

Education from the Perspective of Psychoanalysis: Based on Heisaku Kosawa's Educational Consultations Documented in the Magazine *Shogaku Ichinensei* (First Graders)

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Abstract

Clinicians often fail to pay attention to the relationship between such psychoanalytic work and education. Many clinicians espouse the deeply rooted notion that the psychoanalytic process will be adversely affected if they also play the role of an educator. Therefore, they tend to avoid opportunities to examine the relationship between these two domains. However, many cases in which the relationship between psychoanalysis and education is apparent are embedded within the history of Japanese psychoanalysis. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to examine education from the perspective of psychoanalysis based on Heisaku Kosawa's educational consultations that were serialized in the magazine *Shogaku Ichinensei* (First Graders) shortly after World War II.

Heisaku Kosawa (1897–1968) laid the foundations of present-day psychoanalysis in Japan. In 1932, when he was studying abroad, Kosawa met Sigmund Freud and received psychoanalytic training from Richard Sterba. In 1935, he became a member of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) and opened a psychoanalytical clinic in Tokyo, where he practiced psychoanalysis. He published a series of educational consultations in the magazine *Shogaku Ichinensei*. His advice was characterized by a unique quality. He advised mothers to allow their children to be free and to spoil them a lot.

Between the prewar and postwar period, an educational scholar called Seishi Shimoda (1890–1973) proposed ideas related to the field of education that were similar to the advice that Kosawa published in the magazine *Shogaku Ichinensei*. He was Kosawa's patient. He received psychoanalytic therapy from him once a week between October 1939 and July 1942. Pertinent details were recorded in his book. This paper discussed the relationship between education and the demonic nature of human beings through these materials in the history of psychoanalysis in Japan.

Key words

history of psychoanalysis, Heisaku Kosawa, educational consultations

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1. Introduction

Let us start with a story about my patient. She often got angry with me and refused to lie down on the couch. Initially, I did not know why she was so angry with me. However, after a while, I realized that she felt angry with me whenever I gave a psychoanalytic interpretation. Soon, what she told me was that my interpretation intended to lead her to a certain goal or pattern while saying, “Speak freely.” She said that this was the same tactic that was used by a teacher whom she disliked. After hearing her criticism, I reflected upon my words and behavior and realized that her criticism made a lot of sense. She was completely right. I instructed her to lie down on the couch and told her to engage in free association. As always, she pressed the intercom button on time. Then, she opened the front door, entered the room wearing the slippers, took off her bag, removed her coat, lay down on the couch, and started engaging in free association after I said, “Let’s get started.” In free association, one is required to freely speak about the things that come to mind. Subsequently, the therapist will give his or her interpretations. These interactions are quite different from everyday conversations. Anyone would feel confused the first time they participate in this experience because she or he is unlikely to have experienced this kind of communication in the past. However, patients eventually become acquainted with such kinds of psychoanalytic communication. They will begin to understand the relationships among the associations embedded within the interpretations conveyed by the therapist and eventually be able to independently discover unconscious links without the assistance of their therapist.

Clinicians often fail to pay attention to the relationship between such psychoanalytic work and education. Many clinicians espouse the deeply rooted notion that the psychoanalytic process will be adversely affected if they also play the role of an educator. Therefore, they tend to avoid opportunities to examine the relationship between these two domains. However, many cases in which the relationship between psychoanalysis and education is apparent are embedded within the history of Japanese psychoanalysis. McWilliams (2003) has noted that psychoanalysis is more educational than it is believed to be, and this has certainly been confirmed in the history.

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to examine education from the perspective of psychoanalysis based on Heisaku Kosawa’s educational consultations that were serialized in the magazine *Shogaku Ichinensei* (First Graders) shortly after World War II. Kosawa laid the foundation for psychoanalysis in Japan.

2. Education in Japanese psychoanalysis

(1) Heisaku Kosawa's educational consultations

Heisaku Kosawa (1897–1968) laid the foundations of present-day psychoanalysis in Japan. In 1932, when he was studying abroad, Kosawa met Sigmund Freud and received psychoanalytic training from Richard Sterba. In 1935, he became a member of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) and opened a psychoanalytical clinic in Tokyo, where he practiced psychoanalysis. In Japan, psychoanalysis flourished during the 1920s and 1930s, and several organizations, including the Japanese branch of the IPA, were instituted. As the war intensified, these organizations disappeared, and members left. However, Kosawa continued his psychoanalytical practice and became the chair of the Japanese branch of the IPA after the war. He founded the largest psychoanalytical organization in Japan, namely, the Japan Psychoanalytical Association.

