

# *Seito Shidō* (Guidance) as a Space for Philosophy in Translation<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *This article attempts to set up the Japanese concept of “seito shidō” (literally student guidance) as a space for philosophical reflection both inside and outside Japanese contexts. It begins with an overview of the history of student guidance in the United States of America and in Japan. In the former, the idea of “student guidance” began as a pastoral concept, transformed into practical guidance, and then into psychological guidance. This idea of psychological guidance entered Japan after the war, particularly through Alfred E. Traxler’s Techniques of Guidance (1945). However, this concept transformed in interacting with traditional Japanese ideas on “life guidance” (seikatsu shidō). The result of this translational interaction was seito shidō, which became a key concept of Japanese educational discourse, with official handbooks published by the Ministry of Education of Japan. The definition and aims of seito shidō are discussed on the basis of this “canonical” form. In the second half of this article, seito shidō is analyzed philosophically, translating from policy and praxis to theory. From the point of view of Nel Noddings’ caring education, seito shidō has the potential to bridge the gap between teaching and counseling, subsuming both under shidō as caring. Furthermore, seito shidō can play a crucial role in moral education as caring education. From the point of view of Gert Biesta’s postmodern approach to education, we see the value of the tension between individuality and community that is clearly expressed in the official handbooks on seito shidō. But there are severe limitations to the official view of “individuality” that beg further consideration.*

## **Introduction**

In this article, I would like to demonstrate that the Japanese concept of *seito shidō* (literally “student guidance”) can be a fruitful space for the global task of philosophizing on education. *Seito shidō* encompasses a broad range of phenomena:

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how to teach students academic subjects in a way that goes beyond developing merely academic competencies, how to make space for the bond between students, how to deal with a student who is struggling with problems (both academic and inter/intra-personal), how to set up club activities to build character, how to cooperate with parents and other educators to help a student, et cetera. The phrase is at once narrower than “education” and broader than “student guidance”, making it difficult to discuss in English. But at the same time, it is the premier space where the *ethical relationship* between the teacher and the student unfolds.

However, setting up this space is a complex endeavor. *Seito shidō* was born through the meeting of two histories — of guidance in America and *shidō* in Japan. Furthermore, both the English and the Japanese terms are contested — with various interpretations in theory, policy, and praxis. Any philosophy of *seito shidō* must traverse multiple dimensions of translation between languages, cultures, and modes of research.

In this article, in order to lay out the groundwork for this philosophical space, I will briefly sketch the histories of “student guidance” in North America and “*seito shidō*” in Japan, and how these two histories intersected in post-war Japan. I will then describe the basic outlines of *seito shidō* through its “canonical” form — the outlines presented by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Finally, I will philosophically analyze the potential and dangers of this conception of *seito shidō* through the ethics of care of Nel Noddings and the ethics of education of Gert Biesta.

## **Student Guidance and Life Guidance**

The concept of “*seito shidō*” traces back to a translation of the phrase “pupil guidance,” which was imported from the United States. Let us briefly trace the history of this concept and its entry into Japan.

According to the research of John J. Schmidt,<sup>2</sup> prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the word “guidance” in American schools simply referred to the many ways in which teachers engaged holistically with students, beyond mere academic concerns, to deal with social, personal, vocational, and even spiritual life. I refer to this as the

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<sup>2</sup> See John J. Schmidt, “History of School Counseling”, in *Handbook of School Counseling*, eds. Hardin L. K. Coleman and Christine Yeh (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 3–13.

“pastoral” form of guidance, drawing from its kinship to the role of priests and pastors in education.

However, the birth of “student guidance” as a formal concept occurred during the American Industrial Revolution. In response to the human costs of this social upheaval, people like Frank Parsons (1854–1908, the “Father of Guidance”) began to focus on vocational/career guidance, helping young men in a practical way.

During the period of the two world wars, guidance became strongly tied to counseling and psychological testing. This would eventually be exemplified by E. G. Williamson’s “Trait-Factor Approach”, which suggested analysis of students (psychological assessment), diagnosis, and intervention — akin to the psychiatric model. This also began to shift the view of guidance from a function shared by teachers and staff to a distinct “area” focused on by counselors in an auxiliary office, an approach referred to as the “clinical-services model”.<sup>3</sup> To put it simply, the idea of “guidance” shifted from pastoral guidance to practical guidance and then to psychological guidance.

