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Education with Love and Empathy: The Last Lecture of Kazuo Itoga

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Translation of the original paper [Japanese language]:

Ai to kyōkan no kyōiku: saigo no kōgi 愛と共感の教育：最期の講義（1969）

Author: Kazuo Itoga 糸賀 一雄

This paper summarizes the audio-taped lecture of Kazuo Itoga entitled “Human Relationships in Institutions” that took place on September 17, 1968 in Otsu city at an induction lecture for new staff of Shiga Prefecture’s Children’s Welfare Organization. Mr. Itoga spoke for 20 minutes beyond the scheduled time and then collapsed as he was nearing the end of his two-hour lecture. He later temporarily regained consciousness, but his life - characterized by profound love and faith - came to an end at 2:15 p.m. the following day.

As it is said that a person’s dying words come from the heart, Itoga’s lecture represents the crystallization of his 23 years of service in education for children with intellectual disabilities and his lifetime of 54 years of dedicated thought and service. Mr. Itoga spoke of human truths and “educational love” [*kyōiku ai*]¹ that transcended the topic of his lecture that day.

Mr. Itoga made an audio-recording of the lecture, but the beginning and the few minutes before he collapsed were not recorded due to a malfunction of the recording device. These missing sections were later added using notes taken on that day by Ms. Asako Uno, an instructor at Ohmi Gakuen, and Ms. Michiko Kuse, a child-care worker at the same facility. Although the text includes some minor corrections and modifications made by the editor, nearly all of what follows is taken verbatim from the audio-recording.

Children Are the Protagonists of Education

“Whether education takes place in schools or welfare facilities, it occurs in the context of relationships between human beings. And by having good relationships between children and caregivers or teachers, children grow in positive directions. How are such relationships achieved? This is the theme of today’s lecture. As I will speak from my own modest experience, I hope that you will find something of use in my talk.” With words to this effect, Principal Itoga of Biwako Gakuen began his lecture, starting with the example of nursery schools.

In general, the basic premise of nursery schools [*hoikuen/ oikusho*] is that they serve children who need childcare as in the case of children whose mothers are working. Yet there is a contradiction between expectations that nursery schools provide childcare while kindergartens [*yochien*] provide early childhood education.² When we look at the basic mission of childcare - for example when we say that there are deficiencies in childcare or when we say that we must do something to rectify an unsatisfactory environment for the child - we can see that what we really mean by “childcare” is education.

¹ “Educational love”, or *kyōiku ai* in Japanese, is a phrase that Itoga uses to describe the deep love that an educator feels toward his/her students.

² In Japan at that time preschools or nursery schools (*hoikuen/hoikusho*) were administered by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (today the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare) while kindergartens (*yochien*) were administered by the Ministry of Education (today the Ministry of Education Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) resulting in commonly held views that preschools aim to provide child care services while kindergartens aim to provide early childhood education. Itoga challenges this assumption in his lecture.

For this reason, basically there should be no difference between the aims of nursery schools and the aims of kindergartens. Kindergartens are said to provide education while the same is not said of nursery schools; but for children the experience of attending such institutions is the same. In both nursery schools and kindergartens, it is our duty to observe how children develop and to consider what kind of education they should rightfully receive. Both nursery schools and kindergartens must serve children in this way. In my view, this is a tremendously important point.

Let's consider children who are said to be "lacking" in some way. This phrase refers to children who are lacking in childcare and nursing. "Lacking" suggests that compensation of some kind is required. What needs to be compensated? It is their "healthy development as human beings" that is obstructed and requires fortification.

Of course children must develop in a healthy way. This principle forms the basis of children's rights yet children are often placed in environments and circumstances in which this right is not protected. In other words, we need to ask how this right can be protected. This issue is shared by both nursery schools and welfare facilities for the disabled [*shūyō shisetsu*].

The title of the handout asks as follows: "What are the contemporary features of welfare facilities for the disabled?" but what if we read this line as, "What are the contemporary features of nursery schools?" Let's read a little from the beginning of the handout:

"Children are sent to welfare facilities for the disabled for various reasons. And various types of facilities accommodate children. As is well known, the Child Welfare Act recognizes thirteen different kinds of facilities. Each facility has specialized features, but essentially the system is based on the principle that treatment and institutionalization occur according to the nature of the disability" [Editor's note: Itoga read aloud from the handout]

We provide treatment according to the nature of the disability. However, this principle is often compromised by the diversity of children's disabilities. Children's disabilities are complicated and diverse. In many cases, children have not only one disability, but a combination of two or three.

Nursery schools and children's homes [*yūgo shisetsu*] serve those children who have encountered environmental obstacles. Institutions for orthopedically impaired children serve those correspondingly disabled. Institutions for the blind serve the blind, and schools for the deaf serve the deaf. Children with mental disorders would be sent to a facility for mentally impaired children or a protection center [*kyōgoin*]³ and each institution in its own way deals with disabilities related to children's psychological development.

In this way, even though they receive specialized treatment at these facilities, if children have multiple disabilities (we use the word "*chōfuku*" when there are two disabilities and "*fukugō*" when there are three disabilities or more), facilities that specialize in handling only one disability cannot accept them. So new facilities with new roles and standards had to appear.