It is not well known that Kosawa published a series of educational consultations in the magazine *Shogaku Ichinensei* shortly after the war. *Shogaku Ichinensei* is a comprehensive magazine that targets first-grade elementary school students, and it is published by Shogakukan. Anyone who has grown up in Japan is likely to have read this magazine at least once. When this magazine was first published in March 1925, it was called “*Seugaku Ichinensei*”. It has since been published for approximately 100 years. “Educational consultations for your beloved child” and “Educational consultations for mothers,” which were authored by Kosawa, were published between November 1949 and August 1951 (four years after the end of the war). A total of 26 counseling cases were documented across 21 issues. Those who sought consultations were largely mothers, and the reasons for which they sought consultations ranged from concerns about their children entering elementary school to concerns about their children's personality (e.g., being bossy at home but timid outside, being greedy, and being disobedient) and physical problems (e.g., stuttering and ear discharge). Kosawa answered the consultations not with title of Psychoanalyst but as Doctor of Medicine. Although the term “psychoanalysis” was not used, the contents of his answers clearly reflect psychoanalytic perspectives. Moreover, his advice was characterized by a unique quality. He advised mothers to allow their children to be free and to spoil them a lot. Despite the wide range of clients he served, he provided similar advice to more than half of all individuals (to whom specific advice was provided). The different kinds of advice that he provided included the following: “Go easy on your child's selfishness as though you were trying to compensate for the lack of care (love) received during childhood,” “Try to submit to your children” “Afford

your child greater freedom when he or she becomes selfish,” “Adore your child in all ways possible until he or she feels satisfied,” and “Allow your child to do the things that you think are bad.” He provided this kind of advice because he believed that their children had experienced a lack of care and affection from mothers during childhood, and he emphasized the role of failures to wean from breastfeeding. As he has illustrated, “If we use weaning from breastfeeding as an example, the mother’s breast is the place where an infant can rest and feel safe. However, with the birth of the next child, the breast must be given up to that child. This task is very difficult for infants.” He highlighted the effects of breastfeeding experiences on the mental development of children and the problems caused by separation, which are regarded as the causes of various problematic behaviors in children.

In 1951 (when Kosawa was also discussing this issue), a compilation of John Bowlby’s studies on the mental and physical responses of infants separated from their mothers and the effects of separation was published. The effects of deficient maternal rearing practices on the mental and physical development of infants, which were delineated by Bowlby, drew much attention from scholars in Japan. Subsequently, maternal deprivation, which was examined by Bowlby, was reconceptualized as not only a one-dimensional problem that involves the presence or absence of a mother but also a problem that is caused by a series of more complex psychological events. For instance, research continues to progress across multiple dimensions (e.g., comprehension and development of multiple attachment objects other than the mother and the role of separation in mental development). At first glance, Kosawa’s advice appears to have overlapped with the latest findings on the mother-child relationship that were published at the time. However, is this observation valid?

(2) Heisaku Kosawa and motherhood

Keiko Kida underwent psychoanalysis with Kosawa three times a week for approximately six months. She began receiving therapy in 1941—a few years before Kosawa began to write for *Shogaku Ichinensei*. Kida continued to receive guidance from Kosawa and maintained detailed records about him. These records include several statements that are resonant with Kosawa’s advice documented in *Shogaku Ichinensei*. For example, Kosawa often proclaimed that the mercy of Buddha is his unconditional love and that the purest form of unconditional human love is shown by mothers, who nourish their children with their milk. Moreover, he often cited an anecdote, according to which Buddha first attained enlightenment not in an extremely difficult situation but

when he consumed a milk-rice pudding that he had received from a young woman who was passing by.

Kida has also described Kosawa's own childhood. Kosawa was the ninth child, and it was difficult for his mother to care for him. Therefore, all caregiving duties were assigned to a wet nurse. According to her records, Kosawa had described his childhood in the following manner:

I feel that the reason why my eyesight got worse (blindness in one eye) has something to do with the fact that I was brought up by a wet nurse. While giving a sidelong glance to retaliate against the hostility of the other child, which I feared would make me feel as though I were being stabbed, I fought fiercely and took the other child's milk away. There is a sense of guilt and fear that stems from the fact that I gave that child a sidelong glance. I think my eyes were punished.

He may have addressed these problems when he underwent psychoanalysis. Kosawa maintained very brief notes about his psychoanalytic sessions with Sterba. However, his records narrate an interesting episode. Kosawa always felt the urge to purchase something when he stood in front of a candy shop. He experienced obsessive thoughts and felt as though someone were telling him, "You are a greedy person." This happened in Vienna when he saw chocolates stacked against the store window. On the third night after he had started undergoing psychoanalysis, he suddenly experienced the need to have a bowel movement. He ran into the bathroom and had severe diarrhea. The next morning, when he passed by the store window as usual, he was surprised to find that his obsessive thoughts had completely disappeared.

