



China Centre Tübingen Opening Ceremony, 21.04.2016

Welcoming Speech: Karl Schlecht

Thank you for your welcome, dear Honourable Professor Engler, dear students, dear friends from near and far.

As initiator and promoter of our new China Centre Tübingen I would like to say a few words of greeting.

The mission I, as a donor, have in mind for CCT, based upon my 83 years of life experience, is a very simple one:

“Build trust.”

All this is part of my mission *to search for and to further goodness itself*. It is also based upon what I have learnt doing business in China since 1979. Francis Fukuyama’s book *Trust* further reaffirmed this for me.

To contribute to the goal of trust-building, I have already initiated and founded two institutes in Tübingen: the World Ethos Institute in 2012 and the Erich Fromm Institute in 2015.

After four years, the China Centre is now being established. “All good things come in threes,” as the German proverb goes. This is in accordance with my long-term entrepreneurial vision.

The synergetic operation of this trio of institutes will reinvigorate some of the most important humanistic and ethical concerns and biophile schools of thought (which means directed towards love for life) in today’s world.

Complementing the teaching [and research] at Tübingen University, our new institutes will work towards nurturing the characters and self-awareness of the young people who will be tomorrow’s leaders.

The basis of trust within a company is the company’s values. [That is,] trust within the company arises from values which are collectively developed and which connect and harmonise the thinking of all the employees.

In endeavouring to replicate the trust-building success of our Putzmeister values on the global scale in which the corporate family operates, I came across the world ethos idea of Professor Hans Küng many years ago. The world ethos idea demonstrates that all founders

of religions have espoused the same core objective of actively striving towards peaceful human coexistence. This is exactly what an enterprise operating on a global scale needs.

I have also been fascinated by Erich Fromm since 1997, especially by his book *The Art of Loving* and its definition of what it means to lead an active and productive life. Erich Fromm's thoughts in *To Have or to Be?* led to my decision to donate my whole enterprise to the establishment of the charitable foundation Karl Schlecht Stiftung (KSG) in 1998. Its mission is to enrich young people with my and other people's life experiences.

Here in Tübingen, the world ethos idea also led me to its Chinese origins: the Golden Rule of Confucius! "Do not do to others what you do not want done to you." This is in fact the basis of the teachings of all world religions' founders. Confucius, Mencius and others taught these principles of mercy, humanity and what constitutes a successful life thousands of years ago. They also taught us about our highest virtue and source of strength: love, in Chinese, *ren* (仁). It is inherent in all of us.

In order to raise comprehensive awareness of this among our students, we are now completing the trio of institutes with the establishment of the new China Centre, following the – in China highly esteemed - principle of harmony. This harmony prevails despite personal differences, thanks to a common goal: humanity. This is the core objective of the world ethos idea and of Erich Fromm.

Nowadays, China and Germany have, in the global economic context, become neighbours with high mutual respect and appreciation for each other. CCT can [help] remind us that we are good friends and teach us how we have historically been emotionally and intellectually close to each other. In particular, CCT's research will make us aware of the factors which have made China a world power within just a few decades, or rather *re-made* – for China was already a world power hundreds of years ago.

Recognising this and learning from each other in the spirit of friendship with the help of our three institutes – this is my wish as a donor. Thanks to my own 30 years' business experience in China and my recent experiences of building trust in my business dealings with [PRC company] Sany, I have become aware of what we can learn from one another, especially how and why young Chinese are "learning faster" than we are.

With CCT in our trio, we aim to operate hand-in-hand in accordance with our existing Putzmeister motto - "Enjoy: to serve, to improve and to create values." Within our limited means, we want to enrich our world through serving the cause of peace.

Peace has to be brought about collectively through repeated efforts, as Immanuel Kant said. Helmut Schmidt highlighted Kant's exhortation in his great world ethos speech here in Tübingen.

To me it is important not only to ask you to join us as ambassadors in spreading this message, but also to request your assistance in maximising CCT's effectiveness. We are grateful, therefore, for financial donations from Morgan Stanley, the German-Chinese Business Association and the University of Tübingen which have helped us to begin realising this objective through the establishment of CCT as a fully integrated university institute.

On behalf of everyone here, I would like to express my thanks for the past four years of active promotion and support for this endeavour on the part of our honoured rector, Professor Engler and vice-rector, Professor Assmann.

Dear guests, to reaffirm my request for productive companionship and to win you over personally in order to expand our sponsoring family with **your** active contributions and donations to CCT, I will now hand over the microphone to the delegate of the Chinese embassy, Professor Dong Qi.

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