This has been our experience as well - our facilities for mentally disabled children initially only served mentally disturbed children [*seishin shōga*], but over time we needed to serve children with severe mental handicaps. This has happened to us recently. In response, we have had to add a new building to accommodate these children.

Labeling and Isolation Policies

Speaking of this classification system, it is extremely dangerous if we reach flawed conclusions about a certain type of institution considered to be an isolation facility [*kakuri kikan*].

One type of children's welfare institution, protection centers, serves children with mental disturbances. Tankai Gakuen in Shiga Prefecture is an example of such an institution. Today it is commonly understood that it is not the case that children placed there have done something wrong and have been sent there for punishment. Today even prisons do not exist solely to punish. While punishment is one aspect, prisons also provide opportunities for inmates to deeply think and reflect on their actions. In other words, prisons are educational institutions. This must be particularly true for institutions that accommodate children. We are talking about children who are still in the process of growth and development. So while children are subjects to be educated, they are also protagonists of education - this is one approach.

³ *Kyōgoin* are now called "*jidō jitsū shien shisetsu*".

Protection centers are educational institutions, and the emphasis of that education should not be on reading, writing and arithmetic but rather it should aim to fully develop and enrich the child's personality. In other words, the emphasis should be on shaping personality. Thus the aim of education is not merely the transmission of knowledge, but rather emotional training. The aim of education at a children's home should be to help children fully develop their emotional life. Teaching/treatment [*shido*] must be developed to realize this aim.

However, there is a problem here. That is, children at such institutions are labeled as juvenile delinquents or pre-juvenile delinquents. But the reality is that children's emotional disabilities are treated in these institutions. People tend to forget that community homes are institutions that provide treatment. They tend to assume that they are isolation facilities.

The same is true of children's homes. The children served in these institutions were living in inappropriate environments. They may have experienced mistreatment by their stepmothers, for example. In Shiga Prefecture, Shonan Gakuen, Kōka Gakuen, and Moriyama Gakuen are such institutions. Children here were living in problematic family or community situations. Some of these children are diagnosed with emotional disorders. Nationwide there are very few short-term treatment institutions for children with emotional disorders; there are only five or six such places in total. There are no such institutions in Shiga prefecture. Aoba Ryō in Kyoto is one of a handful of such specialized facilities found in our country.

By the way, children suffering from emotional disorders may easily fall into delinquency or crime. It seems that delinquent behavior among children may be caused by emotional disorders. The question of how emotional disorders are formed in children has recently emerged as a specialized research subject, and is developing into a significant research area.

Certainly we should never remove a child from a home and admit them to a facility simply because they did something wrong or may do something wrong in the future. Therefore, a protection center may contain a unit that treats emotional disorders. Furthermore, it is natural that these three facilities - community homes, units that treat emotional disorders, and children's homes that accept children with various

environmental disadvantages - are structurally very similar. This similarity arises from their shared educational content.

As I said earlier, it is extremely simplistic to think that attaching labels to children without understanding the child and then sorting children into labeled facilities can ever be an appropriate response. This kind of thinking reflects an overly rigid attachment to standardization and formalities. By attaching a label such as "this child lacks love" to a child, we create a child who lacks love. We create isolation by sending such a child to an isolation facility.

Adopting this kind of highly superficial, dry, and unemotional approach that makes no attempt to deeply understand the child's situation will cause adults to suffer emotional disorders before the children.

The Teacher Should First Have a Big Heart

Such problematic approaches described above are often seen in bureaucracies. Today we have government officials in the audience so I would like to ask them to kindly bear with me. What is bureaucratization [*kanryō-shugi*]? Bureaucratization actually causes emotional disturbance. It is a condition in which one's perspective becomes hardened; when one is able to think only in terms of categories, and the ability for rich, flexible, deep and profound vision is lost.

Education in schools is no different. When teachers become bureaucratic, their perspective of children hardens. They begin to think that education consists only of reading, writing and arithmetic. They assume that only those who can read, write and calculate are upstanding and educated. In that case, a child with an emotional disturbance or intellectual disability becomes someone with zero human value.

Indeed, there are many adults in this world who think that mentally retarded children have no value - it is not only bureaucrats who hold this view. It occurs even in the educational community and in families. The reality of Japanese society for mentally retarded children is the miserable condition that even parents of children with intellectual disabilities are not able to recognize the value of their child.

Under these circumstances, it is extremely important for us to be freed from such a stubborn perspective. It is very important that we make this effort. This inner confrontation with ourselves must be a central endeavor in our profession. A staff member

who is not struggling internally over this issue is professionally useless and may as well be replaced by a witless doll.

We are human. We should be guided by the true structure of education: that is, education that is built on relationships between human beings and in turn creates human beings. As we teachers venture more deeply into the struggle with ourselves, we create opportunities to make great advances, to find worthy work, and to make our lives meaningful. I think that we need to realize that through this process we discover what makes our lives worth living.

This is the true meaning of education: it is an enduring truth of education in a welfare facility for the disabled and in any place where education occurs. The question of how to strengthen human relationships in the true name of education is the central theme of today's lecture.

