Much Ado about Nothing?

Philosopher Andreas Urs Sommer says values may provide orientation and security but they actually do not exist.

We’ll start with the good news. What doesn’t exist can neither be degraded nor lost, emphasizes Andreas Urs Sommer, a philosophy professor specializing in the Philosophy of Culture at the University of Freiburg. In his book, Werte. Warum man sie braucht, obwohl es sie nicht gibt (Values: Why They are Necessary although They Do Not Exist) he attacks the allegedly solid foundation that politicians, the churches, outraged citizens, snotty-eyed idealists and other loud-mouths refer to. Rimma Gorenstein asked the researcher about the role values play in society, why they are continually changing, and how people can come to terms with chasing a mirage.

unilife: Mr. Sommer, everyone is talking about values such as tolerance, freedom, pacifism and respect. Why are you maintaining that they do not exist?

Andreas Urs Sommer: Values aren’t anything that can be found in physical reality. They are not stones, trees or people. And on the abstract level of intellectual reality, they aren’t well-defined quantities like numbers. Values only exist to come in exist in communication, and the longer people listen to a debate about values, the more they will get the impression that those debates are speaking about very different things. Angela Merkel’s perception of “Western values” differs from that of Pegida supporters. Tolerance is another example. You can characterize it not just as a value, but as a stance, political position or virtue. And what does it mean? Where does it start and where does it end?

Andreas Urs Sommer emphasizes that it is modern societies that debate about values. Different values mean different life frameworks. PHOTO: PATRICK SEEGER

Based on that, present day critics can simply relax. Values cannot be coarsened or lost. They only change. It is precisely this change that we can take as evidence that we are not suffering a general cultural decline. In Europe today, you can choose the sexual orientation you wish, there are registered life partnerships, and human rights have been added to the political agenda in many parts of the world. These are all signs of mature civilization.

But a society that argues about values is modern? Absolutely, because values always indicate diversity. There is not just one value. There are many. You have to consider how to organize them in a hierarchy. It was not until the mid-19th century that we began to speak of “values” as such, and that came at the point when the last metaphysical and religious determinants began to crack. Yet in western tradition, a differentiation was always made between “good” and “evil,” but this constellation didn’t allow for much grey area. Someone who deviated from the mainstream in premodern society was not only a freak, but also evil and ostracized by the community as a result. Today our society is able to accept differences in values, and along with that, differing life and intellectual frameworks.

If you look at Pegida demonstrations for example it doesn’t seem like peaceful acceptance. These are differences of opinion that are fought out in public. It’s a gloves-off fight and the means vary. A large newspaper, for example, has nationwide media power, but an internet troll paid by Russia can also reach broad masses of people by making comments on the internet. The negotiations do not take place in a vacuum, either. It’s a matter of rock hard political or economic interests, and these are simply not objective “scientific” given. Instead, they are attached to individual and collective needs.

When compared with other countries, do particular values make Germans stand out? I think so, and through a certain fragmentation. When we think of “German” values, we think of Prussian virtues like punctuality, order or reliability, but obviously, if you look at major, high-profile German construction projects, for example, we really aren’t quite conforming to those. What I’ve determined is that in Germany, due to its own history, what are supposed to be given are really no longer taken for granted. A high degree of critical self-reflection has dominated in German culture since 1945. People question, analyze and have reservations. When the German chancellor spoke of “the values of Europe,” many cultural commentators reacted with a great deal of criticism. By contrast, when Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump celebrate America as “the greatest country in the world,” they garner broad agreement.

On the one hand, values don’t exist, yet on the other they are by necessity in constant change. How should people handle this contradiction?

That’s actually quite difficult for us. There’s a type of residual metaphysical need – that we’ve inherited from tradition – namely, we want absolute certainty. In the past and present, we find attempts to establish uniform value structures tending towards totalitarianism. But because human life is characterized by movement, durable, rock-solid value structures are impossible. The clever shy away from committing to absolutes. Needs change continuously, that is why no value may be permanently elevated to the most important one. We must always consider what a value means for us. And we need to do that as individuals and in small groups and as entire societies. It will always be that way, and that’s good.

We must start with the good news. What doesn’t exist can neither be degraded nor lost, emphasizes Andreas Urs Sommer, a philosophy professor specializing in the Philosophy of Culture at the University of Freiburg. In his book, Werte. Warum man sie braucht, obwohl es sie nicht gibt (Values: Why They are Necessary although They Do Not Exist) he attacks the allegedly solid foundation that politicians, the churches, outraged citizens, snotty-eyed idealists and other loud-mouths refer to. Rimma Gorenstein asked the researcher about the role values play in society, why they are continually changing, and how people can come to terms with chasing a mirage. (Values: Why They are Necessary although They Do Not Exist) 188 Pages, 19.95 Euro. J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2016.
A Firm Line
The University of Freiburg resolutely opposes xenophobia

By Thomas Goebl

The University of Freiburg resolutely opposes xenophobia. The university is not a politically neutral place – it must discuss the conclusions this measure could have for the institution. The university has made by the city council are relevant for research integrity, gender, and diversity. Prof. Dr. Gisela Riescher is heading the commission composed of people with expertise in history, law, and international exchange. Initially this was primarily in the area of "Modern China Studies. In 2015/16 both universities opened the Nanjing-Freiburg-Center of Modern China Studies with subsiding from the city council issued a policy decision to expand their cooperation to a second area in 2015 with the establishment of a joint workshop dedicated to the study of sustainable materials. University Engages Expert Commission

A commission of experts from the University of Freiburg is looking into an initiative of the city of Freiburg to conduct a scholarly examination of street names to determine the consequences this measure could have for the university. In November 2018, the city council issued a policy decision to rename twelve streets after a majority of the council members said that these street names seemed inappropriate today. The decisions made by the city council are relevant for the university because many of the affected individuals were linked to the institution. The university has recognized these individuals with, for example, statues or plaques or by renamings. The FSO is made up mainly of classical and romantic symphonies, symphonic poems, overtures, and concerto gustatos. The song of Destiny, arranged by Bernard Schmidt, will be performed together with the John Sheppard Ensemble, a chamber choir from Freiburg. The performance begins at 8 p.m. Ticket prices range from 8 euros to 20 euros and can be purchased in advance through Reservix and at the venue's box office. Founded in 1998, the FSO is made up mainly of students from all disciplines. Each semester it performs a repertoire of mainly classical and romantic symphonies, symphonic poems, overtures and solo concerts.

New Name, Modern Research

The winds of change are blowing along Maximilianstraße 15. The Institute of European Ethnology has given itself a new name. Since the beginning of the 2016/17 winter semester it has been called the Institute for Cultural Anthropology and Ethnological Research. The new name heralds more than the institute's upcoming fiftieth anniversary. It also symbolizes the change from a small institute to a new institute profile. In future, the scholars here will increase their examination of topics such as popular culture, space, migration, and mobility, including economic activity. This change will also be reflected in teaching. In addition, a professorship dedicated to material and political culture and Europeanization will again be filled in the coming years. The institute at the University of Freiburg was founded in 1967.

Sustainable Eating and the City

Waldkirch im Breisgau and Leutkirch im Allgäu are being used as models. The University of Freiburg is coordinating a new cooperative project based on the example of district towns in Baden-Württemberg. During the next three years, the project will research and initiate integration of systems of nutrition in sustainable municipal development. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding the program with around 1.1 million euros. The chair of environmental governance, Heiner Schanz; the chair of sustainability governance, Michael Pferring; and the chair of forestry and environmental policy, Daniela Kleischmuth are taking part in the project.

Key Partnership Expanded

The University of Freiburg and Nanjing University in China have concludend an agreement to expand their cooperation and means of transportation for scientists and doctoral candidates. The agreement is a legal annex to the accord the two universities concluded in 2013 to establish their key partnership. Initially this was primarily in the Institute of European Ethnology has given itself a new name. Since the beginning of the 2016/17 winter semester it has been called the Institute for Cultural Anthropology and Ethnological Research. The new name heralds more than the institute's upcoming fiftieth anniversary. It also symbolizes the change from a small institute to a new institute profile. In future, the scholars here will increase their examination of topics such as popular culture, space, migration, and mobility, including economic activity. This change will also be reflected in teaching. In addition, a professorship dedicated to material and political culture and Europeanization will again be filled in the coming years. The institute at the University of Freiburg was founded in 1967.

