

Closing Remarks: About Economic Growth— a Variation on a Theme by David Hilbert*

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen
Vanderbilt University

I feel honored beyond words for having been invited to offer this celebratory symposium some closing remarks. My gratitude toward the organizers, James S. Worley and Anthony M. Tang, is all the greater for two reasons. First, since they both have been my students, I interpreted their invitation as proof that they nonetheless did not want to retaliate against a proverbial wringing examiner. Second, I felt that the invitation meant a rush in the enviable fraternity of the specialists in economic growth. Actually, taking the rush at its face value, I wondered whether there was any reason for my deserving it. After giving it some thought, I came to the conclusion that my main merit may have been that I know firsthand what economic wanting means: I was born and raised in a country that was not only underdeveloped to start with but, worse, devastated by 3 years of war going on in people's own backyards. However, I also remembered that I had after all tinkered occasionally in some analysis of noncapitalist economies, which bears on the essence of economic development. So I was further happy to have an occasion to plug these "secretions of my brain" (to use Pierre Cabanis's bizarre locution).

But my special elation over the invitation was that it offered me the opportunity of joining my other colleagues as well as the alumni of the Graduate Program in Economic Development (GPED), present or corresponding, in applauding not the program itself (which has no ears and no eyes) but those of our faculty who helped its steadily growing success; in succession, William H. Nicholls, Rendigs Fels, Reynold E. Carlson, Anthony M. Tang, and James S. Worley.

And by all means, I should not fail to tell on Jim Worley. He has been director of the program for the longest period, completing now a quarter century. During all that time the program met with many financial snags. (The Ford Foundation, e.g., once decided to divorce the program so as to run, in modern style, after another institution.)