

1: Counter-Enlightenment - Wikipedia

Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder is a collection of essays in the history of philosophy by 20th century philosopher and historian of ideas.

Not as much as some people think, says Phil Badger. In simple terms, reason got promoted to a higher status than it had hitherto enjoyed, and for some it came to replace faith as the basis of understanding both the physical and moral worlds. Many figures could be taken to embody the core themes of Enlightenment thought, but one, Immanuel Kant did so to such an extent that his ideas have become synonymous with it. This idea has been, and continues to be, one of the most inspiring and also controversial in the history of philosophy. At its foundation is the notion that the world is comprehensible to the human mind. The historical roots of this new individualism are to be found in the religious conflicts of the seventeenth century, which among other things involved the demand that conscience and inner light, rather than the Roman Catholic Church, might guide the life of a person. Demands for tolerance were quite limited, and many new religious groups were themselves intolerant in the extreme, but it was these debates, coupled with the work of Copernicus, Galileo and others, that let the Enlightenment genie out of the bottle. Almost immediately, intellectual battle lines began to be drawn up between those who championed the new ideas, and those who saw them as ill-conceived and dangerous. In so doing, Burke laid one of the foundation-stones of modern political conservatism. Reason alone, so his argument goes, is an unreliable basis for moral action and has a tendency to be easily perverted. In other words, anything may be rationalised, and plausible reasoning might lead us down a slippery slope which ends at the guillotine. The subsequent two and a quarter centuries have witnessed variations upon the same arguments, proposed from a bewilderingly diverse range of perspectives. It is strange indeed to think of an injunction to think for ourselves as the source of so much trouble, and tempting to mount a defence of it which is polemical and facetious. However, this is a temptation worth resisting, because, it turns out, there is much clarity to be gained from treating the critics of the Enlightenment with due respect. In fact, despite their differences, the critics of Enlightenment philosophy share a common distrust of its core idea of the individual. Rather, what constitutes good reason is the product of particular cultural and historical circumstances. These philosophers have little in common, but all share a view of knowledge, agency and rationality which takes the Enlightenment view as fundamentally mistaken. In simple indeed, over-simple terms, the conservatives and communitarians tend to see the Enlightenment as having been too successful, at least as a cultural force, while for the neo-Marxists and post-modernists, the Enlightenment is the story of unfulfilled potential. On the one hand, the Enlightenment delivered the goods in terms of our technical understanding of the world and our capacity to manipulate it. However, it failed spectacularly to provide us with the moral understanding to avoid replicating the barbarity of less technological ages on ever-more-grotesque scales. The id is no child of reason, and reason was just not up to the philosophical job of doing anything else than rationalising and excusing its petulance. For Burke, the hubris of reason had led to the guillotine; but for Adorno, the Enlightenment journey led to Auschwitz and its gas chambers. For Nietzsche, and later, his postmodernist disciples, the failure of the Enlightenment was a failure of philosophical courage. Once it had undermined the pretensions of earlier dogmatic beliefs, the field should have been open for a liberation of thought and morality from the notion of certainty itself. However, philosophers such as Kant failed to go the extra mile, instead constructing systems which would replace old repressive certainties with new ones, this time sanctified by reason rather than faith or the authority of the ancients. The apparent inability of reason to provide solid foundations for morality, an inability postmodernists tend to see as liberating, has been depressing for conservatives and communitarians alike. The idea of the individual using his or her own reason to seek out moral truth, perhaps aided by like-minded people, is for such thinkers dangerously misguided. As the most prominent liberal philosopher of the twentieth century, Rawls has been a perennial target of both conservative and communitarian criticism. Put bluntly, he thought that if denied knowledge of their gender, ethnicity, sexuality or other aspects of identity, nobody would wish the establishment of a state in which sexism, racism or other discrimination might be tolerated, because they might become its victim. From this point of view, these particulars constitute the

