



Illuminations

Celebrating the Kant Jubilee

Enlightenment on Trial

International Conference

Friday, July 5 – Monday, July 8, 2024

EINSTEIN
FORUM

Conception:

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2024 is the 300th anniversary of Immanuel Kant's birthday. To celebrate the greatest philosopher of the Enlightenment, the Einstein Forum will host a series of events through September. Kicking off our *Denkfest* is a conference presenting the case against the Enlightenment along with arguments in its defense. The idea of putting the Enlightenment on trial stems from Kant himself. He often wrote of the tribunal of reason, and one of his greatest concerns was the charge that freedom of thought would lead to nihilism. Abandoning the Enlightenment, as so many urge us to do today, means not only abandoning efforts to cultivate our capacities for reason, but also three principles at the core of any progressive worldview: a commitment to universalism over tribalism, a belief in a hard distinction between justice and power, and a belief in the possibility of progress itself.

Aleida Assmann

Can the Enlightenment Enlighten Itself?

The Enlightenment is noted for two innovations that turned into two foundational legacies for our present world: the creation of a culture based on scientific principles and progress, and a new framework for self-reflexive and self-critical thinking. Both innovations have changed the world and have paved the historical path towards Western exceptionalism. In my talk, I ask whether it is possible to overcome the exclusionary force of Western exceptionalism without giving up the values and achievements of the Enlightenment. My answer is yes, and to substantiate my claim, I will focus on the concept of enlightening by introducing a distinction between “blank spaces” and “blind spots.”

Aleida Assmann was Chair of English Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Konstanz from 1993 to 2014, and has taught as a guest professor at various international universities. The main areas of her research include history of media, the history and theory of reading, and cultural memory, with a special emphasis on Holocaust and trauma. Together with her late husband, Jan Assmann, she received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 2018. She was made a corresponding fellow at the British Academy in 2021. Her publications in English include *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices, and Trajectories* (ed. with Sebastian Conrad, 2010), *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (2012), *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (2016), and *Is the Time Out of Joint? On the Rise and Fall of the Modern Time Regime* (2020).

David A. Bell

The Uses and Abuses of Enlightenment

The Enlightenment has been on trial from the beginning. Arguably, it was first seen as a coherent, cohesive phenomenon by its enemies, who held “philosophy” responsible for corroding faith and tradition and convincing naïve readers that the world could be made entirely anew. But precisely because it was born amidst strife and persecution, from the beginning the Enlightenment has risked falling prey to its own versions of intolerance and dogmatism. In my paper, I will examine how thinkers of the eighteenth century faced this challenge, and show how the original “combats des Lumières” shaped visions of the Enlightenment that have endured, in different forms, down to the present day.

David A. Bell is a professor of history and the director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University. His scholarship looks at the political culture of the Enlightenment and revolutionary France. After completing his dissertation at Princeton in 1991, Bell went on to teach at Yale University. He then served as Dean of Faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University, where he also held the Andrew W. Mellon Chair in the Humanities. He joined the Princeton faculty in 2010. Bell has held fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library. His writing has been recognized by the Society for French Historical Studies, the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, and the American Historical Association. Bell is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a corresponding fellow of the British Academy. He is currently writing a history of the Enlightenment.

Omri Boehm
Daniel Kehlmann

“The Starry Heavens above me” A Dialogue on Kant

Three hundred years after the birth of Immanuel Kant, Daniel Kehlmann and Omri Boehm decided to think about how the philosopher from Königsberg can help us with the pressing questions of today. Over a series of conversations, they discussed everything from reason and illusion to racism, colonialism, and enlightenment; from space and time to freedom, art, justice, and the problem of evil; from knowledge and belief to self and God. Their discussions resulted in the book *Der bestirnte Himmel über mir: Ein Gespräch über Kant* (2024). For the conference, the authors meet again to discuss some of their answers and continue the conversation.

Omri Boehm is an associate professor and the chair of the Department of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York. He teaches and writes on early modern philosophy and philosophy of religion, with a specific focus on Descartes, Spinoza, and Kant. His books include *The Binding of Isaac: A Religious Model of Disobedience* (2007), *Kant’s Critique of Spinoza* (2014), and *Haifa Republic: A Democratic Future for Israel* (2021). He was awarded the 2023 Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding for his most recent book, *Radikaler Universalismus: Jenseits von Identität* (“Radical Universalism: Beyond Identity”). His writing has appeared in *Die Zeit*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Haaretz*.