Rehabilitation and Emotional Stability

Recently [Translator's note: in 1967] a new kind of institution for children with severe mental and physical disabilities⁴ was added to the 13 categories prescribed in the Child Welfare Act. In this connection, I was recently called to participate in a consultation organized by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. As a result of this process, a place such as Biwako Gakuen [Translator's note: established in 1963] in Shiga prefecture was classified as a center for children with severe mental and physical disabilities. The policy stipulates that a child who both has severe mental retardation and severe physical disability is categorized as a severely handicapped child. Note that they are not saying that the category of "children with severe physical and mental disabilities" describes such children. Rather, they are saying that people who enter institutions are thus labeled.

Many people are overlooked when decisions are made in this way. A child with a mild physical disability but with severe mental retardation and combined with a psychological illness would be excluded from Biwako Gakuen. Where are they supposed to go? A child may be neither blind nor deaf, have a light physical disability, a psychological disorder, and mental retardation. Even if they have a serious intellectual disability, these people cannot enter Biwako Gakuen according to the government's categorizing. However, they would be eligible to

enter Ohmi Gakuen. In terms of educational content, clearly it is necessary to maintain communication between institutions particularly in regard to treatment of psychology and medicine. Therefore if Ohmi Gakuen takes on the severe cases not served at Biwako Gakuen, the treatment problems for Ohmi Gakuen would become even more serious.

Although this system has been established for treating severe cases, it overlooks many people in various situations. I mention this because history tells us that inevitably particular target groups emerge in response to the development of particular treatments.

I will read from the handout:

The problem of autistic children needing child psychiatric treatment in the context of institutional care has become a subject of discussion in the field of child welfare. One cannot help noticing a basic theme that characterizes these discussions. That is, welfare institutions for children are no longer discussed as primarily protective and accommodative facilities. Rather they are linked to the contemporary topic of providing new forms of rehabilitation [療育 *ryōiku*].

Please understand. We can no longer say: "We have kept your child, and now we are passing your child back to you." The issue today is how we have spent the time with the child. The situation today can never be as simple as it was in the past.

We recognize that an individual may have multiple disabilities. If we label the disabilities found throughout the population we have a list that includes autism, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, epilepsy, cerebral pediatric paralysis and so on.

As a child's personality develops, all of us experienced in preschool education have observed "postnatal character formation". In other words, even more important than one's inborn character is the secondary character that develops in response to the shock of encountering various obstacles in society. For example, the problem may not only be that a child has low intelligence; rather low intelligence hinders character formation.

The main problem for children is emotional stability and feelings of dejection. The proper function of a family is to provide children with a stable environment. If the family is not stable, the child's emotions become unstable leading to emotional impoverishment.

⁴ This category of institution was considered new because it served as both a children's welfare facility and a medical institution.

If this element of a family is not functioning, child nurturance suffers. Children's homes have developed to address this problem. Children's homes take over when there is no other option. When children enter such facilities, their feelings of terror and anxiety increase exponentially. There can be nothing more frightening and miserable for a child. If a welfare facility cannot provide children with a stable emotional environment, then it is better for mentally retarded children to remain with their families. This may sound harsh, but a child's emotions must be stabilized. I must emphasize that welfare facilities for the disabled have problems even before they start administering treatment.

Emotional stability and security in life are the foundations upon which treatment succeeds. We must not put the cart before the horse. In other words, there is nothing more idiotic than the belief that emotional stability may be destroyed for the sake of rehabilitation. Although this may seem obvious, it is a point that needs to be fully grasped. I ask that everyone please fully consider and understand this issue.

Twenty two years have passed since I founded Ohmi Gakuen [Translator's note: in 1946] and in this time I have had many experiences. My talk so far has summarized these experiences.

The next issue to be addressed is how to improve the content of treatment/training (*ryōiku*) and what techniques should be employed. In taking children into our care, it is extremely important that we prepare an environment that promotes emotional tranquility. Regarding the institutional environment, we have the physical environment and the human environment. In the physical environment, I would encourage maintaining a beautiful garden with flowering plants. The human environment refers to the child's relations with teachers, relationships between children and relationships between teachers. The issue of how to create relationships and what constitutes our responsibilities in terms of relationships is the theme of today's lecture as expressed in the title, "Human Relationships in Institutions." All success in education rests on the basis of human relations.

Children Who Cannot Express their Desires

A small child would not be able to tell us what kind of family he/she wants. As staff members we are adults, and can freely express what kind of working conditions we desire. This is natural for us as workers. We even have a union that works to

this end. But shall we be able to hear from the mouths of children of one, two, or three years of age a description of the conditions in which they desire to be raised?

Democratic principles hold that we have a right to representation. In a democratic process, the representative or spokesperson, after discussions with those being represented, strives to bring desired results. Most of the time this process brings about the best results for the most people.

However there are people in this world who cannot find representation. Children are such people; they have no way to express themselves. People with intellectual impairments are the same. It is difficult for people with mental impairments whose psychological development stopped at two or three years of mental age to express themselves even when they reach the age of 20 or 30. Who will speak for these people?

In various facilities, who is truly speaking on behalf of the interests of the service user? Although we who are working at these institutions may strongly insist on our own interests, who represents the interests of the users? We who are working must not forget that users have no voice. This cannot be forgotten. It is our duty to insure that the interests of both parties are fairly represented.

The teacher should not be sacrificed to protect the happiness of the child. But neither should the child be sacrificed to one-sidedly protect the interests of the teacher. Obtaining the greatest happiness between teachers and students requires forbearance on both sides; it is a task that is truly painful and not always satisfying. However I believe that we must humbly wish for this outcome and expect that good results will emerge from our struggles.