individual and are not merely contingent, as Rawls assumed. If so, moral reasoning can only validly take place against the background of particular cultural practices and traditions. Morality is reduced to a consumer choice, in which each individual finds their own path in more or less splendid isolation. This charge is explicitly levelled by MacIntyre in his book *After Virtue*, where he calls for a return to a morality in which virtue, defined by shared cultural norms, is the guiding ideal of human life. However, not content with effectively accusing liberalism of nihilistic individualism, both writers also claim that it is guilty of a pernicious cultural imperialism. After all, the aim of Rawls, and, before him, Kant, was to come up with universally valid conclusions about justice which would receive the assent of all rational people, regardless of their culture. Thus only one kind of society could be seen as just, and others were automatically to be judged as nearer or further from this ideal. The consequence of this thinking was to empower Western imperialism to continue its repressive and destructive ways, underpinned by an apparently liberal ideology of individual rights. Berlin argued in *Two Concepts of Liberty* that there were, in effect, two kinds of liberalism. One form, which was not really worthy of the name, aspired to establish a shared moral truth on the grounds of rational consensus between autonomous individuals. Yet this is impossible, for reasons we have already rehearsed. What is rational is not a universal resource, but is a culturally-defined one. By contrast, the proper basis for liberalism was to be found in the recognition that there is only a messy kaleidoscope of disparate and incongruent ways of being, which would forever resist the urge to bring about consensus. Thus great ideals of progress and perfectibility in human institutions have to be given up in the face of real human lives and the impossibility of establishing the superior rationality of any one set of incommensurable values. The Enlightenment and its ideological child, liberalism, stand accused of both a corrosive moral scepticism and a tendency to absolutism. We have seen how these charges have curiously similar origins. The treatment for this pathology is to become modest again: We need to look to our own cultural resources to bind ourselves to one another, as we did in the past. This is at best an illusion, and at worst a recipe for utter horror. The illusion comes from the fact that to see any past moment as one of unanimity and social peace is to have no knowledge of history. Gray makes this point himself in his critique of communitarian philosophy. By their natures, societies are characterised by sectional interests and conflicts. As both Marxists and postmodernists realise, power gives certain groups the ability to define reality and life for everyone else. The idea of an idyllic kind of shared way of life is no more than a balm, poorly covering repeated eruptions of conflict and repression. Thus we can see that the charge of relativism, long levelled at liberals, is actually true of their accusers. The difference is about where relativism starts and ends. For communitarians and conservatives, relativism is only dubious when individuals make individual moral decisions. Tolerate the Individual The issue of the proper relationship between the group and the individual is the central question of political philosophy. Liberals of every stripe are apt to favour the individual. Individuals are the kinds of things that are capable of suffering, and this fact seems pretty important to some of us. Churches, community organisations and so on are all very well, but their help is often conditional on beneficiaries accepting particular values or passing certain tests. Sometimes, as the USA has found in respect of the issue of race, the state has to actively protect the individual from the community. They charge that a liberal ideal of perfection drives a kind of intolerance of difference. Their mistake is in thinking that the liberal ideal is applicable to individuals rather than legal frameworks or constitutions. We ought to be intolerant of intolerant regimes and cultures, while promoting the rights of individuals to make varied and contradictory choices for themselves. Value pluralism only really works at the level of the individual, because accepting intolerant values at the level of the group means accepting that some of the individuals in the group are going to be discriminated against. One wonders for example how Gray might respond to the execution of homosexuals in Iran. Enlightenment liberals have no difficulty in holding a regime to an ideal standard of tolerance, but for Gray and communitarians such as MacIntyre, there are no such standards to apply. The central problem remains that of finding a perspective from which to make judgements about social, political and cultural institutions that is more than a vantage point from within them. Three possible ways forward suggest themselves. We have already largely ruled this out. Another option involves the Aristotelian notion that human life has an ultimate purpose or telos. Institutions and practices which restrict the ability of the individual to function in or move towards this telos could be deemed

illegitimate. Aristotle had a pretty limited idea of what the ideal human life should be like, and adopting such notions as our yardstick is likely to result in some pretty authoritarian conclusions. The third option, proposed by the great English liberal John Stuart Mill, is a kind of revised Aristotelian position, in which individuals are still supposed to have a telos, but one specific to them rather than one general to human beings. Thus, for Mill there was no one ideal of human development, only ways of being particular to each of us. However, and here is the space for critical perspective, political and cultural institutions can be judged on the extent that they are cognisant of this pluralism. Perhaps so; but certainly none favours tolerance to the extent that liberalism does. For this reason, we ought to value liberalism as approaching the ideal more closely than any other. Liberalism is not necessarily, and, for me, should not be, about promoting a minimal state, so much as attempting to remove those barriers to the full flourishing of the individual which cripple so many lives in our grossly unequal societies. For now, the central point is that the meaning of our lives, however informed by social practice, custom, and so on, sometimes transcends such contexts. For liberals, what we are and what we choose to be are things which states, communities and institutions have no business regulating, save to the extent that our choices and natures impinge on others. However, it is a principle we must return to and reaffirm any time the lives of individuals are afflicted by the overwhelming power of the group. Not as much as some might think!

2: Three Critics of the Enlightenment - Wikipedia

"Isaiah Berlin's main preoccupation was to understand the modern reaction against the Enlightenment. These essays on Counter-Enlightenment thinkers are classics and also illuminate his own ideas about the place of reason in politics.

