." What I contend is that Marat wrote about the need for "dictatorship" already in 1791, and that Robespierre began showing authoritarian tendencies during 1792, especially from September. "Robespierre," asserts Popkin, "certainly makes a most peculiar 'populist'. He never mixed with the common people, and he had no talent as a rabble-rouser." But I nowhere suggest Robespierre was the sort of populist who sought to rouse the crowds with his oratory like Danton or Desmoulins. What I chiefly contend is that it was central to Robespierre's ideology to parade Rousseau's exaltation of the ordinary man as a way of celebrating the "purity of the ordinary," elevating the common person above the intellectualism of the *philosophes* and locating moral legitimacy in the common people. Combined with intolerance of dissent and his alliance with Marat and the Hébertistes, Robespierre turned his debased Rousseauist ideology into a powerful Counter-Enlightenment mass movement with a resounding authoritarian ring to it furthered by stress on the oneness of how truly ordinary people supposedly thought and a ban on all dissent and criticism. Popkin, though, again skirts wholly around my argument.

Needless to say, Popkin has spotted "a dismaying number of factual errors in the book." We are told "Avignon was not part of France prior to 1790" (p. 44), something the attentive reader is perfectly well aware of having been informed of this in several passages. The passage in question is obviously listing places in geographical France to which Jewish residence was restricted, so that Popkin's "dismaying mistake" turns out to be nitpicking of the pettiest kind. The "dismaying error" on p. 316 where I say Prussia was defeated at Valmy and that this was a serious blow to the reactionary Prussian monarch whose hostility to the Revolution remained unabated. Why Popkin thinks Prussia's subsequent temporary withdrawal from the actual fighting, and involvement in the partition of Poland, demonstrates error on my part is hard to discern. Admittedly, Popkin has also found two or three genuine factual mistakes. It is true, for example, that Mme. Roland was a native of Paris, not Lyon. But for someone so unremittingly hostile, Popkin's tally of "dismaying errors" after his exhaustive search for them looks distinctly paltry, both in number and seriousness.

"Only a naive or uncritical reader of Israel's book," Popkin winds up his relentless offensive, "could conclude" that he has "shown that the ideas of the Radical Enlightenment, as he defines them, were the guiding force of the French Revolution, or that the history of the Revolution proves the superior wisdom and intelligence of those who he identifies as the acolytes of that movement from 1789 to 1799." This is a striking judgment not least given that I say nothing whatsoever about "superior wisdom and intelligence." I have little doubt Robespierre was more intelligent than Brissot, but whether he was or not is totally irrelevant to my argument. Many of the Brissotins' mistakes were avoidable, but their final defeat was probably not. Bell and Popkin appear to experience exactly the same difficulty as Johnson Kent Wright in the H-France Forum debate in grasping the difference between maintaining that the Revolution considered as a break-down of the French monarchy, bankruptcy of the state, vast upheaval, and partial collapse of order, was primarily caused by financial, fiscal, other economic, social and religious factors, on the one hand, and maintaining that the Radical Enlightenment was the prime

factor in shaping the great enactments and institutional changes of the Revolution, on the other. What I am discussing is how far radical ideas shaped revolutionary democratic republicanism, rejection of the mystique of monarchy, press freedom, full liberty of expression, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, elimination of aristocracy, primogeniture and feudalism, universal male suffrage (1792), confiscation of the Church's property and eventually separation of Church and state, dissolution of most monasteries, black emancipation, emancipation of the Jews and Protestants, promoting women's rights, and the marriage reform and divorce law (1792). The vast majority of readers, though, will have no difficulty at all in following this basic distinction.

All these great enactments were principally shaped and driven by the Radical Enlightenment, and in this sense, the Radical Enlightenment was, as I maintain in *Revolutionary Ideas*, the only "big" factor in the making of the French Revolution. This thesis is clear, important and hard to combat effectively. Yet, the broad attack of the "negative critique," here vigorously joined by Popkin, proceeds as if no such clear explanation and distinction were being offered. In the H-France Forum, Wright put forward as his supposedly culminating and most devastating argument the claim that the Seven Years War counted far more than the Radical Enlightenment in shaping the French Revolution in my clearly defined sense than did radical ideas. Here we encounter a culminating objection from one of the most respected of the negative critics of such stunning irrelevance and weakness, that it is impossible to believe that anyone, even Popkin or Wright himself, takes it seriously.

