



Voluntary Work and Student Learning

-by Chor-yung Cheung

Dr. Au, Professor Kwan, volunteers, students, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me salute you for all your great works. I believe that it is no exaggeration to say that City-Youth Empowerment Project is a flagship volunteering programme in CityU and your record, i.e. over 9,000 hours of volunteer work for the underprivileged people of our community and the migrant workers across the border is a landmark in voluntarism among tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. I am sure that with today's launch, more good work will come out from your contributions, and there are more records to be made in the months to come.

Participation in voluntary work will certainly be very valuable as an experience for all of you. To get in touch with the people in need in our community will allow you to have more thorough understanding of the Hong Kong society. The satisfaction deriving from giving a helping hand to those single parent children or to people with disability is most unforgettable. No doubt, in the whole process, you will acquire whole person development and through your contributions, you will make our society a better place to live.

But what attracts me most in voluntarism is the human spirit behind voluntary work. It is a most noble spirit because it is non-instrumental. We give a helping hand to the most needy voluntarily, irrespective of whom they are or where do they come from, since we regard every individual human being as an end in himself or herself. When they are in need, we feel duty-bound to help, not because we are thinking of getting something back from them in return, but simply because we regard each and every one of them as equal human individual, and to help them to preserve their human dignity, and not to allow any one of them to be deprived of human needs is an end in itself, for we have equal respect for all.

For those who have read some philosophy, you probably have already noticed that my idea of voluntarism is very much indebted to the 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, a great western thinker who argues that we must treat every human being as an end, never as a means for the sake of other people.

Of course this does not mean that one will not benefit from one's good work. In fact, I am sure that you will learn a lot and get a lot out of your voluntary

contributions. However, the important thing is that even without these benefits, the spirit of voluntarism will be no less valuable because what ultimately distinguishes this spirit from other things is its emphasis on the equal respect for all individuals and the duty to help those in need in order to make sure that no individual's human dignity should be compromised. I think it is this spirit that makes us human, and it is this spirit that makes our world a civilized one.

Under the able leadership of Dr. Au and her colleagues in the City-Youth Empowerment Project, you will have a most meaningful and memorable time in store for you in voluntarism in the coming months. May the spirit of common humanity never die! Thank you.

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