Levine, American University Darren M. Revealed by reason, natural law was for these thinkers a universal pre-political standard for human action, morally constraining on individuals and regimes alike. Several other Enlightenment thinkers, however, reconceived and eventually eliminated natural law as a prescriptive guide for human action due to a variety of moral, political, and epistemological doubts. Some thinkers were suspicious of the traditional accounts of natural law upon which European religious, moral, and political thought had largely depended up to that time because of their perceived susceptibility to abuse. More broadly, the discovery of the New World shook the foundations of Christian cosmology, the recovery of ancient texts due to increased trade with the Muslim world and the fall of Constantinople revealed healthy and happy people despite—or because of—the absence of Christianity, and the rise of science led many thinkers to view the traditional natural-law perspective as parochial and insufficient. Moreover, as the older conception of reason as a faculty of the soul capable of objectively knowing the world gave way to the Lockean view of reason as a purely calculative operation of the mind, doubt arose as to whether any such universal, rationally knowable moral principles could exist. Given these doubts, Enlightenment critics sought to replace traditional natural law theory with more worldly sources of moral and political knowledge. These critics can be classified under three categories: Naturalizing Natural Law Naturalizers such as Voltaire, Diderot, and their precursors such as Montaigne continued to use the vocabulary of natural law, but redefined what natural law is and how it can be known in terms of a new conception of the natural. Instead, they tried to deduce laws of nature from hypothetical accounts of humankind in its original state, accounts that were purportedly grounded in anthropological observation. According to this view, natural law was not a moral command of reason, but rather a set of maxims drawn from the empirical facts of the natural human condition. The nature that they found tended to lead them away from the existing realities of Europe and toward liberal political institutions. In the late Enlightenment they particularly attacked religious institutions, especially the Catholic Church, for their corruption and deviance from nature and, as a rhetorical point, from the words of Christ. They critiqued monarchy, aristocracy, and other forms of hereditary inequality, lamenting the artificial, unfair class system and social norms based on pomp and pretension. They aimed to restore psychological wholeness, inner tranquility, and happiness to the conflicted, unhappy, and unhealthy people suffering under institutions justified by traditional interpretations of natural law. Moral Reductionism The second main way in which Enlightenment thinkers challenged natural law was by rejecting its prescriptive function entirely and offering instead a reductive account of morality grounded in the extra-rational facts of human psychology. Unlike natural law, such reductivism could not issue normative commands from on high. It could, however, clarify moral and political principles and purposes and show how their application might be maximized. These thinkers were thus able to engage in social criticism, albeit not as much as the naturalizers, by showing how existing social or political practices violated those principles and purposes. This strategy had two distinct strains. One strain of reductionism, sometimes called modern Epicureanism, based its moral code on self-love or amour-propre. Drawing on the worldly musings of Saint Evremonde and La Rochefoucauld, thinkers like Voltaire and Mandeville insisted that moral judgment was grounded in the universal desire for happiness and pleasure, and that the public good was the socially useful, just as the private good was whatever resulted in individual happiness. Unlike natural law theory, such a moral science was relativistic: Thus its implications could be quite radical. Similarly for Mandeville, an awareness of the importance of wealth, power, and commercial prosperity for the happiness of a nation led him to insist that private vices were in fact public benefits if prudently regulated. Shaftesbury was the first to treat ethical knowledge as more like the cultivation of an innate moral sense than rational demonstration. Like the Epicureans, they thought that political wisdom and moral truth served to maximize human happiness and public utility, but they insisted that rational thought played little if any part in actual moral judgment. Instead, these would-be moral scientists argued that morality

issued more from the heart than the head. Even the norms associated with traditional natural law were, in this account, the result of human sociability and fellow feeling as applied to particular contexts, and hence were only salutary fictions. Nor were they always salutary, as Edmund Burke observed in the context of the French Revolution. Also like the Epicureans, the devotees of moral sense avoided the presumed dogmatism of the natural law tradition by embracing a certain degree of relativism in cultural, moral, and political arrangements.

Prescriptive Replacements of Natural Law

Toward the end of the Enlightenment, there emerged a more radical alternative to natural law. Like reductionism, it denied natural law any validity at all and replaced it with a fresh source of moral and political authority. Unlike the reductionists, however, the proponents of this strategy sought to maintain the prescriptive power traditionally associated with natural law. There were three notable attempts of this kind. Like natural law, the general will was rationally knowable and binding, but it was also rooted in what, for Rousseau at least, were thought to be the empirically given realities of each political association. This doctrine was therefore significantly variable from polity to polity yet thought to be both certain and scientifically respectable, descriptive and prescriptive. Not surprisingly it proved a potent weapon in the rhetorical arsenal of the French Revolution. Like Rousseau, the Physiocrats Mirabeau and Quesnay sought an ultimate source of normative judgment that was both descriptive and prescriptive. In their case, however, that source was pre-civilized nature, which privileged agriculture as the solely productive sector in political economy. Still others combined the core insights of Physiocratic political economy with the empirical facts of human sensibility. Their metaphysical analysis—so unique among Enlightenment critics of natural law—and their materialist reading of human sensibility entailed that mankind necessarily sought to avoid pain and fulfill its desires and wills. Given the universality of this fact, they claimed to demonstrate that a broadly republican and liberal political order was the sole way to achieve these goals. Non-prescriptive reductionism marked the most radical intellectual departure from the preceding tradition of moral and political thought. Naturalizers, by contrast, were less philosophically radical. The least philosophically radical strategy was that of offering prescriptive replacements for natural law. The prescriptions were new, but they functioned largely in the same fashion as what they replaced, offering mandatory and certain guides to moral and political action: From the perspective of political practice, however, the respective implications of each of these philosophies were almost entirely the reverse. Prescriptive replacements for natural law offered a revolutionary political agenda whose universality and certainty underwrote and legitimated the radical and often violent measures required to put them into effect. French revolutionary thought drew heavily on Rousseau, Physiocracy, and the ideas of early Ideologues, such as Condorcet and Sieyès. Naturalizers like Voltaire and Diderot were comparatively mild in their political prescriptions, offering grounds for criticism and reform but not wholesale reconstruction. By contrast, in a purely political sense, the reductionists were the least radical. Since they viewed moral and political norms as given natural phenomena, their moral theories offered little ground for political reconstruction. In fact, this strategy aimed to lower the stakes of and polemics surrounding political action and debate by showing that there were few moral problems to solve. It sought to convince the literate public that the contemporary world was already imbued with all the moral and political norms it needed, and thus required little intervention. If anything, its purpose was to make contemporary Europeans satisfied with the modern social and political order emerging in their midst. Calas claimed his innocence to his death by torture on the wheel. His death garnered the interest of Voltaire, who eventually had his conviction overturned on the grounds that Calas had been unjustly convicted out of anti-Protestant prejudice.

