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Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv + 276. USD$26.95 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-691-14200-5.

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Jonathan Israel's volume will surely be of interest to readers of *History of Intellectual Culture*. It comes out of a series of lectures Israel prepared to commemorate the life of Sir Isaiah Berlin. And, as Israel points out in his Preface: "Among the chief features of Sir Isaiah's intellectual legacy were his valiant efforts to pull philosophy and history closer together (no easy task) and establish what in his time was the virtually new discipline of 'intellectual history.' Accordingly," writes Israel, "I hope that what follows will stand as a small tribute to his memory and achievements, especially by again attempting to draw philosophy and history into a closer, more meaningful partnership" (xiv). Is Israel's attempt successful?

Unlike Israel's two recently published tomes on Enlightenment themes,[1] *A Revolution of the Mind* is a relatively slim volume. Here, Israel's writing is concise; his argument is straightforward, providing a clear-cut account of what he takes the Enlightenment to be. His overarching framework is of "two fundamentally different conceptions of progress" (12) in the Enlightenment. He challenges those who approach the Enlightenment in national contexts, arguing that these "differences were certainly not national in character" (9); rather, everywhere there was on one side "the radical democratic and, in metaphysics, materialist-determinist, or alternatively Christian-Unitarian," and on the other side "the 'moderate' and positively providential (Deist or religious), championing the monarchical-aristocratic order of society." These two positions "were diametrically opposed to each other. . . . [T]hey were . . . from the outset philosophically and theologically incompatible, indeed opposed, which, on the whole, Enlightenment historians have failed to engage with" (12). The "battle" was one "between radical and moderate thought, between the vision of a time-honored, God-ordained providential order, on the one hand, and monistic, Spinozistic systems anchored in representative democracy and egalitarianism, on the other" (153). Or, as he puts it in the opening line of his concluding chapter: "By the mid-1770s the split in the French, German, Dutch, American, Italian, and British enlightenments had become open, clear, and irreparable. . . It was a vast conflict" (221).

For some Enlightenments at specific points of time and for particular sets of figures, Israel's approach may be useful. He appears to be on solid ground in his portrayal of the importance of radical French Enlightenment thinkers such as Denis Diderot (1713-84) and especially Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach (1723-89), the latter being Israel's personal favorite who is cited more than any other author.

[1] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford University Press, 2001); and *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

His account of some aspects of the English Enlightenment is also useful for its drawing on some of the best recent work by Anthony Page and Martin Fitzpatrick.[2] However, for other Enlightenments — the Scottish and American, for instance — Israel is on less solid ground. Here, he draws on the existing historiography only selectively and his coverage is sporadic at best. One way to demonstrate this is with reference to Israel's assessment of the Scottish Enlightenment figure David Hume (1711-76) and Hume's reception in eighteenth-century America.

Hume's general place in Israel's account of the Enlightenment allows for several observations. First, Israel considers Hume to be the "the foremost Scottish philosopher of the Enlightenment" (15). Not many would disagree. But while his contemporaries knew Hume as a philosopher, they knew him just as much, or more, as the historian who had produced a six-volume *History of England* (1754-62).[3] That work — a best-seller by any measure in the Age of Enlightenment — goes unnoticed in Israel's book. This is a curious approach in a volume that aims to bring history and philosophy closer together. Hume would appear to be an ideal candidate with whom to do that. The absence of Hume's *History* is part of Israel's more general neglect of eighteenth-century historical writings. He notes that there was an "outpouring" of Enlightenment texts that were "literary, satirical, and journalistic, as well as philosophical," but "everywhere it was the new 'philosophical' content that chiefly counted" (87), not the history.

