

Summary Report on the Symposium “Emotion, Democracy and Philosophy of Education”

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1. About the theme

On January 6, 2021, a shocking incident occurred in the United States of America when the U.S. Capitol, a place of democratic decision-making, was destroyed by angry people who claimed that the results of the presidential election were invalid. According to a 2019 report published by the V-Dem Institute in Sweden, for the first time in 18 years, the number of non-democracies exceeds the number of democracies, indicating a clear trend of democratic decline. Considering these, it is apparent that emotions are often a major factor in politics today, and democracy is said to have failed in the face of the rise of populism and authoritarianism. Under these circumstances, reexamining the position and function of the irrational - emotion - in democracy is considered one of the important issues of today, which includes the philosophy of education. Based on this idea, “Emotion, Democracy, and Philosophy of Education” was chosen as the theme of the symposium at the 64th annual meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan.

Since the Enlightenment, pedagogy has been exclusively concerned with the development of the rational subject. Nevertheless, there is a rich lineage of thought that focuses on the significance of the irrational, including emotions. In this symposium, Mr. Natsuki Shirokane (Kwansei Gakuin University), a researcher of Adorno, Ms. Reiko Muroi (Iwate University), a researcher of Rousseau, and Ms. Mai Takahashi (Japan Women's University), who is studying the possibility of education for coexistence based on her research in Okinawa, served as symposiasts.

Mr. Shirokane proposed the concept of education that avoids evil and heteronomy

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as a means of resisting authoritarianism, the enemy of democracy. Based on the arguments of M. Foucault and A. Ferguson, Ms. Muroi pointed out that modern civil society has the character of an emotional community, and that Rousseau, in order to criticize this, advocated a political community based on a social contract and the control of emotions through pity (“pitié”). Criticizing the fascism inherent in democracy, Ms. Takahashi reported how the ideals of coexistence, such as *Nuchidutakara* (life is a treasure) and *Chimugurisa* (my heart suffers), were developed in Okinawa.

The annual meeting in 2021 was held online, same as in the previous meeting. The three symposiasts posted their reports both in video and in manuscripts on the meeting website in advance, followed by a discussion using an online meeting tool on the day of the meeting.

2. Discussion in the symposium

The discussion began with an exchange of views among the three symposiasts. First, Ms. Muroi asked Mr. Shirokane about the implications and limitations of resistance without setting goals, and Ms. Takahashi about the actual situation of fostering and passing on the *Nuchidutakara* philosophy. Mr. Shirokane, referring to Rosa Parks, who is called the mother of the American civil rights movement, answered that the significance of resistance of Adorno lies in the fact that it criticizes barbarism by focusing on the difference between goals and results. Ms. Takahashi stated that today, the *Nuchidutakara* philosophy is being learned throughout the prefecture through peace education in schools. She also stated that this philosophy could easily turn into praise for homogeneity, and that the concept of *Han* (resentment) has the potential to overcome this difficulty.

Mr. Shirokane then asked Ms. Muroi about the understanding of collective catharsis in Rousseau, and Ms. Takahashi about the possibility of mutual understanding among heterogeneous individuals or groups. Ms. Muroi responded as follows: Rousseau's task is to criticize the emotional community of fallen reality, and festivals that evoke collective catharsis do not appear in “*Émile*”. The Clarin community depicted in “*La Nouvelle Héloïse*” has a different character from civil society as an emotional community. Referring to Okinawan thinkers and activists such as Mr. Minoru Kinjo and Mr. Shoichi Chibana, Ms. Takahashi said that questioning oneself may be an alternative condition for sharing the suffering of others.

Ms. Takahashi asked Mr. Shirokane about the possibility of communication with

authoritarian people, and Ms. Muroi about the possibility of collaboration through pity. Mr. Shirokane said that the approach of analyzing patterns of authoritarian discourse and critically enlightening people may be effective to some extent. Ms. Muroi responded that Rousseau was thinking of emotional education to control desires through pity.

Following the exchange among the symposiasts, the discussion took place between the symposiasts and online participants. First, moderator Keita Furuya pointed out the deceptiveness of the concept of "authentic learning" used in contemporary educational policies, and then asked the presenters if, based on Rousseau or Herder, authenticity is an important concept in ensuring the fulfillment of the inside of one's mind. In response to this question, Ms. Muroi pointed out that in his autobiographical writings, Rousseau revealed his own feelings of authenticity, and stated that it may be possible to read it as a theory of self-formation in solitude as resistance to a corrupt society. Mr. Shirokane suggested that a utopian way of being that transcends both identity and non-identity could be considered as something close to authenticity. Ms. Takahashi said that it is important to question the imaginary character of the modern nation-state from the perspective of authenticity.

Mr. Sho Yamanaka (Hiroshima Bunka Gakuen University) then asked whether it is difficult to dismiss the function of emotion, as seen in populism, which seeks what one can identify oneself with. In response, Mr. Shirokane stated that, on the one hand, this is true, but on the other hand, a reflective approach to questioning political thoughts and discourses is effective to some extent. Regarding that, Ms. Takahashi expressed the view that, paradoxically, it is precisely because, in general, we are mutually heterogeneous that solidarity is possible.

Mr. Kanji Uechi (University of the Ryukyus) also asked whether we can consider the key to breaking the democratic deadlock to be found in virtue and emotion rather than in intellect. In response to this question, Ms. Takahashi responded as follows. Okinawa is pursuing a higher level of democracy through its struggle with the mainland. However, the way of pursuing democratic thoughts and ideas varies from culture to culture. In *Émile's* case, the refinement of his ideas led him to elite inequality. Further study is needed on the meaning of democratic thoughts and ideas. Mr. Shirokane stated that he believes education that avoids evil, which may be similar to human rights education or peace education, is more important than education that targets desirable virtues. Ms. Muroi said that, based on Rousseau, it is dangerous to look for clues to break through political blockages in pity, and that she would like to clarify the meaning of Rousseau's last move toward autobiographical writings.

3. Summary

This symposium has highlighted the complex relationship between emotion and democracy. Emotions are often destructive to democracy, but at other times they are the driving force in the struggle for recognition and can reinvigorate democracy. Emotions of suffering and sharing them are conditions for the possibility of coexistence that overcomes identification and division. As for the image of human beings, it could be said that the one who can reflect and reorganize themselves through encounters with others of a different nature, including emotions, is more worthy of exploration.

We look forward to continued discussions on this topic in the future. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the three symposiasts for their thought-provoking presentations, as well as to all the participants who took part in the symposium.