3: Three Critics Of The Enlightenment : Isaiah Berlin :

The enlightenment project of universal values and Kant's kingdom of ends of course developed as all movements do it opposition and critics. Berlin who is a fan of modern enlightenment liberalism and having early life marred by its enemies has a fascination with the history of the opponents of the enlightenment and antiliberal thinkers.

Cuckolded and divorced, Herzog seeks to make sense of himself, his country, and his century by writing unsent letters to philosophers and politicians, alive and dead. It takes an ignorant bastard like me to fight liberal causes. They traced all that was worth defending in the modern western world to the 18th century, when rationality, science, secularism and democracy took hold of the European mind. Though they possessed an impressive capacity for tub-thumping alarmism, these modern freethinkers were by no means the first to mobilise the Enlightenment for their cause. Kant and Hegel effectively dug the trenches for the 20th-century philosophical battle over the Enlightenment. The view that the Enlightenment led to Hitler is today popular with the religious right. Continental philosophers such as Derrida and Foucault attempted to reveal the absolutist and imperialist nature of the principles of justice and truth, while in the English-speaking world John Gray and Alasdair MacIntyre blamed the Enlightenment for the misguided utopian political projects of the 20th century and for the atomised and materialist world of the capitalist west. Predictably, the loyal children of the Enlightenment fought back. They have told us that the Enlightenment was not only based in Paris and Scotland but in Italy, Poland and the European periphery. They have debated the reformist and revolutionary influence of the Enlightenment, and argued whether we can even speak of a single Enlightenment, given its various local manifestations. Our knowledge of the political, intellectual and cultural world in which the 18th-century revolution of the mind took place is vastly deeper and more textured than it was 50 years ago. For whatever reason, the nuancing, problematising conclusions of historians have failed to break the centuries-old Kantian-Hegelian lines across which philosophers, theorists and journalists trade ideological artillery. Historians are certainly not oblivious to the contemporary relevance of the Enlightenment, and the achievements of scholars over the past half-century, such as Robert Darnton, Daniel Roche and Franco Venturi, have been extraordinary, necessary, and celebrated in the world of academia; but their assertions have largely failed to resonate above the clamorous tussle over modernity. Perhaps frustrated by the impotence of historians in fighting for liberal causes, in Jonathan Israel released his inner Sandor Himmelstein and published the first page instalment of a three-part history of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Here was a historian with impressive credentials in the study of Spanish imperialism, the origins of capitalism and the emergence of secularism in the 17th-century Dutch Republic—ideally qualified, it seemed, to tie in the contingent origins of the Enlightenment with its complex philosophical and political legacies. Many critics took Israel to be projecting a particularly benevolent view of western secular democracy into the distant and fundamentally different past. Once again, the 18th century had been swallowed whole by modernity, its supposed creation. What is a historian of ideas to do? A pessimist would say she is faced with two options. Or, as Israel has done, she could pick a side, and mobilise an immense archive for the cause of liberal modernity or for the cause of its enemies. In other words, she could join Moses Herzog, with his letters that never get read and his questions that never get answered, or she could join Sandor Himmelstein and the loud, ignorant bastards. Is there any other way? Pagden, now at UCLA, has had a globetrotting career of which most academics can only dream. He has written learned studies of western-European imperialisms, migrations and ideologies. The great thinkers of the 17th century—Newton, Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke—destroyed the scholasticism of the universities, which held that the human mind is hardwired with innate, God-given ideas, and replaced it with an account of human nature that relied instead on empirical experience and self-interest. The 18th century therefore inherited a worldview with rational man, not God, at its centre. But with Christianity no longer pulling the intellectual strings, what was to stop humanity from lapsing into self-centredness, cruelty and conflict? Adam Smith and David Hume taught us that man is neither a creation of God nor a selfish pursuer of his own interests; at the most fundamental level, man is the friend of man. This, Pagden argues, was the origin of cosmopolitanism: For Pagden, the significance of this turn in

