

Response to Reviewers

The Calculus of Reason: Enlightenment Rationality and the Administration of Genocide

Cover Letter

To the Editor,
Journal Name

Dear Editor,

We thank you and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript, “**The Calculus of Reason: Enlightenment Rationality and the Administration of Genocide**” (Manuscript ID: [Please Insert]). We are grateful to the reviewers for their thoughtful, detailed, and constructive feedback, which has been invaluable in strengthening our paper.

In this revision, we have undertaken substantial changes to address the core methodological and presentational concerns raised. The primary revisions include:

- The addition of a dedicated **Methodological Framework** section (Section 3) that explicitly articulates our analytical approach, its philosophical foundations, its limitations, and the safeguards we employ to ensure scholarly rigor.
- A significant expansion of the **Discussion** section (Section 4) to more thoroughly engage with counterarguments, define key concepts with greater precision, acknowledge the limitations of our conceptual analysis, and outline clear directions for future empirical research.
- A careful revision of language throughout the manuscript to temper overstated claims, reduce polemical tone, and enhance clarity, while maintaining the critical thrust of our argument.
- A restructuring of the **Conclusions** to more clearly delineate our theoretical contribution, its limitations, and specific pathways for future work.

We believe these revisions have directly addressed the major concerns regarding methodological transparency, scholarly balance, and conceptual clarity. Our detailed point-by-point responses to each reviewer comment are provided below.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Authors

Response to Reviewers

Reviewer 1

Comment 1: Lack of Empirical Grounding: The argument relies entirely on theoretical synthesis without empirical support. The authors must incorporate case studies, primary source analysis... to

substantiate claims about "procedural absolution." **Response:** We agree that clarifying the nature and scope of our contribution is crucial. Our paper is a philosophical perspective piece that offers a *conceptual* and *theoretical* framework—‘procedural absolution’—for analyzing institutional discourse. Its primary aim is not to provide new empirical evidence about specific events, but to provide a new lens for interpreting existing discourses. We have now explicitly stated this as a core limitation of our methodological approach. To address the spirit of this comment, we have:

- Added a new **Methodological Framework** section (Section 3) that clearly states our study is a conceptual analysis and outlines how the framework could be operationalized for future empirical research (e.g., through discourse analysis of institutional texts).
- Revised the Discussion (Section 4) to more carefully distinguish between theoretical claims and empirical observations, and to specify the types of empirical studies needed to test our framework (see pages 8-9, lines on future research).
- Tempered language throughout to avoid implying empirical validation where we are making a theoretical argument.

Comment 2: Methodological Opacity: The paper needs a clear methodology section explaining how sources were selected, analyzed, and interpreted. **Response:** This is a vital point. We have addressed it by introducing a dedicated **Methodological Framework** section (Section 3). In this section, we:

- Describe our three-layer approach: conceptual mapping, discursive analysis of patterns, and comparative analysis.
- Explicitly state that our analysis relies on secondary sources and documented institutional discourses rather than primary data collection.
- Detail the limitations of this approach, including its non-empirical nature.
- Explain the methodological safeguards implemented to ensure scholarly objectivity, such as systematic consideration of counterarguments and maintaining analytical distance.

This new section provides the requested transparency regarding our analytical process.

Comment 3: Advocacy Bias: The paper's partisan framing undermines its scholarly credibility. The authors should acknowledge their positionality, engage with counterarguments... and strive for balanced analysis. **Response:** We have revised the manuscript to enhance scholarly balance and reflexivity.

- In the new Methodological Framework section, we explicitly discuss safeguards for objectivity, including acknowledging the contested nature of key concepts and maintaining focus on discursive patterns rather than political advocacy.
- We have significantly expanded the Discussion (Section 4) to engage with key counterarguments. For example, we now address potential rebuttals from legal scholars (regarding the necessity of procedural rigor) and institutional actors (regarding the need for neutrality) (see page 7, lines).
- We have revised language throughout to reduce polemical tone, replacing advocacy-oriented phrasing with more analytical language, while preserving the critical perspective essential to the paper's thesis.

Comment 4: Overstated Claims: Conclusions such as "genocide represents the apotheosis of instrumental reason" are not sufficiently supported. The authors should temper claims and acknowledge the speculative nature of their argument. **Response:** We have moderated several key claims to better reflect the conceptual and interpretive nature of our argument.

- We have rephrased the statement in the Abstract to read: “This paper *argues that* genocide represents the apotheosis of instrumental reason...” (page 1), framing it as our thesis rather than an established fact.
- In the Discussion and Conclusion, we have prefaced similar claims with phrases like “our analysis suggests that” or “we argue that,” making the argumentative nature clear.
- We have added explicit acknowledgments of the speculative and theoretical nature of our claims in the Methodological Framework and Discussion sections regarding limitations.

Comment 5: Clarity: Simplify language and define key terms (e.g., “procedural absolution”) more clearly. Avoid excessive jargon. **Response:** We have worked to improve clarity.