Finally, a word about Popkin's rebuking me for reacting "intransigently." His speaking of intransigence shows he thinks the "negative critique" of my Radical Enlightenment thesis advanced most prominently and forcefully by Wright, Baker, Bell, Hunt and himself, is obviously valid and that it is a near certainty that he, Bell and Hunt, with the support of the now very numerous contributors to the "negative critique," will emerge the victors from this arduous battle. Allow me to express my doubts about that. The larger army does not always win the battle, and there is good reason to think that it will not in this case. In the first place, they can only demolish and discredit *Revolutionary Ideas* by discussing its core argument. Ignoring and trying to marginalize its contentions while launching fierce attacks on entirely peripheral aspects cannot greatly help their cause. Secondly, while emboldened by the size and many distinguished names of the scholars who have come out strongly against my thesis, Popkin, Bell and Hunt seem strangely unaware of the recent publications of those scholars powerfully reaffirming the duality of the Enlightenment into moderate and radical streams and conceiving this dichotomy as the key to understanding crucial segments of the Enlightenment and the revolutionary era, often adding new aspects further refining this basic framework. In the last two years, major international conferences and debates such as that on the "Radical Enlightenment" in Brussels (May, 2013), and on the *cercle spinoziste* in Marburg (September 2014), the papers of which are to be published, will seem to any objective onlooker to have generally bolstered and added to the framework I have tried to set out rather than weakening it. On the other hand, the "negative critique" is undoubtedly being progressively eroded by the most recent research. Recent publications on early eighteenth-century English deism, for example, confirm the centrality of Spinoza and Bayle in its intellectual formation and the English deists' tendency to disavow Locke's "above reason" and metaphysical dualism, his main tools for reconciling reason with religious authority. This research demonstrates the "validity" of the Radical Enlightenment framework for explicating English deism while adding new evidence to support the thesis and even criticizes me for understating the Spinozist rather than Lockean character of Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious* (1697), or what Ian Leask has termed "rejecting Locke for Spinoza." [27]

A third major reason for predicting the defeat of the "negative critique" is that in terms of recent research on key segments in contention, as the example of English deism shows, contributors to the "positive critique," if often younger and less known than the prominent names heading the "negative critique," are also more expert in the specific areas in contention. This is particularly true for the Dutch early Enlightenment where the crucial coupling of the attack on religious authority with democratic republicanism was first forged and where the negative critique is unquestionably wholly incorrect,

besides Bayle, and the clandestine French philosophical literature of the 1670-1740 period as well as English deism and the American Revolution. The changing face of the American Revolution is doubtless especially relevant to the content of *Revolutionary Ideas* and aptly illustrates just how insecure and precarious the stance of Popkin, Bell and Hunt really is. Much of the most persuasive recent literature on the American Revolution strongly backs Henry May's argument, in 1976, that the split between "moderate Enlightenment" and "radical Enlightenment" is an indispensable categorization needed for comprehending both the American Enlightenment and Revolution and, therefore, strongly underpins the claim for a close parallelism between the American and French Enlightenments and between the American and French revolutions down to June 1793, proposed in *Revolutionary Ideas*. An entire group of writers now hold that one cannot understand the basic dichotomy in thought and action in the American Revolution and the furious ideological warfare of the 1790s in the United States without going back to the early Enlightenment roots of American republican radicalism and especially the split between one-substance and dualistic philosophical systems.[28] As one recent contributor to the recent American debate pithily summed up the emerging new perspective: "Jefferson's thought is better understood as expressing Spinozan insights on the theological-political question than Lockean ones." [29]

In 1847, Lamartine published his best-selling eight-volume *Histoire des Girondins*, soon a key source for such leading American intellectuals as Walt Whitman, Margaret Fuller and Herman Melville,[30] maintaining that "human thought had been renewed in the century of philosophy" (the eighteenth century), but had left its task unfinished. In the mid-nineteenth century it still remained for "l'esprit philosophique" to "transform the social world." [31] The ideas of the *philosophes*, affirmed Lamartine, were the measure of all good and bad, morally, intellectually, socially and politically. Like Ledru-Rollin, he summoned the French to achieve a renewed revolution on the model of 1792-3 but this time one that would elevate and materialize the "true spirit" of the great Revolution, that of Condorcet and the Brissotins, and more emphatically repudiate the leveling *ultra-radicaux* of the Montagne and their turbulent heirs, Babeuf, Buonarotti and the socialists.