It was an early form of the psychological model that entered Japan in 1947, after Japan’s defeat in World War II. As Japan struggled to remake its educational system into a more democratic form, many progressive American ideas were introduced in Japan, one of which was student guidance. In particular, Alfred E. Traxler’s *Techniques of Guidance* (1945) was the key influence in the early development of Japanese student guidance.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of guidance presented by Traxler gives us an idea of the “pre-translation concept of guidance”.<sup>5</sup> Allow me a lengthy quote from Traxler:

Ideally conceived, guidance enables each individual to understand his abilities and interests, to develop them as well as possible, to relate them to life goals, and finally to reach a state of complete and mature self-guidance as a desirable citizen of a democratic social order. Guidance is thus vitally

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup> Yamamoto Toshirō 山本 敏郎, Fujii Hiroyuki 藤井 啓之, Takahashi Eiji 高橋 英児, Fukuda Atsushi 福田 敦志, *Atarashii jidai no seikatsu shidō* 新しい時代の生活指導 (Tokyo: Aruma, 2014), 49. Traxler was introduced via the lectures at the “Institute for Educational Leadership” (IFEL). For this information, I credit Kume Yūko from Kyūshū University.

<sup>5</sup> However, strictly speaking, there is no one pre-translation concept, as ideas on guidance had trickled into Japan even prior to the war, and new ideas continued to enter even after Traxler’s.

related to every aspect of the school — the curriculum, the methods of instruction, the supervision of instruction, disciplinary procedures, attendance, problems of scheduling, the extracurriculum, the health and physical fitness program, and home and community relations. . . . Although guidance is closely related to all areas of the school, those charged with responsibility for the guidance program . . . are to collect and systematize accurate information about pupils, to provide an individual counseling service, and to carry on a dynamic educational program among their colleagues and among the pupils and their parents that will lead to intelligent use of the information that the guidance department is able to provide.<sup>6</sup>

Traxler saw his view of guidance as combining humanitarianism, religion, mental health, and a response to social change, but with a new emphasis on the need to know students as individuals through psychological testing.<sup>7</sup> His view of guidance was thus primarily psychological, but with residues of pastoral and practical guidance.

This American history of guidance would then be brought into contact with the Japanese history of guidance. According to Yamamoto et al.,<sup>8</sup> “guidance” first became established as a Japanese concept during the Taishō period (1912–1926). In response to the top-down, centralized, and authoritarian character of Japan’s newly formed modern educational system, two movements arose from Japanese teachers: the “life composition method” (*seikatsu tsuzurikata*) and “life training” (*seikatsu kunren*). In the former, teachers made use of one of the few subjects they had free rein on — essay writing — to give students an opportunity to reflect on their actual life situations and express their concerns. They gradually saw that the ability to narrate well was tied to the ability of students to *live* well — thus developing this simple method into a holistic form of student formation.<sup>9</sup> In the latter, teachers tried to develop the ability of students to govern themselves through selection/election of class leaders, meetings, and discussions. Both movements would intermingle to form what is now known as “life guidance” (*seikatsu shidō*).

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur E. Traxler, *Techniques of Guidance: Tests, Records, and Counseling in a Guidance Program* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 3–4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–6.

<sup>8</sup> Yamamoto et al., 28–37.

<sup>9</sup> For more on this movement, see Mary M. Kitagawa and Chisato Kitagawa, “Core Values of Progressive Education: Seikatsu Tsuzurikata and Whole Language”, *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 3.2 (2007).

With the introduction of Traxler, the western history of guidance came to meet the Japanese history of guidance, in an encounter that is politically loaded and contested up to today. First, there was some confusion as to how to translate “guidance” between “student guidance” and “life guidance”. While teachers were already accustomed to the latter term, MEXT’s outline chose to consistently use the former, “*seito shidō*,” supposedly to avoid the ambiguity of the latter.<sup>10</sup> Gerald LeTendre suggests something more political, that the latter term has left-wing undertones and needed to be avoided in official circulars.<sup>11</sup> Up to today, both terms are in use, with “life guidance” appearing in non-official contexts.

