

# A Summary Report of the Symposium on “Psychoanalysis and Education: Freudian Thought as an Educational Theory”

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## 1. Symposium’s Implementation Status for This Year

First, due to the global situation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting was shifted to an online format for the first time in the history of the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan (PESJ). This step was taken to avoid gatherings at the host university, Nihon University, College of Humanities and Sciences. The in-person symposium was replaced by manuscripts posted on *the Collection of Presentation Manuscripts*, which, in turn, were sent to the conference participants. Questions from the participants were accepted online on October 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, the dates of the conference. Four members—three reporters and a designated debater—exchanged comments, questions, and replies through e-mail. The contents were sent online at a later date, along with replies to the participants’ questions. We would like to express our gratitude to Prof. Akira Geshi, who worked as the planner, reporter, and organizer of the symposium; Prof. Deborah P. Britzman, who worked as the reporter and who was unfortunately unable to come to Japan; and Prof. Takeru Mashino and the members of the Conference Preparation Committee for their great effort in providing a liaison and coordination between the members of the symposium. We would like to sincerely thank them for their efforts.

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## 2. The Purpose of the Symposium

The purpose of the symposium is as follows:

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis is one of many major movements that have shaped the academic world since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although its scientific and therapeutic credibility is sometimes called into question, the idea of psychoanalysis has become part of our paradigm and lifestyle. One cannot think of modern philosophies and ideas without considering Freud's influence. Education is no exception. Understanding children using depth psychology, beginning with psychoanalysis, is deeply ingrained in modern educational discourse and practices. Nonetheless, educational studies have rarely considered Freud and his psychoanalysis as a central research topic. Pedagogists have argued that psychoanalysis has only had a partial impact on education. This underestimation may be regarded as *resistance* to psychoanalysis in education. Education that holds a romantic view of children—for example, that they are born good—is an idea that is incompatible with Freud's theory of infantile sexuality. Moreover, we may argue that Freud's philosophy radically differs from Japan's postwar education, which sought to envision a peaceful future by reflecting on the war with regret. In contrast, Freud espoused the pessimistic idea that war cannot be eradicated because it is ingrained in human nature. These conflicting views are founded on opposing perceptions regarding childhood, such that while education looks at the future of children, psychoanalysis looks back at the cause of pathology in early childhood. As such, there have been few meeting points between these two positions. Considering the above, we would like to re-examine the relationship between psychoanalysis and education and attempt to argue that Freudian thought has a place within educational theory, as well as in this symposium.

The reporters were as follows: Prof. Deborah P. Britzman (FRSC/York University), a leading researcher in theoretical and practical research on psychoanalysis and education; Prof. Minako Nishi (Kyoto University), a psychoanalyst who is also known for her study on the history of psychoanalysis in Japan; and Prof. Akira Geshi (Nihon University), the organizer of this symposium. They were joined by Prof. Tadashi Nishihira (Kyoto University), a designated debater.

### 3. Summary of the Symposium

We had a profound discussion because the comments, questions, and replies among the four debaters, the queries from the general members, and the reporters' replies were all conducted in writing. Please refer to *the Collection of Presentation Manuscripts* for the summary of each report. Here, we would like to summarize the discussion (the sections inside quotation marks were quoted from "Collection of Questions, Comments, and Replies").