Kosawa's eyes looked at the chocolates wishfully, but his inner voice said, "You are a greedy person." The eyes of the baby (Kosawa) who is desperately fighting for his wet nurse's milk, the other baby whose milk has been taken away, and the baby (Kosawa) who gave the other baby a sidelong glance all overlap with one another. This is reminiscent of the advice that he provided to mothers in *Shogaku Ichinensei*: "The breast must be given up to the next child. This task is hard for an infant." This was nothing but a statement that stemmed from Kosawa's heart.

Kosawa has recounted that, when he was a high school student, he felt overjoyed whenever he returned to his parents' house because his mother would be waiting for him with a sweet fermented rice drink that she had prepared for him. It is very likely that milk-rice pudding and sweet fermented drinks reminded him of breast milk. Kosawa said to Kida, "Those battling emotional pain (including those who have had mothers) have not

received the kind of love infants experience when their mothers breastfeed them. Therefore, no one other than a therapist can give this to them.” Kida has noted that Kosawa devoted his life to the pursuit of an answer to the question of “how he could help those who had not enjoyed their own mothers’ milk sufficiently (including himself) and compensate for this deficiency in their lives.”

When preschool education is discussed in Japan, it is often indicated that psychoanalytic theory underlies the “myth of a child’s first three years,” which is still strongly endorsed even today. In other words, it refers to the notion that mothers should devote themselves to child-rearing activities until their child reaches the age of three years. For example, when addressing the issue of the modernization of families, especially during the postwar period, Ochiai (2019) has referred to the fact that the myth of a child’s first three years is rooted in psychoanalysis and has introduced insights propounded by Freud and Erickson. It cannot be argued that this perspective is entirely wrong. Certainly, psychoanalysis emphasizes the early childhood years. Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, however, is fundamentally phallogocentric and paternalistic. However, Japanese psychoanalysis has focused on mother-child relationships since the beginning. What is hidden in the background is not only the perspectives of psychoanalysis but also identification with the notion of Buddha’s mercy and the relationship between Kosawa and his mother. In postwar Japan, Gertrud Schwing’s “A Way to the Soul of the Mentally Ill” (1940) gained great popularity. Even at present, it is a piece of classical literature to which students of not only psychoanalysis but also clinical psychology and nursing are introduced. This book presents the case of a patient with mental illness who was bedridden and had been plunged into desolation but had begun to recover. The centrality of motherhood experiences within Schwing’s therapeutic framework is resonant with Kosawa’s therapeutic theory.

The historical context in which such ideas gained popularity cannot be ignored. During the war, women were encouraged to become mothers through the national policy, “Have children and raise them for the nation.” After the collapse of fatherhood following Japan’s defeat in the war, women were encouraged to become full-time housewives and play a primary role in child-rearing activities during the postwar high-economic growth period. Motherhood was emphasized during this period. As a result, perspectives that emphasized the role of motherhood in early childhood contributed to the formulation of the concept of the *Ajase* complex by Keigo Okonogi, who inherited Kosawa’s idea (Nishi, 2020). This concept further developed its educational meaning as a problem of mothers’ own egoism in child rearing.

(3) Heisaku Kosawa and Seishi Shimoda

Between the prewar and postwar period, an educational scholar called Seishi Shimoda (1890–1973) proposed ideas related to the field of education that were similar to the advice that Kosawa published in the magazine *Shogaku Ichinensei*.

Shimoda was known within the prewar Japanese psychoanalytical community, and he was interested in psychoanalysis from a very early stage. In 1928, Shimoda met Alexander Sutherland Neill and visited his school. Neill practiced education grounded in psychoanalytic theory in Summerhill School in England. After the tour, Shimoda immersed himself in Neill's latest book, "The Problem Child," while returning to Japan on a ship that sailed across the Indian Ocean. He was struck by a story about Neill, according to which he was beaten by a rebellious child and endured it for three hours without getting angry. According to him, Affording children the freedom to do what they want to do will help them learn to accept and forgive others. Strongly influenced by Neill's ideas, Shimoda published several translations, including those of a collection of Neill's books. He also wrote many books based on Neill's idea of "free education" and conducted educational programs to spread these ideas within Japan. His book "Practice of Education without Scolding" (1954) became a best-seller.

There was a period during which Shimoda was Kosawa's patient. He received psychoanalytic therapy from him once a week between October 1939 and July 1942. Pertinent details were recorded in what can be considered to be an autobiography that he wrote at the age of 80 years. He has written that, during psychoanalysis, he experienced strong feelings of affection toward his mother who had died when he was only 10 years old. Shimoda has described this experience as follows:

The analysis started with something close to me and gradually progressed to issues related to deeper unconscious areas. Various problems had risen there, but most important of all was that my love for my mother and my affection for my mother had dominated my life for many years.