There will be no true happiness for children until this goal is realized. In a family, children hope that their mother and father will have a good relationship, and they suffer when they grow up in families with parents who are always arguing and disagreeable toward one another. Children thrive when the family is warm-hearted and understanding, and parents trust one another. Children who from the time they are infants grow up in such environments, knowing nothing else, turn out well. If discord and distrust dominate the home, as the child grows, this negative influence increases. This is almost too obvious to mention.

Therefore in institutions that fulfill the function of a child's home, relationships among teachers must be good. Teachers should not fight and they should definitely not fight in the presence of a child. They should instead sort out their differences among themselves. Sometimes teachers may need to argue, and arguing over issues may be acceptable, but speaking ill of this or that teacher in front of a child - that kind of thing is unacceptable. It destroys the child's environment. It is important that adults get along with each other. This is the basis upon which rehabilitation occurs.

We have arrived at the issue of rehabilitation [*ryōiku*]. The term refers to treatment and education. The German word *heilpädagogik* has been around for a long time, and refers to the integration of treatment and education. It would be insufficient here to superficially explain the meaning of rehabilitation. Rather, it is imperative that we clearly explain the progress we have made in developing our methods; methods that emerged as we addressed various environmental obstacles and treated children's physical and psychological disabilities. Indeed we are frequently asked to explain the content of our curriculum and our educational plans for our various children's facilities.

On Being Born as Persons and Becoming Human

When thinking about the nature of human relationships from the perspective of providing a practical explanation of our rehabilitation methods, my view is that we are "born as persons and become human" [*hito to umarete ningen to naru*]. What I mean is that we are born as individuals and eventually become human beings.

Allow me to relate what may seem to be an irrelevant tale. It begins with the Zen teacher Hakuin Ekaku.⁵ I relate this story here because it has a profound relationship to my idea that we are born as persons and become human.

The great Zen monk Hakuin Ekaku wrote a book called *A Chat on a Boat in the Evening* [夜船閑話 *Yasen Kanna* in Japanese]. I believe that I am alive today because of that book.

Today I will only relate the conclusion of the story. It goes like this: When Hakuin was about as young as all of you are here today, he suffered greatly. He had become a monk but was

highly distraught. The source of young Hakuin's agony was that Buddhist scripture tells us that human beings are born with Buddha nature and the mind of Buddha. Even so, human beings must practice hard and train until the day they die, and only then may they enter Nirvana. This seems absurd. Why must we struggle in a life-long effort if we are born with Buddha nature? If we are born with Buddha nature, we should not have to endure this lifetime of struggle. This contradiction seemed extraordinary. Consumed by doubt, Hakuin knocked on the doors of many masters but none could provide a satisfactory answer. As he obsessively thought about this question, Hakuin fell ill, sweating profusely from under his armpits. He became feverish, his eyes ached, his head throbbed, and he suffered a nervous breakdown. He reached a point near death. After experiencing such suffering he suddenly realized that "because human beings naturally possess Buddha nature, they are entering Nirvana." He describes this experience in the book, *A Chat on a Boat in the Evening* which refers to a quiet talk on a boat in the evening. The Chinese characters are read as "kanna" not "kanwa" in the title "Yasen Kanna" [in Japanese].

As a young man, I reported to a military regiment in Tottori prefecture after receiving my draft notice [Translator's note: Itoga uses the word *akagami* or the draft card used by the imperial Japanese army]. Soon after arriving, I became ill and entered the army hospital. I developed a lingering fever that would not lift.

At that time, I remembered *A Chat on a Boat in the Evening* and asked that the book be sent to me from my home. I savored reading it while lying in my sick bed.

Hakuin emerged from his suffering by practicing the Zen meditation technique of *sūshokukan* which refers to counting one's breaths, inhaling and exhaling, while sitting upright in the Zen meditation posture [*zazen*]. Thinking that I would emulate Hakuin I decided to practice this meditation but my fever returned and I could not sit up. I determined that I would have to practice *zazen* while lying in bed. Ah, I should say "nezen" [Translator's note: "za" in *zazen* means to sit. Itoga replaced "za" with "ne" creating a new word for practicing meditation while lying down]. I thought, well it's not sitting-up meditation, it is lying-down meditation, and with that I settled myself quietly into the bed and arranged my breathing using the counting technique. Soon my fever dissipated and I felt greatly

⁵ Hakuin Ekaku (1886-1769) also known as Hakuin Zenji was a highly influential Zen monk credited with reviving the Rinzai school of Buddhism.

invigorated. I thought myself fortunate to have encountered *A Chat on a Boat in the Evening*.

Although I have this meager experience, and perhaps there is nothing extraordinary in the idea that we are born as individuals and become human, I think that it is basically the same as saying that because we are born with Buddha nature we attain Nirvana.

However to say that we are born as persons and become human means that we are born possessing a social existence but we have to tackle the problem of this social existence. This is the role of education.

We are born as persons and become human. The word “human being” [Translator’s note: 人間 *ningen* in Japanese] is written with the Chinese characters meaning “between people.” It does not refer to one person alone. It refers to having a social existence. Human relationships form the basis of our humanity which means that relationships are the reason for our existence. So having a social existence attests that we are becoming human beings. To live means that we live as social beings.

