

Address at the 2nd Forum of the World Association for Political Economy (WAPE)

[JP] Kiichiro Yagi¹

Dear Friends,

It's my honor to have this chance to speak here at the 2nd forum of the World Association for Political economy and to be able to extend my cordial welcome to all of you. I don't know whether you can tolerate me when I follow Confucius in saying, "Isn't it a happy thing to have friends that come from far away." Still it is a true happiness for us to have friends come to Japan, crossing seas or flying over oceans and continents voluntarily just for the sake of the progress in political economy or social economics and to meet friends in this field.

However, related to the present situation of political economy or social economics, I am not so happy. Since a decade ago, I have been involved in launching an academic association in the direction of evolutionary economics. In the late 19th century, both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had an evolutionary mind, but how are today's social scientists? At present, in all branches of their research, scientists have begun to discover complexity and evolution. In my view, evolutionary theory is not other than the materialism with indeterminate element and emergent property, thus precisely the dialectical materialism. I believe we economists can learn more from the ongoing scientific revolution and join it, only if we would widen our perspective.

Secondly, as a historian of economics, I'd like to stress that a critical examination of the historical development of Marxian economics is also needed. Several times in its history, Marxian economics has suffered bitterly from the primacy of politics and has fallen into sterile dogmatism. I am afraid that many of you would regard it a worthless effort to pour one's energy into such a retrospective work. However, I believe, a true scholarship of political economy or social economics can emerge only from such a self-reflection.

The voluntary gathering of worldwide social scientists as this one is itself an epoch-making event. So far as I know, such an academic event has never occurred in Japan. This is a positive sign of resurgence. I also admire the courageous choice of organizing committee to hold this forum not in Tokyo, a branch of one global city, but in a small but innovative city in the countryside. Finally, I wish the vigor of all the participants and the success of the forum heartedly. Thank you for your attention!

¹ Professor of Social Economics and History of Economics, Graduate School of Economics, Kyoto University, President of the Japan Association for Evolutionary Economics and Ex-President of the Society for the History of economic thought, Japan