

Preface

Naoko Saito (Kyoto University)

“[I]t is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain. . .” —Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §540)

“[T]he reason ‘I know I am in pain’ is not an expression of certainty is that it is an expression of pain – it is an exhibiting of the object about which someone (else) may be certain.” —Stanley Cavell

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been difficult to communicate face-to-face. People around the world have become distant in unprecedented ways, and cross-cultural exchange is in danger of stagnating. In these times, we need to sustain hope and exert our efforts in reaching beyond borders. It is in the spirit of such hope that the papers included in this volume have been published. They are the product of collaborative teaching and cross-cultural exchange between the Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University, and UCL Institute of Education as part of Kyoto’s ongoing International Collaborative Course.

A two-day intensive course, entitled “Thinking about education through film,” took place online on February 6 and 7, 2021. The principal instructor was Professor Paul Standish from the Institute of Education. The idea was to enable Kyoto students to experience the atmosphere of a British-style seminar in the UK. On the first day, eleven people from the U.K. and seven from Kyoto participated, and on the second day, twelve from the U.K. and five from Kyoto. The course was joined on this occasion by some doctoral students from Warwick University. Despite this being our first experiment with this international collaborative teaching on Zoom, lively discussion took place, enriched by the multicultural and multilingual backgrounds of the participants (Japanese, British, Syrian, Philipino, Korean and Chinese). After the course, the participants wrote essays centering on the theme of “Inclusion, acknowledgment and the political,” and the students from the Institute of Education tutored the Japanese students in their writing in English. The articles included in this volume are the product of these experiences of mutual learning.

Continuing the theme of previous years, the course followed ground-breaking work in film as a medium of philosophical enquiry into education. *How does film educate us, and how does film itself philosophize? What happens to us and to the world when the experience of film is shared?* This collaborative intensive course was itself the occasion to search, to experience and to experiment with answers to these questions. We saw two films this year—a British film, *This is England* (2006) (directed by Shane Meadows), a contemporary Japanese film, *Shoplifters* [*Manbiki-Kazoku*] (2018) (directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda).

On the first day (February 6, 2018), and with the themes of *Shoplifters* especially in view, Professor Standish began the course with his presentation, “Knowledge, recognition and acknowledgment,” based upon Stanley Cavell’s ordinary language philosophy. What does it mean to know an other’s mind? We tend to grasp the other by visible and defining marks, but

the point of Cavell's idea of acknowledgment is to remind us of our fated tendency to the denial of the other and, hence, the denial of our common humanity—made all the more poignant where the other is in pain and in suffering. The invisible is apt to be covered over. Building on this broad framework for the interpretation of *Shoplifters*, we then moved on to the analysis of particular scenes of the film and were engaged in discussion—both in groups and with the whole class. Various issues were raised in the course of discussion. What do we mean by “real family”? Does this mean a biological and legally authenticated family? Or can we find it in an alternative way? The film definitely explores the latter possibility of the reality of family. In connection with the idea of justice and care, two horizons of acknowledgment were brought into focus: one belongs to what might be called a horizontal economy of legal and political systems; the other to a vertical dimension that involves obligation to the other that goes beyond exchange. Another issue that was raised was the creation of bonding by acknowledging pain (both physical pains on the body and psychological pains of being neglected). The idea of finding and founding was also discussed: those people depicted in the film as abandoned by society are initially lost but then find a new foundation through others, in a new bond. In the course of philosophical discussion of the film, diverse hidden themes of the film were elucidated.

On the second day (February 7, 2021), we turned the theme of the anxiety of inclusion towards a second film, *This is England*. Professor Standish prepared the philosophical orientation by his presentation, “The anxiety of inclusion.” Anxiety is inherent in the human condition and we have a fated tendency to evade that anxiety. What is it to live well with the anxiety of inclusion? There are attractions and dangers in identity-thinking of the kind that emphasizes essentialism and notions of purity. To search for one's sense of belonging in a particular group may turn out to be an unhealthy way of inclusion: belonging to a certain group (as in the film) can be seen to have its sinister side. What is the relationship between questions of identity, inclusion and economics? The film is set against the background of England in the 1980s when under the nationalistic and monetarist policies of Margaret Thatcher, lower class people economically suffered. Shaun, the main character in the film, is a working-class boy of about thirteen years of age, and he is searching for his identity amongst particular “skinhead” groups. Following the philosophical investigation, we again broke into groups and had a lively discussion about the film before exchanging ideas with the class as a whole. Various issues were raised again. For example, the idea of transformation was discussed in connection with Shaun's cutting of his hair to be a skinhead, the change in the style of his clothes, and his discovery of a new identity in groups—first in a benign group of skinhead young people, and then in a sinister group with an ultranationalist and violent political ideology. The ending scene, in which Shaun throws away his national English flag, symbolizes two senses of leaving—leaving his old identity and moving into a new stage of adolescence, and leaving nationalistic ideas of belonging (with his recognition of the wrongness of some of the behaviour he had been attracted to and the misguided nature of his earlier search for identity).

Some common ground between the two films was also emphasized. For example, father-son relationships, relationships of acknowledgment and care between young people, and the idea of leaving and departure (especially by adolescent boys in each of the films). The common theme of the family was emphasized also in a presentation by Qasir Shah, which reflected on the families presented in the film in relation to the contemporary rethinking of classical—especially

Confucian—conceptions of family relationships. It was a delightfully surprising experience to find this unexpected common ground between films made and set at different times and in two different cultures. Members of the class themselves underwent such moments of transformation and recognition as they tested their words in conversation with each other. It was a characteristic of the course that through close attention to particular scenes of the films, possibilities of interpretation and lines of analysis were explored and extended in conversation with others. The students learned that film as the medium of teaching and learning allows us to see things and people in the details of ordinary life: this expands the capacity to think philosophically.

Throughout the two-day intensive course, the Japanese students began to express themselves with growing confidence, even though they had been relatively shy and silent at the beginning of the course—especially as this was their first experience of attending an international course online. They progressively learned how to present their views to others. All this progress was made gradually in the course of two days in relation to the medium of film and the content of these particular films. Film, more precisely than the theatre, enables a shared experience of what is on screen. In contrast to the ways that things in the world are normally perceived, from left and right, from different perspectives, we see the same image, from the same perspective. In this course, students from the Institute of Education and Kyoto experienced such moments of sharing common images and, through this, underwent mutual transformation. It was surprising to know that such experience can be made possible online, and the course this year has proved that it is possible to create “face-to-face” relationships online.

The event is the result of a sustained exchange and collaboration between the Institute of Education and Kyoto over the past fifteen years. The joint course began in 2014, and this year it was offered as an International Collaborative Course at the School of Education, Kyoto University. The course has run alternately in London and Kyoto, but this year was the first occasion when it was held online. We hope that the collaborative teaching with the Institute of Education will continue to be an example of initiating Kyoto students into the seminar style of foreign institutions and will inspire students to study abroad, even at this difficult time of COVID-19.

We thank, first and foremost, Professor Standish. His wholehearted commitment in teaching Kyoto students has helped them to cultivate a high standard in the command of English and to increase the number of their presentations and publications in international conferences and academic journals. He has also been initiating Kyoto students into ways of philosophizing in ordinary life. This has a bearing on students’ engagement and re-engagement with language, and on the way they undertake research in the humanities. We also thank other participants from the Institute of Education and Warwick University, who helped and inspired Kyoto students to express and transform themselves through cross-cultural dialogue.

February 8, 2021
Naoko Saito
Graduate School of Education
Kyoto University