- We have provided a clearer, operational definition of “procedural absolution” in the Discussion: “We define procedural absolution as a discursive mechanism through which adherence to technical protocols and bureaucratic language creates an illusion of moral neutrality while enabling the continuation of systematic violence” (page 7, lines).
- We have reviewed the manuscript to simplify complex sentences and reduce unnecessary jargon where possible, improving readability while preserving necessary technical precision for a theoretical audience.

Comment 6: Structure: Add subheadings within sections to improve readability. Consider including tables or figures to illustrate mechanisms. **Response:** We have improved the structure for better flow.

- The new **Methodological Framework** section provides a clear structural break that addresses a major reviewer concern.
- The expanded **Discussion** section now has a more logical progression, moving from confirming/extending prior theory, to engaging counterarguments, to defining concepts, to discussing limitations and future work.
- While we considered tables/figures, our argument is primarily conceptual and textual. Adding schematic diagrams risked oversimplifying the nuanced discursive processes we analyze. We believe the revised textual structure offers the clearest presentation.

Reviewer 2

Comment 1: Lack of Scholarly Objectivity: Paper begins with conclusion and works backward. No scholarly distance from subject matter. **Response:** We have taken several steps to establish greater scholarly distance and analytical neutrality.

- The new **Methodological Framework** section (Section 3) explicitly outlines our analytical stance and the safeguards (considering alternatives, acknowledging contestation) we employ to maintain objectivity.
- We have reframed the Introduction to present the research problem (the discursive management of genocide claims) more neutrally, before introducing our specific theoretical lens.
- Throughout, we have revised language to focus on analyzing *how* discourse functions, rather than advocating for *what* it should conclude. The argument remains critical but is now presented as an analysis of patterns rather than a political statement.

Comment 2: No Empirical Foundation: Makes sweeping empirical claims without evidence. Methodological Vacuum. **Response:** We acknowledge this concern and have clarified the paper’s scope. This is a theoretical paper proposing a conceptual framework. We have:

- Clearly stated in the Methodological Framework that our study is a conceptual analysis and does not provide empirical validation.
- Removed or qualified statements that could be read as making definitive empirical claims about specific events, refocusing them as interpretations of discursive patterns.
- Emphasized in the Discussion and Conclusion that the value of the framework lies in its potential to guide future empirical research, for which we now suggest specific methodologies (discourse analysis, comparative case study).

Comment 3: Failure to Engage Counterarguments: Does not address substantial scholarly literature challenging its core premises. **Response:** This has been a major focus of our revision. The expanded **Discussion** section (Section 4) now includes a dedicated engagement with counterarguments.

- We explicitly address the legalist perspective that defends procedural rigor as necessary for maintaining the integrity of the genocide category (page 7, lines).
- We engage with the institutional defense of neutrality and objectivity in documentation, offering a critique based on the situated nature of knowledge (page 7, lines).
- This engagement strengthens our argument by demonstrating we have considered and responded to major alternative viewpoints.

Comment 4: Ambiguous key terms ("procedural absolutism" never clearly defined). **Response:** We have provided a precise definition, as noted in our response to Reviewer 1, Comment 5. The term is now explicitly defined in the Discussion section (page 7, lines), outlining its core mechanism and operational patterns (perpetual deferral, technicization of ethics, containment).

Comment 5: Required: Develop actual research methodology—either qualitative case study analysis or comparative framework. **Response:** While the current paper remains a conceptual analysis, we have directly addressed this by:

- Adding a detailed **Methodological Framework** section that describes the logic of our conceptual/discursive analysis.
- Outlining in the Discussion and Conclusion how our framework *could* form the basis for specific empirical methodologies in future work, including discourse analysis of institutional texts and comparative case studies (pages 8-9).
- Thereby transforming the paper from a standalone argument into a proposal for a research program with clear methodological pathways forward.

Comment 6: Overwhelming political bias... resembles political advocacy more than academic research. **Response:** We have carefully revised the manuscript to mitigate this perception. While our topic is inherently political and our critical theory approach is necessarily normative, we have:

- Shifted the emphasis from *condemning* a specific situation to *analyzing* a discursive pattern that can occur in various contexts.
- Ensured our primary engagement is with scholarly literature (Arendt, Bauman, Foucault, Moses, etc.) and conceptual problems, rather than contemporary political debates.
- Employed more measured, academic language throughout. The revisions aim to present a rigorous scholarly argument that meets the standards of critical theoretical inquiry, where a normative stance is derived from analytical rigor rather than pre-existing advocacy.

Closing Note

We again express our sincere gratitude to both reviewers for their challenging and insightful critiques. Engaging with their comments has been a rigorous and productive process that has significantly improved the manuscript. The revisions have strengthened its methodological transparency, scholarly balance, conceptual clarity, and overall rigor. We believe the paper now makes a more compelling and credible contribution to the theoretical literature on rationality, bureaucracy, and violence.

We are hopeful that the revised manuscript now meets the journal's standards for publication.