

Invitation from

**the Department of History**

**To the Annual Nicolai Rubinstein Lecture in the  
History of Political Thought and Intellectual History**

# **‘Democratic versus Aristocratic Enlightenment: The Split in European Thought in the Late Eighteenth Century’**

Professor Jonathan Israel,  
Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton)

**Wednesday 5 November 2008 at 6.30pm**

Skeel Lecture Theatre

People’s Palace

Queen Mary, University of London

Mile End Road

London

E1 4NS

A reception will follow the lecture

**RSVP on attached card or by email to [events@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:events@qmul.ac.uk)**



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## 'Democratic versus Aristocratic Enlightenment: The Split in European Thought in the Late Eighteenth Century'

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From the very outset the European Enlightenment was divided between radical and moderate wings. After 1770, with the appearance of the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique* and Baron d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*, the split between the moderates and radicals became at once more open and more political. Voltaire concentrated most of his efforts after 1770 on counter-attacking this radical tendency, which he believed was threatening to undermine the entire basis of ancien regime society anchored in monarchy, aristocracy and ecclesiastical power. This late eighteenth-century intellectual struggle formed a crucial part of the background not just to the French Revolution but the simultaneous democratic movements and conspiracies under way in the 1780s and 1790s in the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland and Britain.

Jonathan Israel was born in London and educated in Kilburn before moving on to study at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. He taught for thirty years in British universities, ultimately holding the Chair of Dutch History at University College London, before taking up the post of Professor of Modern European History at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton in 2001.

The author of numerous distinguished studies in Dutch, colonial and European history, his most acclaimed works are *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1466-1806* (1995), *The Radical Enlightenment* (2001) and *Enlightenment Contested* (2006). Professor Israel is a Fellow of the British Academy and a corresponding Fellow of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences.