Comment

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Two professors made presentations from the different points of view. To be honest, it is still difficult for me to comment on how their reports might relate to each other, but I should. So, I would like to comment on their reports respectively, and then try to find out the connections.

First, I would like to comment on Prof. Rieu Alain-Marc's presentation. He said that our project should "concern the forest more than the trees." I was very impressed with this. While we are researching, we tend to focus too much on the theme and lose sight of the whole picture. In other words, we tend to "look at only the trees without paying attention to the forest." Prof. Rieu also pointed out that the purpose of the COE Project of Kanagawa University can be understood as the construction of a Virtual Museum.

As he said, our aim is to develop a new technique to transmit information. In order to realize this, we embarked on a project to create a new information source this year by setting up two working groups. One is "Dissemination of Regionally Integrated Information" and the other is "Experimental Exhibits of Research Results in Museum Studies." However, the project is still in the testing phase and we don't have any clear vision at this stage. So I think Prof. Rieu's presentation was very useful because it gave us a clear direction for our project.

Prof. Rieu's idea of a Virtual Museum has developed remarkably, based on the achievements of digital anthropology utilizing state-of-the-art information technology. (I think he uses the term "anthropology" as a concept that includes Folklore and Ethnology.) He said that the Museum has three new possibilities: "convergence of libraries and museums," "expression of techniques and practices" and an "interactive information flow" where information is not provided from one side.

Thanks to modern information technology, we can process a large amount of audiovisual information and make databases easily, if we ignore cost issues. What's more, we can put together different types of information freely. We can not only access but also create many kinds of images on the computer screen, including still and motion pictures, 3D images, sounds and characters. On personal computers, the barrier between museums where real objects are exhibited and libraries where written materials are kept has been removed. Further study would be needed to clarify how this result could broaden our academic knowledge, but at least we can't deny that achievements of different academic studies are available in a more persuasive, specific and analytical way.

Secondary, using modern technology, we can express or analyze things at a level of "techniques and practices," in other words, in a more dynamic way, especially those that had been expressed only in a fixed format like photographs and characters. For example, when we look at a certain tool, we can not only see the object itself, but also record or get information about the object, such as the situation and environment where the tool is used, relations with its users, how to use it, how it is made, and other related information on time and space. The viewers can access many kinds of images about one tool, and if such a database was available in many places, researchers could easily secure the means to carry out a comparative study. It goes without saying that researchers and database owners must have a clear vision and the databases should be established beforehand.

Let's move on to the third possibility, which is interactivity. The Internet is obviously interactive, but there are only a few researches that utilize its interactivity successfully. As Prof. Rieu pointed out, just like *Wikipedia*, good quality information can be accumulated allowing users to browse data and participate freely. In the past, we used postcards to conduct questionnaires and collect basic research data. But now we have alternative methods to get more, better quality information, even though we still have to learn how to establish an appropriate sorting process and administration system for the accumulated data.

As I mentioned above, the convergence of digital technology and the Internet can create a Virtual Museum, a system to transmit and accumulate information, and it will offer unlimited possibilities to create a new intellectual environment. As Prof. Rieu pointed out, no one can deny this. However, there is one thing I would really like to mention here. It is about the power of reality, in other words, inspiration.

I had an opportunity to visit the Fukushima Prefectural Museum to see the exhibition of bed linen and clothes. They were worn out but mended over and over again. I was overwhelmed by the power of those real objects. I imagined the lives of the people who used them. To avoid misunderstanding, I'd like to make it clear that I am not referring to their poverty, which is certainly an issue but what impressed me was their respect for those objects. I even thought about their expertise, wisdom and even aesthetic sense. This kind of power cannot be felt in the virtual world. If we live only in a virtual world, we may lose our sensitivity to real things. If this happens, people may not be able to understand the fundamental elements of human life and culture. I am worried about this. I would like to ask Prof. Rieu to comment on my concern.

Now I'd like to move on to Prof. Matoba's presentation. As we can see from the subtitle "Some Philosophical Problems concerning Perception," it was highly abstract. He explained difficult issues such as what Nonwritten Materials were and how they were recognized. The theme was somewhat difficult for a person like me who usually view things in a realistic way. But I would like to do my best to comment on his presentation based on my understanding.

Prof. Matoba suggested that we should distinguish Written Materials and Nonwritten Materials as signs with or without a grammatical code. I think this is extremely important. Written Materials and Nonwritten Materials should not be distinguished according to the nature of the subjects to be studied or observed. (Some are physical objects, and some are phenomena.) They should be defined by those who study or observe the objects. As Prof. Matoba gave an example, if characters are arranged according to a certain grammatical code, they have meanings defined by the writer and they can be categorized as Written Materials conveying the meanings. However, the style or the shape of the writing can be used as materials to identify other meanings that are expressed by the writer unconsciously (just like those used for psychological analysis), which are Nonwritten Materials. In contrast, communication tools such as paintings, photographs, or the sound of a drum are not written, but it is necessary to interpret the meanings defined by the writer, photographer, or drummer according to their codes. In this case, we basically apply the same method as the one we use to understand writings.

In this sense, the distinction mentioned above relates to differences in approach to materials. Let's take a look at ideological writing, for example. This is thought to be a typical Written Material. I refer to this because I am specializing in History of Political thought. Researchers or readers read texts faithfully, and they do their best to accurately understand what the author wants to say. In this process, they even try to understand the whole set of

documents, and in some cases, even personal, social or historical background of the writing. They avoid interpreting or evaluating the whole idea by reading only part of the writing or mentioning one particular element.

Meanwhile, when they analyze the texts as Nonwritten Materials, their approach is completely different. For example, when they analyze a picture part cut from a picture scroll, it is cut out from the scroll as data to express some tools or movements. The data has nothing to do with the original scroll. (although the original picture scroll has its own meaning.) A landscape like snow patterns on a mountain slope is also a good example. Nature does not create the patterns intentionally, but people see the patterns as signs of agricultural work. Another example is a group photograph to record an event, which has its own inherent meaning as a commemorative document but which, by studying what people in the photo are wearing can also be used as research material to study the history of costumes. Some pictures may provide information about political science. Meanings do not exist in the subjects but are given by those who observe and study them. This is fundamentally different from the approach to Written Materials.

This relates to what Prof. Rieu said that Nonwritten Materials are implicit. What is implicit is relatively unrecognized. However, not everything about human life can be recognized or explicit. Recognizable areas make up only part of human life. Studying Nonwritten Materials depends on how much we can make those implicit areas recognizable, and explain and communicate the information clearly. I think the final goal of the project is to expand the area and enrich understanding of human life and culture.

If so, researchers and observers will be required to clarify their visions and processes by which they systematized collected materials as the subjects of their study, and eventually report the results of the analysis using those materials.

Some may say my comments are those of a bystander, who is totally absorbed in reading antique documents and writings about thoughts. However, as a member of this project, I was inspired by the presentations made by the two professors here. I am really grateful to them. Thank you very much.