human thought cannot be exaggerated. Pagden admonishes critics of the Enlightenment project such as Gray and Macintyre for reducing it to a movement based on autonomous reason and objective science. Instead, the Enlightenment was about sympathy, the invention of civilisation, and the pursuit of a cosmopolitan world order. While he is clearly in the Kantian camp in arguing for why the Enlightenment still matters, Pagden wants to make it clear that all participants in the debate have been fighting over the wrong issues. And these issues still matter because the cosmopolitan project is still incomplete. In shifting the focus of the Enlightenment away from science and reason in favour of sympathy and civilisation, Pagden may well have dodged the odd postmodern bullet. Europe has become a civilisation which fails to progress, which is no kind of civilisation at all. This is a peculiar attempt to prove that the Enlightenment is all that stands between the west and Islamist despotism. But it is the natural culmination of a narrative that presents the Enlightenment project as the discovery of some timeless truth that had previously been obscured by religion. The philosophes worked this out in Europe in the 18th century, thinks Pagden, and we in the west are still waiting for the rest of the world to catch up. But a cosmopolitanism that rests upon ideals that were developed centuries ago in a few corners of Europe is just about the most restrictive, parochial cosmopolitanism imaginable. And in its comprehensive rejection of religion as having any role to play in human understanding and organisation, it is a hopeless model for modern global governance. If the dawning of a new cosmopolitan era is waiting on the disappearance of religion from human affairs, it will be waiting a long time. Arguing from the authority of the philosophes is unlikely to convince those non-European cultures which have their own heritage of cosmopolitan thought, nor those where the legacy of European imperialism is still a political factor. Voltaire implored his contemporaries to eschew their deference to the past; perhaps it is time historians and theorists of the Enlightenment do the same. Pagden thinks the cosmopolitan Enlightenment that he has identified is so important that he has unquestioningly adopted its secular worldview, which sees global history marching in one direction, towards a future that was imagined in Europe over years ago. In making his Enlightenment about sympathetic cosmopolitanism, he believes he has successfully broken free from the interminable debate about the legacy of the Age of Reason, in which the charges laid against the philosophes include technocratic scientism and the atomisation of society. Pagden makes no secret of writing his history of the Enlightenment with current debates in mind. Such presentism can skew our view of the past, and make us read into it the stories we want to tell ourselves. But it can also encourage us to discover aspects of the past that have previously been overlooked. David Armitage, the Harvard historian, has recently argued that a renaissance in the history of international thought is underway. Intellectual historians are studying the movement, connections and interactions of ideas, how they travel and how they are communicated. The philosophes lived in a world connected across oceans by networks of navigation, commerce and correspondence, providing a contingent basis for their universal conceptions of cosmopolitanism and cultural progress. Humanity was drawn closer together in the 18th century not only in the minds of a few great thinkers but in a fundamentally material way as well. While globalisation has encouraged historians to explore the spatial scope of Enlightenment ideas, another 21st century concern of planetary significance—the threat of climate change and global warming—has sent scholars in another fruitful direction. As the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has noted, the Enlightenment coincided with the period in which human beings switched from wood and other renewable fuels to the large-scale use of fossil fuels; the origins of ideological and material modernity, in other words, coincided with humankind becoming capable of causing lasting change to the planet. These are grand historical projects, reflecting the scale of the contemporary concerns out of which they have emerged. But unlike in Herzog, a question that goes unanswered is not always the sign of a nervous breakdown or of ideological impotence. A healthy society needs intellectuals to ask uncomfortable questions. And with questions like that, who can hope for easy answers? In defence of the Enlightenment John Gray: Steven Pinker is wrong. We are not becoming less violent.

4: Three Critics of the Enlightenment : Isaiah Berlin :

*Three Critics of the Enlightenment [Isaiah Berlin, Henry Hardy] on www.enganchecubano.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Isaiah Berlin was deeply admired during his life, but his full contribution was perhaps underestimated because of his preference for the long essay form.*

Counter-Enlightenment movement vs Enlightenment thinkers[edit] Joseph-Marie, Comte de Maistre was one of the more prominent altar-and-throne counter-revolutionaries who vehemently opposed Enlightenment ideas. He used the term to refer to a movement that arose primarily in late 18th- and early 19th-century Germany against the rationalism , universalism and empiricism commonly associated with the Enlightenment. Isaiah Berlin traces the Counter-Enlightenment back to J. Berlin argues that, while there were enemies of the Enlightenment outside of Germany e. Joseph de Maistre and before the s e. This German reaction to the imperialistic universalism of the French Enlightenment and Revolution, which had been forced on them first by the francophile Frederick II of Prussia , then by the armies of Revolutionary France, and finally by Napoleon , was crucial to the epochal shift of consciousness that occurred in Europe at this time, leading eventually to Romanticism. A great many of these early opponents of the Enlightenment attacked it for undermining religion and the social and political order. This later became a major theme of conservative criticism of the Enlightenment after the French Revolution appeared to vindicate the warnings of the anti-philosophes in the decades prior to Graeme Garrard traces the origin of the Counter-Enlightenment to Rousseau. Everdell was the first to situate Rousseau as the "founder of the Counter-Enlightenment" in his book, *Christian Apologetics in France, â€” The Roots of Romantic Religion*, and earlier in his dissertation. Also, like McMahon, it traces the beginning of Counter-Enlightenment thought back to France and prior to the German Sturm und Drang movement of the s. Rather, there have been many Counter-Enlightenments, from the middle of the 18th century through to 20th-century Enlightenment critics among critical theorists, postmodernists and feminists. The Enlightenment has enemies on all points of the ideological compass, from the far left to the far right, and all points in between. Although serious doubts were raised about the Enlightenment prior to the s e. Hamann in Germany in particular , the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution fueled a major reaction against the Enlightenment, which many writers blamed for undermining traditional beliefs that sustained the ancien regime , thereby fomenting revolution. Counter-revolutionary writings like those of Edmund Burke , Joseph de Maistre and Augustin Barruel all asserted a close link between the Enlightenment and the Revolution, as did many of the revolutionary leaders themselves, so that the Enlightenment became increasingly discredited as the Revolution became increasingly bloody. That is why the French Revolution and its aftermath was also a major phase in the development of Counter-Enlightenment thought. Barruel argues in *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism â€”* one of the most widely read books of its period â€” that the Revolution was the consequence of a conspiracy of philosophes and freemasons. In *Considerations on France* , Maistre interprets the Revolution as divine punishment for the sins of the Enlightenment. Romantic revolt against the eighteenth century[edit] Many early Romantic writers such as Chateaubriand , Novalis and Samuel Taylor Coleridge inherited this Counter-Revolutionary antipathy towards the philosophes. Of particular concern to early Romantic writers was the allegedly anti-religious nature of the Enlightenment since the philosophes and Aufklärer were generally deists , opposed to revealed religion. For the most part, they ignored it. One of the most famous prints of the *Caprichos*. The philosopher Jacques Barzun argues that Romanticism had its roots in the Enlightenment. It was not anti-rational, but rather it balanced rationality against the competing claims of intuition and the sense of justice. Even the rational critic is inspired by irrational dream-content under the gaze of the sharp-eyed lynx. By the middle of the 19th century, the memory of the French Revolution was fading and Romanticism had more or less run its course. In this optimistic age of science and industry, there were few critics of the Enlightenment, and few explicit defenders. Friedrich Nietzsche is a notable and highly influential exception. Shadowing it has been a resurgent Counter-Enlightenment literature blaming the 18th-century trust in reason for 20th-century totalitarianism. They say little about Soviet communism , referring to it as a regressive totalitarianism that "clung all too