Daniel Kehlmann is a German-language novelist and playwright. Born in Munich in 1975, Kehlmann’s 2005 novel *Die Vermessung der Welt* (*Measuring the World*) has become one of the most successful German novels in the postwar period. His work has been translated into more than 40 languages. In 2020, Kehlmann’s novel *Tyll* was shortlisted for the International Booker Prize. He has been awarded the Candide Prize, the Per Olov Enquist Prize, the Thomas Mann Prize, and the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize. In 2013, Kehlmann collaborated with Jonathan Franzen on his essay collection *The Kraus Project*, a translation of works by the Austrian satirist Karl Kraus. His plays *The Mentor* (2014) and *Christmas Eve* (2017) have been performed at the West End Theater in London and the Theater Royal in Bath. He has held the Eberhard Berent Chair at New York University and has been a fellow-in-residence at the New York Public Library Center for Writers and Scholars. He is a member of the German Academy for Language and Literature. His newest novel is *Lichtspiel* (2023).

Lorraine Daston

Diversity and Universalism

It is startling to realize how quickly and thoroughly the value of diversity, until a few decades ago a value largely confined to the aesthetic and organic realms, has acquired deep political and moral significance. Universities, corporations, and governments are now judged by the degree to which they achieve diversity among their leaders and recognize diversity among their publics. Older values of the liberal polity, for example that of honoring merit without regard to creed, race, sex, or ethnicity, have been increasingly eclipsed by values that closely attend to these and other differentiating traits (which traits matter is contentious). Universalism has become an object of suspicion, either as the interests of a particular privileged group masquerading as the interests of humanity, or as simply a failure to appreciate the riches of diversity. How did this sea change in value come about, and come about so swiftly? And what kind of value is diversity?

Lorraine Daston is Director emerita of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, permanent fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, and visiting professor at the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Her work focuses on the history of rationality, including writing on the history of wonder, objectivity, observation, the moral authority of nature, probability of theory, Cold War rationality, and scientific modernity. Her work has been recognized by the Pfizer Prize of the History of Science Society, the Dan David Prize in the history of science, the Gerda Henkel Foundation Prize in the Humanities, and the Heineken Prize in History. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a member of the American Philosophical Society and the German National Academy of Sciences, and a corresponding member of the British Academy. Her most recent books are *Rules: A Short History of What We Live By* (2022) and *Rivals: How Scientists Learned to Co-operate* (2023).

Konstanty Gebert

Totalitarianism and Genocide: Bastard Children of the Enlightenment?

One of the consequences of the Enlightenment was the acceptance of the idea that the state is responsible for the welfare of its citizens. Until then, it was just the biggest bully in the neighborhood, who provided security from other bullies in return for its subjects' money and obedience. The Enlightenment about-turn gave us, gradually, universal suffrage, universal education, and other widely shared benefits, thanks to which we can, among other things, meet and discuss the Enlightenment's failing. But what was the state to do when a group was seen as standing in the way of universal prosperity and progress. It could – and did – educate the ignorant, re-educate the recalcitrant, and heal, or at least treat the indisposed. But if a group was seen as malignant and could not be reformed, the state had the right – indeed the obligation – to dispose of it, in the name of the greater common good. If the group's malignancy was of an ethnic or racial nature, ordinary mass murder would suffice; if it was of a political nature, totalitarianism was the solution. It is obvious that the creators of the Enlightenment did not desire, approve or even envisage such developments. It is no less obvious that they constitute the bastard progeniture of their creation.

Konstanty Gebert is an international reporter and columnist with the leading Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Born in Poland, he received his degree in psychology from Warsaw University in 1976. He has taught at Hebrew University, the University of California at Berkeley, Grinnell College, and Warsaw University's Collegium Civitas. He has served as a war correspondent covering conflicts in Turkey, India and Kashmir, Myanmar, Israel-Palestine, Rwanda, and Bosnia. Gebert has also advocated for a revival of Jewish life in Poland as a co-founder of the underground Jewish Flying University and the Polish Jewish intellectual monthly Midrash. He has served as a board member for the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, Paideia Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, and the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund in The Hague. In 2018 he received the American Jewish Press Association Rockower Award.

Stephen Holmes

Is Attention to Injustice Inevitably Selective?

