

Editorial

The international symposium, 'The Self, the Other and Language: Dialogue between philosophy, psychology and comparative education', was held on March 25 and 26, 2008, in the Clark Hall of the Institute of Education, London University (IoE), in collaboration with the Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University (Kyoto). Nearly fifty people attended, including fourteen staff members and students from IoE and eleven staff members and students from Kyoto, all of whom were presenting papers. The main theme of the first day was 'Beyond the Self', the title of a book by Professor Paul Standish of the IoE that, with the assistance of five graduate students from Kyoto, I am currently translating into Japanese. The theme of the second day was 'Language, Learning and Identity'. In contrast to the philosophical approach of the first day, the presentations on the second day were marked by different approaches to the issues of the self, the other and language—from the perspectives of psychology and comparative education as well as philosophy of education. One of the distinctive features of the symposium was the way in which the occasion for dialogue was created. This was achieved especially as a result of the approach proposed by Professor Standish whereby each Japanese student received a response from an IoE student, all of which generated fruitful discussion. The symposium was thus dialogical and cross-cultural in the sense both of its interdisciplinary constitution and of the style of presentation. The discussion with the participants from the floor was also active and engaging, and it was a very challenging and educative occasion. This was the case especially for the students from Kyoto, but it was clear from the comments and feedback of IoE colleagues and others attending that they also found the event very stimulating.

A substantial number of the participants at the Kyoto-IoE symposium then went on to New College, University of Oxford, to attend the annual meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society at Great Britain, held from on March 28-30, 2008. At this event also some staff members and students from IoE and Kyoto presented their papers, and they again immersed themselves in the intensive but friendly atmosphere of academic dialogue. Some of the Japanese students, who were attending an international conference abroad for the first time, expressed their surprise at how much people enjoyed talking and exchanging ideas freely—not only at formal occasions for presentation but also at meal tables, bars and on the dance-floor in the evening (which is beyond the imagination of Japanese people). One of the students said joyfully that she experienced the moment of 'being in tune with the audience' in discussing her ideas, which she had never experienced before. Also during the intervals of the conference, the participants from Kyoto had the chance to brief others on the biennial meeting of the International Network of Philosophers of Education to be held at Kyoto University in August 2008. It was a great occasion to introduce Kyoto and Japan to people from all around the world.

From the experiences of these two events, the Japanese participants have realized that they are expected to have the capacity to be engaged in an in-depth dialogue at international conferences—so that all those contributing can overcome differences and barriers created by language and values, and so that they can affect and influence, even destabilize, each other's frame of thinking. Some of the students have already expressed

their wish to present papers again next year. As a faculty member at Kyoto, a task for me is to create occasions and, hopefully, a curriculum that enable students to acquire a high-level command of English and the capacity to be engaged in open-minded dialogue on the international scene. The high 'command' of a foreign *language* here, I believe, requires not only academic skill, but also the willingness and spirit to open one's self to the unknown *other*. Such education also requires a collaborative effort at an institutional level between IoE and Kyoto. I hope the international symposium we organized this time is the first step in the realization of this broader goal.

Finally, in order to make this event successful, the initiative from and collaboration with Professor Standish at IOE were indispensable. Preceding the symposium, in February 2008, he visited Kyoto and gave two public lectures. In addition he gave a six hours session for the students from Kyoto to help them prepare for their presentations in English. I would like to express my special thanks to him. On behalf of the participants from Kyoto, I also thank the staff members and students from the IoE for their active, thoughtful and sensitive contribution to the project. This small booklet is published as a record of this invaluable dialogue.

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