

# Conservatism vs. Neoconservatism: A Philosophical Analysis

---

Jack Kerwick<sup>1</sup>

---

**Abstract:** In the world of contemporary American politics, the “conservative movement” continues to figure prominently as a force that is, for all practical purposes, inseparable from the Republican Party. As the 2016 presidential election cycle gets under way, well over a dozen Republican contenders are laboring tirelessly to establish their “conservative” bona fides. In truth, however, neither the “conservative” movement nor most “conservative” politicians are conservative at all. Rather, they are neoconservative, and between neoconservatism and traditional or classical conservatism there is all of the difference, a difference in kind. In this paper, I cite both scholarly and popular representatives of both traditions of thought to show that each depends upon epistemological, ontological, and ethical-political suppositions that are not only fundamentally distinct from, but radically at odds with, those of the other.

**Keywords:** conservatism, neoconservatism, rationalism, Michael Oakeshott, Russell Kirk, Edmund Burke, Irving Kristol, Charles Krauthammer, Reason

---

<sup>1</sup> Burlington County College, Department of Philosophy, 601 Pemberton Browns Mill Road, Pemberton, New Jersey 08068, email: jackk610@verizon.net

As America heads into its 2016 presidential race, its “conservative” party (the Republican Party) hopes to reverse the electoral misfortunes that it suffered in 2006, 2008, and 2012 when the country rejected “conservatism.” Yet is it really *conservatism* that has been rejected? Over the span of decades, the architects of “the conservative movement” in America—politicians, consultants, and self-avowed “conservative” writers, radio, and television personalities—have been remarkably successful in weaving a narrative that the “grass roots” of their movement—the base of the Republican Party—has swallowed hook, line, and sinker. According to this line, William F. Buckley is “the master”<sup>1</sup> to whom conservatives owe a debt of gratitude for expunging from their ranks the dregs—the “racists,” the “anti-Semites,” and “extremists” of all sorts—who threatened the movement’s social respectability.<sup>2</sup>

This account, however, isn’t really *history*. It is ideology or politics taking refuge behind the value-neutral guise of history.<sup>3</sup> In reality, “the conservative movement” has long been a predominantly *neoconservative* movement. While there is plenty of historical, sociological, and polemical literature on neoconservatism, there is relatively little that treats it *philosophically*. Yet, as I will show, neoconservatism *is* indeed a distinctive philosophical theory inasmuch as it consists of ethical and political views that differ in kind from those of traditional conservatism. Moreover, neoconservatism is an expression of *rationalism*, exactly the kind of orientation against which conservatives have been railing since the time of Edmund Burke.

My method here is simple enough. First, I look at Edmund Burke, Russell Kirk, and Michael Oakeshott to reveal what I take to be a distinctive set of philosophical presuppositions that has informed conservative thought in the past.<sup>4</sup> Then, I identify an assortment of scholarly and popular writers—from Leo Strauss, Alan Bloom, and Irving Kristol, to William Bennett, Douglas Murray, Charles Krauthammer, Dennis Prager, and Michael Medved—who were active at some point in the last half of a century. From the work of these figures, it is apparent that neoconservatism has its own intellectual tradition that is antithetical to the ideas of the traditional Right.<sup>5</sup>

## 1 Conservatism

Edmund Burke distinguished himself as “the patron saint of conservatism” via his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. While it was the Revolution that he specifically focused on, it was the rationalist philosophy behind that upheaval that Burke attacked.

Classical conservatism, as represented by Burke, is not hostile to intellectual analysis or science but to what it sees as an ideological aberration. In the revolutionary situation that Burke addresses, Reason is no longer identified simply with those moral and cognitive faculties that are needed to make sense of the world and of our place within it. It is an instrument of transformation that the individual can and should avail himself of independently of any given social context. Moreover, this form of speculative thinking supposedly furnishes us with a universal blueprint for reconstructing man and society. Its advocates seek to emancipate themselves from those *traditions* they believe have enslaved humanity up until the present moment. Reason as understood by those of this persuasion is both a universal and a unitary

phenomenon: it is universal insofar as there are no problems that transformational Reason cannot rectify on the basis of its method of change; it is unitary inasmuch as all minds properly trained in the exercise of this instrument should be able to identify and solve all social and political problems.