By undergoing psychoanalysis with Kosawa, Shimoda appears to have gained greater insights into not only himself but also education. However, after undergoing psychoanalysis for almost three years, a serious problem had emerged. According to Kosawa, Shimoda sought freedom and endorsed a scolding-free educational paradigm because he had not experienced *Amae* during childhood. Shimoda was able to accept this interpretation. However, they had different opinions about what caused the emergence of

this need. Shimoda believed that human beings are fundamentally good. In contrast, Kosawa believed that human nature is characterized by conflicts between good and evil. Subsequently, he scolded Shimoda by “blasting his voice throughout the entire room” and argued that Shimoda’s claim was nothing but the rationalization of his desire to experience Amai. However, Shimoda refused to change his mind. He tried to prove his theory in a calm manner by offering real-life examples. However, Kosawa was not willing to change his mind about his theory either. After several such exchanges, Kosawa told him, “A stubborn fellow like you has paranoia. I can no longer analyze a fellow like you. Leave!” Consequently, psychoanalysis was terminated. Shimoda has described this incident as follows:

Dr. Kosawa, who dismissed the notion of education without scolding, tried to change my mind by scolding me, but I did not budge even an inch.

This is the event during which a transference had taken place. This is the time point at which psychoanalytic development appears to have occurred. It is not an exaggeration to state that modern psychoanalysis aims to answer the question of how these transferences can be facilitated and how one can survive them. The transference relationship, as we can see here, is something that has been thrown in and drowning without noticing. According to Kosawa, “Those with mental illnesses (including those who have had mothers) have not received the kind of love infants experience when their mothers breastfeed them. Therefore, no one other than a therapist can give this to them. Moreover, Kosawa wrote a paper entitled, “The Two Kinds of Guilt,” and presented it to Freud. This article discussed the guilt caused by the state of being forgiven. Forgiving others and being forgiven were issues of great interest to Kosawa. However, there was a time when he scolded another person so loudly that his voice reverberated throughout the room. The objective of this discussion is not to question whether Kosawa’s attitude is right or wrong. Transference can plunge a therapist into a helpless situation that differs from the one for which he or she had prepared. Then, a therapist will be able to accurately understand what is really going on in his or her patient’s mind.

Based on his psychoanalytic process with Kosawa, Shimoda wrote about the events that had led up to his marriage to his wife. It appears as though he was trying to associate them to his experiences with Kosawa. Shimoda’s wife was his former student. After graduating, she became a teacher, faced various difficulties, and had come to Shimoda for advice. Shimoda enthusiastically provided advice and guidance to his former student. When they eventually decided to get married, Shimoda thought to himself, “From now

on, I will teach and guide her for the rest of my life. I will also help her become a sensible and respectable person.” However, his wife resisted his efforts in this direction. After several years of conflict with his wife, he realized that it was wrong for him to arrogantly believe that he could teach and guide his wife. Since then, he tried to remind himself, “If someone resists, I will accept their resistance. I will never try to teach and guide them.” Shimoda wrote about this episode within the context of his criticism of Kosawa for trying to eliminate his resistance by scolding him. Furthermore, it was an illustration of how resistance should be addressed in psychoanalysis. However, it is evident that his relationship with his wife was similar to the one he shared with Kosawa across three years. It was a relationship in which neither one was willing to compromise. Instead, they continued to demonstrate resistance toward one another. One relationship ended when the two parties decided to part ways out of anger, whereas the other relationship lasted a lifetime.

3. Summary

This paper presented Kosawa’s desire for motherhood and a psychoanalytic process with Shimoda, starting with a series of educational consultations he provided in *Shogaku Ichinensei* after the war. These events illustrate the relationship between the demonic nature of human beings and education. Freud has described this as follows:

...we may say that the patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it.

Psychoanalysis places paramount value on such unconscious repetitive acts (i.e., understanding through transference). In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Freud focused on those who repeat their unfortunate fate as though they have been possessed by a demon. Unfortunately, we always repeat the same mistake. With regard to their educational beliefs, both Kosawa and Shimoda believed that it is important to give the other person the freedom to do what he or she wishes to do without scolding him or her (i.e., to forgive and accept the other person). This can certainly be found in what both of them have left behind. However, what actually happened between the two of them was different. It was completely the opposite of what they had been teaching mothers.

However, this may be the very reason why they passionately endorsed similar

educational beliefs. During psychoanalysis, they failed to demonstrate maternal forgiveness, which is what they were desperately seeking. The educational advice that they provided to mothers was also a reflection of their demonic fate and possibly their desire to escape their fate.

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