

Humanistic Transformation

Third International Erich Fromm Research Conference

8-11 June 2023

Register on our website.



Dear members of IPU Berlin,

A warm welcome to all students who started their studies at IPU in April. We hope you and all our other members will have an insightful summer semester. In our monthly newsletter, you will find all the latest information regarding the IPU Berlin, upcoming **Events** as well as the **Column** by IPU President **Prof. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz**.

Zoë Hauptmann (Bachelor) und **Jonas Rudolph** (Master) submitted the best theses at IPU in 2022. Recently, the two were honored and their academic achievements were financially rewarded. Read more about it [on our website](#).

Our cooperation partner, the Hans Kilian and Lotte Köhler Centrum (KKC) Bochum, with which the IPU established a joint Graduate School this year, is hosting several events in the summer semester. The events lie at the crossroads of cultural psychology, social science and historical anthropology. IPU professors Phil Langer and Gavin Sullivan are among those who will be involved. You can access an [overview of all events here](#).

Are you working on a research project at the IPU? The registration and updating of your projects for the IPU website has recently started via a protected online form. You can [access this 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 programmes.

Further information [on our website](#).

15 May 2023 | 8 pm

On Being Grown-Up: Loewald's Concept of Maturity

Public lecture by Joel Whitebook (New York), organised by the Verein der Freunde & Förderer der IPU e. V.

Register [on our Website](#).

8 June 2023 | 5 pm

Information Session for Prospective Students at the IPU Berlin

Register [on our website](#).

8 June 2023 | 7:30 pm

Prof. Dr. Hartmut Rosa: From Affirmation and Responsibility to Transformation and Responsibility

Public lecture starting the Erich Fromm Conference 2023 (8-11 June at the IPU)

Register [on our website](#).

SAVE THE DATE: 15 June 2023 | 7 pm

Perversion in Lacan: A Structural Diagnosis Or...?

Public Lecture by Prof. Stephanie Swales (University of Dallas)

More information on our website soon.

Primary Side Effects

The **April Column** by IPU President **Prof. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz**

How does such a heading come about? The answer can be found in the package inserts for a variety of medications that in some cases read like horror novels. For instance, for some pills, I now know (in all seriousness) how “adolescent rats” behaved after taking them. Anyone who has become somewhat long in the tooth can take comfort in having an adolescent rat as a reference point – it’s definitely better than an old one.

Years ago, I read in the directions for a microwave that under no circumstances should it be used to dry a wet cat. Obviously, it is for liability reasons that they have to print warnings even for the most absurd cases. The societal tendency to replace responsibility with safe-guards can these days be found in just about any user manual, package insert, or multi-page clarification that every patient is required to sign at medical clinics. It seems to be too risky to leave even the tiniest risk unmentioned.

In 1979, Hans Jonas suggested in his Book *The Imperative of Responsibility* (which is in reference to *The Principle of Hope* by Ernst Bloch) that, when making an important decision, one should depend on the “heuristics of fear” and accept the worst possible prognosis. According to this principle, I would no longer be able to leave my house, and even that – in the strictest sense – would be too dangerous.

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.



And now, as a trained teacher, one isn’t even allowed to ask one’s doctor such questions, as they already consider this profession to be a diagnosis. The answers are given accordingly: international studies have proven, it was in the guidelines, one out of one thousand cases show, and there is not much known about drug interactions.

In the past, “speculative” served as a legitimate – and above all, neutral – expression of various scientific approaches, namely, to derive assumptions through reflexivity and discourse, mentally play out alternative options, make conclusions by analogy, and to make attempts at explanation through a mixture of cultural knowledge, logic, and understanding. This was a task that belonged to the humanities, particularly philosophy. With the dominance of “exact” (or even “positive”) sciences, to which we also somehow attribute the art of medicine, this marker has become pejorative. However, it is precisely medicine, which, like nearly no other discipline, is speculative – it just disguises it.

“If you feel healthy, you just haven’t been examined closely enough,” maintained my mother, being herself a doctor. And it’s not without reason that I have always preferred temporary measures at the dentist. They are just more durable.

I really don’t need to speculate over the side effects of this column; after this text, there probably won’t be any doctors left who want to treat me. But I was not informed of this risk.