To be clear, from the standpoint of Reason, the contingencies and relativities of time and place are burdensome encumbrances. Reason is resolutely impartial with respect to those particularities that distinguish peoples and engage their affections. Before this tribunal all traditions that are concrete or local must yield.

Against this rationalist perspective Burke articulated another view of reality. It needs to be underscored that neither he nor any other conservative has ever denied *reason*. Rather, it is *this rationalist model of Reason* for which the conservative has no patience. Burke described rationalists as “political-theologians” and “theological-politicians,”<sup>6</sup> “new doctors of the rights of men,”<sup>7</sup> “moral politicians,”<sup>8</sup> “men of theory,”<sup>9</sup> “levelers,”<sup>10</sup> peddlers of a “mechanic philosophy,”<sup>11</sup> of an “empire of light and reason.” Reason as an individual standard of judgment, Burke insisted, becomes a private conceit unless it takes into account the civilization in which it operates and the vital role of tradition and prejudice, understood as the inculcation of moral sentiment, for advancing the collective social Good.

“We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason,” Burke famously states, for “we suspect that the stock in each man is small, and that the individual would do better to avail himself of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages.” He then draws his audience’s attention to what he perceives to be the fundamental difference between the conservative conception of knowledge on behalf of which he argues and that of the rationalist conception that he rejects. “Many of our men of speculation,” Burke asserts, “instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them.”<sup>13</sup> Rather than “cast away the coat of prejudice” in favor of “the naked reason,” the wise retain the prejudice, for it alone supplies a “motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence.”<sup>14</sup>

Note, knowledge here is *inarticulate*, the fruits of the experiences of generations spanning centuries and millennia. Moreover, because this knowledge is passed on from “those who are dead” to “those who are living” and “those who are to be born,”<sup>15</sup> it takes the form of *tradition*. Contrary to what rationalists imply, reason cannot discard tradition without discarding its own cultural context and trying to impose on society its own invented way of life.

The conservative’s tradition-based epistemology is inseparable from his tradition-based vision of morality. Morality is largely a matter of observing “*ancient* indisputable laws and liberties,” age-old cultural customs that Burke urges us to view as “*an entailed inheritance*,” a thousand generations’ worth of social capital.<sup>16</sup> In habituating ourselves to the “manners” and “moral opinions” of our ancestors,<sup>17</sup> by learning “to love” the local and concrete institutions, “the little platoon(s),”<sup>18</sup> we succeed in cultivating “those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty,” and “the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals.”<sup>19</sup>

The rationalist's moral philosophy is just as abstract as his epistemology. The moral life consists not in the observance of traditional customs, as it does for the conservative, but in the advancement of *principles* (or, in a later idiom, "*values*") like "the rights of men."<sup>20</sup> The latter are supposed to be "self-evident." This morality of abstract, universal principles is incompatible with one based on a tradition developed in a specific social context and proceeding from historical tradition.

"Against" the rights of men, Burke says, "there can be no prescription; against these no argument is binding: these admit no temperament and no compromise: anything withheld from their full demand is so much of fraud and injustice." He continues: "Against these their rights of men let no government look for security in the length of its continuance, or in the justice and lenity of its administration." If reality fails to "quadrature with their theories [of the rights of men]," then the oldest and most "beneficent government" is as susceptible as "the most violent tyranny" of being toppled.<sup>21</sup> The rationalist's "rights of men" for Burke were "pretended rights," "extremes" that, "in proportion as they are metaphysically true...are morally and politically false."<sup>22</sup>

The rationalist's conception of morality informs his view of the state as an "enterprise association," to quote Michael Oakeshott. When the state is treated as such, its members are regarded as being "related to one another in terms of their *joint pursuit* of some recognized *substantive purpose*," a pursuit in which they are "obligated to engage [.]"<sup>23</sup> An enterprise association is a type of association "in which a Many becomes One [.]"<sup>24</sup> Associates are all "servants of the purpose" that distinguishes and justifies their existence while the government assumes the form of "a managerial engagement."<sup>25</sup> This differs from an older conception of the state, embraced by the traditional Right, which treats it as an administrative arrangement intertwined with a stratified social structure. In this conception, it is society, not political mechanisms, which controls most human interactions. The traditional state is to be revered but only in its limited role, and as an extension of an inherited social order.