The World of Empathy

It goes without saying that relationships between persons brings us to the world of empathy. In this world there is no room for the egoism of the self, or the thinking that it is fine as long as I alone exist.

This is very easy to understand if we take the example of a mentally retarded child. It is said that three percent of all children born into this world are mentally retarded. It means that about three out of one hundred persons or one in thirty people are mentally retarded. Various terms are used to describe these people such as “mentally weak” [*seishin hakujaku*], “intellectually lagging” [*chie okure*] and mentally behind [*seishin chita*]. Recently people use the English word, “mentally retarded,” to describe those with intellectual disabilities or delayed intellectual development. The word “mentally weak” [*seishin hakujaku*] is no longer used.

In fact, everyone has a disability. We are all disabled when we are born. When you were born, you could not speak Japanese. You can all imagine what it is like when we were newborns. If you have a photograph of yourself you can take a look. When

seeing yourself as a baby your response would be, “Excuse me, is that me?” I have recently become a grandfather and I went to see my grandchild. He was really red! It makes you think, what is cute about this child? Gradually the baby becomes endearing but at first the child looks seriously mentally and physically disabled. The baby cannot see, cannot hear, and cannot even turn itself over in its sleep. It just cries, “Boo! Hoo!” Babies are seriously disabled.

Babies cannot physically grasp with their hands what their will commands. They don’t even have the idea that they should like to grasp at something. They are just thrown out there, thrown out into the world. Their existence is explained by the existential philosophy, *dasein*.⁶ They are merely there. Even their consciousness is not developed. Their disability level is the severest level of severe. They cannot hear, see or talk. Their body and their limbs have no freedom. Their entire body is disabled.

From that point their minds gradually develop and their relationships with others grow. Through these relationships, they become human beings. Their bodies become stronger and their limbs are trained.

Those who encounter obstacles in the process of development are called mentally retarded or mentally and physically disabled. Yet all of us throughout our lives repeatedly encounter obstacles and again and again we must overcome them to move forward. We have arrived where we are in our lives by repeatedly overcoming obstacles. Obstacles are always placed before us.

In this respect, we are basically the same as those people with mental retardation or with mental and physical disabilities. I am interested to know more about the world of empathy that emerges from the fact that disabled and nondisabled people share the same origins. We can see these shared origins when considering human growth from the developmental perspective. Rationally as well we can see that shared origins form the basis of the world of empathy.

Growth of Love

The ability to truly empathize requires time. It takes years for human affection based on interaction with others to rise to the level of educational love. Although it may take many years, human love gradually emerges. And eventually real love in our

⁶ *Dasein* refers to human existence and comes from the philosophy of Germany philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

hearts - for humanity and for ourselves - develops. Of course, this kind of love cannot be achieved all at once. Yet working toward obtaining this kind of love makes us human: it is a path that we would definitely like to take. Also, as we must move forward, it is the only path for us. As we are born with such love, it is a path of love that we must take.

I have been talking about the nurturance of love and rising to the level of educational love. Let me talk about rationality now. With or without rationality, true love develops in our hearts. It may take many years. Because the road and target are clear, and because it may take many years, we truly want to grow love in our hearts without any rush or hurry.

Love is something that grows. It grows because it originally occurs within us. Love is not something that can be purchased with money. Love is not something that sticks to you without your knowledge. However, for true love to grow, feelings of love that exist in the complex feelings of “love and hate” must grow first.

Recently the movie *The Children before the Dawn*⁷ was filmed at Biwako Gakuen. It was first screened at the National Education Center [*kokuritsu kyōiku kaikan*] in Toranomon in Tokyo on 4 May 1968. As the Crown Prince had indicated an interest in this some time ago, I invited him to the screening and he came with Princess Michiko. The Lord Steward to the Imperial Prince, Mr. Suzuki, came together with the royal couple. After greeting the Crown Prince and Princess, I asked Mr. Suzuki what he thought about the film. He said that he found it frightening and creepy in the beginning. However in the course of watching for two hours, the children who appear in the movie with names such as Nabe-chan, Mitsui-kun, and Shimo-chan began to grow on him. “The children became adorable after watching for a while” he said. I replied to him, “Mr. Suzuki, of all the responses that I have heard, your response just now is the most welcomed.” I explained, “In the field of education, Mr. Suzuki, we do not bluster about child welfare or fundamental human rights. Rather, individual children, one by one, become adorable to us. That is the nature of our field.” “That seems reasonable,” Mr. Suzuki replied.

To Put Down Roots

⁷ *Children Before the Dawn* (*yoru ake mae no kodomotachi*) (1968) is a documentary by Hisao Yanagisawa.

Some time after that, the Crown Prince and Princess said that they would like to invite me to tea if I happen to be in Tokyo. This may be an unnecessary story but anyway, they called me again and said that I do not need to give a lecture or prepare a script [laughs]; they said that it would be a comfortable and relaxed visit. Well, I thought I can't very well go to a café if I'm there [laughs].

So I set out on the day as promised. The two were waiting for me, and we had tea for about an hour as planned, and then we extended into the second hour. We eventually spoke for two and a half hours: I arrived at three o'clock and left at five thirty. During the two-and-a-half hours of nonstop conversation, second cups of tea were served as we engaged in lively communication.

At that gathering we talked about the movie but we ended up mostly talking about how we raise children and how to think about our children. These are the most important issues. Let's think about these questions apart from your position as a staff member or a childminder.

Although a few men are here today, most of you are women and you will probably become mothers in future. Now you care for someone else's child, but in the future you will raise your own. Regardless of whether the child is one's own or another's, how should we approach the raising of that child? This was one topic of conversation I had with the Crown Prince and Princess. This topic is inexhaustible. Everyone is deeply interested in education especially when they raise their own child. One topic of conversation went something like this:

There is a type of mother called an “education mother.” I will not say that being an education mother is wrong because she is avid about education. But I want to think about why this phrase has a negative meaning. One of the reasons is that such a mother is not trying to encourage other children to perform well. Rather, she is set on seeing her own child perform better than others. As such, we feel that these mothers are enthusiastic about education but nonetheless are unpleasant. It is because their minds are tied up in concern only for their own child.

They are only concerned about improving their child's school grades and that their child's grades be higher than others. It gets crazier when it comes to intelligence testing. Some mothers even make their child memorize the questions to intelligence tests to raise their child's IQ results. Such action does not

improve the intelligence of their child since the improved score is based on memorization - so why do they do such idiotic things? They are disproportionately concerned with “intelligence.” This concern is a kind of superstition. I suppose that this is why they are called “education mothers.”

When we talked about this topic, I told them this story: “A long time ago in China there lived a foolish farmer. He set out for his fields every day and came back home every night saying that he was extremely exhausted. Wondering why he came home so tired every day, one day his family member followed him to the fields. He found that the foolish farmer was pulling out rice seedlings every day. [laughs] So the part of the field where he foolishly toiled - where the roots had been lifted out of the ground - the rice seedlings eventually withered away and died.”

When I told this story to the Crown Prince and Princess, the Crown Prince immediately said “Oh, it is a story from the book of *Mencius*, isn’t it?” *Mencius* refers to the Mencius text from the ancient Chinese text, *Analects of Confucius*, and is part of the study material for the imperial family. It is said that Emperors are supposed to thoroughly study *Mencius*. This is a great book that reveals many truths to government officials who study it well.

The Crown Prince recognized that the story I told is written in the book of *Mencius*. I thought that probably the deceased Mr. Shinzo Koizumi made sure that the Crown Prince thoroughly studied *Mencius*.

I replied to him that yes, it is from *Mencius*. In raising a child it is important that we not make their intellectual development the sole issue. As I have said at the start and will repeat once again, what is truly important is to “put down roots.” Roots must be firmly placed in the soil. A child’s roots cannot be floating above the soil. To raise a child into an outstanding human being, you need to develop the emotions not the intelligence. In the development of human beings it is extremely important that the roots are firmly embedded in the great earth. The idiot farmer from the story is teaching us that we must treasure the richness that we obtain when we root ourselves firmly in the earth.

Education mothers push their child’s roots down. In a sense they avoid developmental delay. A man who I highly respect and

whose passing I deeply mourn is Mr. Motomori Kimura⁸ who worked at a university in Kyoto [Translator’s note: Kyoto Imperial University]. I have known him since I worked as a substitute teacher immediately after graduating from university. The two of us would go for a drink together and over drinks we talked about many things.

At that time - it was around 1938 - the military put pressure on the Ministry of Education to send their best students into the world as soon as possible in a form of “early education.” They asked schools to practice a kind of “advanced cultivation” education. For example, from the fifth grade of elementary school, one could go directly to junior high school. From the fourth grade of junior high school, one could go directly to high school, so the best students rapidly advanced through the system. The idea was to pass students through the system ever more quickly.

Mr. Kimura was working at a university during this time, and researchers were also being told to complete research ever more quickly. Mr. Kimura said, “Hey, Itoga,” - we were drinking - “the government is doing something stupid.” He became exceedingly angry. He resented that the government thought that education could be conducted as advanced cultivation. He wanted to say that education cannot be conducted as such. At that time the military wielded great power and demanded that each university work hard to conduct education through this method. So Mr. Kimura said to me: “Itoga, true education means making detours.” “True education means making detours” - this is an important insight.

In the old high school system, I failed to obtain entry on my first try and failed again the next year as well. It took me five years to graduate when it should have taken three; I was a large taxpayer (laughs). Well, I finished university and came out into society but there were no jobs and I did not know what to do. At that time few people studied subjects such as religious philosophy. At Kyoto University I graduated at the top of my class. It sounds great when you hear it, but actually there were only two people in my class (laughs). We fought over first and second place (laughs). I never held third place [laughs]. It seems like a joke but that was the situation then.

⁸ Motomori Kimura (1895-1946) was a well-known philosopher and educationalist who was educated and later taught at Kyoto Imperial University (now Kyoto University).

I had another buddy from that time; I hear that he is a university teacher now. He came to university without inheritance so every day he pulled around a two-wheeled cart [*daihachiguruma*] piled high with radishes in the Hyakumanben district near our university. He was on foot, mind you. When I asked “Where are you going?” he would say, “I’m off to the Kitashirakawa side now.” He worked part-time pushing a radish cart to earn money while studying at the university. That was the kind of time it was.

Well, I asked for job placement because I had no work even though I had finished university. I heard that I could get a job for 60 yen as a substitute teacher. So I became a substitute teacher at Dai-ni Kinugasa Elementary school in Kyoto and that job turned my life around.