#### (1) Comments and questions for the Britzman Report and their corresponding replies

Prof. Nishihira first focused on the connotation of "otherness," as suggested by Prof. Britzman. It is something "mysterious, uncanny, and unknowable"; "we cannot control it, but [it is] definitively essential in the current situation." Prof. Nishihira supported Prof. Britzman's theme that teachers should stand with the students while acknowledging their own and the students' otherness, and that such an acknowledgement encourages mutual growth. While supporting this idea, Prof. Nishihira also asked whether this theme could be connected with the trust in otherness and whether the Eastern philosophy involving the affirmative and constructive role of non-articulation could be explored. Prof. Nishi asked about the connection between learning and otherness, perceived as something dynamic that "may not always exist, but may be transient." She likewise inquired about the relationship between otherness and libido. Prof. Geshi asked how the "pain of education for otherness" could be tolerated and how it could be conveyed. The general members asked: 1) whether there is transference specific to education that differs from psychoanalytic treatment (Mr. Yuho Goto), and 2) Prof. Britzman's opinion on teachers attempting to escape exhaustion by shutting out their emotions (Prof. Nana Hatano). Other questions were about Prof. Britzman's view on the relationship between the theory of queer pedagogy and psychoanalytic research (Prof. Masato Fukuwaka). They also inquired about her motives for becoming interested in psychoanalysis (Prof. Nana Hatano).

Prof. Britzman provided a comprehensive response to individual questions. The content of the reply covers her own research history, supplementary explanations, and perspectives for considering the relationship between psychoanalysis and education and the redefinition of keywords. The following are the topics that we found interesting and suggestive:

(i) Psychoanalysis suggests the approach of “we feel before we know and learn before we can understand.” Such an approach is different from “we understand and then learn,” which is often found in education. This approach understands the emotional experiences that underlie the relationships with others. It likewise examines “negative capability” as “tolerance to otherness” (i.e., “not knowing” and “uncertainty”). It can also be used as a “means for handling one’s countertransference or urgent feelings to act out and even to destroy contact with an actual other.” (ii) Prof. Britzman stated that “the link between psychoanalysis and education is both fragile and hopeful.” While psychoanalytic knowledge echoes fate and is not easily received, it demonstrates the importance of the teacher’s attention to their own and students’ past mental lives. Through an understanding of the bodies and eros, it teaches that “the right to have a mind of one’s own and to freely associate to people and memories can take on importance.” (iii) Emotional situations in learning can be considered at two levels. The first is the level at which teachers recognize the difference between reality and ideals and respond to unknown situations. The second level is the creation of resources and vocabularies for us to pay attention to our mental lives. For example, what Prof. Nishihira called “non-articulation” and Koichi Togashi formulated as “the psychoanalytic zero” can also be regarded as an expression of the dynamics to know, despite the existence of translation and communication gaps and other uncertainties. (iv) “Anxieties are a significant experience in education.” A violent child’s game of teacher may be “reaction formations or defenses against both anxiety and the otherness of learning.” Furthermore, one of the factors that student teachers blame themselves for not becoming an “ideal” teacher may lie in the harsh model of classroom teaching that leaves them with the choice to either “sink or swim.” (v) The reply concludes as follows: “I don’t see otherness so much as a self-possession, or as something to teach others. I think of otherness as a situation with others that has the quality of a nonrelation (...).”

## **(2) Comments and questions for the Nishi Report and their corresponding replies**

The general members asked questions around three topics: 1) the Freudian understanding of human beings (Prof. Keiko Nakano), 2) the fact behind “educational attitudes” that many analysts try to avoid (Mr. Yuho Goto), and 3) whether transference takes place through intervening factors such as letters and IT equipment (Prof. Nana Hatano). According to Prof. Nishi, the point of Freud’s understanding of human beings is that “he had made it clear that human beings do not know much about themselves.” Moreover, the “educational attitudes” that analysts warn people about refer to the

superiority of those who know over those who do not know. This state of affairs leads to idealizing the analyst and, conversely, strengthening their patients' intellectualization by providing them with too much advice. Concerning the last question, Prof. Nishi answered that she continues to ask herself the following questions amid the COVID-19 pandemic: "will transference occur" and "what has been lost" in the context of clinical practices where people wear masks?.