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www.uni-freiburg.de/uni/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen.html

www.uni-freiburg.de/universtaet/uni-wissenschaftliches-arbeiten-informiert.html

www.fso-freiburg.de/premier-in-the-konzerthaus.html

www.uni-freiburg.de/university/uni-wissenschaftliches-arbeiten-informiert.html
The Same Procedure as Every Year? Not Quite!
How celebrating Christmas has changed in religion, society and culture

Chocolate Santas are already on supermarket shelves at the end of the summer, right alongside the Advent calendars and gingerbread. That’s when you have to ask yourself: Is there anything still exciting at all about Christmas anymore? Or has it become merely a festival of consumption and commerce? Freiburg theologian Dr. Stephan Wahle downplays this cynical query with a simple “No.” Alexander Ochs asked him about the most significant rituals and routines related to Christmas in Germany.

Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Advent – it’s entirely conceivable that hundreds of books have been written, particularly in theology, about how the meaning of the holiday has changed over the course of centuries. Conceivable, perhaps, but that’s way off the mark. Stephan Wahle’s work, however, is an exception. The 42-year-old has been at the University of Freiburg since 2006. He is responsible for liturgical studies within Catholic theology. In his postdoctoral research thesis Wahle investigated Christmas in religion, culture and society. In July 2016, he received the Balthasar Fischer Award for his work. “Scholarly theology barely addresses Christmas at all. It always bothered me that there isn’t a current monograph on it, and if there is, then it’s only about the early history. But the processes of transformation, the meaning of Jesus as the son of God made man was in the foreground. During the Middle Ages, the spectrum broadened and deep contemplation of the child took on a central role. Into the 19th century, Christmas remained a religious holiday and revolved around going to church. Protestants pushed Christmas celebrations from 25 December to 24 December early on. For Catholics, the vigil mass at midnight on Christmas Eve was the key service. But the researcher says that in recent times, that hasn’t really been the case. He says everything is shifting to be even earlier. Adds Wahle, “Visitor numbers for the service on Christmas day are staying relatively stable. It is the church service of the entire year.”

Anticipation

Apropos of forward displacement and making everything earlier. Some of the Christmas markets are already open in mid-November and close on 23 December. So on Christmas, the Christmas market has been and gone. Says the theologian, “It’s explicitly about a Christmas market. It is not or only rarely an Advent market.” According to Wahle, Christmas markets aren’t just a big export hit, they are also a cultural component of the celebration. “They’ve got a long tradition. People offered to sell their wares to the townspeople on the church square. Nuremberg’s Christkindlsmarkt, for example, tends to be viewed as one of the oldest and best-known Christmas markets of early modern times. The Christmas market is an expression of anticipation. Regardless of the drinking of mulled wine, the real celebration only comes afterwards, on Christmas day,” says Wahle. He continues, “Something is always being anticipated, yet at the same time, it’s made clear that what’s being anticipated isn’t quite there yet. Socially, on 25 December, Christmas is just about over for many people, whereas for the churches, it’s only just beginning.” According to Catholic ecclesiastical calendars, Christmasside only ends on the first Sunday after 6 January.

Crowded Churches on Christmas

Viewed historically, Christmas came into being in relatively late, in the 4th century. “The first church services and texts that we’re relying on originated in late antiquity. In those, the child in the manger, Jesus, the small, helpless child, doesn’t have any role to play,” reports Wahle. Instead, the meaning of Jesus as the son of God made man was in the foreground. During the Middle Ages, the spectrum broadened and deep contemplation of the child took on a central role. Into the 19th century, Christmas remained a religious holiday and revolved around going to church. Protestants pushed Christmas celebrations from 25 December to 24 December early on. For Catholics, the vigil mass at midnight on Christmas Eve was the key service. But the researcher says that in recent times, that hasn’t really been the case. He says everything is shifting to be even earlier. Adds Wahle, “Visitor numbers for the service on Christmas day are staying relatively stable. It is the central church service of the entire year.”

Expression of anticipation: Christmas markets usually get underway at the end of November and end a day before Christmas Eve, so just before the actual Christmas holiday is about to get started. PHOTOS: THOMAS KUNZ

Naive rituals, deliberate routines

In assigning meaning to the celebration, says Wahle, he distinguishes between the church, private individuals and society. The meal, whether it’s carp or potato salad, or if there’s meat or it’s vegetarian, is an essential part of the holiday for him. He says it’s not a matter of how these rituals and routines ever came to develop within the family; the main thing is that they are carried out. Does that guarantee an “ideal world” on Christmas Eve? “No,” counters the theologian. “There are different behavior patterns. Most people simply take part in this ritual without thinking much about it. It’s a certain type of naive ritual that is practiced. Then there are small groups who simply want to get away from it by going abroad, for example. And there’s another small group, that consciously and completely immerses itself in the celebration, continues Wahle. Even people who are not religious celebrate the holiday, because it resonates with existential questions and considerations and it opens up some scope for sorrow. People think about someone who’s died or are happy to see children’s eyes glowing in excitement. “Christmas is a social and holy holiday, during which the topics of time and eternity play a role and those are religious concepts through and through, even if there isn’t any praying or reading of the Christmas story according to the Book of Luke.” These are, by the way, also indispensable components of Christmas, he says, as is whether a place is occupied or remains empty. “Everyone also sings Alle Jahre wieder ("Year after Year"). But every year is a little bit different,” says the scholar, calling it “collective contingency.” And he warns that, “The four or five hours of the afternoon on Christmas Eve and into the early evening are the most intense of the entire year.”

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Gingerbread, apples and candies; Stephan Wahle decorates his Christmas tree in the traditional way. PHOTOS: ARS ULRIKUS, BY-STUDIO, S.H.EXCLUSIV (BOTH OF FOTOLIA)

People who aren’t religious celebrate Christmas, too, because the holiday provides space for existential questions and thought, says Stephan Wahle.
Precious wood

Forest scientists research two forgotten members of the genus Sorbus – service and checker trees

By Eva Oplite

When tree branches are bare in autumn, the bright red berries on the rowan trees lining the lanes are a sure sign of winter. The rowan is a close relative of cherries and apples, and in the past, the berries were used for making schnapps. The rowan, however, is a tree that takes time to develop, and it is at risk from fungal disease. But the checker tree, Sorbus torminalis, and service tree, Sorbus decumbens, are also at risk. They are both native to Europe and are found in many places, but they are not as common as they once were.

One way to help these trees is by creating a more diverse forest ecosystem. The checker tree grows best in open stands of oak forest, and it is often noticed by foresters. However, the service tree also faces challenges. It grows well in the shade of beech trees, but it’s too dry for beech, says Kunz. He adds that they need to know more about these species. They say that the checker and service trees have commercial potential, too. Their wood is very hard and as a result, they could be used as a sustainable substitute for high quality tropical woods. The scientists estimate that a table made of checker wood could easily fetch several thousand euros, meaning the price for a cubic meter of the fine wood exceeds that of spruce many times over.

The hard wood has always been used to make high quality furniture and musical instruments. Says Pyttel, “if you hear a bagpipe, then there’s a very high probability that they are made of Sorbus wood. We’ve got to get away from viewing these trees as curiosities in the forest,” says Pyttel. He adds that instead, they should become an important part of the forest economy. He emphasizes, “This is the message that we’re trying to spread the world with as we present our work.”

The two scientists are taking the results of their top-level, empirical research into forestry districts and the forests are benefitting from it. People in the field have to know about the species in order to bring them on property,” says Kunz. He adds that knowledge based on simple observation is not enough. An extensive foundation can be verified results is required. Kunz continues that success ultimately depends on making the correct recommendations for silviculture using many case studies done on different stocks of trees. Says the scientist, “Only then do generally valid results become established. They are the prerequisite for taking the right measures. And through that, the trees get the attention that they deserve.”

Deep in their cavern, the three witches brew a charmed potion which they use to forestall the fate of the protagonist, William Shakespeare’s Macbeth, who has already killed the king of Scotland and thus ascended the throne. The witches name the ingredients of the brew as a list, ting with eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog. These magical ingredients make up one of the magical ingredients that a table made of checker wood could easily fetch several thousand euros, meaning the price for a cubic meter of the fine wood exceeds that of spruce many times over.

