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Author(s)	Saito, Naoko
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Preface

The fourth International Symposium between the Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University (Kyoto), and the Institute of Education, University of London (IoE) was held on August 18 and 19 at the Clock Tower Memorial Hall of Kyoto University. The symposium's theme this year was *Finding Meaning, Cultures Across Borders: International Dialogue between Philosophy and Psychology*. Nearly thirty people attended, including a staff member and six research students from the IoE, and six staff members and eight graduate students from Kyoto. Participants had diverse cultural backgrounds—Japanese, British, Korean, American, Chinese, German and Cypriot—and they came from different academic disciplines—psychology, cognitive science and philosophy. Furthermore, people from institutions outside Kyoto and the IoE attended the meeting, helping the dialogue between two institutions become open and public. The lively discussion during the two-day conference embodied the theme of the conference—finding meaning, cultures across borders. Centering on the issues of language, translation and understanding other cultures, participants experienced the difficulty of communicating foreign ideas to those from different cultural, linguistic and academic backgrounds; but, at the same time, the intensive discussion continually demonstrated the possibilities of translation in a broad sense—of conveying one's own original ideas into the language of others and into their frameworks of thinking.

The keynote paper of the conference, by Professor Paul Standish of the IoE, thematised this very feature: as his title, 'One language, one world: The common measure of education', suggests, his discussion addressed questions concerning the possibility and the problems of there being a common world language, and the relation of this to culture and education. The paper began with a question posed by Hilary Putnam relating to the credibility of Enlightenment values after the Holocaust, but it took up a seemingly minor aspect of his discussion in order to enter into an extended exploration of questions of language and meaning. This was achieved via a discussion, in the light of a paper by Jacques Derrida, of a letter on the subject of language sent by Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenzweig. The deconstruction that Derrida's reading was shown to achieve was considered as potentially offering a retrieval of the Enlightenment values that Putnam seeks. The particular status of English as a world language was considered in relation to the idea of 'one language, one world,' while some ramifications of such homogenization were briefly explored. Although apparently a difficult text, especially to those outside the discipline of philosophy, the paper raised questions concerning the nature of language, our relation to language, and the possibility of understanding others that were of much wider, interdisciplinary importance. Based upon Derrida's views regarding language, Professor Standish destabilized the common assumption about language, that it is simply a matter of grammar or the tool of communication, with translation understood simply as a matter of switching from one language to another. Behind this common assumption, he argued, there was a deeper problem to do with our fated blindness to the abyssal nature of language—to its bottomlessness or absence of foundations, and to the darkness of the unknown, and to the ghostly quality that is to be found in the fact that it comes to us from an origin we cannot grasp or retrieve. This, it was claimed, presents us with scary experiences, with the inevitable sense of our falling into a gap. One way of securing ourselves against the abyss is to set up a dichotomy

of the sacred (the pure and the original) and the non-sacred (the secularized), and then to appeal to the former as a secure foundation (call it the interiorization of the spiritual). Another way of avoidance is to be complacent in the secularized life, being oblivious to the sacred but engaged in the technological, detached and binary (easy-to-understand) modes of thinking. Professor Standish claimed with Derrida that such avoidance of the abyss is tantamount to a form of repression: we should rather live in the tension between the sacred and the non-sacred, and in the transition between two places: we should expose ourselves to a possibility of contamination, for it is only through this that the experience of the sacred is made possible. This mode of accepting and undergoing the abyssal nature of language, Standish argued, is the very nature of translation, and this is not a special experience outside our ordinary experience. It calls for and creates the 'space of responsibility and judgment' in our use of language. It is also through this broad sense of translation that we can expose ourselves to the other, which always exceeds our full grasp. Standish's concluding remark that 'our education is a measure of ourselves' is a call for a kind of education through which each of us, without being contained by the pre-given common measure, is understood to be responsible in the ongoing creation and recreation of the measure of our society, reflected in our ways of living, and this in turn is understood in the light of that quality of the unknown, in language, in others and in ourselves. This is a vision of a common society—that is, of an open, pluralistic society, one that is always still to come.

If we turn to consider our shared experience of the symposium, to what extent did we succeed in experiencing this sense of abyss, and in living on the edge, between two places? (Or, we might ask, was that indeed necessary?) There are various 'barriers'—between languages, between cultures, and between disciplines. To those in the field of psychology and cognitive science, the idea of the *abyssal* nature of language may itself seem to go against their disciplines. Even among those with philosophical backgrounds, there is certainly no agreed interpretation of the relationship between the sacred and the non-sacred (as the discussion between Professor Standish and Professor Imai showed), and hence, the recognition of the necessity of the abyss and gap was not fully shared. There was also a sense of gap between those who put an emphasis on the 'empirical' or on 'field' research and those concerned with 'theoretical' research. The professional translator of the symposium, Ms. Yukiko Noguchi, confessed later that she had read Professor Standish's paper fifteen times in preparation, and that she still could not understand it all. In the course of the diverse forms of discussion and conversation at the symposium, however, we must have experienced, occasionally perhaps with a sense of irritation, the presence of those others whose language, ideas and ways of thinking seemed beyond our own comprehension. I believe this sense of a gap, this confrontation with the impossibility of translation, as well as the sense of irritation I have just acknowledged, are a part of our common measure of education and an entrance into cross-cultural understanding.

The symposium was preceded by an intensive summer course, 'International Frontiers in Research and Education', taught by Professor Standish. The theme of the course was 'One language, one world: Meaning-making, translation and the understanding of other cultures.' Some of the participants from the course had thus been prepared for the discussion at the symposium, and they themselves presented their own ideas at the meeting in connection with what they had learned in the course. In this sense, the symposium was in itself an occasion of continuing education for students. Also in the preparation of the students' papers, their fellow students from the IoE had proofread their English, and a preparatory meeting had been held on the day

before the conference at which issues of translation that had arisen in connection with these were discussed. In producing the present set of proceedings, IoE students have again helped the Kyoto students to rewrite their papers. This peer tutoring system is also a step in facilitating cross-cultural and interdisciplinary dialogue—the process of finding meaning, across borders.

The official exchange between Kyoto University and The IoE has now entered its fourth year, with meetings having taken place alternately in London and Kyoto. The group of participants has partly changed, but many have attended throughout this series of meetings. The participants this year included Professor Jun Yamana, who is a new faculty member at Kyoto and who gave an intriguing presentation on the history of the Japanese school building; Professor Yasuo Imai from the University of Tokyo, who is a leading figure in the philosophy of education, gave a response to Professor Standish's paper, in which he elucidated a subtle but significant difference in their understanding of language and translation; and Professor Junko Nishigaki from Osaka Municipal University, who conducted research at the IoE and was hosted by Professor Standish, also presented a paper, continuing her role as a crucial link between psychology and philosophy in our exchanges. I would like to thank all these participants. Professor Standish has continuously supported the organization and arrangement of the symposia, and he has served as a bridge between two places. His open-mindedness and hospitality across borders have helped to make our continuing exchange possible. I would like to thank him and the other participants from the IoE for their valuable contributions in this ongoing collaboration.

Naoko Saito
Associate Professor
Graduate School of Education
Kyoto University