# THE CONTRIBUTION OF IMAGES TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT AGENDA

**Daniel Fulda (IZEA, Universität Halle)**

## Call for papers

While the 19th century has often and rightly been seen as the moment when European societies asserted their nationhood, the 18th century can be considered as the laboratory where this phenomenon was worked out. Alongside the spirit of universalism characteristic of the philosophes, the age of Enlightenment also contributed to the emergence or consolidation of representations of individual national identity.

The aim of this panel is enquire into the role played in this process by correspondences, starting with a series of questions around three major themes :

We know numerous programmatic Enlightenment texts, but are there equally programmatic visual representations? Did identity formation of the protagonists of the Enlightenment also occur in visual media?

We are all aware of images whose motifs relate to the original meaning of such terms as Lumières, Enlightenment, Aufklärung, Verlichtigung, Illuminismo. Yet how can the observer be certain that visual motifs like the sun, a torch or other sources of light (may) signify claims of enlightenment? How were such 'images of the Enlightenment' differentiated from the Christian usage of the same motifs? Or did Enlightenment visual politics even profit from the promise of salvation tied to traditional Christian light metaphors?

Images with light motifs are the most striking, but by no means the only programmatic representations of the Enlightenment. It is possible to discern two types of images: first, those that relate and commit to enlightenment through certain motifs or subjects, and, second, those that represent methods of enlightenment beyond the respective motif, e.g. by showing something that cannot usually be seen or thought or imagined, whether through technically generated images (microscope) or abstract diagrams, or through risk-free insights into hidden realms of society or the world (lunatic asylum, pornography, foreign cultures). Hence, the iconographic approach needs to be supplemented by the question whether there are representational techniques that can be called programmatically enlightening.

The session invites proposals examining questions that relate to the visual representation of the Enlightenment programme, e.g.: Which images in which media, genres and techniques are relevant in this context? How is the composition of the image linked to its meaning? How does accompanying linguistic material play into the creation of meaning? Which contexts invited programmatic images? Examining the 'images of the Enlightenment' allows us to re-evaluate and, possibly, to correct our current conception of the Enlightenment.

**Please send your proposal to:**
Daniel.fulda@germanistik.uni-halle.de