



THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE CULTURAL CENTRE OF SOFIA UNIVERSITY

in partnership with

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Guanajuato

Center for Philosophy, University of Tokyo

Faculty of Humanities, National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”

Department of Comparative Literature, Istanbul Bilgi University

ANNOUNCE

CALL FOR PAPERS

for an international interdisciplinary conference

THE ENLIGHTENMENT FROM A NON-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

THEMATIC AREA OF THE CONFERENCE

The Enlightenment is an intellectual and philosophical high point of European historical development. It created powerful ideas and ideals - such as freedom, moral law, empowered, autonomous citizenship, fraternity and equality, representative democracy and tolerance, along with the ideas of progress and rational governmentality of society. At the same time, however, it also legitimized the Eurocentric domination of the world, serving as universal justification for all imperial conquests, for the destruction of local traditions, for ruthless technologization and exploitation of various non-European cultures and the forceful export of “civilization,” and “modernity”.

Today, the general consequences of the Enlightenment seem to be ambiguous: spread of literacy, scientific and economic progress, rule of law, emancipation movements along with centuries of colonial rule, violent political changes, disastrous world and local wars. The Enlightenment ideas have inspired several revolutions – political, philosophical and technological. They are the normative basis of democracy, yet of free market, technology and capitalism, too; they legitimize colonization, yet also anti-colonial and anti-capitalist resistance movements. Philosophers, writers and public figures of the Enlightenment, along with agents of mass education and literacy, spread across the world the standards of human dignity, sovereignty and emancipation, which are still enshrined in the legal and moral order of the “global present”. However, their dark doubles - eurocentrism, nationalism, racism, xenophobia, patriarchalism - are rooted in the very same intellectual, moral and political project and continue to shape our present as well.

All this shows that the Enlightenment is still very much a topical, controversial issue that has important political and intellectual implications; it raises questions and doubts - is Modernity a finished or still an unfinished project? In this strict sense, thinking about the Enlightenment and Modernity means not only thinking about our own origin; it means justifying our present and designing our future.

This conference aims not only to rethink those already known and inevitable contradictions, but also to *de-Europeanize the history of the Enlightenment and its contemporary condition*: to offer new perspectives from the “peripheries” which will, as we hope, re-examine the ambivalent legacy of the Enlightenment in a new heuristic way.

We propose the following possible topics:

- The historical fate of the Enlightenment in non-European peripheries. Political, public and cultural effects and their development. Agents, channels, discourses, events, personalities.
- Enlightenment in non-European peripheries/cultures/modernities: imported or autochthonous?
- Are there specific contexts and traditions – local, pre-Enlightenment, indigenous; what is the specificity of the regional modernizations?
- Internal “peripheral” discussions about Enlightenment ideas and ideals. What are the local variants of general disputes and controversies?
- Reception of Eurocentric metanarratives of the Enlightenment and reception of the great philosophers and writers of the Enlightenment: their function, fate and local specificity in non-European contexts during colonialism.
- The Enlightenment and post-colonial studies. Differences between non-European and non-Western perspectives. Revision of the stereotype “non-Western perspective.” Is “periphery” a good concept and a real alternative? The ideas and values of the Enlightenment in the contexts of colonization, post-colonial condition, self-colonization.
- The problems of desecularization of the world and the critique of the Enlightenment. Do we need a revision of the secular world order?
- What is the legacy of the Enlightenment in a global world where freedom, the power of reason, and human dignity are endangered? Can we defend and redefine those idea(l)s today?
- What are the different types of anti-Enlightenment movements: ideas, personalities, debates, events? How do peripheries question and challenge the Eurocentric universalism of the Enlightenment?
- What are the local answers to these global issues: what happened after the critique and crisis of the metanarratives, are there the new alternative political projects, how should one react to the crisis of the imagination and the absence of neoliberal alternatives?

- End of the Enlightenment? The local and historical exhaustion of the Enlightenment wand of all its ideas, utopias, concepts and discourses. Are these local crises a sign of global decomposition of the Enlightenment project
- Utopia and the legacy of the Enlightenment. What is the fate of utopia after the collapse of state communism, in the neoliberal present of “no alternative”? What are the ways and models of imagining the future today?

PARTICIPATION TERMS

The conference will be held from **23 to 27 May 2016** in Bulgaria. The main part of the conference will take place at Sofia University, Sofia, on 23, 24 and 25 May. The second part (the Doctoral School) will be held in the rest-house in the area of Gyolechitsa in the Rila Mountain on 25, 26 and 27 May. The official language of the conference will be English.

The expected participants should be experts in philosophy, cultural studies, cultural history, anthropology, sociology, literary and art criticism and other branches of humanities. The call is also open for young scholars and PhD students who will take part in the Doctoral School, led by prominent scholars.

Application deadline: 1 February 2016

Applications (accompanied by a topic within the thematic areas of the conference, a 300-word abstract, a short bibliography and a scholarly CV) should be sent via e-mail to enlightenment.conference2016@gmail.com. The Conference Committee (consisting of senior scholars, representatives of the partner universities) will select and announce the final list of the participants.

The Host organization will cover the costs of accommodation for all selected participants (invited keynote speakers, senior speakers and PhD students). The travel costs should be covered by the participants.