



Call for Applications

In association with the *Udo Keller Stiftung Forum Humanum* and the *TRA 4 – Individuals, Institutions and Societies*, the *International Centre for Philosophy (IZPH)* of the University of Bonn is offering **6 Forum Humanum fellowships** to qualified doctoral and masters students from any department in the social sciences or humanities at the *University of Bonn* to participate at two events of the *Institute for Philosophy and the New Humanities (IPNH)* this autumn: an event to be held at the *New School for Social Research* (New York City, Sep. 1-5) and at an event to be held at the *Kyōto Institute of Philosophy (KIP)* (Kyōto, Sep. 22-26).

Researchers within the *TRA 4 – Individuals, Institutions and Societies* investigate how institutions mediate complex relationships between individuals and society and thereby develop a new view of micro-phenomena (development of personality, agency, individualization) as well as macro-phenomena (world society, globalization). Sharing this research objective, the *Institute for Philosophy and the New Humanities* is founded on the premise that genuine knowledge acquisition, truth and objectivity are not the exclusive preserve of any single discipline or method. The concepts we deploy to understand and evaluate human cultural and scientific achievements also have to be placed within their broader social, political and intellectual context and therefore have to be approached from a truly interdisciplinary perspective. The Institute thus aims to bring together researchers from a variety of disciplines and draw on the resources of the social sciences, philosophy, and the humanities more generally, in order to pursue a collaborative understanding of the nature and goals of the humanistic and social scientific disciplines and to grapple with the challenges they face in light of the increasing prevalence of intellectual models imported from other disciplines.

This year's event in New York will take place on *September 1-5, 2025* and will consist in a week-long series of seminars, guest lectures and workshops on the topic of *Iconoclasm in the Age of AI*. The ascent of AI has both been fuelled by and produced a steady proliferation of images, which disturb not only through their sheer number, but due to their very nature. On the one hand, the images unsettle through their undeniable verisimilitude, sparking concerns about deep fakes, forgery, trust etc. in both political and personal domains. On the other hand, AI images disrupt through their uncanny quality, their mixture of hyper-realism and crude inaccuracy, which seems to manifest an intelligence parasitic upon and yet very much not our own. The increasing omnipresence of such images suggests that we think of AI image-cultures themselves as iconoclastic phenomena, but one occurring within the realm of image-production itself: a set of fundamental challenges to our understanding of the politics and ontology of images and associated preconceptions about originality, creativity, accuracy and representation. The event will therefore be devoted to an examination of how the emerging image cultures of AI should best be categorised from an interdisciplinary perspective, which draws on the resources of philosophy and the humanities. This examination will be organised around two guiding methodological axes: Firstly, we will enquire into the ontological status of

images as determined through the dynamic relationship between reality and fiction. Secondly, we will draw on disciplines from visual and cultural studies as well as socio-political critique in order to establish the concept of iconoclasm as an interpretative foil for AI image cultures.

The event in Kyoto will follow on *September 22-26, 2025* on the topic of *The Social Ontology of AI*. Whilst typical AI user interfaces are designed to facilitate the illusion of a person-to-person interaction, the user is, of course, engaging with a vast ‘social’ network distributed across human, non-biological and digital nodes, enabled by an infrastructure comprising human intellectual labour, data centres, energy resources etc. How should this sociality be modelled? What is its ontological status? The participation in social networks that enables human intelligence is reflected in the very nature of that intelligence – but does this, as is often claimed, provide a model for understanding the relation between AI and its (very different) enabling conditions? The Kyoto workshop will be devoted to addressing these and related questions. In addition to the workshop, Forum Humanum Fellows are invited to attend the inaugural **Kyōto Conference Toward the Realization of a ‘Multilayered Society of Values’**, which will be organised by the KIP from September 23-24 and will be attended by leading philosophers from value theory and other sectors (especially media and economics) around the globe.

IPNH co-directors **Markus Gabriel, Paul Kottman, Zed Adams and Yasuo Deguchi** will also present lectures.

The Forum Humanum scholarship will cover travel and accommodation costs, as well as provide a modest stipend for daily expenses. Applicants must therefore confirm that they are committed to traveling to **both** New York and Kyōto this September and, if necessary, are able to acquire visas on their own for the USA and Japan.

To submit an application, please send a) an up-to-date academic CV and b) a brief statement outlining your interest in the event in light of your current research project (max. 1 page), combined into a **single document**, by **31.03.2025** to **Jan Voosholz** (E-Mail: voosholz@uni-bonn.de).