While I was teaching those “snot-nosed boys” - actually they were girls -, I received the draft card and was sent to join a heavy artillery unit in Tottori Prefecture. I could not lift up a gun above my knees, much less a heavy machine gun [laughs]. That was the highest I could lift [laughs]. I was in great trouble.

At that time, my family’s registration documents were located in Tottori Prefecture, so my former classmates from junior high school joined the unit as soldiers. They could run quickly and lightly [laughs] because they had been working as farmers while in my case my gun was banging around on my knees [laughs]. Finally, as I mentioned before, I ended up getting sick and was hospitalized in the military hospital. That’s my story.

I received the military draft notice twice. The second time was easy. I immediately failed the inspection. They said: “Turn right!” I turned right and then was told with a slap on the back, “Go home!” [laughs] That’s why I am alive today. All those who passed inspection that time are dead. They all died on the front lines. Not a single one is alive today. In other words, I survived because I am weak. Today I have heart disease which makes me light headed and the dizziness makes me weak. Because I am weak and thanks to being chronically ill, I am alive today. Well, it’s my personal experience.

It is already four o’clock. I’m sorry to keep you all this long.

Educational Love

My story aside, “educational love” [*kyōiku ai*] is not some kind of wonderful love that we can instantly access. Rather, as I mentioned earlier, it emerges from years of interpersonal

contact. In the beginning it is extremely unpleasant, especially when one is caring for a child with a disability.

Mr. Masaki writes about a teacher who went to teach at a school in a remote area. The correspondence between this young teacher, Mr. Soma, who was headed to a remote area of Sendai, and his professor, Mr. Masaki⁹ - a wonderful educational scholar who has passed away - was published as a book. The wonderful questions and reports of Mr. Soma matched by the opinions and responses of Mr. Masaki reads like the embodiment of educational love. I highly recommend that you all read it.

To summarize, Mr. Soma is teaching in a small village school where the villagers and their parents have little concern for the children. Mr. Soma is angry. He is angry at the parents. For a trifling monthly salary he and his wife, both young, are living in the remotest of small mountain villages. His wife complains incessantly about the low salary. But his students have not a single textbook so without his wife’s knowledge, he has taken money from his own salary to buy textbooks in town. He has snatched away the living expenses held by his wife. Because the children are miserable, he is angry with the villagers and angry with their parents; absolutely furious from the feeling that the children are pitiful. He has secretly taken money from his wife. Speaking to the villagers is like talking to the deaf. That is his situation.

While struggling with these difficulties, he gradually begins to think that the children are cute. Going so far as to hide his feelings from his wife, he cares for the children because he thinks they are incredibly lovely. This is what Mr. Soma frankly expresses in his letters.

Mr. Soma writes that as an educator, he is not burning with educational love. He writes that his real feeling is that he hates to see the children left behind and abandoned. He starts out with this kind of feeling.

Those are very human feelings, reflecting the very nature of humanity. Anyone would feel that way. When we see someone being oppressed, anyone would think, “You bastard! How can

⁹ Masashi Masaki (1905-1959) was an influential educational psychologist who published extensively in his field. A graduate of Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University), he taught at Tohoku University and Kyoto University.

you treat them so cruelly!” The starting point is anger but Mr. Soma wrote about a process of gradually developing a pure, high form of educational love in his heart.

The teachers exchanged letters. Mr. Soma occasionally included detailed descriptions of his experiences. Mr. Masaki read this and responded with his opinions. This was the nature of their correspondence.

We can see a process of growth that emerges from the growth of the educator as a human being who searches for the true meaning of education. This process started with feelings of sympathy and ended up with the attainment of a high level of educational love.

However, love does not emerge suddenly. This is because deep in our hearts we possess the capacity for true love. Why is this? It is because we all know unconditional love. It is not love with calculations attached. We are actually experiencing love although this love also contains feelings such as hate and anger. But we already have this real love within ourselves.

Although there are various kinds of parents, parental love is unconditional love. There are good-for-nothing parents but these are the exceptions. To say that a few good-for-nothing parents represent all parents is unfair. However parents' feelings change when their children reach adolescence; young children may become abominable sons and daughters. But before that, when children are very young, parents raise them with unconditional love. There is such a prototype; it is one that we all possess.

Seven Gifts without Possessions

The Greeks have explained love in a religious sense but I will stop talking about this theme, “What is love?” The deeper we delve into the issue of love, the more I want to know how deep love goes and whether love is something that can be purified.

We know that we can reach a high level of love and that love runs through the foundations of education. I think it would be wonderful if as a result of today's talk you come away with a memory that you have heard somewhere that within human relationships -- relationships that are usually based on buying and selling through the medium of material objects or relationships that are usually entered into only with the confidence of having money in one's pocket -- there is such a thing called “the seven gifts without possessions” [無財の七施 *muzai no nanase*].