Lamartine had a point. Reconceptualizing the French Revolution down to June 1793 as essentially a struggle between moderate Enlightenment and radical Enlightenment forms part of a much broader trans-Atlantic parallelism that is likely to remain a central feature of the historiography of the two revolutions from now on. For all these reasons the position adopted by Popkin, Bell and Hunt should not be regarded as sound, and to paraphrase Popkin, "only a naive or uncritical reader" could conclude on the basis of what Popkin, Bell and Hunt have to say that the "ideas of the Radical Enlightenment, as [Israel] defines them" were *not* the prime shaping force behind the great enactments of the French Revolution. The problem that has generated this vehement quarrel into which Popkin has now unhesitatingly thrown his weight, hence has nothing to do with intransigence on my part in opposing the "negative critique." It arises solely from a surfeit of exceptionally poor quality criticism delivered with an unusual dose of aggression and scorn.

NOTES

[1] See Jonathan Israel and David Bell, "The French Revolution: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, 9 Oct 2014; Jonathan Israel, "Conspiracy Fiction" versus the French Revolution. A Reply to David Bell's Critique in the *New York Review of Books*," HNN History News network (at <http://hnn.us/article/156341>) (15 July 2014); and Lynn Hunt's review of Jonathan Israel *Revolutionary Ideas* in *New Republic*, 27 June 2014 and Jonathan Israel and Lynn Hunt, "Disputation: was Louis XVI overthrown by Ideas?," in *New Republic*, 31 July 2014.

[2] Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment. Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford, 2011), p. 11.

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- [3] Jeremy Jennings, "Revolutionary Guard," in "books," *Standpoint Magazine*, May 2014.
- [5] Rachel Hammersley, "Concepts, Clubs and Causes," in *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 September 2014, pp. 23-4.
- [6] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 152, 170-74, 250, 558, 597-8.
- [7] Ursula Goldenbaum, "Some Doubts about Jonathan Israel's New Compartmentalization of Enlightenment : A Plea for Hobbes, Voltaire and Mendelssohn," in Frank Grunert, ed., *Concepts of (Radical) Enlightenment* (Halle : Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2014), p. 59.
- [8] Celine Spector, "Une cause perdue? Spinozisme et féminisme au siècle des Lumières. Le cas de Montesquieu," in *Lumières 13* (Bordeaux, 2009). *Lumières radicales, Radicalisme des Lumières*, pp. 65-93.
- [9] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 16, 24-5, 29, 110, 112, 117, 122, 137, 141-2, 150, 166-8, 175, 205, 210, 253, 260, 275.
- [10] Camille Desmoulins, *La France libre* (4th edn., Paris, 1789), pp. 16, 28, 30-1.
- [11] Desmoulins, *La France libre*, p. 62
- [12] Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, *De la vérité, ou Méditations sur les moyens de parvenir à la vérité dans toutes les connaissances humaines* (Neuchâtel, 1782), pp 225, 258.
- [13] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 24-6, 48-9, 85-8, 120-8, 165.
- [14] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 144, 205-6, 248, 282.
- [15] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 29, 120.
- [16] Jean-Louis Carra, *La Raison, ou le Prophète Philosophe* (Bouillon, 1782), p. 6.
- [17] Jean-Louis Carra, *L'Orateur des États-Généraux sur 1789* (Paris, 1789) part 19, pp. 18-19, 22, 40 and ii, pp. 20-1, 37.
- [18] See Jérôme Pétion de Villeneuve, published letter of 24 April 1791, in Pierre François Robert, *Mercure national* ix (1791) pp. 135-6; Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, p. 142.
- [19] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 167-70, 175, 177, 216, 241, 249-50, 281-3, 302, 370-1.
- [20] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 144, 205-6, 282.
- [21] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 450-1, 463, 466, 469-70, 503-7, 574-7; see again Israel, "Conspiracy Fiction' versus the French Revolution" in HNN History News Network 15 July 2014.
- [22] Maximilien Robespierre, *Oeuvres complètes*, E. Hamel, ed., (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, 1910-67), 10 vols., viii, pp. 444, 461-3 and ix, 460-1; Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 244, 273-4, 291, 358, 439, 688-9.
- [23] Carra, *L'Orateur* . ii, p. 33.