THREE CRITICS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT pdf

desperately to the heritage of bourgeois philosophy" [6]. They claim it is epitomized by the Marquis de Sade. Jane Flax have made similar arguments, likewise seeing the Enlightenment conception of reason as totalitarian, and as not having been enlightened enough since, for Adorno and Horkheimer, though it banishes myth it falls back into a further myth, that of individualism and formal or mythic equality under instrumental reason. Michel Foucault , for example, argued that attitudes towards the "insane" during the late and early 19th centuries show that supposedly enlightened notions of humane treatment were not universally adhered to, but instead, that the Age of Reason had to construct an image of "Unreason" against which to take an opposing stand. Debates have occurred over the scope, meaning and application of reason, not over whether it is good or bad, desirable or undesirable, essential or inessential per se. Some charge that the Enlightenment inflated the power and scope of reason, while others claim that it narrowed it.

5: Enlightenment Critics | Natural Law, Natural Rights, and American Constitutionalism

Three Critics of the Enlightenment and millions of other books are available for Amazon Kindle. Learn more Enter your mobile number or email address below and we'll send you a link to download the free Kindle App.

Extra high quality OCR Some brief overview of this book Isaiah Berlin was deeply admired during his life, but his full contribution was perhaps underestimated because of his preference for the long essay form. The efforts of Henry Hardy to edit Berlins work and reintroduce it to a broad, eager readership have gone far to remedy this. Now, Princeton is pleased to return to print, under one cover, Berlins essays on these celebrated and captivating intellectual portraits: Vico, Hamann, and Herder. These essays on three relatively uncelebrated thinkers are not marginal ruminations, but rather among Berlins most important studies in the history of ideas. They are integral to his central project: Giambattista Vico was the anachronistic and impoverished Neapolitan philosopher sometimes credited with founding the human sciences. He opposed Enlightenment methods as cold and fallacious. Hamann was a pious, cranky dilettante in a peripheral German city. But he was brilliant enough to gain the audience of Kant, Goethe, and Moses Mendelssohn. In Hamanns chaotic and long-ignored writings, Berlin finds the first strong attack on Enlightenment rationalism and a wholly original source of the coming swell of romanticism. Johann Gottfried Herder, the progenitor of populism and European nationalism, rejected universalism and rationalism but championed cultural pluralism. Individually, these fascinating intellectual biographies reveal Berlins own great intelligence, learning, and generosity, as well as the passionate genius of his subjects. Together, they constitute an arresting interpretation of romanticisms precursors. In Hamanns railings and the more considered writings of Vico and Herder, Berlin finds critics of the Enlightenment worthy of our careful attention. But he identifies much that is misguided in their rejection of universal values, rationalism, and science. With his customary emphasis on the frightening power of ideas, Berlin traces much of the next centuries irrationalism and suffering to the historicism and particularism they advocated. What Berlin has to say about these long-dead thinkersâ€™ in appreciation and dissentâ€™ is remarkably timely in a day when Enlightenment beliefs are being challenged not just by academics but by politicians and by powerful nationalist and fundamentalist movements. The study of J. Hamann was originally published under the title *The Magus of the North: Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*. The essays on Vico and Herder were originally published as *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas*. Both are out of print. This new edition includes a number of previously uncollected pieces on Vico and Herder, two interesting passages excluded from the first edition of the essay on Hamann, and Berlins thoughtful responses to two reviewers of that same edition. See more interesting books: This time is necessary for searching and sorting links. One button - 15 links for downloading the book "Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder" in all e-book formats! May need free signup required to download or reading online book. A few words about book author Isaiah Berlin was one of the leading intellectual historians of the twentieth century and the founding president of Wolfson College, University of Oxford. He has edited several other volumes by Berlin, and is currently preparing Berlins letters are not marginal ruminations, but rather among Berlins most important studies in the history of ideas.