This foreshadows the difficult question of the relationship between the two terms. One can follow LeTendre and say that the two terms are referring to the same thing, but with a difference in context. MEXT does not deliberately state the difference between the two terms either. In contrast, adherents of *seikatsu shidō* deliberately distance their terminology from *seito shidō*, stressing the anti-institutionalism of their position in opposition to *seito shidō*.<sup>12</sup> I do not hope to resolve this argument here. But for this article, I will preliminarily refer to both *seito shidō* and *seikatsu shidō* using “*seito shidō*” in a neutral, inclusive sense, with *seikatsu shidō* as one particular movement within *seito shidō*.

The idea of *seikatsu shidō* became the ground on which the English word “guidance” would be received as well as resisted.<sup>13</sup> One of the early works from Tokyo Educational University on *Seikatsu shidō* (1950)<sup>14</sup> critiqued Traxler’s move

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<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), *Seito shidō teiyō* 生徒指導提要 (Tokyo: MEXT, 2010), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald LeTendre, “Shidō: The Concept of Guidance”, in *Teaching and Learning in Japan*, eds. Thomas P. Rohlen and Gerald K. LeTendre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 277.

<sup>12</sup> Yamamoto et al., 60–64. The *seikatsu shidō* movement continues until today, somewhat independently from the mainstream of *seito shidō*. Most of the development occurs via the activities of Zenkoku Seikatsu Shidō Kenkyū Kyōgikai (Japanese Society for Life Guidance Studies, a.k.a. Zenseiken). For an in-depth examination of its activities, see Nishioka Kanae, “Classroom Management in Postwar Japan: The Life Guidance Approach,” in *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues*, eds. Carolyn M. Evertson and Carol S. Weinstein (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1220–1235.

<sup>13</sup> Yamamoto et al. would disagree with this assertion, as they attempt to completely separate the genealogies of *seikatsu shidō* and *seitō shidō*. While I am sympathetic to their critiques, I disagree with this complete bifurcation. See Yamamoto et al., 257-258.

<sup>14</sup> Tokyo Educational University Educational Science Research Laboratory 東京教育大学教育学研究室 (ed.), *Seikatsu shidō* 生活指導 (Tokyo: Kaneko Shobō, 1950). I also received this lead from Kume Yūko.

to outsource guidance to non-teaching personnel, the tendency to focus on the individual and individual guidance, and the tendency to focus on “problematic” students. Eventually, the idea of *seito shidō* would include western ideas like testing and counseling, but compromise with the need for forming group dynamics and understanding the way of life of students. The center of gravity of *seikatsu shidō* transformed guidance, such that psychological guidance was brought back to something closer to the pastoral and practical sense of guidance, with its focus on the holistic view of the child and on the immediate concerns of his/her lifeworld.

### **The Definition and Aims of *Seito Shidō***

In 1965, the *Manual for Student Guidance (Seito shidō no tebiki)* was published by the Ministry of Education. This manual was to be the official guide to student guidance. The outline was republished in 1981. The latest incarnation of this manual is the *Outline of Student Guidance (Seitō shidō teiyō, heretofore Outline)* in 2010.<sup>15</sup> These official guides are seen as authoritative, and teachers use them in study groups. The *Outline* defines student guidance as follows:

“Student guidance” refers to all the educational activities that are carried out in order to respect the personality (*jinkaku*) of each student and increase social dispositions and practical abilities, while trying to build individuality (*kosei*). In other words, student guidance aims at the better development of the personality of each and every child, and at the same time aims to make school life more meaningful, interesting, and fulfilling for each child. Student guidance plays an important function in fulfilling the educational aims of the school, and is of great significance alongside academic guidance (*gakushū shidō*).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For more on the history of this concept, see Ueno Kazuhisa 上野 和久, “*Seito shidō no tebiki* (1981) to *Seito shidō teiyō* (2010) no hikaku kenkyū: ‘Seito shidō no igi’ ni okeru kijutsu hōhō imi naiyō no hikaku o tōshite 『生徒指導の手引』 (1981年) と 『生徒指導提要』 (2010年) の比較研究—「生徒指導の意義」における記述方法・意味内容の比較を通して—”, *Wakayama Daigaku Kyōikugakubu Kyōiku Jissen Sōgō Sentā Kiyō* 和歌山大学教育学部教育実践総合センター紀要, 21 (2011).

