

A Summary of SSRI Open Lecture, delivered on June 18, 1998

Political Theory Symposium

Jon Simons (Nottingham University),

“The Aestheticization of Politics: An Alternative to Left-Modernist Critiques”

Stephen Macedo (Syracuse University),

“Liberal Constitution, Public Reason, and Diversity”

Commentators

Nancy Rosenblum (Brown University)

Ryuichi Yamaoka (University of the Air)

Ken Tsutsumibayashi (Keio University)

Chair

Shin Chiba (ICU)

An international political theory symposium was held at ICU on June 18 under the auspices of SSRI, the Division of Social Sciences and the Peace Research Institute of the university. It was indeed an exciting occasion to have such a symposium at ICU by having eminent and leading—though relatively young—political theorists from the United States, the Great Britain, and Japan as speakers and commentators. About thirty people joined the symposium both from inside and from outside of the university.

Dr. Jon Simons' paper was concerned with a new way of looking at the old theme: aesthetics and politics. In terms of the aestheticization of politics he sought for a liberating alternative to notorious fascist versions of romanticized politics. He came up with the notion of an aesthetic politics of the self by referring to Michel Foucault's reappropriation of Nietzschean “aesthetics of existence.” Commentators' questions were focused on the definitions of such important concepts as poli-

tics, aesthetics, and intrapersonal politics. Dr. Simon's approach to this ever-important theme of aesthetics and politics proved to be postmodern through and through. I noticed that there existed a slight gap in perception and premise between Dr. Simons and other participants in the discussion including those who raised questions and comments from the floor.

Professor Stephen Macedo of Syracuse University could not arrive at the symposium on time due to the unexpected flight cancellation which he had suffered. So Professor Nancy Rosenblum read his paper instead. The paper again was a stimulating one, illustrating well what a Rawlsian liberalism's argument is like in contemporary America. The paper has presented the case very well for the significance of the concepts of diversity and toleration in liberal democratic societies. Also impressive was his search for a "judgmental liberalism" or a "civic liberalism" which was supposed to sustain liberal democratic societies both as people's general ethos and the basic principle of such societies.