One challenge to Enlightenment universalism is the well-documented history of human concern for some not all victims of injustice. Individuals able to recognize victims on *all sides* of violent conflicts have always been, and remain today, politically marginal. For similar reasons, there is no popularly supported political party in any country in the world that advocates a “universalistic immigration policy.” The fact that such a policy is politically unfeasible does not weaken the moral truth of universalism. But what does it say about the possibility of an Enlightenment politics?

Stephen Holmes is the Walter E. Meyer Professor of Law at the NYU School of Law. He previously taught at Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Chicago. His fields of specialization include the history of European liberalism, the disappointments of democratization after communism, and the defense against transnational terrorism within the bounds of liberal constitutionalism. He served as a member of the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin from 1991 to 1992 and was named a Carnegie Scholar in 2003. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1998 for his study of the theoretical foundations of liberal democracy. Holmes is the author of *Benjamin Constant and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (1984), *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (1993), *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (1995), and *The Matador's Cape: America's Reckless Response to Terror* (2007). He is co-author of *The Cost of Rights: Why Liberty Depends on Taxes* (with Cass Sunstein, 1999) and of *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel* (with Moshe Halbertal, 2017) as well as *The Light That Failed: A Reckoning* (with Ivan Krastev, 2019), and co-editor of the *Routledge Handbook of Il-liberalism* (with András Sajó and Renáta Uitz, 2022).

Daniel Kahn
Stella Morgenstern
Christian Dawid

Lord of the Air

A musical play based on Daniel Kehlmann's Tyll

Roguish texts in German and English composed by the troubadours Daniel Kahn and Stella Morgenstern, catchy tunes by the multi-instrumentalist Christian Dawid, and whimsical drawings by Jerry Merose come together to form an epic ballad inspired by Kehlmann's masterpiece on the Thirty Years' War. The play tells the story of the poor miller Claus whose thirst for knowledge and nonconformity leads to his tragic demise.

This advance showing of the play will feature several songs sung by Daniel Kahn. The premiere will take place in September in the orangery of Potsdam's Neuer Garten park as part of the Einstein Forum's Illuminations celebration.

Philip Kitcher

Reclaiming Adam Smith

Although he would have deferred to his friend, David Hume, Adam Smith was the principal figure in the Scottish Enlightenment. Today many scholars view him with suspicion. They see him as the architect of a callous hypertrophy of capitalism. Such judgments stem from the appropriation of Smith by right-wing politicians. This lecture will attempt to reclaim Smith as a progressive thinker.

Libertarians and conservatives read Smith very selectively, focusing on a few sentences in the *Wealth of Nations* and ignoring his earlier book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. As a result, the picture they paint is a caricature. A more systematic account of Smith's pioneering work in political economy, viewing it in light of his moral philosophy, recognizes his sympathy for an ethically guided version of capitalism. In particular, viewing him as an apostle of something called "the free market" is a serious blunder. I shall argue that his work supplies resources for socio-economic reform. In particular, we are unlikely to act to lessen the threats posed by climate change unless we replace the mythical version of Smith with the real thing.

Philip Kitcher is the John Dewey Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, at Columbia University, and an Honorary Fellow of Christ's College Cambridge. His philosophical work ranges from the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of science, and the philosophy of biology to ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of education and philosophy in literature and music. His books include *The Advancement of Science* (1993), *Science, Truth and Democracy* (2003), *The Ethical Project* (2011), *The Main Enterprise of the World: Rethinking Education* (2021), and *What's the Use of Philosophy?* (2023). *The Rich and the Poor* will be published in the spring of 2025. He is a Past President of the American Philosophical Association (Pacific Division), a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and of the British Academy, and a member of the American Philosophical Society. Among his awards are the Prometheus Prize (given by the American Philosophical Association for work expanding the fields of science and philosophy), the Rescher Medal (for systematic philosophy), and the Hempel Award (for lifetime achievement in the philosophy of science.)

Claire Messud

Where Did the Time Go?

The narrator of Valeria Luiselli's 2019 novel *Lost Children Archive* reflects that "Something changed in the world. Not too long ago, it changed, and we know it...We feel time differently. No one has quite been able to capture what is happening or say why. Perhaps it's just that we sense an absence of future, because the present has become too overwhelming, so the future has become unimaginable. And without future, time feels like only an accumulation."

I feel powerfully the experiential truth of this observation, both in life and in writing; and would like, in my talk, to explore its causes and consequences. Without a sense of future, there can be no hope; and without a sense of a future, our understanding of the past is also disrupted. Indeed, our entire relation to Time—and with it to our lives and their possible meanings—is called into question. A post-Enlightenment faith in rationality and progress—reinforced by the 19th and 20th century mastery over Time—can no longer be presumed.