Burke charges his rationalist opponents with approaching "the science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it," as if it could be known "*a priori*." A state, he remarks, has "various ends" that "admit of infinite modifications" that can't be "settled" by appeal to "any abstract rule" or "principle."<sup>26</sup> The rationalist who views society as if it had a "single end," fails to recognize that "the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity [.]" This being so, the Rationalist is fundamentally mistaken in believing that a "simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature or to the quality of his affairs."<sup>27</sup>

The conservative treats the state, viewed as an administrative mechanism, as nothing more than a *civil* association. Here, associates "are related solely in respect to their obligations to observe" the *law*. Unlike the *policies* of an enterprise association, laws do *not* "specify a practice or routine purporting to promote the achievement of a substantive purpose."<sup>28</sup> Members of civil association are not joint-enterprisers conscripted in the service of realizing a common goal. Their enterprises, rather, are self-chosen. In other words, they are not told *what* they must do, but only *how* they must do whatever it is they choose to do. And the government of such an association is not a manager, but more like an umpire, the "custodian of the rules [.]"<sup>29</sup>

Russell Kirk, whose death, William F. Buckley claimed, “left the conservative community desolate,”<sup>30</sup> spent much of his life enunciating the conservative vision. The conservative, notes Kirk, regards as utopian folly “*a priori* designs for perfecting human nature and society,”<sup>31</sup> the “fanatical ideological dogmata”<sup>32</sup> of “metaphysical enthusiasts”<sup>33</sup> who refuse to grasp that principles are “arrived at by convention and compromise, for the most part, and tested by long experience.”<sup>34</sup> Kirk contrasts the conservative’s “affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of human existence” with the “uniformity, egalitarianism, and utilitarianism of most radical systems,”<sup>35</sup> and his “faith in prescription” with the certitude of those rationalists “who would reconstruct society along abstract designs.”<sup>36</sup>

The conservative’s philosophy of change reflects his commitment to tradition. Appearing “always...as deprivation,”<sup>37</sup> change “is an emblem of extinction.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, with an eye toward assimilating change, Burke characterized the English Constitution in terms of “an inheritance from our forefathers [.]” Such an image, in linking the present generation with its “forefathers” and its “posterity,” “preserves an unity in so great a diversity of its parts,”<sup>39</sup> thus guaranteeing “a condition of unchangeable constancy [.]”<sup>40</sup> The image of an inheritance assures that “change will proceed by insensible degrees” and along a “gradual course...”<sup>41</sup>

Kirk adds that change should “come as the consequence of a need generally felt, not inspired by fine-spun abstractions.” The trick is to discriminate between “a profound, slow, natural alteration,” on the one hand, and, on the other, “some infatuation of the hour.” Rationalists are ineligible to be “agents of change,” for “the perceptive reformer” knows that “an ability to reform” must be reconciled “with a disposition to preserve[.]”<sup>42</sup>

Neoconservatism shares none of those suppositions that have traditionally defined conservatism. In fact, in every respect, outside the media reconfiguring of reality, neoconservatism is a species of Rationalism adapted to a late modern American society.

## 2 Neoconservatism

There are few media “conservatives” nowadays who aren’t, in some measure, neoconservatives. Nonetheless, “neoconservatism” today is associated with nothing more than an ad hominem attack, and even an “anti-Semitic” epithet.<sup>43</sup> Still, this ideology *has* its apologists, most of which will happily concede that “socially, economically, and philosophically,” neoconservatism differs in kind from traditional conservatism. Some of its proponents even admit that their doctrine clashes with the older conservatism, which they generally loathe because of its rejection of the project of a world democratic revolution based on human rights. As one unabashed advocate put it, neoconservatism is “*revolutionary conservatism*.”<sup>44</sup>

