

Erich Fromm Lecture 2021

with Prof. Roger Frie

18 November • 6 pm (c. t.)



The Cranes of “ebay kiss”

October Column by Prof. Dr. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz

Anyone driving north on the A24 motorway these days will witness a unique – and yet annually repeated – spectacle of nature: thousands of cranes gather in the mown stubble fields before flying south. That's why I recently visited Linum, a small community in Brandenburg, to keep an eye out for them. But if you have never heard of cranes, if you are travelling without expectations, you will not see them. According to Goethe, you only see what you know.

I wrote to a friend about it, or more precisely: I dictated into my smartphone the message about the cranes and added, jokingly, that I'm sure the cranes of Ibycus were there too. My dictation programme turned it into “The Cranes of ebay kiss”. How did the machine come to interpret the reference to the famous Schiller ballad in this way?

Prof. Dr. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz took up the office of IPU Berlin President in July 2021. His background is in educational sciences, and he was previously head of the Institute for University Research in Wittenberg, president of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs in Saxony-Anhalt.



For some time now, I have been making notes of digital blunders of this kind, because they open up new and surprising, sometimes even absurd worlds of meaning. The system struggles especially with compounds. Every misunderstanding – or, as the software suggests, “Miss Understanding” – has been documented ever since. I had such meaningful sentence fragments as “Aufregen folgt Sonnenschein” (sunshine following excitement instead of rain) on the display.

Is the machine to be blamed for such errors? It is not the machine that lacks knowledge or even intelligence. It can only process what we humans have fed it. The dictation programme is based on algorithms which, in turn, operate primarily with frequencies. Since the words ebay and kiss are probably entered more often than the ancient Greek poet Ibycus, the algorithm made an adequate decision when it invented the “ebay kiss”.

Those who then doubt artificial intelligence should always doubt natural intelligence as well. For it is not the machines that are losing sight of our knowledge and cultural wealth, but we are. To be aware of this would be an intelligent conclusion that a computer would never draw.

International Office News



The International Office is pleased to welcome Prof. Mark Solms (left) and Prof. Roger Frie to the IPU Berlin.

Mark Solms, Psychoanalyst and Neuroscientist, is Chair of Neuropsychology at the Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town and Professor of Psychiatry at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital. He is regarded as the founder and most important representative of neuro psychoanalysis. Prof. Solms is the first to fill the newly created Horst Kächele Visiting Professorship and will contribute to symposia, lectures and psychology master's programs. The founder and initiator of the Horst Kächele Visiting Professorship is Prof. Andreas Hamburger, who had previously invited Prof. Solms to the framework of the IPU's Balkan Network.

Roger Frie, clinical psychologist and interdisciplinary scholar in history, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, is a professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and holds doctorates in both history and philosophy as well as clinical psychology and links these fields in his teaching and research. It is thanks to IPU's Prof. Thomas Kühn that Dr. Frie is also at IPU as a visiting professor, and he will teach in the BSc and MA Psychology as well as in the MA Leadership & Consulting.

Both positions are largely funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Events

Starting 26 October 2021 | 8 pm

Lecture Series Psychoanalytic and Cultural Theory (with Prof. Insa Härtel)

A cooperation between the Berlin Institute for Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis (BiPP), the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the ICI Berlin, and the IPU Berlin.

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Erich Fromm-Lecture 2021

Prof. Dr. Dr. Roger Frie: „Trauma and Silence: Erich Fromm, the Holocaust and Historical Responsibility“

Register [on our website](#).

25 November 2021 | 5 pm

IPU Online Information Event for Prospective Students

Register [on our website](#).

Spotlight

Prof. Benigna Gerisch has published the collection *Lost in Perfection*. The current issue of the multidisciplinary journal *denkste: puppe (de:do)*, includes a discussion by **Prof. Insa Härtel**.

Prof. Gavin Sullivan has written an article on the role of affect in political reactionism in England. **Prof. Annette Streeck-Fischer** and **Prof. Lars Kuchinke** have written papers on the evidence of psychodynamic treatments for children and adolescents. More information [in our spotlight](#). >>>

Yuliya Salauyova joined the International Office team in October. We would like to offer a **warm welcome** to the IPU Berlin.

