

# Response to Mitsutoshi Takayanagi's 'Economy of Beyond the Self: Teacher Education in and as Higher Education'

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The main point with which Mitsutoshi Takayanagi's paper is concerned is the application of the picture of higher education as, depicted in Paul Standish's *Beyond the Self* (1992), to what is termed: 'the realities and practices of teacher education in colleges and in professional training'. Two opening remarks can be made in relation to this consideration. First, the paper is important in that it has relevance to both the initial training that teachers receive *and also* to their ongoing professional development. Both, it seems, are subject to the kind of closed, totalised economy that Standish's work highlights. This is particularly pertinent to the current situation in England given the introduction in September 2007 of new professional standards for teachers working with learners following compulsory schooling (LLUK, 2007) and with the additional requirement for such teachers to undertake and centrally log at least 30 hours of continuing professional development that is monitored by the Institute for Learning, the professional body for the Learning and Skills Sector.

The second remark relates to an observation made by Paul Standish (2004), who argued that the performativity of educational curricula (those characteristic of a closed economy) deny not only the student voice in education, but also that of the teacher. So, in a reversal here, what Mitsutoshi is arguing in terms of the 'alienation [of teachers] from engaging in their own continued education' must also affect the students with whom those teachers work. Given the current prominence of debates regarding teacher education and training both in England and Japan, the importance of these initial remarks in relation to the paper's argument should not be underestimated.

The notion of outwardness that is central to the paper's philosophical stance and argument is a useful starting point for exploring what it means for a teacher to 'invent a sense of outwardness of herself', and hence to go beyond the restrictions of a closed, totalised economy. This notion of outwardness is one that is given expression within some works of philosophical literature such that the paper could usefully highlight. It is an idea that is central to some American literature and philosophy as expressed in the works of Henry Thoreau and, more recently, Stanley Cavell. In his celebrated work *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854/1999), Thoreau takes up the idea of departing from settled ways of thinking and being, what Standish calls our 'immigrancy to ourselves' (Standish, 2006, p. 156); both are expressions of an outwardness which is a necessary precondition to an openness to the other and to the re-birth of self and of society. This outwardness and departure is, in Thoreau, a *mourning* that is then contrasted with the *morning* of new ways of being in the world.

In elaborating the nature of our relationship to language, Thoreau indicates our nearness to (spoken) language by describing it as our 'mother tongue' against which he contrasts the distance and departure from settled ways of understanding that are characteristic of what he terms the 'father tongue', most commonly associated with writing (Thoreau, 1854/1999, p. 93). Thoreau's father tongue is in itself an instantiation of outwardness, of otherness to the nearness of our mother tongue. Our unsettling by, and strangeness to, words is a theme that runs from Thoreau, through the work of Stanley Cavell, and has been considered more recently by Naoko Saito in her recent translation of Cavell's *Senses of Walden* (Saito, 2007), where what she describes is, in some sense, her outsideness to her own language and her having to return to it. It is this same strangeness to language, and return to it, that is experienced in reading, especially in reading works that, like *Walden*, exhibit the father tongue: 'Reading... requires us to return to words as through a condition of estrangement, as though we still have to arrive at our words' (Standish, 2004, p. 156). It is the kind of education, characterised by the father tongue, that Thoreau calls our 'uncommon schooling' (Thoreau, 1854/1999, p. 99). Such an education that rejects the closed economies of exchange that Standish identifies (1992) should be characteristic of teacher education.

There seems to be an interesting connection between the argument made in this paper—that language is central to something other than self-contained economies of exchange—and research that similarly draws on Thoreau and Cavell to explore aspects of language in other areas of educational practice. One particular interest in my own work is in literacy education for adults, and how its current conceptualisation within policy and much of practice might well be described in terms of a totalised economy of exchange. Against many of the discourses of literacy that speak of 'empowerment', I argue that literacy, in some respects, can lead to, using Takayanagi's words an: 'alienation from engaging in continued education'. To contrast with many now orthodox notions of literacy, I pursue instead an idea, or a vision of being literate. This is an idea that has had scant attention despite the prominence of literacy in much of educational policy. It is one which recognises the rich possibilities of the term, possibilities that are denied if being literate is simply equated with having acquired the skills of reading and writing at a particular level. Rather, it is a notion that, whilst not denying the importance of acquiring technical skills for, say, reading and writing, recognises that these are merely constitutive of a much broader vision of what it means to read and to write.

In developing this idea of being literate, I explore the importance of the word 'being' in this term, and suggest that being literate is better understood if it is seen as part of our being human, of our having a language, a culture and of living with ourselves and in society. Referring back to Takayanagi's paper again, it is an idea of being literate which is 'an education designed not to equip and accommodate entry into society and its conventional economy, but to help adults to acquire the language that enables them to find their own economy of living'. Being literate is an ongoing education which resonates with some of the ideas from the philosophical literature of Thoreau, of Ralph Waldo Emerson and of Stanley Cavell. It is an uncommon schooling of which the ongoing acquisition of the father tongue and the development of voice are both features. It is an idea which Emersonian notions of self reliance and moral perfectionism can inspire. If literacy thinking, teaching and learning is too often of a totalised economy, then being literate is characterised by the presence of infinity.

It seems that at least in some ways, Takayanagi's paper that calls for a 'going beyond an inward, self-contained exchange' and for an alternative education in which a 'reading teacher becomes a writer of language in terms of inventing a sense of outwardness

of herself' is expressing some of the anxieties of traditional teacher education that I recognise in literacy education, and that the richness of Thoreau, of Emerson and of Cavell's metaphors and writings are a starting place for an alternative mode of thinking about these issues. The challenge is, perhaps, now to define in more practical terms how these ideas can be used to effect change in classroom practice.

## REFERENCES

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