We should begin with the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Leo Strauss, who provides “a useful and necessary point of entry for any investigation of neoconservatism.”<sup>45</sup> Strauss affirms the concept of “natural right” on the grounds that, without it, we have nothing but “blind choice” for our actions.<sup>46</sup> Unlike Burke and conservatives generally, Strauss is convinced that the only alternative to natural right is “positive right,” that which “is determined exclusively by the legislators and courts of the various countries.”<sup>47</sup>

No one is clearer on the differences between Strauss and Burke than Strauss himself. First, he charges the British statesman and other “eminent conservatives” with being “historicists” for their reliance upon tradition and because of their disavowal of the “universal or abstract principles” inherent in natural rights. Strauss realizes what conservatives realize, namely, that those principles he favors for American politics must have “necessarily a revolutionary, disturbing, [and] unsettling effect” upon a country in that they “prevent men from wholeheartedly identifying themselves with, or accepting, the social order that fate has allotted them.”<sup>48</sup> Secondly, Strauss equates Burke’s rejection of the rationalist’s notion of Reason with “a certain depreciation of reason”<sup>49</sup> per se. This accounts for why Burke passes over “the [general] view that constitutions can be ‘made’ in favor of the view that they must ‘grow,’” and the specific belief “that the best social order can be or ought to be the work of an individual, of a wise ‘legislator’ or founder.”<sup>50</sup>

Strauss’ and Burke’s beliefs concerning the origins of constitutions reveal their conflicting beliefs regarding the kind of association, “civil” or “enterprise,” that a modern state should be. This difference between the neoconservative and conservative visions becomes clearer yet when we turn to the musings of Strauss’s most famous student, Allan Bloom.

In his *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom writes that America “is one of the highest and most extreme achievements of the rational quest for the good life according to nature,” a “regime” guaranteeing “untrammelled freedom to reason.” The American “regime” is grounded in “the rational principles of natural right” alone.<sup>51</sup> It is to these “rational principles” that the American patriot is committed and in the light of which “class, race, religion, national origin,” and “culture all disappear or become dim [.]”<sup>52</sup> America, the “liberal democracy” par excellence, is “the regime of equality and liberty, of the rights of man,” “the regime of reason.”<sup>53</sup>

If there were any doubts that neoconservatism exemplifies rationalism, the quotations from Bloom should suffice to dispel them. Here we are presented with certain premises about the well-ordered society: morality consists in abstract, universal principles of natural right—not the historically embodied experience of “nations and of ages,” as Burke put it. The principles of natural right upon which America is said to have been founded, like the Reason to which they are “self-evident,” are independent of the particularities of time and place. And because America is “the regime” that embodies these rationalist principles most fully, it has a special—an “exceptional”—responsibility to promote them throughout the world in the exportable form of “liberal democracy.”

Irving Kristol is known as “the godfather” of neoconservatism, an honor that he happily embraced. Kristol is quick to dispatch the objection that the relationship between Strauss and neoconservatism has been, at best, exaggerated. Among “neoconservative intellectuals” he identifies Strauss by name<sup>54</sup> and credits him with, among other things, supplying Kristol and his ideological ilk with their “favorite neoconservative text on foreign affairs,” Thucydides on the Peloponnesian War.<sup>55</sup> Needless to say, Kristol could have read Thucydides without having to depend on Strauss’s exposition. But it was precisely that exposition, and Strauss’s (questionable) assurance that the Greek historian was a really a “democrat,” that may have appealed most to Kristol.

Neoconservatism, Kristol informs us, endorses “the welfare state” in that its adherents support “social security, unemployment insurance, some form of national health insurance, some kind of family assistance plan, etc.,” and will not hesitate “to interfere with the market for overriding social purposes”—even if this requires ““rigging”” instead of imposing upon it “direct bureaucratic controls.”<sup>56</sup>

Neoconservatives accept “the equality of natural rights” enshrined in the Declaration of Independence<sup>57</sup> and view them as “the principles of” America’s “establishment,”<sup>58</sup> the principles of “the universal creed” upon which the nation is “based.”<sup>59</sup> The United States, then, is “a creedal nation”<sup>60</sup> with a ““civilizing mission””<sup>61</sup> to promote “American values”<sup>62</sup> throughout the world, to see to it “that other governments respect our conception of individual rights as the foundation of a just regime and a good society.” Kristol is unambiguous in his profession of the American faith: the United States, given its status as a “great power” and its “ideological” nature, does indeed have a responsibility “in those places and at those times where conditions permit” it “to flourish,” to ““make the world safe for democracy.””<sup>63</sup>

