

## **Inaugural address**

**Professor Klaus Dicke, Rector Friedrich Schiller University of Jena**

Dear Professor Lerner,  
my dear colleague Rainer Silbereisen,  
dear guests from abroad,  
dear colleagues and friends,  
ladies and gentlemen,

“Morning has broken like the first morning; blackbird has spoken like the first bird” – everybody knows this Gaelic song which Cat Stevens made popular. It came to my mind when I asked myself yesterday how to open a conference at an October Sunday morning at 8.30. And I think that this song came to my mind because it is a song of welcome, a song praising the glory of life, a song of thanksgiving and a song of hope. And welcome, praise, thanks and hope are the very elements which a rector’s welcoming address are expected to contain. And so, first of all, I would like to cordially welcome all of you in this wonderful Thuringian region “Weimarer Land” and bring to you the greetings of the Friedrich-Schiller-university. A special welcome goes to all guests from abroad and to those who for the first time visit Jena, Weimar or Thuringia. I wish you a pleasant stay here and it is my hope that the schedule of the conference will leave you the opportunity to get an impression of the richness and beauty of Weimar and the region surrounding it.

Praise is my second task, and as president of the Friedrich-Schiller-university I take pride in opening this conference by which the Center for Applied Developmental Science at our university starts its program. This week I had the pleasure to welcome 4.500 first-year students at the University of Jena. It was a hard job because traditionally the president of the university pays for the the first cask of ale at the welcoming party in a

very famous old cellar in Jena, and I did my best in helping to consume it. Every one of those 4.500 students looks back at her or his own adolescence which makes them different, and in four or five years they will leave the university as young adults, starting their individual professional career. What happens in-between is called "development". And when it comes to the question of how this development should be formed and shaped and how the university could help forming and shaping it the philosophy of our university meets with Rainer Silbereisen's idea: It is the philosophy of the Friedrich-Schiller-university that Jena alumni are masters of their own, that they have their own judgements and that they are or that they increasingly become self-conscious and autonomous persons. It was this philosophy which in 1989 encouraged the senate and courageous colleagues of Jena to get rid of Marxist-Leninist domination even before the wall came down. And to a large degree, this philosophy is present here.

Rainer Silbereisen conceives developmental science as a way to help people to get masters of their own lifes, to establish life-skills by exploring human development in its individual and communitarian aspects and to provide for professional advice to all actors of society who influence human development – and this is exactly the philosophy underlying this conference and the Center for Applied Developmental Science as well. This coincidence between the philosophy of the Friedrich-Schiller-university and Rainer's or the Center's approach is meritorious and praise-worthy itself but there is an additional coincidence which I greatfully would like to emphasize: When Friedrich Schiller learned about the cruelties and barbarian acts of the French Revolution in particular in September 1792, he developed his project of an aesthetic education of humankind and he was convinced that this very project would provide for life-skills by educating and by forming reason and liberty of human beings. To provide them he followed the most advanced methodology of his times namely the Critique of Judgement by Immanuel Kant. Schiller's project belongs to the

most valuable treasures of our university's tradition. Your project is not aesthetic education and does not follow a Kantian approach but rather empirical research of human behaviour and human development by modern methods of social science. But the concern and the aim of both projects are the same: exploring scientific knowledge in order to provide life-skills for society thus enabling people to be masters of their own life. And by this means the Center and this Conference is an excellent instance of our university's spirit to combine tradition and modernity to win our future.

Thanks is my third concern. Of course I first of all thank you, Prof. Silbereisen and your team for organizing this conference and for all the work which you invested to bring up this Center. Furtheron, my thanks go to the German Research Foundation (DFG) which did so much to help establish your Center, to make the Jena Department of Psychology one of the leading departments in Europe and to finance this conference. And I am very glad to take the opportunity to very much thank you, Professor Lerner, for chairing the advisory board of the Center. Rainer Silbereisen once called you a "networker", and so I am sure that your commitment as well as that of the other board members makes Jena part of the global community of developmental scientists. Last but not least my thanks go to all participants of the conference. Your cooperation is vital in bringing the Center and its idea to flourish.

A last song remains, a song of hope. It is my hope as president of our university that in the coming years we will significantly enhance our international contacts and networks. Among the 4.500 students I welcomed this week were only 330 students from abroad. In my view this is by far not enough, and in global scientific networking we have serious deficits. Thus a tough program of internationalization is a must. It is true, our university has traditional contacts to Eastern Europe, and certainly we have to cultivate and to enhance those contacts in particular against the background of the enlargement of the European Union. But that is only

one part of the effort. In my view we have to establish closest contacts to universities, departments and research institutes of Western Europe, the United States and the Pacific area. Next year the university will identify clusters of excellence which we want to sustain and support for global competition. And one of the preconditions for any cluster to become fit for global competition is its internationalization or its embeddedness into global networks. Therefore, one of the measures to promote those clusters will be the establishment of very close and sustainable links to excellent partner institutes or departments abroad. That needs presence by our people in faculties abroad and vice versa; that needs significant improvements in our university's appeal for excellent students from abroad; that needs incentives for internationalization efforts, and that needs a lot of fund-raising. And certainly it needs conferences like this one. I would like to ask all of you and in particular our guests from abroad to share your international experience with us and to communicate your observations to us; every e-mail in this respect is appreciated and helpful.

But now I should bring my Sunday morning sermon to an end. I again cordially welcome all of you, I wish you a pleasant stay in Weimar and a conference which will enrich your knowledge and which will remain in your minds for a long time.