

3. Report

Write a report on your study experience, addressing the matters listed below. Your report should be around 500 words in English and completed in the space of this form. Submit your report form file by e-mail.

Matters to include in your report: (a) Academic outcomes (how participation in this program affected your motivation, university study and international understanding, and what interests and plans you developed for further study in the future); (b) Your experiences in Kyoto University; (c) The content of the program; (d) The impact of the program on your career plans. Please attach reference materials or digital photo to show your activities if available.

A Journey of Self-discovery

By Tzu-Tung Sophia Chen

Plainly, a session of eight lectures is just like a sweet dream—way too short! Despite the fact that how I wish to stay longer in this dream world and continuously trained by the master of enlightenment, Professor Graham Priest, there is this vicious conventional reality awaits and reminds me that I have other unavoidable obligations in life. So, here I am—half-waking: writing this bitter-sweet report. While I am writing the report, the mental images in my memory relive vividly once again as if I am still sitting in the lecture room, talking to students from different countries, writing essays for Graham’s questions and strolling on the streets of Kyoto. These elements should be seen as single unit; scilicet, without any one of them, my journey to Kyoto University would not and could not be considered as complete one. For this reason, I should review them one by one in order to reveal my sense of self-discovery.

First of all, sitting in the lecture room and listening to Graham’s lecture is a nerve-wracking experience. It is not to say that Graham is a notorious instructor; quite the contrary, he is not only a diligent and soft-spoken scholar but also a true humanist. However, he would try to get to bottom of his theory and made sure that students understood of what he said; meaning, he would ask students questions from time to time. In other words, we were encouraged to express our ideas and therefore we had to “think” in depth. As a result, I am able to understand the meanings of “conventional reality and ultimate reality”, and their relations with ineffability. Moreover, one of the professors in our institute, after I told him about what I have learnt from Graham’s lectures, is eager to read Graham’s handouts and promises to review the material with me one more time. In this way, I can assimilate Graham’s theory thoroughly.

Secondly, talking to students from different countries not only broadens my ways of thinking in relation to Buddhist philosophy but also enriches my experience in communicating any debatable issues with other young scholars. Unfortunately, language barrier seems to be the biggest problem between students from Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Most of the time, we could understand each other well enough, but, there were times when we did not know how to express the “key” word in our thoughts in English. Need not to say that the students of Kyoto University and the staffs in the office of KUASU are the best and the warmest host that I have ever met.

Especially, to Professor Yasuo Deguchi, I must express my utmost respect. Undoubtedly, without his insightful vision, such a meaningful platform would not take place, and I cannot hold an optimistic attitude toward the result of intellectual inbreeding. On the other hand, by utilizing such a dialogical channel, young scholars will be able to mingle their ideas with other young scholars from different cultures and to generate new thoughts. Now, I am sure that the gene pool of this group will get bigger and bigger.

Thirdly, writing essays for Graham's questions is as tough as hitting a nail with a bare hand. I must admit that my understanding for Buddhist philosophy is next to nothing. For this reason, I do not think that I am in the position of criticizing the content of the programme. If I must say something, I would say: the time is too short!!

Last but not least, strolling on the streets of Kyoto is therapeutical for me because, after listening to Graham's lectures, I need to exercise my brain. There are things, such as the meaning of selfness, emptiness, truth, reality and ineffability et cetera, should be validly placed in my perception in order to apply them in my life. That is to say, from Graham's lectures, I have learnt things that I took for granted for a long time once again. I realize that at the end of my life is not emptiness; I realize that the completeness of my life does not happen at the end but appears in the "present"; I realize that my selfness does not come from the distinction between "the other" and I; I realize that ...Graham's lectures may be too soon to come to an end, but the spinning in my mind has just begun.

My feeling for Professor Graham and Yasuo is ineffable; my gratitude for the staffs in the office of KUASU and the students of philosophy department in Kyoto University is ineffable. Nevertheless, my love for all of you is effable: *I Love You.*

*The information you provide may be included in Re-discovering Japan Project reports, or published in printed materials or on our website in pages dealing with the outcomes of programs offered by the Asian Studies Unit and/or Kyoto University. Please ensure that your report only includes content which is publishable in light of privacy considerations and the need to safeguard personal information. Also note that depending on the publication format, we may need to edit parts of your report.