The “godfather” of neoconservatism is clear that, both domestically and globally, his ideology looks upon the United States as, in Oakeshott’s words, as an “enterprise association.” America has a vocation, first and foremost, to export the “values” of “democracy” to the rest of the world. This is the grand enterprise to which all citizens are expected to deploy at least some of their resources. More resources must be conscripted into the service of fulfilling specifically American purposes at home. As Kristol says, neoconservatives are “always interested in proposing alternate reforms, alternate legislation, [to the Great Society] that would achieve *the desired aims*”—the eradication of poverty—“more securely, and without the downside effects.”<sup>64</sup> Neoconservatives don’t want to “destroy the welfare state, but...rather reconstruct it along more economical and humane lines.”<sup>65</sup>

To his credit, Kristol does not hide the marked differences between neoconservatism and conservatism. “Neocons,” he states, “feel at home in today’s America to a degree that more traditional conservative do not.”<sup>66</sup> Neoconservatism is the first “variant” of conservatism that operates “in the American grain.” This is because it is “hopeful, not lugubrious; forward-looking, not nostalgic; and its general tone is cheerful, not grim or dyspeptic.” Furthermore: “Its twentieth-century heroes tend to be TR [Teddy Roosevelt], FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt], and Ronald Reagan,” while “Republican and conservative worthies” like “Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, and Barry Goldwater are politely overlooked.”<sup>67</sup>

That “the conservative movement” retains this distinctly neoconservative character to the present day is apparent from the comments of some of its leading lights. Take, for instance, William J. Bennett, a former cabinet member of the administrations of Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr. who is now a nationally syndicated talk radio host. Bennett articulates emphatically the neoconservative’s conviction that morality requires subscription to abstract, self-evident principles or ideals. Indeed the (American) state has a commitment to advance these values throughout the world. American patriotism demands “steadfast devotion to the ideals of freedom and equality,” Bennett insists. The Founders discovered “something quite new—a new nation conceived in a new way and dedicated to a new self-evident truth that all men are

created equal,” Bennett explains. America is “a country tied together in loyalty to a principle [...]”<sup>68</sup>

Fox News celebrity and nationally syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer locates himself unmistakably within this neoconservative intellectual tradition when he describes America as “a nation uniquely built not on blood, race or consanguinity, but on *a proposition*”—the proposition that all human beings are created equal, or possess equal rights. Krauthammer, along with his fellow neoconservatives, refer to this creed as “American exceptionalism.” From it, he makes the characteristically neoconservative move and deduces a “value-driven foreign policy”—what he calls “democratic globalism.” From the latter vantage point, “the engine of history” is “not the will to power but the will to freedom”<sup>69</sup>—i.e. “the spread of democracy” around the planet.<sup>70</sup>

Krauthammer contrasts Democratic globalism to three other approaches to foreign policy: “isolationism,” “liberal internationalism,” and “realism.” The first he rejects for being “an ideology of fear.” It promotes and reflects “fear of trade,” “immigrants,” “the Other.” “Isolationists” favor “pulling up the drawbridge to Fortress America.”<sup>71</sup> The problem with “liberal internationalism,” as Krauthammer sees it, is that it stresses “multilateralism,” which in turn threatens “to blunt the pursuit of American national interests by making them subordinate to a myriad of other interests[.]”<sup>72</sup> “Realism” defines “interest” in terms of “power,” and we “cannot live by power alone,” for “America’s national interest” is “an expression of values.”<sup>73</sup>

And this is just how American interest is viewed from the perspective of Krauthammer’s “democratic globalism.” His dogmata “can teach realism...that the spread of democracy is not just an end but a means, an indispensable means for securing American interests.”<sup>74</sup> In other words, the more “democracies” in the world the more secure we in America are.