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By Yvonne Troll

There are the typical form in which historic texts of ancient history, catalogues of the botanical genus Sorbus and the Rosaceae family, the two trees are relatively unfamiliar and rare compared to the rowan. Dr. Patrick Pyttel and Jörg Kunz of the chair of forestry at the University of Freiburg want to change that. “We want to know more about how they grow, which locations are ideal for them and how foresters can distribute them in woods,” says Kunz. Both forest scientists are convinced that their work will pay off. The service and checker tree produce popular wood, can cope with the stress of drought and their knowledge of new species. They say that the checker and service trees have commercial potential, too. Their wood is very hard and as a result, they could be used as a sustainable substitute for high quality tropical woods. The scientists estimate that a table made of checker wood could easily fetch several thousand euros, meaning the price for a cubic meter of the fine wood exceeds that of spruce many times over.

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The exact forces at work are still unclear. "We haven't been able to simulate the process satisfactorily on the computer yet." That is the reason for the search for clues in the Gulf of Mexico. A liftboat, a cross between a ship and a drilling rig, brought the team to directly above the ring-shaped mountain range. At the Chicxulub crater, the researchers for the first time took drill cores from depths ranging between 500 to 1,334 meters. This took them down to the upper strata of the ring-shaped mountain range. With the naked eye and geological expertise, Poelchau's job was to provide the initial description of the three meter long chunks that were brought up onto the liftboat, including identifying the rocks and determining the environment in the crater that segments came from. His work created the basis for later geochemical and geophysical investigations.

340 samples in Freiburg
Now, the core samples are at MAR-UM – the Center for Marine Environmental Sciences at the University of Bremen. Poelchau has delivered the first 340 samples together with Prof. Dr. Thomas Kienemann at the University of Freiburg. It is time to do the detailed work: for instance, assess the shape and direction of the cracks in the rock that can show the strength and direction of the forces released when the meteorite struck. Researchers are using the data to gradually determine how the central ring-shaped mountain range was formed.

The team has reported their initial findings in the specialist journal Science. The scientists determined that within the space of a few minutes the asteroid first compressed down and then onwards rocky masses located ten kilometers below the earth's surface before they were again pushed back to the center of the crater and upwards. On the earth's surface they piled up into a central mountain and then collapsed into a ring-shaped mountain range. Another finding was that the rock making up this ring is more porous and less dense than expected. It offered microorganisms ecological niches in which they could develop and perhaps provides clues about how the first life forms appeared long, long ago, when the earth was beset by meteorite strikes much more frequently.

By Nicolas Scherger

Dr. Michael Poelchau gladly took on a month of enduring the swell of the sea and engine noise, sharing a cabin with five people, and doing shift work from midnight to noon every day. After all, as part of an international research team, the Freiburg-based geologist was taking part in a scientific adventure. The expedition led to a crater – the site of a meteorite strike 66 million years ago that changed the course of life on earth.

"Until now we've only had a rough idea of what happened back then," says Poelchau about the origin of the 180-kilometer Chicxulub crater in the Gulf of Mexico. What is known is that a 15-kilometer diameter rock slammed 180-kilometer Chicxulub crater in the Gulf of Mexico. What is known is that a 15-kilometer diameter rock slammed the earth's crust was also flung up into the atmosphere. Fine dust darkened the skies around the world, the ecosystem collapsed and many species disappeared. The theory is that this event marked the end of the dinosaurs and enabled the rise of mammals.

From central mountain to ring-shaped mountain range
But what exactly happened when the meteorite struck? Large strike craters are found at the heart of ring-shaped mountain ranges. When the collision first occurs, a mountain rises in the center of the crater. However this is an unstable and rapidly collapsing, causing the material to be forced to the edges of the crater and the ring-shaped mountain range to rise. "You can see a similar phenomenon with a drop falling into water," says Poelchau. The exact forces at work are still unclear. "We haven't been able to simulate the process satisfactorily on the computer yet."

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The Archaeological Collection holds an exhibition designed by students

by Stephanie Strefi

Aucha logical Collection had a plan when he took charge of the University of Freiburg's Archaeo logical Collection four years ago. The new curator's idea was that exhibition space in the basement of the Herder buu on Habsburgerstrasse would not only serve as a collection for study and instruction but also function as a place for learning, or—to put it more precisely—as a workshop. Since then, the space between enormous plaster casts and display cases full of tiny original artifacts has hosted drawing courses, readings, seminars and concerts in addition to the usual lecture ses, workshops and examinations. And should a student suddenly get the urge to practice setting up a small exhibition in a corner of the collection, then that's allowed, too.

Yet at the moment, Dr. Dickmann is facing greater challenges. A genuine exhibition has been planned and is opening to the public on 24 January 2017. The show, A Matter of Perspective: Ancient Sculpture Groups in Space is the finale of a large-scale teaching project that Dickmann developed and for which he received an 85,000 euro grant from the Essen based Stiftung Mercur (Mercur Foundation). Students have been preparing for the exhibition for more than a year. The idea grew out of a one semester teaching project that Dickmann had been working with the archaeologist. It was a seminar in which the students were to approach a single exhibit item by writing about it. They were first to describe the object as vividly and in as much detail as possible. Then, the students had to write up scientific documentation, a catalog item, and an easily understandable information sheet for it. A semester later, the students took part in a seminar which gave them the required basic knowledge of Hellenistic sculpture groups. And because it is to be their exhibition, they are working on curating, organizing, creating, scripting, laying out and photography for the event, which they might even have to spend an afternoon or two painting pedestals for the sculptures if need be.

Passion takes priority over European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) points

Dickmann describes his aspirations: "I want my students to already assume scientific responsibility during their education." Decisions are made—with a few exceptions— together and democratically, after extensive discussion within the group. This is the second exhibition to be financed with funding from the grant. In the summer of 2015, Of Drinking and Carousing—Racetrack Changes in Ancient Feasting was the first exhibition to be held. Back then Dickmann had a team of seven students. This time, he's got twice as many. "The concept was very well-received at the Institute of Classical Archaeology. The newer students were getting curios, in part because they could do a great deal by themselves, but the amount of effort involved was nevertheless enormous," says Dickmann.

Assembling a 340-page catalog, in particular, took a great deal of the students' time during the first project. Dickmann had been convinced that the students are motivated by far more than the few ECTS points they get for taking part in his project. At the moment, the students are mulling over their texts for the catalog. If the words fall to convince, Texts can be rewritten three, four, and, if necessary, five times. The curator says that the young people don't always handle this with ease. Yet they stick with it, he adds. "They want to learn and have shown themselves to be extremely reliable," he says.

The Mercurator grant will end during the current semester. It's not yet clear if young archaeologists at Freiburg will have the chance to set up their very own. Hopes are that they will, because those who do things themselves learn best.

"If you have fun at it, then you're good at it too"

A new teaching format simplifies career guidance for students

by Verena Adt

Siegfried Weiss never expected to be asked about the subtle differences between fee and commission-based advisory services. In mid-November 2016 the independent financial advis er from Waldkirch was in Freiburg facing a group of students who had signed up for a new course. Weiss was stunned at how well-prepared many of the participants were. "The level of detail of some questions was astonishing," said the 49-year-old appr eciatively after he had talked about his experiences. "Many students are uncertain what knowledge, skills and weaknesses lie. They also have to incorporate someone else's evalu ation of them. Then they really get down to it with the vocational aptitude test of the IHK, which takes up a three-hour session. As a result, the students receive a comprehensive aptitude profile precisely depicting their abilities—from motivation and attentiveness to decisiveness and planning skills. Their individual profile is then compared to the features of more than 300 different professions. The possibility for going back to an occupational branch can be determined from the extent to which they correlate.

One of the participants, Dominik Möthner, was interested in discovering career opportunities and assessing his abilities better. He is enrolled in a bachelor's program with majors in Biology and Economics and doesn't yet know what direction he wants to take. He was glad to learn first hand that successful careers don't always take a straight path.

He gained this sudden insight from communication coach Lena Sarikaya, who gave up a management position in the pharmaceuticals industry a few years ago to work as a freelance coach. "Some people in the group were very certain that I can live from my current job," relates Sarikaya. She thinks the new format is a good way of responding to the problem that many students have little insight into working life.

The students have to prepare intensively for the encounters. They must create a corporate profile for each meeting and produce a number of key questions for the discussion. The speakers are without exception operational management and not mere sent from the personnel department. This was important to the organizers. "We are not aiming to gain future employees, but to present the in dustry of the region as a whole," stresses the head of the IHK, Dr. Steffen Auer. "For the students it's about finding out: 'What am I suited for and what do I enjoy? Is it fun for you, then you're good at it too.'

