

THE END OF ENLIGHTENMENT/DAS ENDE DER AUFKLÄRUNG/ kuratiert von Philipp Blom

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# LIVING IN TRUTH: THE FATE OF ENLIGHTENMENT OPTIMISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

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Moderator: Philipp Blom, Author and Historian

When in November 1935 the philosopher Edmund Husserl came to Prague to deliver the lectures he, as a "non-Aryan," could no longer deliver in Germany, he was full of despair. The Enlightenment's great optimism—its faith that reason would lead us to truth—had been embodied in works such as Beethoven's Ode to Joy. Now, in 1935, Husserl told his Prague audience, we could no longer even understand that piece of music. Enlightenment rationalism had failed us because it was too thin, too superficial. Half a century later, after living Nazism and Stalinism—the Second World War, the Holocaust, the Stalinist Terror—the philosopher-playwright Václav Havel led the Velvet Revolution of 1989 with the slogan "the truth will prevail!" This lecture will explore the philosophical pursuit of "truth" as such in Eastern Europe before, during and after communism.

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