Krauthammer is quick to note that the “universalism” of democratic globalism, “its open-ended commitment to human freedom, its temptation to plant the flag of democracy everywhere,” poses a real “danger [.]” To guard against this, Krauthammer proposes the “axiom” of what he calls “democratic *realism*.” Democratic realism supplies a criterion for the use of American force. While America “*will support democracy everywhere*,” it “*will commit blood and treasure only in places where there is a strategic necessity*,” i.e. “*places central to the larger war against the existential enemy, the enemy that poses a global mortal threat to freedom*.”<sup>75</sup>

The vast majority of Krauthammer’s colleagues among the “conservative” punditry class agree with him on all of these points. Nationally syndicated columnist and radio show host Dennis Prager, for instance, affirms “American exceptionalism” while explaining that it is nothing more or less than the belief that “America often knows better than the world what is right and wrong.” And why is this? For the most part, belief in “American exceptionalism” rises from the “Judeo-Christian” character of America’s “values.”<sup>76</sup> Though these “values” have going for them their “moral superiority” to all others, they are also of “universal applicability” and “eminently exportable.” Prager is unabashed: “These magnificent American values are applicable to virtually every society in the world.”<sup>77</sup>



Syndicated columnist and radio show host Michael Medved responds to the charge that “conservatives” like himself reveal inconsistencies in their thought when they simultaneously contend for less intrusive government at home *and* a more “activist” American government abroad. The solution to this apparent inconsistency, Medved insists, flows from the view of “American exceptionalism” held by “conservatives” who “passionately embrace the idea that the United States is better than the rest of the world,” the “almost mystical faith in the American people and the powers of the market.” Thus, since Americans “need a strong hand from Washington far less than do beleaguered hordes in less fortunate societies around the world,” there should be “less Washington interference at home and more Washington determination abroad [.]”<sup>78</sup>

Neoconservatism, it should now be clear, endorses conceptions of knowledge, morality, and political philosophy that are unmistakably *rationalist* in character. Reason is a universal faculty with access to abstract moral principles (or ideals or values). Since it is for the sake of realizing these eternal moral verities, both home and abroad, that the American state exists, America, from this perspective, is seen as an “enterprise association,” an association defined in terms of its *goals*.

### 3 Conclusion

By now I hope to have persuaded the reader of the truth of two theses. First, contrary to what its name and adherents would have us believe, neoconservatism is most emphatically *not* just another variation of conservatism, a species of conservative thought distinguished merely on account of its *emphases*. Rather, neoconservatism depends upon notions of knowledge, morality, and the nature of a modern state that differ *in kind* from those that inform the classical conservative tradition. Secondly, insofar as neoconservatism is a militant, imperialistic form of political rationalism, it has nothing to do with conservatism or older American notions of limited constitutional government.

## Endnotes

1. Bob Grant, *Let's Be Heard* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996), 100.
2. For representative expressions of this conventional approach see, Tobin, Jonathan S, "The GOP Doesn't Need a Purge." *Commentary*, December 2012 <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2012/12/04/the-gop-doesnt-need-a-purge-tea-party-william-f-buckley/html> (accessed February 28, 2014); and Welch, David, "Where Have You Gone Bill Buckley?" *The New York Times*, December 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/04/opinion/where-have-you-gone-bill-buckley.html> (accessed February 28, 2014)
3. From Bill Bennett's, *America: The Last Best Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006) to Larry Schweikart's and Michael Allen's, *A Patriot's Guide to American History* (New York: Sentinel, 2004); from Thomas Woods' *A Politically Incorrect Guide to American History* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2004) to Howard Zinn's, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980), the temptation to invoke "history" for the sake of present political purposes knows no partisan bounds. This isn't to deny, of course, that either the aforementioned authors or anyone else who is guilty of this charge of enlisting "history" in the service of advancing an ideological agenda speak *falsely*. Rather, it's just that while their utterances may very well be *true*, they are not *historically* true.
4. That there is some degree of arbitrariness in my selection of conservative theorists is, of course, undeniable. However, given that, the object of this study being an intellectual tradition transcending time and place, it is also unavoidable, the goal here is not to eliminate, but to limit, the arbitrariness that's permitted to creep into this analysis. Since Burke is widely regarded as "the patron saint of modern conservatism," it seems obvious that any examination of conservative thought that excluded Burke would be woefully inadequate. My choice of Kirk and Oakeshott, two not insignificantly different sorts of conservative thinkers from both sides of the Atlantic, is intended to show two things: first, in spite of their dissimilarities, they affirm one and the same set of philosophical concepts; secondly, these concepts have characterized conservatism in the Anglo-sphere from the time of Burke.
5. It is worth noting that to this selection of neoconservative writers endless legions of others could have been added. The most casual perusal any random issue of *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, or *Commentary* unfailingly expresses the neoconservative view, as do virtually every "conservative" talk radio and Fox News host.
6. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 419.
7. *Ibid.*, 424.
8. *Ibid.*, 431.
9. *Ibid.*, 433.
10. *Ibid.*, 438.
11. *Ibid.*, 448.
12. *Ibid.*, 447.
13. *Ibid.*, 451.
14. *Ibid.*, 452.
15. *Ibid.*, 458.
16. *Ibid.*, 428, italics original.
17. *Ibid.*, 451.
18. *Ibid.*, 437.