Curved career paths

First of all, the participants have to assess where their interests, strengths and weaknesses lie. They also have to incorporate someone else's evaluation of them. Then they really get down to it with the vocational aptitude test of the IHK, which takes up a three-hour session. As a result, the students receive a comprehensive aptitude profile precisely depicting their abilities—from motivation and attentiveness to decisiveness and planning skills. Their individual profile is then compared to features of more than 300 different professions. The possibility for going back to an occupational branch can be determined from the extent to which they correlate.

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www.zfs.uni-freiburg.de

www.archaeologische-sammlung. uni-freiburg.de
A new program of study – Global Urban Health – investigates ways to reduce health risks in cities

Health in the city

by Sarah Schwarzkopf

Air pollution, fast food and stress are just a few of the factors de-motivating urban dwellers’ health. The more urbanization increases, the more contagious and chronic diseases, psychological ailments and violence, gain in significance. In the winter semester of 2016/17, the University of Freiburg’s Faculty of Humanities began offering a Master’s degree program Global Urban Health. The one-year course of study addresses the health challenges posed by urbanization. Its students learn to mitigate the risks and threats to health posed by living in modern cities.

The Center for Medicine and Society is organizing the English-language, interdisciplinary program. In the mornings, students examine theories that they then apply in practice in the afternoon. “There was a statistics course this morning,” says Dr. Sonia Diaz-Monsalve, who coordinates the course this morning. “After the lunch break, the students gather data at the cemetery. They can then analyze it and determine, for example, at what average age people die in different regions.” Guest lecturers and field trips provide further insight into urban health in reality.

Bringing knowledge back home

The prerequisites for admission are a university degree and at least two years of work experience. The tuition fee for the course is 12,000 euros. Graduates will have many employment options open to them, for example in development aid, medicine, policy-making, city planning or education. In future, with the Master’s degree I will be able to work at an international level rather than just in a hospital,” says student Francesca Tsai of Taiwan. “I would like to achieve that independent of its political situation. Taiwan can take part in World Health Organization events.” she explains. Students from developing countries can take the knowledge they’ve gained back to their home countries as well.

Up to now, the program is the only one of its kind in the world. What’s new about it is that it focuses specifically on health in cities with an emphasis on the developing world. “It is nevertheless important to us to examine problems from a global standpoint, because mosquito-borne diseases from different professional fields are not only in developing countries. In poor and affluent countries alike, chronic diseases is becoming more evenly distributed as globalization progresses. Says Diaz-Monsalve, fast food, cigarettes and televisions are everywhere, so heart disease, cancer and diabetes are common everywhere as well. Students learn how to recognize problems and develop solutions for them. “Freiburg is an optimal location for the program,” says its coordinator. The university is located relatively close to United Nations organizations headquarters. Furthermore, there are many green areas nearby and the physical activity level of the population is comparatively high. In addition to theoretical knowledge and methods of empirical analysis, dealing with the media and policy-makers effectively is part of the course curriculum.

In the first year that the course has been offered, three hundred people from different professional fields applied for the 20 available course places. The first group comes from ten different countries – among those are Argentina, Bangladesh and Ethiopia – as well as five continents. “The intercultural differences are a wonderful experience for all of us,” says Diaz-Monsalva, because the students have first-hand experience with some of the problems being investigated. This can be helpful in terms of developing promising solutions. Says the course coordinator, “In certain regions, mosquito nets are not necessarily an effective means of preventing mosquito bites because their white color is associated with death and people don’t like to sleep under them.” She adds that this example shows how important it is to approach the problem to be addressed from different perspectives.

New Delhi, India: Students learn how health risks – those caused by polluted air for example – can be reduced in metropolitan areas. PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

Open for questions

How digital provision of texts is changing

by Nicolas Scherger

New rules affecting the availability of texts that can be called up online via the ILIAS study platform came into effect on 1 January 2017. The university has set up a forum to answer students’ and instructors’ questions about this because the availability in particular of digital items on course reserve shelves will not be straightforward in future.

The affected texts are those that come under Paragraphs 52a of the German copyright law (UHG). These are small parts of a single work – up to 12 percent or a maximum of 100 pages, short literary works and articles from magazines and newspapers. In-
Snow White, Sons and Heirs, and an Eight on the Intelligence Scale

How the game Therapy plays with social expectations and self and others’ assessments

by Nicolas Scherger

Editorial staff members from the psychology and social sciences at the University of Freiburg sat down for a round of Therapy in the German television series Abgezockt (Ripped-off). Their aim was to examine the board game from a – tongue-in-cheek, of course – scientific perspective.

The game

Players use a miniature couch to make their way through infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and to consider their alter ego. As they go, the players collect pins representing facets of knowledge. The goal is to be the first to garner all six. To proceed, contestants must answer questions correctly or guess what people believe they see in inkblots. They also provide therapy for the other players. This involves determining how people perceive themselves and the influence they have on others. Game sessions can get spicy. Years-long friendships can be made or broken on the game board.

The players

Prof. Dr. Markus Heinrichs, Dr. Bernadette von Dawans and Dr. Tobias Stächle draw a knowledge question, “Who visits their retired parents more often? Adult sons or adult daughters?” The psychologist gets it right. According to a 1986 study, they visit their parents an average of 62 times a year, whereas men only visit 47 times. An amused Markus Heinrichs says, “I wouldn’t even get to 47 visits in twenty years. Comparative studies today would in part arrive at very different results.” Yet other outcomes dating back some time remain valid. Rimma Gerenstein is to guess whom a father of twins prefers – the firstborn, or the smaller one. He’s the first to volunteer. “That’s a bit of a dilemma, but I go for the smaller,” she answers correctly. The experts explain that this can be credited to both evolutionary biology and psychology. Bernadette von Dawans gets an easy question as well, “Whom is it easier to hypnotize? Men or women?” Women, clearly. “Men have more fear of relinquishing control,” elucidates Heinrichs.

Stächle provides a bit of a variety a few moves and knowledge questions later. He has to guess what most people see in a certain inkblot. The question alludes to the personality test named for the psychologist Hermann Rorschach, who developed it nearly a century ago. Heinrichs says, “Viewed from today’s perspective, with regard to its diagnostic relevance, it is ‘utter nonsense, but entertaining.’” So does the image show two dancing women, two horses fighting or a bow-legged cowboy? “I actually see the cowboy. But only two percent of the last subjects saw that. Sixty percent said the blot depicted two dancing women. Says Heinrichs, “What a person recognizes depends on what dominates an individual’s character. Medical students could interpret it as an anatomical diagram of the birth canal.” Yet it remains a mystery how Stächle arrived at comes.

Finally, the highpoint of the game is reached. Gerenstein ends up in Stächle’s office and must subject herself to therapy. The patient is asked: “If she had to cast a film with the people with whom she is playing, what film would it be? – “Snow White,” “Gone with the Wind,” “The Godfather” or “Sissy Schoolgirl Report Nr. 8?” The answer given should actually be “Snow White,” according to Heinrichs. “Sissy Schoolgirl Report Nr. 8” is what film she chose. “The Godfather,” he answers, missing the mark. “I wanted that first, but then you influenced me,” complains Gerenstein, looking over at Heinrichs. “Now you’re right on the paper,” says Gerenstein, “I thought that would be socially desirable because we’re a friendly group.”

A short time later, Heinrichs is faced with a similar problem. He ends up in group therapy and has to write down how intelligent he thinks on a scale of one to ten. The others have to agree on a number, but are allowed a margin of error of one point. Stächle sets limits, “He’s written down something between five and ten, so we’re interested in something from six to nine.” Von Dawans takes on the role of the therapist. “He’s certainly don’t think that he’ll put him at seven,” or six, “burts the pro- fessor. “Snow White,” is what he chooses. “He’s certainly don’t think that he’ll put him at seven.”

The analysis

After just over an hour, all the situations the game presents have been tested – but none of the contestants is anywhere near victory, so the group decides to leave the game undecided. How does having psychological help when playing the game? About twenty to thirty percent of the questions can be answered with the help of subject knowledge, but the experts say common sense can be applied to many of them. Heinrichs says the game can best be used in private life, rather than for teaching. He elaborates: “With a group of new roommates, for example, who want to get to know each other. Or, he adds, for people who have long been friends. “It is interesting to see how one person influences the others – and during a game that lasts for several hours, you are getting feedback again and again,” he says.