Claire Messud is a novelist and professor of creative writing at Harvard University. She is the author of numerous works of fiction, including *When the World Was Steady* (1995), *The Last Life* (1999), *The Woman Upstairs* (2013), and *The Emperor's Children* (2006), which won the Massachusetts Book Award in 2007. Messud is the recipient of the Strauss Living Award granted through the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and was a Radcliffe Fellow in 2004. She was the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship in 2002. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Fintan O'Toole

Kant and the Contemporary Public Discourse

We live at a time when journalism and public discourse are under huge pressure both from the challenges of social media and from the polarization of politics. Can some of Kant's principles help us to think about the duties of public intellectuals in this atmosphere? This talk suggests that Kant provides a bracing and potent reminder of the often tough imperatives that should guide those of us who take part in public debate.

Fintan O'Toole is a columnist for *The Irish Times*, and advising editor of the *New York Review of Books*. He also contributes to the *Guardian*, *The Observer*, *Foreign Affairs* and other international publications. His books on theatre include works on William Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Thomas Murphy. His books on politics include the bestsellers *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* (2009), *Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain* (2018), and *We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Modern Ireland* (2021). He has received the A.T. Cross Award for Supreme Contribution to Irish Journalism, the Millennium Social Inclusion Award, the Orwell Prize, the European Press Prize, and the Robert B. Silvers Prize for Journalism. *O'Toole's History of Ireland in 100 Objects*, which covers 100 highly charged artifacts from the last 10,000 years, is currently the basis for Ireland's postage stamps. He is working on the official biography of the Nobel Prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney. He is a member of the Royal Irish Academy, and was named an International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2023 and elected to the American Philosophical Society in 2024.

Diana Pinto

*Enlightenment at Last! Unveiling the Kant Statue,
Lagos, Nigeria, September 30, 2084
(An iconoclastic exercise in intellectual speculation)*

To celebrate the 300th anniversary of Immanuel's Kant's essay "What is the Enlightenment?" a prestigious elderly Nigerian intellectual, born in 1989, reminisces on his personal political and cultural struggles as he sought to defend Kant's Weltanschauung in a fractious Nigerian world throughout the 21st century. His dialectical relationship to "Western civilization" and commitment to Kant's ethical and intellectual standards independently of one's origins and country serve as a lynchpin in our own collective assessments of who we are and what we stand for.

Diana Pinto studied at Harvard University and is a historian and writer. Formerly a Consultant to the Political Directorate of the Council of Europe, she is interested in pan-European identities and Jewish communities in Europe after 1989. She is the co-founder of the European Council on Foreign Relations and the Moscow School of Civic Education, now in exile in Riga. She has served on the board of the London Institute for Jewish Policy Research. Pinto is the recipient of fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Collegium Budapest, Fulbright. She is the author of *Israel has Moved* (2013, German version: *Israel ist umgezogen*, 2013).

Lutz Raphael

Defending Professional Historical Reasoning with Kant

My talk reconstructs a line of critical reasoning in history and the social sciences that takes up Kant's arguments on the topic of history. The theoretical and political profile of what can be called "historical rationalism" (Bourdieu) was shaped by two controversies: one against the liberal and later socialist philosophies of history as linear or dialectical that converge on the idea of the present as progress, and second, the critique of radical skepticism or cultural relativism. Arguing with Kant in history means to defend an epistemic constructivism that defends claims to truth and rules of scholarly practice in reconstructing the past. Kant's regulative idea thus becomes the defense of an historically embedded rationality.

Lutz Raphael is a professor of modern and contemporary history at the University of Trier. He received his doctorate from the University of Münster, where his dissertation, *Partei und Gewerkschaft* ("Party and Labor Union"), looked at the trade union strategies of the communist parties of France and Italy since 1970. He went on to complete his habilitation at Technische Universität Darmstadt, with a thesis on the historiographical methods and French *nouvelle histoire* movement of the Annales school from 1945 to 1980. He has held teaching positions at the University of Tübingen, the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, the Université Paris-Didérot, the Humboldt University of Berlin, St Antony's College Oxford, the London School of Economics, and the German Historical Institute in London. From 2007 to 2013, Raphael served as a member of the German Council of Science and Humanities, and the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz. He received the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize in 2013, and has been an editor for *Neue Politische Literatur* and *Journal of Modern European History*. He has chaired the Association of Historians in Germany since 2021.