6: The trouble with the Enlightenment | Prospect Magazine

Three critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder User Review - Not Available - Book Verdict. All three essays in this collection have appeared elsewhere at other times in the past 40 years; Berlin himself proposed publishing a trilogy of essays on Herder, Vico, and de Maistre in , though.

Max Weber already envisioned the spirit of Enlightenment "irretrievably fading" and a world in which there would remain only "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart. The Enlightenment, of course, always had its critics. Beginning with the Restoration of and the new philosophical reaction to the French Revolution, however, they were almost exclusively political -- if not necessarily cultural -- adherents of the right: Interestingly enough, however, a critique of the Enlightenment has now become part of the philosophical and polemical stock in trade of many on the left. It comes in various guises: Communitarians condemn its individualism, religious zealots bemoan its skepticism, populists castigate its intellectualism, and traditionalists decry its rejection of experience as the criterion of truth. Dogmatic Marxists dismiss the Enlightenment as "bourgeois," anarchists are repelled by its emphasis on the state, and ecologists by its unwavering belief in science and technology. Even certain followers of the Frankfurt School still view the Enlightenment as the unwitting source of modern totalitarianism. Left critics of the Enlightenment form a motley crew and, perhaps, this reflects the current disarray of progressive forces. But there is something that, ultimately, binds all of them: The Enlightenment generated various paralyzing ideas of mechanical materialism and historical teleology. Many of its proponents identified the increase in scientific knowledge with progress per se while, arguably, others threw a representational straightjacket over art and literature. Even in the realm of political theory, which is the issue here, its emphasis on abstract universal precepts of "reason" and the egoistic individual along with not just the "right" to property, but the right to employ it without any regard to the public interest, has led to much disillusionment with the legacy of the Enlightenment in general and liberalism in particular. But, while criticisms are easy to make, none of the critics have been able to develop an alternative set of principles with which to inform a genuinely progressive politics. Indeed, there is hardly a single ideal of the left, which does not derive from the Enlightenment. Political democracy, economic equality, and cultural internationalism are its legacy. Its philosophers informed every subsequent emancipatory movement of those whom Ernst Bloch called "the lowly and the insulted. But the world is not quite so "contingent" as the postmodernists would have it. Weber was correct when he spoke about the "elective affinity" existing between particular theories and given forms of practice. Enlightenment philosophy was, in fact, primarily embraced by the labor movement and those seeking liberal political reforms while its critics inspired the great movements of right-wing reaction. Contemporary reactionaries understand all this better than the left -- and they are willing to draw the consequences. Stalinism and the failure of the Soviet experiment obviously leads them to call for the liquidation of Marxism tout court. Even this, however, is not enough. For, insofar as these developments were informed by the American and the English Revolutions, it is also necessary to take the next step and transform the meaning of these events by identifying their real importance with laissez-faire capitalism and a society based on law and compromise. The result is, in keeping with the practical emergence of a new conservatism, a new ideological attack on the Enlightenment and the political legacy of what R. Palmer called the "age of the democratic revolution. Atavism and a rejection of the radical implications generated by the Enlightenment legacy bind these tendencies of neo-conservatism together. If its irrational populism contrasts with the rationalist tenets of liberalism, for example, its employment of classical "liberal" political economy and social darwinism short-circuits the commitment to equality and tolerance. Thus, the conservative project evidences a coherence and sense of purpose sorely lacking on the contemporary left. Talk about introducing what Richard Rorty has called a "new language" for the left has been going on for more than 25 years. But, especially with the introduction of notions like "ethno-solidarity," the promise loses its radical quality. The real issue is not the language anyway. It is rather what the left has to say: Advocates of Enlightenment values may have to make compromises with movements willing to embrace reactionary assumptions about "experience" or racial particularism or anti-intellectual

populism in any number of practical struggles. Religion offers a case in point. Theory never mechanically translates into practice and often, in the process, loses its coherence. But this does not make the quest for theoretical coherence any the less important. The past shows how important it is to recognize such contingent philosophical or political compromises for what they are rather than as "necessary" steps toward a utopian goal. It is a matter of the left becoming able to criticize its practical and theoretical shortcomings in relation to the ideals it projects. Nevertheless, this presupposes clarity about the cluster of political values informing liberalism and socialism. The fights between "liberals" and "socialists" have, of course, often been bitter. But the three great issues of contention have essentially been overcome. Modern liberals have now generally embraced substantive notions of equality and mitigated their original views concerning the unqualified "private" character of property and the repressive nature of an activist state. For their part, especially with the added impetus of , socialists now recognize more than ever the political value of the liberal inheritance and the dangers inherent in unaccountable forms of planning. Differences surely still exist regarding issues like class and the individual or the role of markets against the need for socialization. Nevertheless, these all pale in the face of what has become the most dramatic conservative offensive since McCarthyism. A cluster of common ideological concerns underpin both progressive politics and the socialist project. The excesses created by privatization in the East and the introduction of what is perhaps best termed market populism in the West have drawn sharp political and ideological lines of division in practice. But theory has tended to ignore these developments. It has even become quite fashionable to talk about the obsolescence of "left" and "right. Now, more than ever, political theory must distinguish left from right. Nevertheless, this is possible only by making reference to the core values deriving from what spawned the division between left and right in the first place:

