

MR WUN KAM HOI:

Thank you, Prof Cheng. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Since most speakers are speaking Putonghua, I will use my really poor Putonghua to share some views with you. I'm sure you'll feel at home listening to my Putonghua if you're from Hong Kong.

Having heard from Prof Yu, I would like to share with you some of my comments. Prof Yu was most modest. She said she's a later generation in the field of classical studies, so she is not really qualified to speak here, but I'm even worse. I'm not really someone from the cultural field, I'm no expert in the areas, I really am not qualified to talk to you about the studies of classical literature.

I've been involved in IT for over three decades, but I have to say IT and computer is a good industry. It's clean, it's convenient, it's also very creative industry. So I really enjoy the IT industry. But as I continue to work in the field, I started to feel that, okay, I am involved in creating so many technologies, but are they doing any good to the community? Oh yes, there are advantages, but then I also pondered technology make our efficiency and productivity improve. You know, like Mr Chiu is involved in animation, the way he would produce animation now than from what it's like 20 years ago, it's very different. It would be so much slower in the old days.

I'm involved in network communication, it's a technology that is fast advancing. That means it's becoming increasingly easy for people to communicate. But the relationships between people somehow seems to be more and more distant. People become more disaffected.

I have many brilliant engineers in my company. Sometimes, after work, I will talk to them and I will say, "Do you read after work?" and I found, yes, they do read, but what do they read? They read cartoons, comics. It's true. When I heard that, I wasn't sure whether I should laugh or cry. You know, these were really top

engineers in my company and they just read comics after work. Or they went out to dine, they went to karaoke and that's all. And these are the intellectuals in Hong Kong nowadays.

I'm not criticising them. They're all nice people. It just led me to reflect that the pathway embarked on now is just about IT. Perhaps it needs adjustment.

But then it may have nothing to do with IT. IT is like economy, it's like money, it is just a tool, it's just a means.

Of course, if we want to get a job properly done, with he must first get the right tools or the means.

So if you want the job to be done properly, you have to have proper tools, but at the same time you must have cultured employees so they are able to make the most of the tools to do the job because otherwise the tools may end up hurting them too.

So the IT development is important or technology development is important, but it's just a tool. It's like a pair of scissors. How we use a pair of scissors depends on the people who hold the scissors, it depends on our cultivation, on our personality. So it all starts with education and self-cultivation.

Then I started to think perhaps I need to do something about promoting culture. Although I'm probably not the right person to do it, but I thought, well, I was not much knowledgeable about the classical studies but I hope the next generation would be different. So education is the only way to do it.

Also in this world and age, we talk about IT development, economic development, what more can we do as we promote the economy? Of course, we know we are destroying the environment. We are destroying the climate. That led me to think about Lao Zi's teaching, that we must not go against nature.

So I think we should all ponder the thoughts of Lao Zi, and then as we develop the economy, we know what's the right thing to do.

There's a Buddhist saying: if you don't get the development right, then the country will be embarking on the wrong course. So when we talk about development, we just want to move quickly. But we can't actually get answers about these questions from technology. We can only get the answers from culture, from mind.

The Chinese culture, the biggest wisdom of it is the mean way, the middle path is about achieving equilibrium and balance. That's why in Chinese culture we always talk about the world as one, harmony. As in classical studies. We cannot achieve that from economic development or technology development, we can only achieve that from understanding of good culture, we need to foster a good culture. And that actually is derived from classical literature. That's the essence of Chinese culture.

Of course, we can't say that only because we're Chinese so we must learn Chinese literature, but actually there is also brilliant English literature and other literature, but what we know is that learning about classical literature is for everyone.

Who should read about classical literature? From the age of 3 to about 103, you could still learn classical literature. After 103, if you want to stop learning, that's fine, but if you study classical literature at 3, at 13, at 23, at 33, you will still learn something, it will benefit you. The best and most effective way to learn classical literature is to start from a young age. It's a scientific and natural way of learning. That's why we are promoting the activity of children reciting classical texts.

I have been involved in the IT field for three decades so I'm trying to make good, I'm trying to promote classical text now.

Many asked who inspired me to do this because you've been in the IT field all along, how come you're now involved in classical activities?

I said there was a teacher of mine when I was in secondary school. He said to me, "I don't think you've got an A in Chinese studies

at the Hong Kong Certificate Education Examination, then you know about Chinese literature, it's not the case, you're not even Chinese just by getting the score. But you have a duty to pass on Chinese culture because it's something that's living, it's not something that's dead. So you all have this duty."

At that time I was moved but then later on I started working and I forgot all about it. Then somehow it just came back to me. My teacher told me culture was something living, but we know of course culture can be dead too. In the ancient times, some very excellent cultures just died. For example, Egyptian civilisation, Egyptian culture was an excellent culture, but now you go to Egypt, you don't find it. Nobody speaks Egyptian any more.

So there is this huge crisis in confronting Chinese culture as well. It's not the first time that Chinese culture has experienced a crisis. As another professor said earlier, Chinese culture has always been influenced by outside. At one point, Buddhism was introduced into China. All of a sudden during the -- in the (indistinct words) so it boomed, it blossomed and people, some of its followers but after 2 or 3 hundred years by the Sung Dynasty, there's new Confucianism. It's because our culture is just able to digest foreign culture and then promote it further.

We have all sorts of different schools of Buddhism and they were not even in India -- it was in China that we gave birth to all these various schools of Buddhism.

And now, of course, we are even more influenced by other cultures. In those days, you know the Westerners had to travel a long way to go to China, but now it's so easy so we're under ever more influence of other cultures.

We experience a far bigger impact of foreign culture on us.

Just now Prof Yu Dan said we've experienced many impacts, the May 4th impact, the cultural revolution. In the past 90 years or so, these events served to weaken Chinese culture. We're now at our

weakest. So can we now then assimilate Western culture and then expand Chinese culture further? But our culture is so weak.

I was exchanging views with the other professors. In China there could be graduate students majoring in Chinese studies who never studied the analects or the major's studies. It's possible many graduate students majoring in Chinese language never needed to read the whole book. I don't know if it's the case in Taiwan or whatever, but in Hong Kong this is certainly the case. So is it possible for us to assimilate other cultures with our Chinese culture? I am very eager. Where should we start? We should start with kids. How we going to do that? I'm going to show you a short video clip. As professor Cheng said, one of our activities, annual activities, is to hold a rally. Our children come together to recite the classical texts.

(video shown).

Thank you.

Let me say a few more words. That activity was very simple. We started when kids are between 3 and 13, when their memory is the best. They can start reciting classical texts and this has proved to be useful and effective. If you are interested in this activity, we have a brochure which you can get free of charge just outside the theatre. Thank you very much.