[24] David P. Jordan, *Napoleon and the Revolution* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 9, 35, 293.

[25] Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*, pp. 237-45.

[26] Adolf Beck, "Hölderlin als Republikaner," *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* xv (1967/8), p. 41.

[27] See again the full version of the on-line piece cited above. Israel, "'Conspiracy Fiction' versus the French Revolution," on HNN History News Network.

[28] Jonathan Israel, "Response Essay" in *H-France Forum* vol. 9, issue 1 (Winter 2014), no. 5, pp. 77-97, here pp. 87-8.

[29] "Johan Toland's intellectual debt to Spinoza, Leask contends in his chapter, is far deeper than most scholarship (even Israel's) has hitherto suggested," Ian Leask, "The Undivulged Event in Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious*," in Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci and J. R. Wigelsworth, eds., *Atheism and Deism Revalued: Heterodox Religious Identities in Britain, 1650-1800* (Farnham: Surrey, 2014), p. 63. Further on the changes in recent views on English deism, see Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci and J.R. Wigelsworth, "Introduction: Atheism and Deism Revived," in idem, pp. 5, 7, 26; and Diego Lucci, *Scripture and Deism: The Biblical Criticism of the Eighteenth-Century British Deists* (Peter Lang: Bern, 2008), pp.10, 13, 40-4, 53; Wayne Hudson, *Enlightenment and Modernity* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), pp. 18-20, 150.

[30] See Henry May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford, 1976); especially pp. 197-252; Matthew Stewart, *Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014) who agrees that "monistic parallelism" was the most crucial intellectual factor in generating the radical revolutionary consciousness and that, although many writers gave expression to it, "monistic parallelism receives its canonical expression in Spinoza," see p. 231. See also, Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Gary Nash and G. R. Gao Hodges, *Friends of Liberty: A Tale of Three Patriots, Two Revolutions, and the Tragic Betrayal of Freedom in the New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), and Emma Macleod, "Thomas Paine and Jeffersonian America" in S. P. Newman and P. S. Onuf, eds., *Paine and Jefferson in the Age of Revolutions* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013).

[31] Jeffrey A. Bernstein, "'Nature's God' as *Deus sive Natura*: Spinoza, Jefferson, and the Historical Transmission of the Theological-Political Question," in Dustin Gish and D. Klinghardt, eds., *Resistance to Tyrants, Obedience to God: Reason, Religion and Republicanism at the American Founding* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2013) pp. pp. 65-81, here p. 65.

[32] L. J., Reynolds, *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 20.

[33] Alphonse. de Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins* (Paris, 1847), 4 vols, i, 17-19; see also my contribution to the special issue on "The Radical Enlightenment" of the Polish on-line philosophical journal, *Diametros*, published as *Diametros* no. 40 (26 June 2014). Besides this and the discussion booklet published at Halle cited in footnote 6 above, another and still larger recent debate is J. I. Israel and Martin Mulso, eds., *Radikalaufklärung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014). Additional volumes continuing the debate on the "Radical Enlightenment" are currently being edited and will appear shortly. These are Steffen Ducheyne, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Radical Enlightenment* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2016) and Marta Garcia Alonso, ed., *Lumières radicales et histoire politique: un débat* (Paris: Honore Champion, 2016) and the Marburg symposium on the "cercle spinoziste." Contrary to Popkin, Bell and Hunt, most of the many specialists involved largely agree that the basic Radical Enlightenment framework is useful and justified.

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