“Therapy”

(Recorded in current selection)

www.hasdeo.de

Campus statistics

Student numbers have again topped the 25,000 mark. In the winter semester of 2016/17, 25,439 students matriculated. Of those, 4,339 have foreign nationality. During the winter semester last year, the University of Freiburg for the first time had more foreign nationals. Both records have been surpassed again this year. During the winter semester of 2016/17, 25,439 students attended the University of Freiburg for the first time. Among them, more than four thousand were foreign nationals. During the winter semester of 2016/17, 25,439 students attended the University of Freiburg for the first time. Among them, more than four thousand were foreign nationals. Both records have been surpassed again this year.

One gold, four silvers

The University of Freiburg’s wine has won five medals at the Austrian Wine Challenge (awc) in Vienna. The competition is the largest recognized wine competition in the world. A gold medal was awarded to a dry, late vintage, 2014 Pinot Noir from the Lorettsberg. Two of the university’s Pinot Blanc wines – vintages 2013 and 2015 respectively – each won a silver medal as did a 2015 and a 2012 Pinot Noir. The University of Freiburg first took part in the competition in 2012 and had the honor of taking home two gold and five silver medals for its wine. The enrollment administra- tion of the university manages the vineyards. At this year’s awc Vienna: 1,890 producers from 41 countries en- tered nearly 13 thousand wines in the competition. The jury is composed of international oenologists, sommeliers, restaurateurs, wine merchants and award-winning wine journalists. Because the compe- tion is recognized by the EU, the uni- versity may use the medals on bottle labels when advertising the wines.

Clean-up the environment and donate

By a decision of the rectorate, pro- ceeds from the University of Freiburg’s projects in the Sustainable University Work Group will be donated to charity. Two thou- sand euros have been collected by the project in the last four years. The Sus- tainable University Work Group is now donating this sum to the Förderverein für Krebskranke Kinder e. V. in Freiburg. According to its statutes, the organiza- tion aids children who have cancer and their families by providing psychological and social support and aftercare. It also supports the Center for Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the Freiburg University Medical Center. “We think that training in a sense of responsibility and comprom- ise and outstanding work in Freiburg,” says Dr. Jürgen Steck, who leads the Sustainable University Work Group.

www.uni-freiburg.de/projekte/tomx/kurzfassungen

universitätszeitung kreisfreie stadt freiburg
Launching a New Life

Refugees Nabil Sifo and Danial Danha are studying at the University of Freiburg this winter semester

by Petra Völzing

The semester is starting. Everyone is milling around outside the University of Freiburg’s library. Danial Danha and Nabil Sifo are sitting in a café happily watching all the hustle and bustle. Both have had hard times in the past. Sifo comes from the town of Salamiyah in Syria. He came to Germany via Greece in the summer of 2015 – one of many in the massive stream of refugees. The 30-year-old had already left Syria in 2013. “I had finished my military service in Syria, but they did not want to let me go because of the war,” he explains. While he was on leave, he packed a few things and fled to Jordan. “According to Syria I am a deserter,” he says grimly. He would face the death penalty were he to return. The decision to go was difficult to make, because he was leaving his mother and three siblings back home. “Killing another person was unimaginable for me, and certainly not for a dictator like Bashar al-Assad,” he says. Before he joined the military, Sifo studied geology in Damascus. Now he is starting a Master’s program at the University of Freiburg in the same subject.

The men converse steadily in German. Both have taken a language course for refugees that the university has offered since April 2016. “Of course it would be more relaxed if we were speaking to each other in Arabic,” says Danha. Both say it is especially important to learn to speak German well as quickly as possible, because they use every opportunity they get to practice. “There are some topics where I still can’t put the German words. For example, when I’m talking about a pretty woman,” says Danha with a laugh. He has been in Germany since the start of 2015 and has already passed the German Language Test for International Students at German Institutions of Higher Education – meaning he has attained a C1 level and meets the requirements to begin study. The 22-year-old has been studying medicine since the start of the 2016/17 winter semester. Sifo, on the other hand, does not require Level C1, because teaching is in English in his course of study. “Naturally, that’s easier,” he says and smiles. Nevertheless, he is still working diligently at learning German.

Reaching the required level

This semester a total of nine refugees began courses of study at the University of Freiburg. That is not a large number. Yet students from the affected countries on regular student visas who are not seeking asylum are not included in this figure. “Learning the German language is the biggest hurdle,” says Dr. Christina Schoch, the Director of the Student Service Center. Conventional integration courses only take learners as far as Level B1, which is insufficient for university studies. “There are few affordable opportunities to reach Level C1,” says Schoch. Forty refugees can take part in the university’s German course. Eighty applied for it. Normally it takes six months to progress from B1 to C1 explains Schoch. She adds, however, that experience shows the refugees need more time. Compared to other students from abroad, they are less prepared and often have to work on the side as well. What is more, they are worried about the right to remain in the country.

Danha was an exception. “Right after I arrived in Germany I bought myself a German book and started on my own,” he explains. The Aramean comes from the town of Irbil in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. In recent years his family’s life was made increasingly difficult on account of their Christian faith. When their house was taken from them, they saw no future in Iraq anymore. Danha does not like to say how they came to be in Germany, only that: “It was difficult and complicated.” Before he left, he had started studying medicine in Irbil. Attacks were carried out twice in front of the university building. “I was never certain if I would get back home safely,” he says. Now he lives with his parents and two sisters in an apartment in Umkirch. His father has found a job as an engineer. His two sisters attend secondary school.

Saying thanks and giving back in return

Both students are happy in Freiburg. “The university’s caliber and equipment are far better here than in Irbil,” says Danha, who can foresee becoming a cardiologist. Nabil feels comfortable, too. But he says the need to work on the side makes his studies more difficult. “I need the money, above all to pay rent.” He lives with three German students in a shared apartment. Another bitter pill for him is that he has succeeded in getting a PhD scholarship in Jordan. But because he did not have a valid passport, the German embassy refused to issue him a visa and the scholarship offer expired. He applied again in Freiburg, but in vain. “That was a real shame, because then I would have more time to study,” he adds. All-in-all, however, he has no regrets.

Neither of them has experienced any discrimination yet. “If anything, I experience positive discrimination,” notes a grinning Sifo. He says he is continuing to receive support precisely because he is a refugee. “The social worker at the refugee hostel in Emmendingen helped me a great deal,” he recounts. It was she who established contact with the university. But he says the professors support him, too. Danha also has positive reports. “I have at least 30 friends – and all my fellow students are ready to help,” he says with enthusiasm. “They don’t see us as refugees anymore. They are also taking part in our course, they do not want to let me go because of the university. But he says the need to work on the side makes his studies more difficult. “I need the money, above all to pay rent.” He lives with three German students in a shared apartment. Another bitter pill for him is that he has succeeded in getting a PhD scholarship in Jordan. But because he did not have a valid passport, the German embassy refused to issue him a visa and the scholarship offer expired. He applied again in Freiburg, but in vain. “That was a real shame, because then I would have more time to study,” he adds. All-in-all, however, he has no regrets.

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Etiquette Primer for Social Media

A new netiquette and updated guidelines provide orientation for everyone using the internet in the name the university

by Yvonne Troll

Whether it is Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or the rest, the University of Freiburg is active on all major social media channels. The offerings on the world’s largest social media network, Facebook, is directed at the broadest audience. It provides prospective students, students, faculty, colleagues and journalists a package of comprehensive information about the university. Twitter, by contrast, uses a hashtag system. A media account provides journalists with news, while a second channel is dedicated to supplying a wider audience with more general information and reports on the latest happenings. A new YouTube presence is in the process of being launched. The platform provides impressions of the university, including videos of research and teaching as well as tips and information for students. Instagram promises a look behind the scenes at the university. The Social Media Coordinator at Freiburg, Dr. Max Orlich, and his colleague, Melanie Hübner, handle everything that has to do with any type of social media. As Public Relations Department staff, they coordinate and supervise all the university’s digital activities.

The business networks XING and LinkedIn are currently being expanded. “There we are in contact with employers, donors and sponsors, and maintain a network of former students,” reports Hübner. The duo are getting plenty of response. Says Orlich, “You can tell by the comments and likes that the alumnae and alumni continue to be interested in what is going on at their alma mater.”

