



**China Centre Tübingen Opening Ceremony, 21.04.2016**

**Welcome Speech: Prof. Bernd Engler, Rector, University of Tübingen**

Dear ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests,

It is my special pleasure to welcome you to the Tübingen China Centre's opening ceremony here in the festival hall of Neue Aula.

With CCT, we have created an interdisciplinary platform which aims at promoting dialogue with the Chinese world and contributing to a better understanding between cultures. I am convinced that CCT will enhance China competence at Tübingen University as well as beyond it.

I am very happy that so many high-ranking guests from the spheres of academia, politics and economics, and from numerous Sino-German cultural exchange organisations, have accepted our invitation to join us today.

Given the great number of eminent guests, please forgive me for not being able to greet all of you by name. I would, however, like to extend a special welcome to the Chinese Embassy's Minister Counsellor in Germany, Professor Dong Qi. Your presence as head of the department for education illustrates the significance our new centre has for the People's Republic of China.

A warm welcome also goes to today's keynote speaker, Professor Tu Wei-ming, Director of the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies as well as the Institute for World Ethics at Peking University. Dear Professor Tu, welcome to Tübingen! We are very honoured to host such an eminent scholar and we are looking forward to your speech.

Honoured guests!

The China Centre builds on existing institutions excellently. The work of CCT has numerous links to that of the Global Ethic Institute, next to which, incidentally, it is in fact physically located.. Together with their Chinese sister organisation, the World Ethics Institute Beijing, these organisations are dedicated to academic research on aspects of values and ethics in different cultural contexts. All three have a particular focus on the connection between ethical reflection and entrepreneurial practice.

Another feature these three institutions have in common is that they have been established on the initiative of the Karl Schlecht Foundation. At this point, I would like to warmly welcome this foundation's eponymous founder and chairman. Dear Professor Schlecht, it is

only with your generous funding that we have been able to establish the Tübingen China Centre in its present form. I want to offer you my sincere thanks for this.

Under the roof of CCT, another important platform for Sino-German understanding will soon be incorporated: the Erich Paulun Institute (EPI for short). EPI primarily promotes Chinese as a school subject and the exchange of German and Chinese university students. I would like to welcome its president, Professor Paul Gerhardt – a warm welcome to you!

EPI was founded in 2013 by the German-Chinese Business Association in Munich. In order to ensure EPI's ability to continue its work in the long term, it is now being linked to the university as a department of CCT. At this point, let me also welcome DCW's representatives: Mr. Harald Lux and Mrs. Silke Besser. The German-Chinese Business Association makes it its goal to deepen the knowledge of historical and contemporary cultural links between Germany and China and thereby intensify cooperation in business, academia and education.

Another important CCT partner - by no means the least of them - is the University's Asian and Oriental Studies Institute (AOI), especially the Department of Chinese and Korean Studies. Dr. Matthias Niefenführ, Junior Professor of Sinology with a focus on business ethics, is also the vice-director of CCT. He has been working hard to promote its establishment since 2014. Therefore, my special thanks go to him.

I also want to warmly welcome CCT's director, Professor Schmidt-Glintzer. Our colleague Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer is Professor of East Asian Literary and Cultural Studies at Göttingen University and, from 1993 to 2015, he was the Director of the Herzog-August Library in Wolfenbüttel. He is undoubtedly among Germany's most renowned Sinologists and we consider ourselves lucky that he has agreed to be the head of CCT. For this, dear Mr. Schmidt-Glintzer, we would all like to thank you!

Now, let me briefly outline the motivation for the establishment of CCT and its goals without pre-empting the other speakers too much. China, as a rising economic power, is one of Germany's, and Europe's, most important trading partners. In China, interest in the West, in addition to economic interest, is growing. Aside from business enterprises, more and more Chinese students, researchers and tourists are coming to Germany. No less significantly, China also plays an important role in areas in which it is necessary to reach global solutions, such as environmental protection or international crisis management. In this context, deepening our knowledge of modern China, its cultural foundations and its values, has decisive importance for mutual understanding and harmonious relations at all levels. The development of solid cultural competence to understand this "global player" will not only [help] secure sustainable cooperation but is also personally enriching.

Therefore, the Tübingen China Centre links practice-oriented research to intercultural exchange. Special attention is paid to the examination of values and value orientations of people in the Chinese culture area. CCT's research focus, among others, will be business ethics and sustainable entrepreneurship in China, as well as modern Confucianism.

Furthermore, through its projects, CCT constitutes an interface between academia, economy and society. It is directed at students in all disciplines, as well as at researchers, professionals and the general public. Workshops and conferences are planned for business practitioners in addition to lectures on China open to everyone who is interested. This summer term for instance, there is a lecture series with the title "China in the globalised world" which Professor Tu Wei-ming will open with his lecture next Monday.

Furthermore, CCT, in cooperation with the Erich-Paulun-Institute, aims to offer different platforms for exchange with and about China and through these channels transmit knowledge and network contacts [in China and Germany].

Through EPI's initiatives in promoting Chinese language in German schools, young people can be made aware of Chinese culture at an early age in the course of their language studies. In short, CCT is dedicated to intercultural communication and exchange between China and Germany in all facets.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

You are about to hear more about the formation and further plans of the China Centre. I am convinced that CCT will make an important contribution to the dialogue between cultures, between East and West and will be successful in doing so. On that note, I wish all parties involved good progress with their project.

Now, I would like to hand over to CCT's sponsor Professor Karl Schlecht.