

CLOSING ADDRESS.

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In closing I wish to say a few words. It seems Prof. Nakatani asked me to make this closing address since I am the chairperson of the National Committee for Asian Studies, which jointly held this symposium with Prof. Nakatani's program. First, let me say, therefore, a few words about this committee. It was a committee organized by the Science Council of Japan, a governmental organization for the promotion of science, the social sciences and humanities in order to promote Asian studies in Japan by recruiting scholars nominated by various academic associations and societies which pursue Asian studies. The Council has nearly 200 committees of this type representing various academic fields, and their members are all established scholars in their respective fields. Prof. Nakatani is a member of our Asian studies committee. In March 2000, this committee held a symposium jointly with Prof. Nakatani's program, but circumstances had prevented us from further participation until quite recently. Therefore, this is the first time I have participated in their symposium.

I did, however, know about Prof. Nakatani's program for reconstituting classical studies and I have been impressed with the research I have observed in their publications and oral reports. By actually participating in this symposium, however, I was even more deeply impressed with the reports and discussions made at the symposium. To me the most impressive aspect of the symposium is that the participants have all tried to study the classics not simply as the philologists, but more broadly with the intention of activating the creativity of the classics in this century, and with an eye towards the realization of harmony in the world. Such efforts are well represented by the lectures given by Professors Witzel and Japhet.

To study the creativity of the classics, we have to ap-

proach the classics from various angles including different disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, history and so on. Prof. Teixidor's historical approach was quite stimulating as an example in which the creativity of the classics is seen exercised in the course of history. Prof. Lin's presentation on the Chinese classics was another interesting example in Chinese history. Papers presented by Professors Craik, Babiniotis, Yaron and Otani dealt with more specific topics, but they elucidated the formation and development-process of the classics. As a historian and epigraphist working on South Asian history, I am now really convinced that the classics are, indeed, eternal sources of the cultural heritage of mankind that await our utilization.

In this relation let me suggest one thing. Yesterday in his speech Prof. Nakatani criticized to some extent the economy-oriented concept of 'sustainable development' by quoting Buddha's saying from Suttanipata, which reminded me of Mahatma Gandhi. Though Mahatma Gandhi did not use the word 'sustainable development', what he actually taught us was indeed the concept of sustainable development inspired with the spirit of Suttanipata. Mahatma Gandhi may be a good example of a person who tried to activate the creativity of the classics.

Returning here to the standpoint of the National Committee for Asian Studies, it is extremely interesting to notice that Prof. Witzel takes up the contrast between Indian philosophy and the Occidental philosophy in their treatment of rationality and other principles. Again interesting to me is that Prof. Witzel did not speak about Asia, though he employs the word Asia once in his text in relation to music, as Asian music. As I have told you in the discussion that we had this afternoon, we, the National Committee for Asian Studies, held last

year a symposium entitled “What is Asia? Is Asia One?” This is a fundamental question for us, and probably for Prof. Witzel, too. Can we define Asia as a region having one common culture or should we define it as a region comprising various cultures but holding common cultural traits, or should we define it as a region holding no common cultural traits?

In this relation, and more properly in relation to our efforts in activating the creativity of the classics, I wish to attract your attention to the point that Prof. Japhet emphasized in her speech. That is, we need not discard our own identity and create ‘a universal culture.’ We should retain our own traditional culture, and enrich it by incorporating into it the traditions of other cultures. This process is same as the one explained by Prof. Witzel in his discussion of the re-interpretation of old ideas as a characteristic of Indian culture. By incorporating other cultures into our own, or by re-interpreting our old ideas within a new framework brought in from the outside, we will be able to share common cultural traits without losing our own cultural identities. This is very important for harmony to prevail in the world, and is again quite suggestive for our interpretation of Asian culture. I am sure that further study of world classics will help us greatly in developing our cultures, enriched with various cultural traditions, but not losing the traditions of individual national cultures such as Greek, Indian and Chinese, or those of our broader, regional cultures such as Asian and European.

Last, but not least, I wish to thank Prof. Nakatani, Prof. Uchiyama and others of the organizing committee and all the participants of this symposium for their sincere efforts in giving rebirth to our classical studies. Thank you very much.