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Review of the Reichenau Summer School 2023

REICHENAU - The Reichenau Summer School took place on 25/26 August 2023. This report provides insights into this year's conference.

With the Reichenau Summer School, the Reichenau Centre for Psychiatry has established a truly unique series of conferences for 10 years now. Where else can employees from relevant professions come together in an inspiring environment - not far from the Reichenau monastery, a UNESCO heritage - to engage in dialogue with renowned scientists from philosophy, psychology, psychotherapy and related professions? The group reflects on the exciting aspects of psychiatry and psychotherapy that characterise our work but often go unnoticed in everyday life.

The Summer School is open to all relevant professional groups. So far, the council chamber of the municipality of Reichenau (at the island) has been a sufficient meeting venue for us. This year, under the title "Believing, Thinking, Knowing", the circle dealt with how to deal with "uncertainty". How can we deal with our insecurity? Both in its pathological expression, as a delusional phenomenon, and as a general, existential basic problem?

The functionality of madness: philosopher Lisa Bortolotti (Birmingham) and neuroscientist Philipp Sterzer (Basel), two internationally renowned experts, discussed this with the participants in their talks in an exciting, inspiring and entertaining way. It has long been known that delusions can also contain positive experiences. Rico Gutschmidt, who is a philosopher in Munich and Constance, reported on mystical worlds of experience within madness - and explained how mysticism affects us all. Based on the results of a qualitative study carried out by the Soteria Reichenau in collaboration with Daniel Nischk, he outlined a philosophical way of entering into dialogue with those affected.

Uwe Herwig, Medical Director at Centre for Psychiatry Reichenau and promoter of psychedelic therapy in Germany, pointed out the therapeutic aspect of mystical (and similar) qualities of consciousness in his lecture - and explained how psychedelics could be used therapeutically now and in the future.

Susanne Burri, a philosopher at the University of Constance known from relevant Swiss radio and TV programmes, spoke about "final and other farewells", the "philosophy of death": How do farewells succeed, the final ones as well as the everyday ones? Burri did this humorously and profoundly - a lecture that will continue to occupy many listeners and have a lasting effect.

The content of this conference was as challenging as it was enriching - and, in conclusion, very worthwhile for both participants and speakers. All of this only worked with great support. The organisers Daniel Nischk (Centre for Psychiatry Reichenau), Johannes Rusch, Dorothea Debus (University of Constance) and Thomas Müller (Centre for Psychiatry Suedwuerttemberg / University of Ulm) would like to thank the Centre for Psychiatry Reichenau which took on the catering for this event with great commitment.

Text: Daniel Nischk (Centre for Psychiatry Reichenau), Thomas Müller (Centre for Psychiatry Suedwuerttemberg)
Photo: Excerpt from the poster for the Reichenau Summer School

Conference report by Lisa Bortolotti: Reichenau Summer School: Dealing with Uncertainty (22.11.2023). In: Imperfect Cognitions. Link:

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