Good manners are always in style. Netiquette provides tips for Facebook etc. Illustration: Svenja Kirch

Friendly and respectful

The pair says comments, news, discussions and posts are welcome on all channels. Nevertheless Orlich and Hübner emphasize that there are certain rules to follow. Netiquette—a type of collection of behavioral rules for social media users—offers guidance. “You should adhere to certain communication rules when dealing directly with people. The same goes for the internet. But there, many people still find it difficult to have their say reasonably and politely,” notes Orlich. He says that depending on the topic, the potential for aggression can rise rapidly and may lead to insults, threats and intimidations. The university disciplines those who make xenophobic, sexist, party-political or religious remarks. Beyond that, users must ensure that they respect copyrights and the privacy of others and do not post advertisements. People who fail to comply with these guidelines can be warned—or in extreme cases—be reported to Facebook, banned or reported to the police. The University of Freiburg is legally responsible for content on social media channels and websites that appear on the internet in its name.

Even staff members who are using social media for university institutions are being given a helping hand. Orlich and Hübner have updated and expanded already existing guidelines. New, for example, is the tip that legal information is obligatory, as is eliminating the “like” or “share” buttons of social networks on external websites because these transfer user data without authorization. Staff members have the opportunity to use a forum on the university’s intranet to share their experiences. The team furthermore offers social media courses for beginners and advanced users through the university’s internal further and continuing education programs. Orlich and Hübner say they are also available for direct contact at all times.

Netiquette schooling

Netiquette and Guidelines

www.uni-freiburg.de/publikationen/service-manual/soziale-medien

Introduction to Corporate Design

www.uni-freiburg.de/service-manual/socialmedia

Contact

socialmedia@pr.uni-freiburg.de

Working out at work

Students and office workers often spend hours sitting motionless with their eyes fixed on their computer screens. As deadlines and examinations approach, the time for relaxation shrinks to nil. It’s no wonder, then, that back pain, stiff necks, headaches or simply a general sense of being unwell caused by sluggish circulation, can set in over time.

Finding relief for these aches and pains isn’t difficult. The staff of the Fitness & Health Center (FGZ) of the University of Freiburg has presented a series of exercises that can easily be done at your desk at any time.

Take a load off your back – stretch your hip flexor

By Petra Völzing

Most people are likely barely aware of the existence of their hip flexors. Yet the muscles have a key function. They link the upper thigh with the pelvis and the lower section of the spinal column. The hip flexors provide stability for the torso and transfer force from the legs to the lower spine. Sitting bent at the hip for long periods of time keeps the muscles in a shortened position. This can lead to the lower back pain of which many people complain. Using a simple exercise to stretch the hip flexors periodically can help to avoid this discomfort. Sit up straight and on the edge of your chair. Put your left leg out and bent to a 90-degree angle. Place your right leg under the chair or to the side of it. Rest it gently on your upper instep and extend the leg as far behind you as you can. This stretches the hip flexors and the muscles at the front of the thigh. Putting the pelvis in an upright position and straightening the back intensifies the stretch. Hold the position for twenty to thirty seconds, then repeat the exercise on the other side. Repeat the stretch two or three times on each side. People who want a more intense exercise can do it without the support of a chair, but remember that more strength and balance are required for this.

Caption: Using the chair as a support Valentin Stark demonstrates a hip flexor stretch. Photo: Klaus Polkowski

Move it!

Anyone who wants to get moving is welcome to come and explore the range of activities and advice the FGZ offers, or they can book an office visit from PausenExpress to be put through their paces on the spot.

www.fgz.uni-freiburg.de
www.gesund.uni-freiburg.de/angebote/ pausenexpress
Individual standard

The Web-to-Print service can create visiting cards, flyers, posters or calendars in the university corporate design to suit your needs

by Rimma Gerenstein

The key feature of Web-to-Print is that it only stocks templates that are designed in accordance with the corporate design (CD) rules of the university. "The advantage is that you don't have to rummage through a manual when you are creating a flyer about an institute, for example," says Marcel Oettrich from Knowledge Management, who oversees the service. "You don't have to spend ages thinking whether the university logo should now go at the bottom left or right or how big it should be. The program sorts all that out for you."

A saved document can always be reworked

The platform came into existence all of eight years ago, when the university introduced its corporate design. "Our goal was to provide staff with guidelines for use of the CD, but at the same time show them that corporate design absolutely doesn't have to mean that everything looks the same," remarks Oettrich. The platform is popular. About 5,000 orders are sent to the program each year. Besides the simplicity of the in-house process, it also pays off financially, as print jobs are only charged at equipment and materials costs, not design costs.

Web-to-Print has gradually expanded its offering, and from the start of 2017 there will be another new service: Serial documents. Now, to print personalized invitations or certificates you just have to upload an Excel file with the names and the program does the rest. Oettrich says that's especially practical because every employee can repeat-

Unwanted advice

The Glücksatlas isn't intended as a guide to happiness – but there's still a lot to learn from the study

by Martin Jost

W"e humans strive to be happy. Many are happy or at least the drive to be happy is the meaning of life. So it's a pity that we know so little about what makes us happy in the long term. Published by Deutsche Post, the 2016 Glücksatlas, or Atlas of Happiness, is the sixth edition already looking into the happiness of the German people and their satisfaction with their standard of living. Its main authors are Birnd Raffelhüschen, professor of public finance and director of the inter-generational Contract Research Center at the University of Freiburg, and Reinhard Schlinkert, professor of public law and director of the Institute for Market and Political Research – dimap, in Bonn.

The authors of the Glücksatlas stress that it is not suitable as a guide to a happy life. Presumably this is a disclaimer of liability, so it shouldn't stop us from taking the study at face value. We want to learn from the happiest Germans: What are they doing right? What does it mean? And what can put a damper on our happiness? Below are a few well-meaning pieces of advice which you should take with a pinch of salt.

The Glücksatlas are the happiest. The average for the Federal state of Schleswig-Holstein is currently 7.11. However, if you prefer to live in the south-west either as a matter of habit or on principle, it's far from the worst anyway. But then please choose Baden. Of the 19 regions surveyed, Baden came fourth in the satisfaction rankings – 0.06 points and five places ahead of Württemberg.

Good friends and pleasant colleagues are important, but the happiest people also have a permanent partner. Married people are meanwhile still 0.1 points happier than people who are living together without a marriage certificate. Find a religion and practice it, that makes everything better. Catholics rate their marriages as far and away the most satisfying. On the other hand getting married hardly makes atheists any happier.

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Good friends and pleasant colleagues are important, but the happiest people also have a permanent partner. Married people are meanwhile still 0.1 points happier than people who are living together without a marriage certificate. Find a religion and practice it, that makes everything better. Catholics rate their marriages as far and away the most satisfying. On the other hand getting married hardly makes atheists any happier.

Illustrations: Svenja Kirsch

Find a secure job. Losing a job is no good for anyone. On the other hand, this isn't so much because of the loss of income but because of the loss of social contacts. In other words, you can't do without other people.

Otherwise, as far as family planning goes, you only move into the top league of happiness when you have children. The first child contributes the most to the balance, but each additional child does increase satisfaction with life at least a little. However, three or more children are required to offset the negatives of living in the former GDR. Unfortunately, living in the former GDR will bring you down a lot, with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern being the absolute nadir.

But if you are honest with yourself, you already know what else does you good: not watching too much television, playing more sport, voluntary work and donating to a good cause. But don't give blood if you are paid for it. This doesn't affect your satisfaction levels. The bad news, however, we've kept until last. More than half of your tendency to be happy is determined genetically – so we hope your parents have passed on a good basic level of satisfaction.
As a child, Sarah Adler already found skeletons, graves and all sorts of creepy stories exciting. In her book, she expresses her fascination in a humorous way.

When death has doubts about life

by Sarah Schwarzkopf

No tody likes him. So he decides to finally do something to change that. In her debut novel published in October 2016, Sarah Adler tells a story of death and its efforts to improve his image. The 22-year-old from Könztin-gen is in her fourth semester at the University of Freiburg. She is studying archeology and English language and literature. Writing has always been Adler’s passion. Now that’s paid off. Her novel sold out two weeks after it was released.

Says the author, “Death finds it unfair that no one can stand him and that everyone slings to life. So he tries to find friends by using several methods which unfortunately all go horribly wrong in some way.” His annoying colleagues life and fate keep throwing a wrench into his work. The three following animals and humans through evolution, starting with the first cell. Death has to adapt to things too, because different forms of life die in different ways. He asks himself if he is really as bad as everyone thinks he is.