Cheryce von Xylander

Universalist Dietetics at Odds

In a final salvo of publications, Kant grappled with “dietetics” as a conduit to the art of living. He endorses a dietetical regimen that is universalist in form but agnostic in content in that he does not prescribe specific lifestyle choices. Kant's remarks were developed in exchange with Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland, the premier physician of the German-speaking world of the day. Hufeland had just published *The Art of Prolonging Life*, a treatise on “rational medicine,” for which he later coined the term “macrobiotic.” The medical primer became a best-seller and was translated into all of the major European languages. What is more, it presaged today's personal development industry with its staunchly self-empowering ethos and entrenched self-help credo. While global revenue from book sales has been steadily declining, one rubric is flourishing: “self-improvement” literature enjoys an expanding readership with global market volume expected to reach 14 billion US-dollars by 2025. The universalist premises driving this commercial sector were laid out at the end of the 18th century in the Kant/Hufeland intermezzo. The dietetical precepts they endorse still inform the applied universalisms of present-day anti-aging aspirations from intermittent fasting to transhumanism. But their positions are starkly at odds with respect to the individuation of selfhood.

Cheryce von Xylander is a research associate at the Institute of Sociology and Cultural Organisation at the Leuphana University Lüneberg. She previously held various teaching and research positions at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Sciences at Brandenburg Technical University Cottbus-Senftenberg, the Department of Art and Visual History at Humboldt University Berlin, and the Institute of Philosophy at Technical University Darmstadt. Her scholarship looks at the aesthetics of knowledge transmission, historical subjectivity, and technologies of mediation. She has been a research associate at the Deutsches Museum of Masterpieces of Science and Technology in Munich and affiliated with the Max Planck Institutes for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences. She studied symbolic systems, philosophy of science, and the philosophy of history at Stanford, Cambridge, and the University of Chicago.

Kaveh Yazdani

Universalizing the “Rest”: Periodizing Global History, and Deprovincializing the West

A non-Eurocentric periodization of global history is needed to account for the crucial intercontinental circulation of humans, ideas, resources, practices, and goods as part of the contributions of the non-Western world to modernity. Non-European influences should also be reflected on and expanded into existing institutions. On the one hand, if the concrete material conditions in the “Global South” do not radically change, non-Eurocentric approaches will not have a wide-ranging societal impact. On the other, anti-Eurocentric and postcolonial thought contain the pitfalls of Asio- and Afrocentrism, and are equally ahistorical. Both Eurocentrism and reverse-Orientalism bear the risk of misconstruing Asio-African, Latin American, and Caribbean dynamics between the 8th and 18th centuries (in the case of Eurocentrics) and Euro-American empires and nations from the 16th to the 21st century (in the case of anti-Eurocentrics). Moreover, the postmodern and postcolonial overemphasis on contingency and suspicion towards terms such as “pre-capitalist,” “backward,” and “progress” misrepresents historical realities and power relations, and, thus, abets the idea of cultural relativism. Connected and comparative methodologies are necessary if we want to understand the global co-production of historical processes, to discern similarities and differences, to comprehend the reasons behind disparate levels of development, and to capture asymmetrical power relations.

Kaveh Yazdani is assistant professor at the University of Connecticut. He was born in Tehran and raised in Paris and Berlin. He received his Ph.D. degree at the University of Osnabrück in 2014. His research areas include the socio-economic history of India, histories of capitalism in global perspective, theories of modernity and periodization, and the entangled histories of India and Persia. Yazdani’s books include *India, Modernity and the Great Divergence: Mysore and Gujarat* (2017), and *Capitalisms: Towards a Global History* (2020). He was Visiting Residential Fellow at the Warwick Institute of Advanced Study in 2017. He taught courses in economic and social history at the University of Bielefeld from 2017 to 2020. In 2020, Yazdani was also Visiting Professor in Global Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna. He obtained a residential visiting scholarship at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin in 2022, a Wiedemann-Fellowship at the IZEA in Halle in 2023, and a fellowship at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg in Münster (EViR) in 2023/24. He holds a research affiliation at the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa (CISA) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Lea Ypi

Kant on Revolution

Authors who think about the justifiability of revolution are often divided between those who criticize it on grounds of institutional legalism and those who endorse it on grounds of idealist moralism. Moralists think that since the ends of revolution are right, revolution can never be wrong. Legalists think that since the means of revolution are wrong, revolution can never be right. In this lecture I revisit their arguments and offer a Kantian alternative that tries to cut across the divide. I examine revolution not in relation to the justice of individuals but grounded on a philosophical theory of history that focuses on collective progress.