19. Ibid., 451.
20. Ibid., 440.
21. Ibid., 440.
22. Ibid., 443.
23. Michael Oakeshott, "Talking Politics," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1962), 450, emphases added.
24. Ibid., 450-451.
25. Ibid., 451.
26. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 442.
27. Ibid., 443.
28. Michael Oakeshott, "Talking Politics," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1962), 454.
29. Ibid., 455.
30. Buckley, William F., "Russell Kirk, R.I.P.," *National Review Online*, October 6, 2005 <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/215620/russell-kirk-r-i-p/william-f-buckley-jr> (accessed March 2, 2014)
31. Kirk, Russell, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Elliot*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 1985), xv, emphasis original.
32. Ibid., xvi.
33. Ibid., xv.
34. Ibid., xvi.
35. Ibid., 8.
36. Ibid., 9.
37. Michael Oakeshott, "On Being Conservative," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essay* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1962), 409.
38. Ibid., 410.
39. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 428.
40. Ibid., 428.
41. Quoted in Kirk's, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Elliot*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 1985), 47.
42. Ibid., 45.
43. Elliot Abrams remarks: "It is also clear that one of the most unattractive things about the opposition to neoconservatism is its inability to stay away from anti-Semitism." See his, "Neoconservatism, a good idea that won't go away." *The Commentator*, June 2013 [http://www.thecommentator.com/article/3758/neoconservatism\\_a\\_good\\_idea\\_that\\_won\\_t\\_go\\_away](http://www.thecommentator.com/article/3758/neoconservatism_a_good_idea_that_won_t_go_away) (accessed March 4, 2014)
44. Murray, Douglas. *Neoconservatism: Why We Need It*. (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), 38, emphasis added.
45. Ibid., 2.
46. Strauss, Leo. *Natural Right and History*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 6.
47. Ibid., 2.
48. Ibid., 13, 14.
49. Ibid., 312.
50. Ibid., 313.
51. Bloom, Alan. *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 39.