Shall I explain the meaning of “seven gifts without possessions?” Well then let me write it. The phrase “seven gifts” [*nanase*] and the word for gift [*hodokoshi*] come from Buddhism. It means that even an impoverished person, someone who lacks possessions, can give in seven different ways. It means that human beings are not intended to only receive. There is an old proverb that says “take anything freely given” [*natsu mo kosode*] [Translator's note: in Japanese “*natsu mo kosode*” - literally “winter clothes even in the summer” - means that if something is given away, people desire it even when they have no need for it]. Today in terms of giving, people “stick out their tongue” [Translator's note: “*shita o dasu*” in Japanese suggests that one “gives their tongue” but it means to talk behind someone's back] and that's not nice either. There are certainly a lot of people like that today. But there are great things that we can give even if we have no property in this world. That is the meaning of “seven gifts without possessions.” The first is “*gen-se*” (gift of the eyes). The second is “*wagan-etsujiki-se*” (gift of a smile).

(Editor's note: The tape ends with the sound of the microphone rattling.)

1. *gen-se*(眼施: gift of the eyes)
2. *wagan-etsujiki-se*(和顔悦色施: gift of a smile)
3. *genji-se*(言辞施: gift of speech)
4. *shin-se*(身施: gift of the body)
5. *shin-se*(心施: gift of the heart)
6. *shōza-se*(床座施: gift of a place to sit)
7. *bōsha-se*(房舎施: gift of accommodation)

Mr. Itoga carefully listed the “seven gifts” on the blackboard and then explained them one by one. Mysteriously, however, when he started writing on the blackboard, the tape ended - shortly before his life would end. Relying on the notes that I had taken at that time and my faltering memory, I have recorded the words of Mr. Itoga as follows:

First, *gen-se* “Means to meet people with a friendly gaze.”

Second, *wagan-etsujiki-se*: “This means that one's expression is a radiant smile. It is much nicer to meet people who have a smile on their face than someone who looks angry.” Then he gave a beaming smile.

Third, *genji-se*: “This refers to beautiful language. An angry voice is unpleasant. When we talk with children we should speak in a gentle voice.”

Fourth, *shin-se*: “This refers to the gift of labor. Work is something that anyone with a healthy body can do.”

Fifth, *shin-se*: “A heart of gratitude. It means “thank you.” Wherever you go in the world, people will understand the words, “Thank you very much [Translator’s note: Itoga said this in English]” I remember that he gestured grandly when he said this.

Sixth, *shōza-se*: “You can give someone your seat. Anyone can give their seat to an elderly person when riding in a vehicle.”

Seventh, *bōsha-se*: “This refers to offering a night’s lodging and a meal. Even if you only have a cup of rice, you can give half, and you can also provide lodging.” Everyone present seemed impressed when he said this.

After finishing his discussion of “seven gifts without possessions,” Itoga was concerned that he had run over the allotted time. “Finally,” he said, “about the difference between the phrase, ‘having these children be the light of the world’ and ‘providing these children with the light of the world’ it is not that these children are provided light but they are the light.”

After that I became unable to hear his voice. Still, his mouth was moving as if talking and his right hand was raised high. As it had been a long lecture I thought for a moment that he had lost his voice. Then with great effort he kept speaking with slurred articulation and in a weak tone.

Watching from our seats, we anxiously wondered what to do. I suddenly thought, “We need to call a doctor!” and came rushing forward. Almost at the same time, the organizer, Mr. Norimitsu, and others also ran up to the podium. Propping up his shoulders, we had our Principal sit on a hard chair off to the side, and as he was trying to speak, we all listened.

After a while, Mr. Itoga asked “Did something happen?” as if another incident had occurred. When a teacher of Ohmi Gakuen told him, “You collapsed during the lecture,” he said in slurred speech, “All I need is a drink of liquor.” Given this strange response, I wondered for a moment whether he was lucid. Then he said, “Or you can give me an injection called...”

As soon as his consciousness was restored, he kept repeating, “There is only a little bit left. There is only a little bit left so let me finish. I’m OK now. I’m OK. Let these children be the light of the world...”

His voice was already powerfully filled with spirit. I guess he wanted to talk about the important meaning of the phrase, “Let these children be the light of the world [この子らを世の光に *kono kora wo yo no hikari ni*].” According to the position of the particles [in Japanese] “wo” and “ni” in the sentence, one interpretation of the sentence may be “let’s provide these children with light” [この子らに世の光を *kono kora ni yo no hikari wo*].” However, I think that Mr. Itoga wanted to say that in fact these children are the light of the world: these children are full of vitality and have wonderful personalities that make those of us around them and the rest of the world realize the vitality of our own lives. I believe that what Mr. Itoga wanted to urge most strongly when he said “Finally...” was that those children are the light of the world and we must exert great effort to have them be the light of the world.

Soon a doctor came. Principal Itoga was taken to a separate room and seemed to have completely regained conscious after receiving an injection. His wife and all the teachers of the school had arrived by then. Evening was already upon us and we left believing that he was fine.

Although for two hours we were all extremely worried, as he seemed to have recovered, we had no idea that this would be the final farewell.

For us newly appointed staff members, this was our first and last lecture from Principal Itoga. I only had four or five opportunities to talk to him and these talks were brief. The Principal was too busy. He dedicated too much time to others and too little to himself, and more than anything else, he dedicated himself to the children. As I thought about his thin frame that I supported that day, I remember feeling deeply regretful about the heavy burdens that fell on his shoulders and highly resentful against something or someone. [Translator’s note: The writer is resentful of the society that pushed Itoga to his death.]

[Additional information was provided by Asako Uno and Michiko Kuse, staff of Ohmi Gakuen]