Lea Ypi is a professor of political theory at the London School of Economics and Political Science and an honorary professor in philosophy at the Australian National University. A native of Albania, she has degrees in Philosophy and in Literature from the University of Rome La Sapienza, a PhD from the European University Institute, and was a Postdoctoral Prize Research Fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford University. She is the author of *The Meaning of Partisanship* (with Jonathan White, 2016), *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (2017), and *The Architectonic of Reason: Purposiveness and Systematic Unity in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (2021). Her latest book, *Free: Coming of Age at the End of History* (2021) won the 2022 Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize and the Slightly Foxed First Biography Prize and is being translated into thirty languages. Her academic work has been recognized with the British Academy Prize for Excellence in Political Science and the Leverhulme Prize for Outstanding Research Achievement. She co-edits the journal *Political Philosophy* and occasionally writes for *The Guardian* and *Financial Times*.

Benjamin Zachariah

Enlightenments Lost in the Post

My talk traces a set of (mis)readings of Enlightenment ideas, before and after they acquired the Enlightenment label. Whether as an abstraction or series of processes that have acquired a collective noun, it is usually a set of present-day concerns that are projected into the past or stabilized in the present as 'the' Enlightenment, the better to attack or defend it. I ask whether enlightenments have traveled badly or been lost in the post-reason and pro-affect world; and whether this is reason enough to abandon reason. I ask whether principles not fully realized in any really-existing manifestations are principles that must be abandoned, or whether they have any value as principles of judgement. In the course of following the post-reason perambulations of enlightenments variously perceived, I ask what has been lost or gained, whether 'enlightenment' might still have some characteristics attributed to it, and what they might mean.

Benjamin Zachariah is a member of the Einstein Forum research staff. Zachariah completed degrees in history and philosophy from Trinity College, Cambridge, and held previous senior research fellowships at the University of Trier, the Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University, and the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Study at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, among other places. Zachariah's research interests include the politics of historical knowledge, historical theory and historiography, global fascism, transnational revolutionary networks, nationalisms, and memory. Zachariah is the author of *Nehru* (2004), *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History, c. 1930–1950* (2005; 2nd ed. 2012), *Playing the Nation Game: The Ambiguities of Nationalism in India* (2011; 2nd ed. 2016; revised edition *Nation Games* 2020), and *After the Last Post: The Lives of Indian Historiography in India* (2019). Zachariah is co-editor of *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views 1917–1939* (2015), and of *What's Left of Marxism: Historiography and the Possibility of Thinking with Marxian Themes and Concepts* (2020).

Illuminations. Celebrating the Kant Jubilee

2024 is the 300th anniversary of Immanuel Kant's birthday. A century ago, it was common to blame modernity for all the woes of society. Today it's considered progressive to reject the Enlightenment and its accomplishments. Were Enlightenment thinkers nothing more than naive optimists? Did they idolize technological progress while advocating reason's dominion over nature? Or, worse still, were they racists and colonialists who flaunted the universal values they purported to espouse?

To celebrate the greatest philosopher of the Enlightenment, the Einstein Forum will host a series of events through September. Kicking off our Denkfest is a conference, Enlightenment on Trial, presenting the case against the Enlightenment along with arguments in its defense. The idea of putting the Enlightenment on trial stems from Kant himself. He often wrote of the tribunal of reason, and one of his greatest concerns was the charge that freedom of thought would lead to nihilism. Abandoning the Enlightenment, as so many urge us to do today, means not only abandoning efforts to cultivate our capacities for reason, but also three principles at the core of any progressive worldview: a commitment to universalism over tribalism, a belief in a hard distinction between justice and power, and a belief in the possibility of progress itself.

The Einstein Forum will host a program of events to engage the general public in discussions of these questions. Central to the program is an installation by the artists Saskia Boddeke and Peter Greenaway. The Power of Enlightenment – Walking with Kant will run from August 23 to September 25 in the historic orangery on the grounds of Potsdam's Neuer Garten park. Over the installation's five spaces, Boddeke and Greenaway use their characteristically immersive, opulent, and multimedia-inflected visual languages to comment on Kant's demand that we use reason to guide our actions. The Einstein Forum invites the public to think about Kant's most important philosophical ideas amid artistic impressions of light, sound, and movement.

