

Library Talk: The Racist Fantasy

with Dr. Leon Brenner and Prof. Todd McGowan

4 April 2023 • 8 pm
online**Dear members of the IPU Berlin,**

find out more about current information about the IPU Berlin and upcoming **Events**. Besides you can read the monthly **Column** by IPU President **Prof. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz**.

The **Karl Schlecht Foundation**, with which the IPU has enjoyed a productive collaboration for many years, has been named Science Foundation of the Year 2023 by the German Stifterverband. The IPU warmly congratulates the Karl Schlecht Foundation on this award. Find out more **on our website**.

Recently, **DAAD Guest Professor Chris Muran** and **Prof. Louis C. Castonguay** spoke on the topic of *Alliance Rupture Repair as a Critical Change Process* as part of the International Horst Kächele Memorial Webinar Series. The event was moderated by IPU researcher **Jenny Eis**. A recording of the conversation is **now available on our YouTube channel**.

An important note for all persons involved in research projects at the IPU Berlin: Starting now, the registration and updating of your projects for the IPU website will be processed via a secure online form. You can [access the form here](#).

Events

23 March to 24 May 2023**DAAD Online Webinar Series for International Students**

Meet our International Office and find out more about our English language programs. Further information **on our website**.

4 April 2023 | 8 pm**Library Talk: The Racist Fantasy**

Online discussion with Dr. Leon Brenner and Prof. Todd McGowan

Register **on our website**.

SAVE THE DATE: 8 June 2023 | 5 pm**Information Event for prospective students**

More information on our website soon.

Cognitive Slights

The [March Column](#) by IPU President Prof. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz

In mid-March, the Federal Secretary of Education held a “summit on education” in Berlin, at which 14 of the 16 German states were not in attendance. Pure cultural federalism, one could say; however, the reasons for this educational crisis originate from a deeper place and reach far back into the past. Also in mine.

This event reminded me of the question as to why as a student I was so relieved when my schooling was over. I can still recall this feeling of freedom today; when I left the school yard, I looked around and said to myself: “You will never again – at least not as a student – enter this building.”

This partially had to do with the GDR, especially the fact that my school could provide no satisfying answers for many of the numerous questions rolling around in my head, and really wasn’t even willing to entertain them.

It wasn’t much different in the Church. For example, in my religion class (the extracurricular religious education that was frowned upon by the state), I asked where Cain and Abel found the wives that they “took”. Because Adam and Eve only had two sons, and even if there had also been sisters, those marriages would have been incest. “You don’t always have to question everything”, said the catechist, “you just have to believe!”

Prof. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz has been president of the IPU Berlin since July 2021.

Once a month, he provides commentary here on contemporary, timeless, psychoanalytic and political issues.



In my elementary school German lessons, I was meant to believe that the mnemonic device “Wer nämlich mit ‘h’ schreibt, ist dämlich” (translation: “Whoever writes ‘nämlich’ with an ‘h’ is a fool”; A common misspelling of this word is ‘nähmlich’). I disputed this and told my teacher that I would always write the word with “h”. This went back and forth for a while until, with noticeable impatience, she called me to the front of the class and said I should write the word on the board and heed the mnemonic device. And so, I wrote “nämlic” on the board, with no “h”, just as I was instructed – my heart was in my throat. For a moment, she lost all composure; of course, the mnemonic device is “not meant” like *that*.

Next, in math class, we learned that two parallel lines intersect at infinity, which makes me indignant to this day. Either they were not parallel and will actually intersect at some point, or it must be expected that at infinity they are still parallel. It was only many years later that a colleague – a professor of mathematics education in Halle – helped me reconcile this. He suggested I should just think of it like this: “Two parallel lines will not intersect in finiteness.” I can live with that.

And finally, in civics class, we learned that the materialistic alternative to the creation story is the Big Bang theory. When we wanted to know what was “before” the Big Bang, the answer came that this question is “not askable” (what an impertinence!), because it was only with the Big Bang that time and space began. Is that supposed to be a satisfactory answer? Today, these stories remind me of Bertolt Brecht, who once remarked that during his “nine years of being turned into preserves at an Augsburg secondary school”, he failed at nurturing his teachers in any significant way.

To make matters worse, it was recently written in the newspaper that by using a super telescope, astronomers have been able to see the light from the Big Bang. If it’s true that light is faster than sound, as we are taught in physics class, then the bang is yet to come.