The Liberal Inheritance

The Enlightenment is usually associated with France and especially its philosophes of the 18th century whose great names include Beaumarchais, Diderot, Laplace, Rousseau, and Voltaire. But this is mistaken. It began about a century earlier with figures like Descartes and Spinoza, and first coalesced in England around figures like Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. The new thinking, however, spread quickly. Even Spain, shrouded in the darkness of a feudal absolutism, experienced its effects through the remarkable group of intellectuals centering around the philosopher Olivares and the painter Goya. The Enlightenment was, in short, a genuinely international phenomenon with a political and ideological dynamic whose core values derived from the burgeoning liberalism of the 17th century. Liberalism was connected with a revolutionary commitment to republicanism, tolerance, and experimentation. It gave the members of what would become the "third estate" a new sense of their rights and their dignity. It preoccupied itself, for this reason, with a secular response to the injustices suffered by the outsider and a new notion of ethical, rather than merely material progress. It sought to overcome prejudice and coercion in favor of a rational adjudication of grievances. Indeed, from the first, liberalism initiated the modern concern with constraining the arbitrary exercise of power on which any democratic form of socialism would have to build. They initially identified the public realm with "political society" or the state and the private realm with the interplay of particular interests and personal property in "civil society. Instead, they made certain abstract assumptions about human nature, identified them with the rising bourgeoisie, and drew the consequences for politics. Thomas Hobbes described the hypothetical "state of nature" as a "war of each against all" while John Locke conceived of it as a rather poorly ordered existence of relatively well-intentioned persons concerned with property. The difference in their views of human nature was decisive for the degree of authority they provided the state. Both saw, however, the need for a new political order whose character would become determined by the people themselves under the auspices of a hypothetical social contract. Thus, the state received a new importance in theory around the very time it was becoming the predominant form of political organization in practice. Capitalism is inconceivable without an "impartial" political form predicated on consent and capable of enforcing contracts in a consistent manner, which logically calls upon the new "state" to divorce itself from civil society. So, for both Hobbes and Locke, the state was conceived as utilitarian insofar as its primary purpose lay in buttressing law through sanctions and regulating the ruthless competition of the market by self-interested if responsible individuals. Nevertheless, ever more surely, it came into conflict with the new liberal emphasis on the consent of the governed. Sovereignty gradually became identified with the universal citizenry

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or "the people. He recognized that the monarch was no better or worse than his subjects and that political legitimation could rest neither on God nor blood. Hobbes had no use for revelation or prophecy as the criterion of truth. The state would, for this reason, remain fully sovereign over religious authorities in the public arena. But Hobbes was content to legitimate the monarch only through a "social contract" in which everyone transferred all their rights to him. Thus, for all his support of absolutism, Leviathan was condemned precisely because it militated against the "divine right of kings" as well as the inherent superiority of the aristocrat. Public now distinguishes itself from private existence. The state stands over and apart from the personal interests defining civil society while law becomes external to the individuals comprising the community. The possibility of impartial arbitration of grievances, in this way, presents itself. Anticipating Max Weber, the sovereign is depersonalized by Hobbes and identified with a "mechanism" or institution. Citizens surrender the right to punish offenses and to define the law as they arbitrarily see fit. It was, for Hobbes, a rational exchange predicated on consent. He saw the citizenry as calculating people who understood their own lives in the horrific state of nature as "nasty, poor, solitary, brutish, and short. This meant obedience from the citizenry and the ability to command it by the state. Whether the state proved monarchical, aristocratic, or democratic was not the issue. But, if only in the extreme instance, revolution gained legitimacy and the people their power. The first steps had been made. Hobbes, however, quickly tried to retreat. Anything which weakened the exercise of power became anathema to him and he opposed the ability of individuals to make claims against the state, the "division" of sovereignty or the separation of powers, the subjection of the sovereign to civil laws, and even the "absolute" right of private individuals to their property. Nevertheless, the self-interest of the individual understood in terms of self-preservation created the basis for undercutting this absolute identity just as the willingness of Hobbes to contest "experience" and tradition" opened the way for a new commitment to political experimentation. Preserving this tension between identity and difference called for a new commitment to democratic experimentation. The question for the new liberalism of John Locke would now become how to maintain it in the face of traditional institutions, prejudice, and the power of vested interests without falling into the absolutism of Hobbes. The answer would come by an immanent criticism of the framework employed to justify the leviathan in the first place based on the recognition that the arbitrary power of the monarch ultimately undercuts the very security its citizens require. The social contract was predicated on the idea that individuals have a rational stake in preserving order. Locke believed that, so long as citizenship was based on property, rational individuals would have no interest in creating disorder so long as they were left in peace to go about their business. Such is the assumption on which he would base his view that the state should engage in only the most important tasks and essentially leave "civil society" to run its course. It is not necessary for individuals to transfer all their rights to the sovereign.

7: Three Critics of the Enlightenment

Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder (Second Edition) by Isaiah Berlin Isaiah Berlin was deeply admired during his life, but his full contribution was perhaps underestimated because of his preference for the long essay form.

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In Hamann's railings and the more considered writings of Vico and Herder, Berlin finds critics of the Enlightenment worthy of our careful attention. But he identifies much that is misguided in their rejection of universal values, rationalism, and science.

9: Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder by Isaiah Berlin

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