The installation's lavishly conceived spaces wrestle with universal ideals described by Kant and other thinkers of the Enlightenment. Foremost among them are freedom and human dignity, which underpin the fundamental values of open democratic societies – values that need to be reinforced more than ever today. Visitors will begin their walk with Kant in the philosopher's study, during the Age of Enlightenment. They then embark on a journey through the old hierarchies of Church and Monarchy, whose dogmatism and absolute control Kant's philosophy helped topple. Next visitors encounter the wind and weather of change followed by the four horsemen of the apocalypse, who continue to drive fear into even atheist hearts. The final space is devoted to hope. Can we find it in a ravaged world?

The orangery will also feature several extraordinary musical performances in September. The first is a play specially commissioned for the occasion by the musician and actor Daniel Kahn. The work is a musical interpretation of Daniel Kehlmann's best-selling novel *Tyll*, whose striking portrayal of the pre-Enlightenment world reminds us what we owe the age of reason. The second set of performances is a new production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* by the highly acclaimed British chamber opera ensemble Wild Arts. In addition to three performances in the splendid "Hall of Palms," there will be an evening lecture with the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who will talk about her forthcoming book on opera.

Concept and direction: Susan Neiman

Exhibit curator: Cilly Kugelmann

August 24 to September 25, 2024, Mon–Sun 11:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Installation

The Power of Enlightenment – Walking with Kant

By Saskia Boddeke and Peter Greenaway

Place: Orangery, Neuer Garten, Potsdam

Other events at the orangery

Sept. 13 / Sept. 14 / Sept. 15, 7:00 p.m.

Herr der Luft

Concert by Daniel Kahn and Daniel Kehlmann

Sept. 19 / Sept. 21, 7:00 p.m. & Sept. 22, 2 p.m.

Die Zauberflöte

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, performed by Wild Arts

At the Einstein Forum

Sept. 20, 7:00 p.m.

Martha Nussbaum

Die Zauberflöte. Mozart and the Freemasons

Conference

Aug. 29

Enlightenment in the World

Conference

26.9.2024

The Universalism of Paul Robeson

Program

Friday, July 5, 2024

19:00
Susan Neiman
Introduction

19:30 Fintan O'Toole, Dublin
Kant and the Contemporary Public Discourse

20:30 Daniel Kahn, Christian Dawid
"Freedom is a Verb" and other songs

Saturday, July 6, 2024

11:00 David A. Bell, Princeton
The Uses and Abuses of Enlightenment

12:30 Aleida Assmann, Konstanz
Can the Enlightenment Enlighten Itself?

13:30 *Lunch break*

15:00 Lorraine Daston, Berlin
Diversity and Universalism

16:30 Claire Messud, Cambridge, Mass.
Where Did the Time Go?

18:00 Daniel Kahn, Stella Morgenstern, Christian Dawid
Lord of the Air
a musical play based on Daniel Kehlmann's *Tyll*
Followed by Susan Neiman in conversation with Daniel Kahn and Daniel Kehlmann

Sunday, July 7, 2024

11:00 Cheryce von Xylander, Lüneburg
Universalist Dietetics at Odds

12:30 Diana Pinto, Paris
Enlightenment at Last! Unveiling the Kant Statue, Lagos, Nigeria September 30, 2084 (An iconoclastic exercise in intellectual speculation)

13:30 *Lunch break*

15:00 Kaveh Yazdani, Storrs
Universalizing the "Rest": Periodizing Global History and Deprovincializing the West

16:30 Lutz Raphael, Trier
Defending Professional Historical Reasoning with Kant

18:00 Benjamin Zachariah, Potsdam
Enlightenments Lost in the Post

Monday, July 8, 2024

11:00 Stephen Holmes, New York
Is Attention to Injustice Inevitably Selective?

12:30 Konstanty Gebert, Warsaw
Totalitarianism and Genocide: Bastard Children of the Enlightenment?

13:30 *Lunch break*

15:00 Philip Kitcher, New York
Reclaiming Adam Smith

16:30 Lea Ypi, London
Kant on Revolution

18:00 Omri Boehm, New York, Berlin
Daniel Kehlmann, Berlin
„The Starry Heavens above me" A Dialogue on Kant