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(Interviewer: 三須・菊井)

"Exploring ways to solve the problems of developing countries, that's "development economics"!"

Q. Please tell us about the research that you specialize in.

In a word, development economics. Thirty years ago, development economics was about macroeconomic development, but nowadays it is about how much we can actually reduce the number of people living in poverty in small villages. However, recently, development economics has become a field that analyzes how much the number of impoverished people in small villages can be reduced by using economic methods. Development economics in general is now moving from the big level to the small level.

I hope that the second-year students will be aware and learn about this. However, my own research is more of macroeconomic analysis, using old-fashioned methods. For example, I analyze what kind of policies are in place to reduce poverty in the Philippines, what effect they have on the country as a whole, and how they differ by region, using econometric methods.

Interactive and heated discussions on an equal footing!

Q. Please tell us about Professor Ohira's educational philosophy.

Well, to be honest, I have never really thought about it, but one thing I have thought about since I was a student is that students are the main characters in a university. In other words, the educator is at the top and the students follow him or her. I have hated this kind of structure since I was a student.

I wanted to have as many discussions as possible on an equal footing. For example, a seminar is like that kind of community, where seniors teach knowledge and juniors stimulate seniors whose thinking has become entrenched, so to speak, from a fresh perspective. I stay in the seminar long after the students of the older generation have graduated, and I offer my opinions on how I see things from the standpoint of continuing to study economics. In other words, I am on an equal footing with the students in terms of sharing opinions and mutually exchanging those opinions. I believe that seminars, in other words, small-group classes, allow me to have this kind of relationship with students. For example, in a macro class in Hiyoshi, with 400 students, it would be impossible to have a mutual discussion on an equal footing (laughs). That is my kind of education. I believe that a place where everyone learns from each other is a university. However, if we are all literally equal, it can lead to a kind of familiarity, so sometimes, as a faculty member, I have to say things like, "That's a little different from what you think! I have to be able to use the word "equal" in such a way. I feel that we have to make good use of such distinction. Well, even if it is called an educational philosophy (laughs), I should not be in a position of superiority. I always keep that in mind.

I was a student who passionately played volleyball! And then I encountered a books...'

Q. Tell us about your student days, Mr. Ohira.

I played volleyball all day long, not all day long, but all afternoon long (laughs). I used to go to the place where the Fujiyama Memorial Museum is now, which used to be a library and read philosophy, sociology, linguistics, and so on. I didn't read economics (laughs).

In the past, the job hunting season started in May or June, but I wondered what everyone else was doing. I wondered. All we talked about was volleyball. We didn't talk about books or job hunting, so time passed before we knew it (laughs).

Then I heard from a friend that there is such a thing as graduate school! (laughs) Then I heard from a friend that there was a graduate school. So in August of my fourth year of college, around the time when everyone was starting to receive job offers from companies, I decided to take the graduate school exam.

I decided to take the graduate school entrance exam around August of my fourth year in college, when everyone was getting job offers from companies. That was the first time I began to seriously study economics. That was the first time I studied economics, and I thought it was interesting.

Q "What made you choose development economics from among the many economics courses available?"

I was in my first year of college when I went to the foreign book section of Kinokuniya to try reading something a little more typical of a college student. There, I found a copy of "Common Crisis." I found a book called "Common Crisis. What caught my attention about this book was the name of this "Brandt. I was what is called a returnee, and I was in West Germany. The chancellor of West Germany at that time was Brandt, and I saw a familiar face on the cover of the book! I couldn't read the book because it was too difficult, but I skimmed the introduction. The book was about developing countries and the North-South problem, and it talked about how the world as a whole is in crisis right now. The developing countries seem to be more endangered, but the whole world is now endangered by the crisis in the developing countries. This is a common crisis. I thought, "Oh, developing countries have a problem. I was moved by the thought, "Oh, developing countries have a problem," and "poverty is putting the whole world at risk. I thought, "What can I do to help? And this consistently became what I wanted to do in college. That has led me to where I am today. Plus, my graduate school professor said, "Let's read a book on development finance!" he said. I thought, "That reminds me of what I wanted to do. That's when I remembered what I wanted to do, and I started to do research.

Have something you can devote yourself to!

Q. What are you looking for in a sophomore who wants to join the Ohira Seminar?

I thought about that, but it's hard to say (laughs). (Laughs) Well, I would say to have something you can devote yourself to. As long as you are applying to some seminar, it is natural to be interested in the research content of that seminar. What makes you unique will not emerge unless you have something you can devote yourself to, so try to have something that will become your core. I think this is important. In that respect, I like geeks (laughs), like train geeks (laughs).

Anything, the ability to express yourself!

Finally, do you have a message for second-year students?

Yes, I do. For sophomores who want to apply for the seminar, make sure you are able to transmit information yourself because the seminar is a place for discussion! I guess. That doesn't necessarily mean you have to speak verbally. Even if you are too shy to speak, it is fine if you can express yourself in writing. Or vice versa. Even if you can't write, if you can express yourself by speaking, that's fine. Whatever it is, please hone your ability to communicate to others in a way that you are comfortable with and good at! I guess that's the message.