<sup>16</sup> MEXT, 1. All translations are my own.

We see two concept pairs in the above definition: student guidance vs. academic (*gakushū*) guidance, and individuality vs. sociality. Sumida and Okazaki<sup>17</sup> suggest a schematic approach: Schools can be seen as a means of transmitting culture. Culture, in turn, can be divided into intellectual culture and normative culture. Academic guidance focuses on the former, and student guidance focus on the latter. However, transmitting normative culture necessarily entails two contrasting elements: the development of the individual, and socialization. These two tensional elements are brought together through “self-guidance”:

Student guidance aims at supporting the sound growth of each student [in activities] both within and outside the curriculum, cultivating the ability for self-guidance (*jiko shidō nōryoku*) which allows each student to actualize him/herself in the present and the future...<sup>18</sup>

Self-guidance, a concept already present in Traxler, is interpreted as the yoke that ties individualization and socialization together, and through this, leading to the self-actualization of the student.

Another point of continuity with Traxler is the placement of student guidance within the spectrum of educational activities:

Even in educational activities carried out within the subjects of curriculum (different subjects, moral education, integrated learning time, special activities), the educational function of student guidance is present alongside the academic guidance of content. / . . . Furthermore, this is not restricted merely within the educational curriculum, but also functions in individual guidance carried out during breaks or after school, remedial guidance for students having problems with school work, and educational consultation (that occurs on an on-demand basis).<sup>19</sup>

Student guidance is carried out when teaching regular academic subjects and moral education classes (the domain of regular teachers), integrated learning time (led by the class moderator), consultation (both teachers and counselors), and even

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<sup>17</sup> Sumida Masaki 住田 正樹, Okazaki Tomonori 岡崎 友典, *Jidō seito shidō no riron to jissen* 児童・生徒指導の理論と実践 (Tokyo: Hōsō Daigaku Kyōiku Shinkō Kai, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> MEXT, 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5.

during break time (any staff in school). In other words, guidance is carried out by *everyone* involved in education and is part of *every domain* in education, from the curricular to the extra-curricular.

LeTendre offers a moving, ethnographic account of how student guidance is carried out in Japan.<sup>20</sup> Nishioka also describes several important methodologies used by the lifestyle guidance movement, such as life composition, building classroom community (*gakkyū shūdan zukuri*), learning groups, and informal networks.<sup>21</sup> But to give an overview of the range and practical importance of this function — particularly its “canonical form” — let me briefly describe the topics that MEXT devotes entire chapters to.

MEXT discusses at length the relationship of student guidance to the rest of the curriculum, from academic subjects to special classes like moral education and integrated study (*sōgōteki gakushū*) (Chapter 2), understanding students through developmental psychology and various means of assessment (Chapter 3), the institutional structure of student guidance in the school as a whole (Chapter 4), educational consultation carried out in homeroom classes and by counselors (Chapter 5), advice on how to deal with problematic situations like misbehavior, juvenile crime, violence, bullying, sexuality, suicide, abuse, school refusal, et cetera (Chapter 6), the laws surrounding guidance (Chapter 7), and the linkages between school, home, local community, and other institutions that are necessary for guidance to go well (Chapter 8).

I think we can see, from the table of contents alone, the curious mix of the western idea of guidance and the Japanese idea of *seikatsu shidō*, combined in a new term, *seito shidō*.

## **Noddings and the Philosophical Value of Guidance**

Above, we have examined guidance from an historical approach. But what does it mean to take this as a space for philosophizing?

Regardless of whether one is in Japan, the United States, or the Philippines, the discourse on *seito shidō* poses essential questions on the nature of education and educative relationships. With the growing number of counselors and advances in the ability to measure various intelligences, aptitudes, and personality traits, coupled

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<sup>20</sup> LeTendre, 275–294.