A second observation worth making about Hume's general place in *A Revolution of the Mind* concerns Israel's attempt to categorize him. Israel's Hume does not belong to the Radical Enlightenment but rather to the Moderate Enlightenment. On some scores, that makes good sense. Certainly Hume did not believe in any particular metaphysical system. He saw no evidence of the sort of unlimited progress in which his friends Richard Price (1723-91) and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727-81) believed. But how well does Hume fit into a Moderate Enlightenment defined by its belief in "supernaturally ordered and divinely guided progress"? "For the moderate mainstream," Israel writes "reason is immaterial and inherent in God, a divinely given gift to man, and one that raises him above the rest" (33). "Unquestionably, the moderate view was by far the more widely embraced everywhere and at all social levels: the world and everything in it were created by God and the social order is divinely sanctioned" (52). Israel's Moderates were "those championing divine Providence" (131). None of that sounds like Hume. Remember, too, in Israel's polarized Enlightenment world, there is no tenable middle ground between the Radicals and Moderates; no room for half measures. The Enlightenment figures with whom he deals (and rather selectively) are pigeon-holed into one of two polarized ideological camps in that "vast conflict" that was being "fought out" (221). Perhaps Hume gets short shrift because he does not fit the mould very well. Indeed, Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), a lesser light of the Scottish Enlightenment than Hume, is discussed in more detail than is Hume — or Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) or Adam Smith (1723-90) for that matter — perhaps because Ferguson's notion that "it has pleased Providence, for wise proposes . . . to place men in different stations and to bestow upon them different degrees of wealth" (111) fits much better into Israel's cookie-cutter approach. As is well known, Hume had reservations about Ferguson's thought.

Third — and this gets to the crux of the matter — is when Israel writes that Hume "was viewed in conservative circles as a particularly useful philosophical resource against egalitarian and democratic ideas and was also invoked against colonial rebellion" (16). What is Israel's proof? He writes:

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[2] Israel cites Anthony Page's *John Jebb and the Enlightenment Origins of British Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); and Martin Fitzpatrick's "The View from Mount Pleasant: Enlightenment in late-eighteenth-century Liverpool," in Richard Butterwick, Simon Davies, and Gabriel Sánchez Espinosa, eds., *Peripheries of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2008), 119-144.

[3] David Hume, *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688* (London, 1754-62), which was reprinted often in Britain, continental Europe, and America.

> Among [Hume's] conservative admirers was one of the leading American "Tory" publicists who in 1776, under the pseudonym "Candidus" . . . published a tract insisting on the benefits of rule by Britain and glorying in the fact that "this beautiful system (according to Montesquieu), our constitution is a compound of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy," an empire dominating the Atlantic and the trade of the entire world. Implacably opposed to independence, "Candidus" went so far as to claim that "independence and slavery are synonymous terms," repeatedly citing "the profound and elegant Hume" against the subversive elements attempting to "seduce the [American] people into their criminal designs." (16)

That Hume was cited by "Candidus" is absolutely true. But Israel does not tell us several things. He does not tell us that the Humean works cited by "Candidus" were his political essays and his *History of England*. Hume the political historian is in play here, not Hume the philosopher. Nor does Israel tell us that "Candidus" was not the only or first Loyalist writer who looked to Hume's authority. Ezekiel Russell had done so in the pages of his *Censor* in 1772, for instance.[4] But most importantly, Israel does not tell us that for every Loyalist such as "Candidus" or Russell who invoked Hume's name in eighteenth-century America, dozens of other Americans saw Hume as a friend of the American Revolution and turned to his works to help build their case.[5] If one is interested in the eighteenth-century American dimension of the "intellectual origins of modern democracy," as Israel claims to be, then Hume's part of that story should be traced in many other places besides a pamphlet by "Candidus."

For Israel, the heavy work of the American Enlightenment comes to an end with the conclusion of the American Revolution. Israel writes that "most Americans deemed the Revolution complete once Britain recognized American Independence in 1783" (44). As an example of one who thought that way, Israel cites Alexander Hamilton. That seems a very curious thing to say of one who worked so hard to help draft the US Constitution of 1787 and who was the primary voice of "Publius," the author of the celebrated 1787 *Federalist Papers*. But then *The Federalist* is not once mentioned in Israel's selective account of the intellectual origins of modern democracy. Israel wants us to see the Moderate Enlightenment everywhere as a failure. The Moderates, he writes, were to "fail spectacularly" (120). "In short, Moderate Enlightenment was simply unable to do the job that major portions of society required it to do and hence it eventually lost the initiative. By the 1780s, control of events had passed to the radical enlighteners and, equally evident, to the out-and-out opponents of all Enlightenment, the ideologues of the Counter-Enlightenment" (122). That may be the case for the history of the Enlightenment in parts of Europe, but it is badly misguided for an assessment of the Enlightenment in America.

In his effort to streamline the philosophy of the Radical Enlightenment and what it achieved, Jonathan Israel has unduly crowded out much else that would be part of a richer and more complete account. *A Revolution of the Mind* is surely not a volume that draws history and philosophy closer together.

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[4] See, for example, the issues for 4 January 1772 and 1 February 1772.

[5] My book, *David Hume and Eighteenth-Century America* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), attempted to tell part of that nuanced history.