Prof. Nishihira's comment developed from a situation "that cannot be helped" (i.e., otherness) in which Heisaku Kosawa and Seishi Shimoda had found themselves. According to Britzman Report, even though teachers do not want a sense of otherness to emerge between them and their students, they have no choice but to manage it and somehow survive in that situation. On the other hand, analysts attempt to "facilitate clients' otherness unknowingly" and "experience it together, scrutinize it, and try to survive." As to this difference between psychoanalysis and education, Prof. Nishi argued that while much of the transference between teachers and students is slowly diffused and eliminated, psychoanalysis (especially Kleinian psychoanalysis) creates and facilitates the transference to turn the situation into one where they can discuss it. She described this as a storm in which we work, and we have to throw ourselves into the storm even if we want to escape from it.

Prof. Geshi asked two questions. The first asks why Japanese psychoanalysis emphasizes mother-child relationships. The second asks about the validity of educational consultations conducted through the media (e.g., television and magazine). Regarding the former, Prof. Nishi explained that she could attribute the emphasis of Japanese psychoanalysis on mother-child relationships to the development of the object relations theory in Japan's postwar psychoanalysis and the reflection of men's Oedipal complex. Regarding the latter, she replied that, while educational consultation involves providing professional advice, psychoanalysis is a special type of communication that goes far beyond the help that the client in need could imagine.

Prof. Britzman recognized the relationship between the "demonic fate of human nature and education" in Nishi Report. When an analyst says, "Let's get started," the phrase sounds heartless to the patient: "There is something that cannot be started because it already happened. It's as if the analyst's words threw the patient back into childhood (...)." With this in mind, Prof. Britzman asked two questions based on the clinical practice of psychoanalysis, where a situation will "repeat what cannot be remembered." The first question is: "What kind of education and what kind of resistances are we calling on?" The second question is: "In discussing the disparities between advice and life, (...) how may we understand the urgency of affect carried out as in conflict with our

theoretical claims?” In response to the first question, Prof. Nishi answered that understanding the “educational attitudes” of analysts is an aspect of education and requires reconsideration. Replying to the second question, she said that “a storm of urgent affections may always be brewing behind our calm world.” As such, it may be “the overwhelming power of the unconscious that cannot be helped by advice.”

### **(3) Comments and questions for the Geshi Report and their corresponding replies**

The questions from general members concerned both the criteria for measuring the positive and negative aspects of “retroactive education” (Prof. Hiroaki Sekine), and the view of education that promotes “retroactive learning” (Prof. Hiroaki Sekine and Mr. Yuho Goto). Prof. Geshi answered these questions by organizing his replies into three statements. First, what constitutes an experience that can lead to retroactive learning more easily?— It is something beyond our understanding when we experience it, and it settles like sediment at the bottom of one’s unconscious mind. Second, what kind of secondary experience activates initial experience?— It requires similarities with the initial experience, but it is difficult to standardize. Third, what criteria can be used to evaluate self-transformation?— Generally, there are two criteria; the person himself/herself and the community to which the person belongs. However, these two factors do not always agree. Moreover, individuals belong to multiple communities, and therefore, there are multiple criteria. In addition to these factors above, the criteria are constructed afterwards and may change.

Prof. Nishihira recognized the logic of eschatology in *Nachträglichkeit*. This logic denotes that the meaning of every event in (life) history will be revealed at the end. In response to Freud, the Britzman and Nishi Reports emphasized the retroactive act of “touching the darkness and digging up the shadowy part” to aid in human development. Further, Geshi Report considered the retroactive act to suggest a kind of education that “cannot be predicted in advance and can only be confirmed after reflecting on later.” However, Prof. Nishihira indicated that such a perception may lead to relativism, skepticism, nihilism, and populism: “There are ‘no foundations,’ ‘no guarantees’ in education. In spite of having shared that reality, how much ‘courage to educate’ can we have? While feeling confused about asking such a question to myself, I cannot help but think about what is being asked today.” On the other hand, Prof. Geshi admitted that it is a “gamble” whether “retroactive education” will happen. Moreover, he argued that we need to be vigilant toward “barbarism,” which has lost the perspective of uncertainty: “It must be the sensibility that perceives education as something incomprehensible that

enables teachers to broaden their horizons when they stumble in educational practice and support children and people who cannot get used to education.”