<sup>21</sup> Nishioka, 1221.



with increasing student diversity and presence of students with psycho-social disabilities, the need to cooperate with staff specialized in psychological counseling and testing is becoming more apparent. At the same time, standards and the tests that accompany them are becoming stricter. With these combined, there seems to be a great temptation to improve efficiency by *dividing* the provinces of academic teaching and student guidance. This temptation is present not only for those influenced by the “clinical-services model” of the United States, but for all nations, not exempting Japan.<sup>22</sup> However, what does this do to the essence of educating itself?<sup>23</sup>

For this, I turn to Nel Noddings’ (1929–) idea of “caring education”. In the closing chapter of her landmark work, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Noddings writes:

The primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring. Parents, police, social workers, teachers, preachers, neighbors, older siblings must all embrace this primary aim.<sup>24</sup>

Secondary aims might differ from kindergarten to graduate school, but the primary aim, in so far as there is a cultivation of persons, is *caring*. This requires that we change the way we see the role of the teacher and the role of the counselor:

Whatever I do in life, whomever I meet, I am first and always one-caring or one cared-for. I do not ‘assume roles’ unless I become an actor. ‘Mother’ is not a role; ‘Teacher’ is not a role. . . . When I became a teacher, I also entered a very special — and more specialized — caring relation. No

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<sup>22</sup> For more on the relationship of *shidō* and counseling in Japan today, see Steven R. Zaffuto, “Integration of Traditional Japanese Educational Guidance with School Counseling: A Collaborative Approach for the Challenges of Program Implementation”, *Asian Journal of Counselling* 12.1/2 (2005): 17–44.

<sup>23</sup> This tendency can be considered as one manifestation of what Jan de Vos calls “psychologisation”, the reduction of a vast range of human phenomena to psychological terminology and frameworks. While *seito shidō* sometimes resists psychologization, it has in other times fallen headlong into it. I leave this point to future research. See Jan de Vos, *Psychologisation in Times of Globalisation* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013), 172.

enterprise or special function I am called upon to serve can relieve me of my responsibilities as one-caring. . . . As teacher, I am, first, one-caring.<sup>25</sup>

Caring for the student as an entire person is not restricted to counselors or homeroom moderators. Teachers are not there to merely deliver information or to train skills. Rather, everyone in a school is there to care. Noddings writes, “Such arrangements would make it possible for us to expect that teachers should act as counselors and advisors in their subject fields and not just as imparters of knowledge”.<sup>26</sup>

Noddings’ view of caring education is supported and concretized by the suggestions made in the *seito shidō* discourses. First, the act of *shidō* is very similar to care. It is not only a transmission of “normative culture” but an engagement with the student in his/her entirety. In *seikatsu shidō* (taken as one approach to *seito shidō*), they use the phrase “*kodomo o marugoto toraeru*” (grasping the student as a whole).<sup>27</sup> This is none other than an *engrossment* with the student’s existence as an individual (as self-actualizing personality) and as a member of various communities (social skills and dispositions). This engagement is aided by various things, ranging from psychological understanding of developmental challenges and disorders, to a Deweyan engagement with the student as he/she is formed and forms his/her “lifestyle”,<sup>28</sup> to a narrative sense of knowing in the autobiographic method. This engrossment is then followed by a motivational shift to act in response to and for the sake of the student — from simple day-to-day guidance to patient explanations of ideas and to individual, group, and family counseling (by or with professional counselors). In other words, *seito shidō* is *caring* par excellence.

Second, *seito shidō* was argued to be a *function* of education inseparable from academic guidance, rather than a distinct area. This was the result of a long debate that began with Miyasaka Tetsufumi (1918–1965), educator and the main proponent of *seikatsu shidō*. He argued that even while teaching academic subjects, a teacher was also engaging in forming a student holistically. But this was criticized by Ogawa Tarō, who argued that academic guidance and life guidance had a fundamentally different aim, and ought to be kept separate.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>27</sup> Takeuchi et al., 15.

<sup>28</sup> Takeuchi et al., 18–21.

<sup>29</sup> For more on this debate, see Ueno, Takeuchi et al., 7–11. Miyasaka’s position is fully argued in Miyasaka Tetsufumi 宮坂 哲文, Sagawa Michio 寒川 道夫, Haruta Masaharu

While, in policy, the debate was eventually settled in favor of seeing *seito shidō* as a *function* always connected to academic guidance rather than a separate *area*, in practice this remains to be settled. The gap between academic and life guidance is particularly pronounced in high schools in Japan, where the focus is on preparing for university examinations. And in universities and graduate schools, few seem to even consider the relevance of this holistic *shidō*. But we can read Noddings as reasserting precisely that — teachers are first one-caring, and whether in kindergarten or in graduate school, we respond to the students as persons in every situation, no matter how academic.