Adler goes beyond western mytholo-gy in his depiction of death. She includes other concepts as well. The young author says the cross-cultural thought she’s experienced in her stud-ies helped her do this. Adler continues that it is no coincidence that she is studying archeology and has tackled the topic of death in her first novel. “I always found everything that has to do with dead people fascinating – with skeletons and gruesome things,” says the young author and laughs. There is an Alemannian burial ground in Kön- dringen. Says Adler, “As a child I often walked by the old bones that were sticking up out of the clay. I would im-agine how long ago that was and how cool it would be to dig them out myself!”

Ten pages a day

Knochenjob is the first story that Adler has written through to the end. Despite the complex plot – which fea-tures many strands and jumps around in time – Adler wrote the book in just two months. It all started in the sum-mer of 2015, when she played the part of a death in a theater piece and at the same time was preparing for her first A-level course in her school. At one moment, I was studying cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and in the next I had to go out on stage and do someone in. The idea came to me at some point during that time,” recalls Adler. From the start it was clear that the book would be funny. Says Adler, “I love plays on words and humor suits me best. Besides, I wanted to do something new. That’s difficult when death is the topic.”

Student Sarah Adler publishes her first novel Knochenjob

With rope, cable and fire extinguisher

Benjamin Schätzle coaches the German youth national tug-of-war team, he also inspects electrical equipment and provides fire safety at the university

by Jürgen Schickingen

B enjamin Schätzle likes taking back steps – but only during a tug-of-war. As the coach of the German national youth tug-of-war team, he takes it. To win an event, a team has to pull their opponents four meters in their direction, meaning that backwards in tug-of-war means going forward to success. Recently, Schätzle’s team won second place in the world cham-pionships. At the Safety Office of the University of Freiburg, he is responsi-ble for the organization of the fire safety program and inspection of electrical equipment. There, just as elsewhere, the man from Elztal prefers going forwards to backwards, even if barriers need to be overcome in the process.

“You should never give up, even when it looks as if you’re on the brink of defeat,” says Schätzle. He says sports have taught him this lesson, but also books. “It’s a really great sport!” he says. With death has doubts about life. But he didn’t miss a step. At the start of September 2016, in his first year of coaching, he and his team won second place at the world champion-ship in Malmö, Sweden. “That was a surprise,” says a pleased Schätzle.

The 34-year-old can’t stay away from fire, either. “Firefighting was always my hobby,” he says. After he stopped working as an active fireman, Schätzle began providing early fire safety education courses in kinder-gartens and schools. He started work at the university in 2005, first in Facilities Services. Then, in 2015 he qualified as a fire safety officer. A short time later, Schätzle began working in the Safety Office, where he and head fire safety officer Roland Birmelie form the fire safety team. Batteries ignite now and then at one or the other of the techni-cal institutes, says Schätzle. “We haven’t had any major fires in my time here,” he adds. Nevertheless, reports Schätzle, there’s plenty to do – for ex-ample, organizing emergency drills, holding fire safety seminars or drawing up safe seating plans for events. The priority for events is ensuring that fire exits and firefighters’ access routes remain clear. Space is at a premium in many places on campus. Occasionally, tables, cabinets or machines stand in the halls. “Most of the time that’s not allowed for safety reasons,” says Schätzle.

A qualified electrician, Schätzle’s second area of responsibility is inspecting electrical equipment. He can look at anything from small, mobile devices to table lamps, electrical kettles and table centrifuges to ensure they are safe. He says that if you take a close look at many items, you will find plenty of worn cables, exposed con-tacts or bare wires. There can also be cracks in housings or other types of damage. “At the moment we’re working on structural improve-ments to ensure that all electrical de-vices are invented and tested regu-larly,” says Schätzle. This means that soon every institute will have its own office for electrical safety courses. The Safety Office will make the neces-sary testing devices available. It also offers the “You’ve got a house on how to use them. The course only takes an-hour- and-a-half because the measurements are almost fully automated.

Keeping fire under control: Benjamin Schätzle gives seminars on fire safety basics. PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

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Safety Office will make the neces-sary testing devices available. It also offers the “You’ve got a house on how to use them. The course only takes an-hour- and-a-half because the measurements are almost fully automated.

South Baden home to most of Germany’s tug-of-warriors

Fire safety regulations have become stricter. “Fortunately, the university cooperates very well,” prays Schätzle. It would be good, he says, if staff members would simply reflect now and then about what to do in an emergency. Where is my exit? Are there any barriers that I would have to help a disabled person get over? In competitions, com-petitions are when things get serious. But Schätzle says that there are few risks. “It’s true. It’s a strong sport, but there are very few injuries.” The national youth teams are obsessed with reading about the atmosphere at practice ses-sions and competitions – of team spirit, power, technique and synchronicity. “It’s a really great sport!” he says. With one exception, all the clubs in Germany’s national youth tug-of-war association in South Baden. “There are plenty of really high level competitions where we are. I rec-ommend to everyone that they should come by and watch one,” he says.

Among her favorite authors are Walter Moers, Jonathan Stroud and a few British writers with whom Adler shares in her stories. You only learn everything that makes your work by reading a lot,” she says. The thing Adler likes best about writing is that it’s a quiet and relaxing pastime.

Adler works translating English into German in addition to her studies. Lat-er, she says she would like to pursue a Master’s degree or perhaps work for a publisher, but she favors above all earning her living as an author and translator. “I’ve got a house on how to make a career that I’d still like to implement,” she says, adding that it’s a good reason to keep writing ten pages a day. Adler says that’s not difficult at times when she has good ideas. “Then, it’s like I’m possessed,” she elaborates.

The reception her first work received has been wholly positive up to now. “I’m curious to see the first bad review. I want to know what exactly it is they’ll take issue with. Sheshe has already a contract for the third book. It will place three thousand years in the fu-ture in a parallel universe. And it’s not as if Adler rests on her laurels. At the moment, she’s working on her third book, which is directed at an audience of young readers.

Keeping fire under control: Benjamin Schätzle gives seminars on fire safety basics. PHOTO: KLAUS POLKOWSKI

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Achievements

The University of Freiburg has awarded Prof. Dr. Alain Bertetz its University Medal. As the President of the University of Strasbourg, France, he received the award at his farewell party – on 16 September 2016 Bertetz became Director General for Innovation and Research at the French Ministry of Education. The University of Freiburg gave him the award in honor of his extraordinary contributions to the establishment of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EVTL), “Erco – The European Campus,” and his significant work on the project of a European university for the Upper Rhine.

For the discovery of an inhibitor for the enzyme Sirutin 2 (Sir2), the working group headed by Prof. Dr. Manfred Jung from the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Freiburg received the PHOENIX Pharmaceutica Sciences Award together with an endowment of 10,000 euros. Sirutins are associated with a range of age-related diseases such as cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer’s. In future, it may be possible to use this inhibitor to counteract the occurrence of these diseases or find new therapeutic approaches. The pharmaceuticals trader, PHOENIX Group, awards the prize each year for outstanding performance in basic pharmaceutical research.

Forest scientist Prof. Dr. Christian Messier of the University of Quebec, Montreal, Canada, has received a Humboldt Research Award. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation’s distinction honours scientists for career achievements that have made a substantial impact on their areas of expertise. Award winners are invited to realize research projects at an institution of their choice in Germany. Messier intends to continue to develop concepts at the University of Freiburg for the management of forests as complex, adaptive systems. Among other things, these approaches are designed to improve the capacity of forests to adapt to climate change. His host is Prof. Dr. Jürgen Bauhus from the Institute of Forest Sciences.

The German government has called on Prof. Dr. Uli Schraml to contribute his professional knowledge to the implementation of its national sustainability strategy for the next three years. Chancellor Angela Merkel has appointed the Freiburg-based researcher to the Council for Sustainable Development. At the University of Freiburg, Schraml deputizes for the Professor of Forestry and Environmental Policy and heads the Woodlands and Society department at the Baden-Württemberg Forest Testing and Research Institute. The role of the council is to develop concrete options for action and projects for sustainable development and to raise public awareness of the issue.

Prof. Dr. Andreas Urs Sommer, who teaches in the department of philosophy at the University of Freiburg and heads the ‘Nietzsche-Kommentar’ Research Unit of the Heidelberg Academy of Science and Philosophy at the University of Freiburg, has been awarded the Geisteswissenschaften Internationale special prize for his book Werte. Warum man sie braucht, obwohl es sie nicht gibt. The Bösarenverlag des Deutschen Buchhandels, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, VÖ WORT and the German Foreign Ministry present the honor twice a year for outstanding works in the humanities and social sciences, and finance their translation into English.

The Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft Freiburg is honoring the Freiburg-based chemist Dr. Michael Sommer for his scientific work in the field of macromolecular chemistry with the Helmut Holzer Research Prize 2016, which includes an endowment of 10,000 euros. Sommer’s area of research is the synthesis of innovative organic polymers, known as functional materials, which are capable of sustainably storing and converting energy. Potential areas of application include organic solar cells.

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, has made Prof. Dr. Bernhard Zimmermann of the Department of Greek and Latin Philology at the University of Freiburg an honorary doctor. The degree is in recognition of Zimmermann’s accomplishments with regard to Greek culture, particularly Greek literature, and his research into ancient history to the present, and his contribution to academic cooperation between Germany and Greece. Zimmermann’s research focuses mainly on Greek literature of the pre-classical and classical period and the reception of ancient culture in the modern era.

Appointments

Faculty of Law

The rector has named an attorney at the Freiburg legal practice of Sparwasser & Heilshorn and lecturer at the University of Freiburg since 2002, Dr. Torsten Heilshorn, an adjunct professor. Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has named lecturer Dr. Jan Felix Hoffmann of the University of Heidelberg, a professor of Civil Law and Civil Procedure Law at the Institute of German and Foreign Civil Procedure Law.

Faculty of Economics and Behavioral Sciences

Effective from 1 November 2016, the vice president has appointed Dr. Bastian Schiller of the Institute of Psychology to be a lecturer for a three-year term.

Faculty of Environmental and Natural Resources

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. Matthias Wittlinger of the Institute of Biology to be a lecturer for a three year period.

Faculty of Engineering

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. Jochen Fründ of the Institute of Earth and Environmental Sciences to be a lecturer for a three year period.

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has appointed lecturer Dr. Stefan Hergarten of the Institute of Earth and Environmental Sciences professor of Near-Surface Geophysics at the same institute.

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Torsten Heilshorn of the University of Bern, a professor of Civil Law and Civil Procedure Law at the Institute of Law, a professor of Civil Law and Civil Procedure Law at the Institute of Law.

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. Gregor Dobler of the Department of Ethnology has declined the appointments offered him by the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and the University of Bayreuth.

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has named lecturer Dr. Tim Ephnehmen of the Oriental Seminar a professor of Islamic Studies, focusing on Central Asia, at the same institute.

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. Valerie Schoenenberg of the Institute of Archaeological Sciences (IAW) to be a lecturer for a three year period.

Faculty of Mathematics and Physics

Effective from 27 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Angelika Rohde of the Ruhr University Bochum, professor of Mathematical Statistics at the Institute of Mathematics.

Effective from 31 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Giuseppe Sansone of the Polytechnic University of Milan, Italy, professor of Experimental Physics at the Institute of Physics.

Effective from 31 October 2016, the rector has appointed Prof. Dr. Marc Schumann of the University of Bern, Switzerland, professor of Experimental Physics, with an emphasis on astroparticle physics, at the Institute of Physics.

Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy

The rector has named the chairman of Roche Pharma AG Germany and CEO of Roche Deutschland Holding, Dr. Hagen Pfundner, an adjunct professor. Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. Andreas Walther of the DNV – Leibniz Institute for Interactive Materials a professor of Functional Polymers at the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry.

Faculty of Biology

Effective from 1 October 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. Thomas Ott of the University of Munich professor of Cell Biology of Plants at the Institute of Biology II.

Effective from 1 November 2016, the rector has appointed Dr. Matthias Wittlinger of the Institute of Biology I to be a lecturer for a three year period.

Anniversaries

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Dr. Volker-Henning Winterer, IT Services
Heike Fründ, Central University Administration
Anja Kury, chairperson of German Brigitte Steritz, University Library

40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Dr. Achim Aurnhammer, Department of German Birgit Erhard, Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences
Dr. Rainer Glawion, Institute of Physical Geography
Rolf Heisch, Central University Administration
**Pictured**

*PHOTO: PATRICK SEEGER*

**Probed**

*Photo: EWS EG*

**Pronounced**

*by Rimma Gersten*  

**Unilife asks – alumni answer: Michael Sladek**

Where were your favorite places to study, dance and eat in Freiburg? When I was studying, especially when I was writing my doctoral thesis at the exit of the Biochemistry Institute I came acquainted with new abilities which I didn’t know I had until then.

What advice would you give to students?

Studying is indeed important and you need to do it to finish with good grades. Still, the conversation you have with fellow students from all disciplines are just as important. The ability to communicate and feel empathy is decisive for life later on.

What do you regret about no longer being a student?

Having the freedom to enjoy time.

In my days, students typically …

I used to spend a lot of time discussing with other students Germany’s past and the role our generation played in it. The memory of these chats took a decisive turn in my and Ursula’s lives after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

Born in 1946, Dr. Michael Sladek studied at the University of Freiburg from 1966 to 1972. He then went on to complete medical training and became a general practitioner. His office has been located in Schönaich since 1977. In 1986, he and his wife Ursula Sladek together founded the campaign initiative “Parents for a Nuclear-free Future” (Eltern für atomfreie Zukunft), which originated within the Schönaier Power Plant (Elektrizitätswerke Schönaich (EWS)). In 1997, the EWS became the first citizen-owned enterprise that was able to “weatre” a power grid from a monopoly. Since 1999, the EWS has been generating and supplying environmentally-friendly power throughout Germany. The EWS currently has 175 thousand customers. Sladek was on the board of the EWS cooperative from 1994. Today he is a member of several committees to implement decentralization of the supply of electricity. He also is a co-organizer of the Freiburg seminar series “Climate Change caus-es Flight” (Fluchtgrund Klimawandel).

**Picked-up**

*by Nicolas Scherger*  

**The Competition of Cups**

The city of Freiburg is taking measures against throw-away cups with the “Freiburg Cup” and a de-posit system. It’s been a real hit. The first five thousand of them were snapped up quickly, and even international media reported on them. Cafés and the mensa of the Studi-erendenwerks Freiburg-Schwarzwald took part – even though there was an environmentally-friendly alternative to one-way cups, the thermos cup, had been around for quite some time. How popular is that cup now? Nicholas Scherger went to find out.

*uni’life: Hello, thermos cup. Is your future leaking away?*

They’ve earned top marks, have de-gress from famous universities and linked in profiles that about “Young and hungry!” Personnel executives today view as underpowered the vehi-cles people once used to launch them-selves into high-paying careers. A new ranking of universities on employability has announced that employers nowa- days value not only expertise in a dis-cipline, but also and above all, pay at-tention to a candidate’s soft skills.

Don’t interrupt the boss, boast to much about your own promotion to a colleague who was passed over, and above all, do not too loudly during team brainstorming sessions. The modern working world celebrates soft skills as characteristics that most ev-eryone has who hasn’t been raised by a pack of wolves. Still, you need to pay attention to the rankings, because they often proclaim that latest truth. And besides, they put the onus on the universi-ties to act. After all, no one wants to have said of them that they are pro-viding material for future episodes of the “Big Bang Theory.” The University of Freiburg is reacting and has a pro-gram planned to improve its students’ soft skills. The first measures have to come to light – success seems likely.

Time management: Every day has 24 hours – but not if you want to make a big splash in the globalized working world. The students are managing a project in fifteen time zones in order to make realizable statements about the past, present and future.

Stress management: The lotus repre-sents the tranquility of spirits that are known to inhabit healthy bodies. When their inboxes are overflowing and the telephone is ringing off the hook, out-lands of rage can be presented by doing yoga exercises like the “one-legged crow,” followed by the “sitting rain drop,” and topped off by performing the “knoted lizard.” You can do them in fashionable office clothes – provided that stretch material is included with the style.

Team players: Meerkats are the kings of efficient cooperation. While a few watch out for foes, others search for food or reproduce the speci-ess. Students in small groups mimic this highly-refined social organism and reflect on their role in the team. A cer-tificate of intercultural competence is issued – an added plus after all. Anyone who’s capable of placing them-selves in the role of a mammal belong-ing to the mongoose family has dem-onstrated that they possess the ultimate in empathy.

**What is your favorite discovery from your 3D printer?**

The minions are taking part in the center’s investigation of how different plastics that are cured with ultraviolet light can be used in 3D printing processes, in order to imitate structures found in nature, for example.

**by Rimma Gersten**

They gained fame by starring in US animated films. The minions are six centimeters tall. These little guys popped out of a "wrest" a power grid from a monopoly.

… skipped classes and instead spent...