Prof. Britzman asked two questions. First, “how can we narrate the significance of uncertainty in learning?” Second, “how can those who direct education accommodate a psychological reality in their theories of transmission and reception and thus go beyond the stasis of education as screen memory?” Prof. Geshi replied by redefining the ambiguous meaning of “retroactive education.” He said that it would enable the learning that accompanies a philosophical sensibility. This would create educational systems that differed from the present one, which would not be constrained by the desire for “immediate effects.” Second, it would overcome a view of education that tends to arrive at topics, such as “the content to be communicated” and “better technology.” Lastly, he argued that to have the understanding that “education is accompanied with ‘uncertainty’ could well prepare him/her to effectively address something that is difficult to understand during his/her future educational practice.”

Prof. Nishi said that “every event associated with the trauma we experience has the potential to create a meaning.” She suggested the possibility of “education to create *Nachträglichkeit*,” which prompts the “symbolization of trauma.” Prof. Nishi argued that “psychoanalysis can learn a lot from education” in regard to “thinking,” which is indispensable for this symbolization. While affirming her argument, Prof. Geshi acknowledged the need to overcome endless enlightenment and the threat of “Es” with “our own intelligence and the courage to step away from dependence on specialists such as teachers and analysts.” At the same time, he suggested the need to explore “a way to co-exist with others while keeping a certain amount of dependency on them.”

#### **4. Issues and Prospects**

As discussed previously, “otherness” was the keyword in this symposium. In the philosophy of education, otherness has been discussed in a wide variety of contexts, such as “inner others,” “children as others,” and “transcendence.” However, the issues of otherness in this symposium ranged from the emotions between the educator and the educated to cultural events that are difficult to understand with the individual’s inner storm of emotions as a starting point.

Psychoanalysis focuses on the emotional storm that suddenly blows up from individual unconsciousness. Furthermore, psychoanalysis has theorized otherness and has dealt with it clinically. Prof. Nishi argues that within psychoanalysis, education can

be found both as a cause of the storm and an opportunity to reveal the storm. Prof. Britzman argued that for education, psychoanalysis stimulates inquiries into the nature of storms and ways to deal with them. They are storms within a child, within a teacher, and those that suddenly blow violently in a place when they face each other. As we can see in the exchange between Prof. Nishi and Prof. Nishihira, while psychoanalysts throw themselves into the storms of their patients, the best that a teacher can do is manage their own and their students' storms. If we look away from the storms, we will allow the violence that exists everywhere in society and schools to continue. One of the roles of education is to pay attention to one's own storm and that of others, to give appropriate expressions to them, and to seek ways to relieve them.

Prof. Britzman's discussion on "otherness" and Prof. Geshi's discussion on *Nachträglichkeit* included various cultural phenomena and cultural heritages, such as the global political youth movement, precarious situations involving violence and inequality, and the contemporary significance of classics. These discussions could be considered as educational variations of Freud's criticism of culture. Historical catastrophes, such as genocides, disasters, and pandemics can be added to these cultural phenomena. Education that could cause a catastrophe must survive without escaping otherness and *Nachträglichkeit*. If that is the case, how does education carry the weight of surviving a catastrophe, facing the emotional storms of the dead, and supporting those who have experienced the catastrophe and those who later speak about it? I think that educational philosophy is required to show uncompromised hope in the form of constant questioning without assisting the hasty symbolization or the oblivion of the storm, while staying in its difficulties and uncertainty. It seems to us that the "*Nachträglichkeit* of educational philosophy" was suggested in this year's symposium, which was held amid the coronavirus pandemic, and in last year's symposium entitled "*Inheritance of HIROSHIMA Memory and Emerging Reconciliation.*"