There is another facet of *shidō* that has philosophical merit. Seen from Noddings' philosophy, guidance is none other than an *ethical* response. It is not merely a means toward achieving a particular aim (say academic success). By placing guidance as a central element in all education, MEXT is suggesting that education fundamentally plays an *ethical* role of caring and inculcating care within students.

However, this ethical view of education has important implications for moral education. Noddings writes:

Moral education . . . has for us a dual meaning. It refers to education which is moral in the sense that those planning and conducting education will strive to meet all those involved morally; and it refers to an education that will enhance the ethical ideal of those being educated so that they will continue to meet others morally.<sup>30</sup>

*Seito shidō* is moral education in the first sense. What about in the second sense? For this, Noddings offers an alternative to character education and other forms of moral education. She suggests that moral education is about *learning to care*, naming four elements to this process: Modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Modeling is how students learn to care by seeing people care for them and for others. Dialogue is how students learn to open up to the needs of others, and to share their needs with others. Practice involves opportunities to actually care for

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春田正治編集, *Kyōka shidō to seikatsu shidō* 教科指導と生活指導 (Tokyo: Meiji Tosho Shuppan, 1958).

<sup>30</sup> Noddings, 171.

others. And confirmation means having one's "best self", one's most caring self, awakened in one's interactions with others.<sup>31</sup>

*Seito shidō* is not only moral education in the first sense, but in the second sense as well. Not only is *seito shidō* carried out in tandem with moral education, MEXT itself considers it to be more concrete than moral education classes:

While moral education directly aims at cultivating morality (moral affects, judgment, practical motivation, and attitudes), student guidance most often provides guidance concerning the concrete problems each student encounters in his/her daily life.<sup>32</sup>

In *seito shidō*, students are able to experience being cared for by their teachers. Both student counseling and practices of self-governance stressed in *seikatsu kunren* (life training) become opportunities for dialogue. Group guidance gives students an opportunity to care for each other and have a sense of moral responsibility toward each other. And the very focus on guidance is a confirmation — that the student is educated through care, thrives in care, and is educated to care.<sup>33</sup>

## A Biestan Critique of Guidance

Despite the potential of guidance in reasserting the ethical aspect of education, it raises key questions concerning the relationship of the individual and the group, and consequently, of the citizen and the state. The *Outline* avoids clear pitfalls of taking a one-sided approach to individual and social existence. But how does individuality relate with communality?

Gert Biesta's ethics of education seeks to address this question. In his trilogy (*Beyond Learning*, 2006, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, 2011, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 2014) he suggests a three-part framework of the aims of education: All education must balance competing demands of qualification

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<sup>31</sup> Nel Noddings, *Educating Moral People: A Caring Alternative to Character Education* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2002), 15–21.

<sup>32</sup> MEXT, 27–28.

<sup>33</sup> For more on moral education and *seikatsu shidō*, see Miyasaka Tetsufumi 宮坂 哲文, *Seikatsu shidō to dōtoku kyōiku* 生活指導と道徳教育 (Tokyo: Meiji Tosho Shuppan, 1966).

(academic guidance), socialization, and subjectification.<sup>34</sup> Socialization — the introduction of the student into the various orders of society — is in clear tension with subjectivity. Subjectivity can be defined (at risk of oversimplification) as one’s capacity to begin something new (to be an *initium*) in a world of plurality, and at the same time to take *responsibility* for that.<sup>35</sup> It is important to highlight the tension between subjectification and socialization because this tension is the core of *democracy* — where individuals need to be able to critique the group when it goes awry, but at the same time there needs to be solidarity, wherein individuals go beyond their own private interests and aim for public goods. For Biesta, the minute individuals are merely absorbed into the totality, or the totality fragments into mere private interests, democracy dies.