52. Ibid., 27.
53. Ibid., 259.
54. Irving Kristol, "The Right Stuff," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 184.
55. Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion," in Ibid., 192.
56. Kristol, "What is a Neoconservative?" in Ibid., 149.
57. Ibid., 150.
58. Kristol, "'Human Rights': The Hidden Agenda," in Ibid., 228.
59. Ibid., 227.
60. Kristol, "The Right Stuff," in Ibid., 182.
61. Kristol, "'Human Rights': The Hidden Agenda," in Ibid., 229.
62. Kristol, "What is a Neoconservative?" in Ibid., 150.
63. Kristol, "'Human Rights': The Hidden Agenda," in Ibid., 227.
64. Kristol, "American Conservatism: 1945-1995," in Ibid., 177, emphasis added.
65. Kristol, "The Right Stuff," in Ibid., 184.
66. Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion," in Ibid., 192.
67. Ibid., 191.
68. Bennett, William J., ed. *The Spirit of America* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 26.
69. Krauthammer, Charles, "Democratic Realism," in *Things that Matter* (New York: Random House, 2013), 346.
70. Ibid., 347.
71. Ibid., 335.
72. Ibid., 340.
73. Ibid., 345.
74. Ibid., 347.
75. Ibid., 348, emphasis original.
76. Prager, Dennis, "Who Believes in American Exceptionalism? Judeo-Christian Values part XXIV," *Townhall.com*, November 2005  
[http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2005/11/01/who\\_believes\\_in\\_american\\_exceptionalismnbsp;judeo-christian\\_values\\_part\\_xxiv](http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2005/11/01/who_believes_in_american_exceptionalismnbsp;judeo-christian_values_part_xxiv) (accessed March 4, 2014)
77. Prager, Dennis, "Why America is Still the Best Hope," *Townhall.com* April 2012  
[http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2012/04/24/why\\_america\\_is\\_still\\_the\\_best\\_hope](http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2012/04/24/why_america_is_still_the_best_hope) (accessed March 4, 2014)
78. Medved, Michael, "American exceptionalism: GOP vs. the Dems," *USA Today* March 2011 [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2011-03-30-column30\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2011-03-30-column30_ST_N.htm) (accessed March 4, 2014)

## References

- Abrams E. "Neoconservatism, a good idea that won't go away." *Commentator Magazine*, June 2013. [http://www.thecommentator.com/article/3758/neoconservatism\\_a\\_good\\_idea\\_that\\_won\\_t\\_go\\_away](http://www.thecommentator.com/article/3758/neoconservatism_a_good_idea_that_won_t_go_away) (accessed March 4, 2014).
- Bennett, B. *America: The Last Best Hope*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006.
- Bennett, W. J., ed. *The Spirit of America*. New York: Touchstone, 1997.
- Bloom, A. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Buckley, W. F., "Russell Kirk, R.I.P.," *National Review Online*, October 6, 2005 <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/215620/russell-kirk-r-i-p/william-f-buckley-jr> (accessed March 2, 2014).
- Burke, E. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Grant, B. *Let's Be Heard*. New York: Pocket Books, 1996.
- Kirk, R. *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Elliot*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington D.C.: Regnery, 1985.
- Krauthammer, Ch. "Democratic Realism," in *Things that Matter*. New York: Random House, 2013.
- Kristol, K. "The Right Stuff," in *The Neoconservative Persuasion*, New York: Basic Books, 2011.
- Medved, M. "American exceptionalism: GOP vs. the Dems," *USA Today* March 2011 [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2011-03-30-column30\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2011-03-30-column30_ST_N.htm) (accessed March 4, 2014)
- Murray, D. *Neoconservatism: Why We Need It*. New York: Encounter Books, 2006.
- Oakeshott, M. "Talking Politics," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1962.
- Prager, D. "Why America is Still the Best Hope," *Townhall.com* April 2012 [http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2012/04/24/why\\_america\\_is\\_still\\_the\\_best\\_hope](http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2012/04/24/why_america_is_still_the_best_hope) (accessed March 4, 2014).
- Prager, D. "Who Believes in American Exceptionalism? Judeo-Christian Values part XXIV," *Townhall.com*, November 2005 [http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2005/11/01/who\\_believes\\_in\\_american\\_exceptionalismnbspc\\_judeo-christian\\_values\\_part\\_xxiv](http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2005/11/01/who_believes_in_american_exceptionalismnbspc_judeo-christian_values_part_xxiv) (accessed March 4, 2014).
- Strauss, L. *Natural Right and History*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Sweikhart, L., Allen, M. *A Patriot's Guide to American History*. New York: Sentinel, 2004.
- Tobin, J. S. "The GOP Doesn't Need a Purge." *Commentary Magazine*, December 2012 <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2012/12/04/the-gop-doesnt-need-a-purge-tea-party-william-f-buckley/html> (accessed February 28, 2014).
- Welch, D. "Where Have You Gone Bill Buckley?" *The New York Times*, December 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/04/opinion/where-have-you-gone-bill-buckley.html> (accessed February 28, 2014).
- Woods, T. *A Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2004.
- Zinn, H. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: Harper Collins, 1980.