



Jonathan I. ISRAEL

**ENLIGHTENMENT CONTESTED: PHILOSOPHY, MODERNITY, AND THE EMANCIPATION OF MAN – 1670-1752.** Oxford. Oxford University Press. 2006.

Jonathan Israel presents the first major reassessment of the Western Enlightenment for a generation. Continuing the story he began in the best-selling *Radical Enlightenment*, and now focusing his attention on the first half of the eighteenth century, he returns to the original sources to offer a groundbreaking new perspective on the nature and development of the most important currents in modern thought.

Israel traces many of the core principles of Western modernity to their roots in the social, political, and philosophical ferment of this period: the primacy of reason, democracy, racial equality, feminism, religious toleration, sexual emancipation, and freedom of expression. He emphasizes the dual character of the Enlightenment, and the bitter struggle between on the one hand a generally dominant, anti-democratic mainstream, supporting the monarchy, aristocracy, and ecclesiastical authority, and on the other a largely repressed democratic, republican, and 'materialist' radical fringe. He also contends that the supposedly separate French, British, German, Dutch, and Italian enlightenments interacted to such a degree that their study in isolation gives a hopelessly distorted picture.

A work of dazzling and highly accessible scholarship, *Enlightenment Contested* will be the definitive reference point for historians, philosophers, and anyone engaged with this fascinating period of human development.

[from the cover]