The tension between individuality and communality is strangely lacking in MEXT’s present publications on moral education.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, the *Outline of seito shidō* highlights this tension: “A classroom in a school is, seen in a particular way, a place of collision between the desires of individual students and the demands of groups and society”.<sup>37</sup>

This collision occurs in various settings. For example, group instruction can teach students to relate with each other well, but it sacrifices individuals with different learning needs. Thus, schools need individual instruction, which responds to these differences better. But individual instruction alone tends to lack socialization.<sup>38</sup>

Another interesting way in which these two facets of human existence clash is in the attitude of the teacher. One oft-repeated virtue in student guidance is the ability to take a clear (or even strict) stance (*kizen toshita taido*), particularly when a student has done something wrong. This has to do with the socialization function, and the need to provide clear norms. But at the same time, student guidance demands that a teacher display empathetic understanding (which hearkens to an older discourse on “counseling mind” in education), which has to do with the recognition of the unique circumstances within an individual’s psyche. When a

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<sup>34</sup> Gert Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 19.

<sup>35</sup> This idea combines Hannah Arendt with post-structural ideas like those of Jean-Luc Nancy, Emmanuel Levinas, and Alphonso Lingis. See Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 141–145.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed critique, see Yoshimitsu Khan, *Japanese Moral Education Past and Present* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> MEXT, 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–16.

teacher is asked to be both strict *and* warmly empathetic, the tension of the dual-structure of individuality and sociality is experienced poignantly.<sup>39</sup>

However, despite this acuity, I think there are deficiencies that remain in the idea of “individuality” in the MEXT *Outline* that get in the way of the democratic ideal. Let us examine the following passages:

The great task set before education is that of cultivating the qualities and abilities that enable pupils and students to seek out, by themselves, the completion of their personalities, and attempt to realize themselves. These are carried out while attempting to harmonize with society and while constantly valuing their own desires.<sup>40</sup>

Why is individuality being equated with desires?

This pattern is repeated in MEXT’s discussion of the virtues of individuality: spontaneity, self-leadership, and autonomy. These virtues are defined as follows. Spontaneity and self-leading is seen as “A stance and attitude of engaging pursuits actively”, or “Acting on the basis of thoughts and judgements that arise within oneself”.<sup>41</sup> Autonomy is explained as “The quality of not merely expressing and acting on one’s desires and impulses, but when necessary, suppressing these and encouraging [oneself] to act in a planned out manner”.<sup>42</sup> In these qualities of spontaneity, self-leadership, and autonomy, we once again see the individual as a source of desires, and at the same time the “reality principle” that rationally controls these desires. The limits of the idea of individuality show particularly in the definition of a third ability of individuality, subjectivity:

There are many cases wherein the contents of [a student’s] actions are pre-determined, where one is prevented from acting on “centerstage”, where one is required to act in accordance with a pre-existing plan. In these cases, one tends to fall into a false dilemma between refusing to act [cooperatively] or to act in a manner that suppresses one’s will and desires. However, there is another option for one to act with subjectivity. There is room for one to give

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<sup>39</sup> Fujii completely dismisses the *Outline* as anti-individualistic. He is particularly critical of the idea of strictness. While there are limitations to the idea of individualism in the *Outline*, I think such a blanket critique is one-sided. See Yamamoto et al., 60–63.

<sup>40</sup> MEXT, 10.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

one's own meanings [to what one is doing], add one's own ingenuity, and in so doing, act not merely as a passive object, but act dynamically as a subject.<sup>43</sup>

Here, we see that while individuality can result in rebellion, the reinterpretation of social demands, or minor adjustments, there seems to be no clear demand for social critique or *moral* disobedience. This individuality is very far from Biesta's idea of "subjectivity".

Nor can one say that "subjectivity" is a western concept: One of the most famous stories in moral education in Japan is "Visas for 6000 Lives", which tells the story of Sugihara Chiune, wartime consular officer in Lithuania, who violated direct orders from the Japanese government in order to save the lives of 6000 Jews. His act was not selfishness. Rather, it was the suppression of selfish desires in order to perform a moral but illegal act. Where is the room for this kind of subjectivity in the idea of the individual? In theory, the idea of "self-actualization" could be brought into play here — but the idea remains vague and unutilized in concrete descriptions of individuality.

