

## Allgemeines Physikalisches Kolloquium

Donnerstag, 09.11.2023 - 16 Uhr c.t.



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#### Reflections on Oppenheimer, the man and the movie

Christopher Nolan's movie Oppenheimer raises a number of interesting questions about the life and times of its main subject and offers a range of answers for viewers to choose from. Why was Oppenheimer in favor of dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Why did he not become a spokesperson for those among his fellow physicists opposed to their military use? And why then was he adamantly opposed a few years later to the development of the hydrogen bomb? What about his communist sympathies? How could the same derogatory information that was well known when he was cleared to become the head of the General Advisory Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission in 1947 be used so effectively to revoke his security clearance in 1954? Like Martin Sherwin and Kai Bird, the authors of the book on which the movie is based, I will deal with these questions as they come up as Oppenheimer's life and career unfolds, from US ambassador of quantum mechanics in Berkeley to scientific leader of the Manhattan project in Los Alamos to Einstein's boss at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton and prominent adviser to the Truman administration on matters concerning nuclear physics and national security to his fall from grace under Eisenhower and his eventual partial rehabilitation by Kennedy and Johnson. I will highlight the roles of those individuals in Oppenheimer's life who play a major role in the movie, especially his nemesis, Lewis Strauss.