Seen from the point of view of Biesta's philosophy, the concept of individuality presented by MEXT is no more than a neo-liberal, aggregative democracy version of the ego. As it is in rational choice theory, this ego has desires and the ability to rationally control these desires to maximize their fulfillment. But it does not have the capacity for any form of altruism, nor the openness needed for deliberative democracy.<sup>44</sup>

The *Outline* itself calls for a connection between educating individual students and democracy (yet again, part of the legacy of Traxler):

The first article of the Fundamental Law of Education states the following in parallel: "the completion of personality" and "the upbringing of citizens

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>44</sup> The view of the individual in *seito shidō* may have a *direct* relationship to neoliberalism. Andrea Gevurtz Arai suggests that Kawai Hayao's strengthening of the role of school counselors in Japan and his view of social problems as having a psychological basis both can be situated in a neoliberal move to push socio-political problems to the private sphere. While this is plausible (and supported by De Vos' "psychologisation" thesis), the direct connection between Kawai Hayao and the *seito shidō* discourses need further investigation. See Andrea Gevurtz Arai, *The Strange Child: Education and the Psychology of Patriotism in Recessionary Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 29–77. Also see Edward Vickers' book review in *Monumenta Nipponica* 72.1 (2017): 146–152.

(*kokumin*), healthy in mind and body, with the abilities necessary to form the state and society into a peaceful and democratic form”. This too presupposes a relationship between human development and social development, wherein it is none other than the personality that is protected and raised by society that can become a citizen that is able to form the future of that society and properly nurture the next generation.<sup>45</sup>

However, as it stands, the only possible relationship between the rational ego (that is concerned merely with fulfilling its desires) and society is one of *compromise*. In contrast, Biesta’s idea of the subject has a radical connection to democracy. The subject is not a self-serving individual. While unique, the uniqueness of the subject only finds meaning in shaping relationships with others, in responsibility. The freedom to be a unique subject requires democracy. But at the same time, deliberative democracy requires free subjects, who will open up and connect to each other with flexibility and a plurality of interests — much like John Dewey’s vision of democracy as a way of life.<sup>46</sup>

This is one major limitation of the Japanese idea of student guidance presented by MEXT. However, as a *discourse*, *seito shidō* has long attempted to address this concern. One of the main criticisms by the *seikatsu shidō* movement of the official take on *seito shidō* is that it lost (or considerably diluted) the focus of the Taishō-era view of guidance on educating “social and practical subjects” (*shakaiteki jissen shutai*).<sup>47</sup> This subject is not merely a member of society, but one that actively *transforms* society, through its engagement with its own life world. Perhaps this subject is much more aligned with Biesta’s deliberative democracy, and is worth stressing in official versions of *seito shidō*.

## Conclusion

The translational encounter between “guidance” and “*seikatsu shidō*” has created a new space — *seito shidō* — where key questions of philosophy of education are being raised: How ought academic instruction and caring be related? In what way is moral education moral? What notions of individuality and totality support

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>46</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916). This point also coincides with Watabe, 77.

<sup>47</sup> See Matsumoto et al., 16.



democracy? As a “space”, *seito shidō* does not provide clear answers to these questions, but rather a scope of actions and certain focal points, around which different philosophies can come into discourse. I hope the dialogues I tackled above sufficiently demonstrate that *seito shidō* is indeed a fruitful place for philosophy around the world.

However, there is much more work that remains. First, there are particular positions and traditions within this discourse, such as the *seikatsu shidō* movement (led by Miyasaka) and the life composition movement, that can provide clear positions that can be philosophically analyzed.

Second, by including counselors and social workers, *seito shidō* opens up the issue of the place of psychology — from counseling to mindfulness to neuroscientific guides to learning — in education. Does psychology lead to better understanding and responding to students as *others*? Or does it lead to psychologization, delegation of moral responsibility, and reducing social problems to mere psychological problems? While the space itself does not answer these questions, it provides a venue where different disciplines can talk with (and not across) each other.

And third, *shidō* is a *space for praxis*. How are ideas like “caring”, “subjectification”, “responding to the other” realized in the actual space of the homeroom class? In essay writing activities? In club activities and group guidance? Might an engagement with these practices not alter the theories themselves?

A translational space is a space for dialogue. I hope others will continue the dialogue of *shidō*, regardless of nationality, academic field, or research language.