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**Special issue on “Amae”**



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# **The Journal of The Japan Psychoanalytic Society vol. 6.**

## **Special issue on “Amae”**

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## Foreword

Takeo Doi is the psychoanalyst who has made the most significant international contribution to the history of Japanese psychoanalysis. He was awarded the Sigourney Prize in 2005 and is almost the only Japanese analyst whose theories have received international recognition.

It has already been over 100 years since his birth and 14 years since his death at the age of 89. His early education and training in the USA, in the heyday of ego-psychology, saw him formulate his theories in solitude. He alone discovered that the bipersonal primitive mentality, which he called *amae*, lies at the heart of all psychic development.

How are his achievements received and considered by the next generation of psychoanalytic thinkers working today, and does his theory have the potential to become part of psychoanalytic dialogue in the next generation? This issue of the JPS journal is very significant in considering these questions.

For me, Takeo Doi was my supervisor in analytical training and the most significant mentor in my life. He showed me first-hand what it means to be a psychoanalyst. It means being too honest, both with himself and with others. What I learnt from him was not to lie to myself, to maintain a constant state of not knowing, to be honest with my constant state of not knowing, and to accept the variability and unpredictability of my way of being.

This honesty and this strong willingness to face the truth have undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of a new idea, the *amae* theory, which goes far beyond the education he received. When we, the next generation, are now exposed to his theory, honest openness to its impact will allow his achievements to survive.

February 2024  
President of the Japan Psychoanalytic Society, Naoki Fujiyama



## Doi's Papers Revisited

# The Concept of *Amae* and Its Psychoanalytic Implications

Takeo Doi

You may wonder why I am introducing a concept which derives from an everyday Japanese word called *amae*. The reason is twofold. First, the concept of *amae* is important as an organizing principle in understanding the emotional life of Japanese people. Second, in spite of its being Japanese in origin it sheds light on and unifies many psychoanalytic concepts that are usually considered separately.

I stumbled, so to speak, on the concept of *amae* in treating Japanese patients psychoanalytically, for I was struck by the fact that their relationship to the therapist is tinged with the same emotional tone which pervades all interpersonal relationships in Japan, the quality that can best be described by a Japanese word *amae*. This is a noun which derives from *amaeru*, an intransitive verb meaning 'to depend and presume upon another's love or bask in another's indulgence'. It has the same root as the word, *amai*, an adjective meaning 'sweet'. Thus *amae* can suggest something sweet and desirable. There exists also a rich vocabulary in the Japanese language centring around the theme of *amae* expressing various phases of its related psychology, a further fact which corroborates the importance of *amae* in the emotional life of the Japanese people. In this respect one can very well say that the concept of *amae* illustrates the characteristics of Japanese people. It has been my belief at the same time that this concept has a universal applicability inasmuch as the patient's transference can be interpreted in terms of *amae*. In other words, the concept of *amae* can lend itself to psychoanalytic formulation and may even complement the existing theories of psychoanalysis. Thus I have written extensively using this concept, both in Japanese and English, and some of my writings might have caught your attention. But so far I have not presented my ideas at an official meeting of the International Psychoanalytical Association and I am very pleased to be given this opportunity to read a paper at this Congress.

In this paper I shall attempt specifically to elucidate the psychoanalytic implications of the concept of *amae*, but before I do so I shall have to describe the usage of the vocabulary of *amae* so that I can acquaint you with the psychology it implies. What is perhaps most important is that it definitely links with the psychology of infancy, because we say about a small child that it is *amaeru*-ing only when it begins to become aware of its surroundings and to seek its mother. Please note that in this instance *amae* describes certain forms of

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behaviour of the child that directly refers to the feelings revealed by that behaviour. *Amae* can be used not only for a child vis-à-vis his mother or any caring person, but also when similar feelings occur in any other interpersonal relationship such as between lovers, friends, husband and wife, teacher and student, employer and employee. Also, please note that one who does *amaeru* on another depends on him or her psychologically since one needs him or her for its fulfilment. However, this does not mean that one who does *amaeru* is necessarily inferior or subordinate in social status to another. In fact it not infrequently happens that one who does *amaeru* is higher in social status, such as the parent depending psychologically on the child or the employer on the employee. However, one who is higher in social status usually either is not aware of his own *amae* on his subordinate or does not wish to admit it openly.

Another important thing about the concept of *amae* is that though it primarily indicates a content state of mind when one's need for love is reciprocated by another's love, it may also refer to that very need for love because one cannot always count on another's love, much as one would wish to do so. Hence it follows that the state of frustration in *amae*, the various phases of which can be described by a number of Japanese words, may also be referred to as *amae* and in fact it often is so called, since obviously *amae* is more keenly felt as a desire in frustration than in fulfilment. It is related to this usage that we can talk of two kinds of *amae*, a primitive one which is sure of a willing recipient and a convoluted one which is not sure if there is such a recipient. The former kind is childlike, innocent and restful: the latter is childish, wilful and demanding to put it simply, good and bad *amae*, so to speak. This distinction is meaningful psychoanalytically and I shall come back to this later.

From what has been said above one may argue that *amae* is a kind of love. This is surely correct. However, what distinguishes *amae* from the ordinary meanings of love is that it presupposes a passive stance toward one's partner, as it invariably involves a dependence on the receptive partner for its fulfilment, though it is quite possible to pursue such a passive stance actively. Things are rather different with love, as one is supposedly on one's own in loving, even though it too needs a willing recipient if it is to get any pleasure out of loving. The difference between love and *amae* can best be seen in the way these two words are used respectively. You can easily say 'I love you' in order to convey your feeling to whoever you happen to love. Actually the expression is often meant to strike the chord in your partner so that he or she will respond in kind. In fact it seems to me that there is a belief in Occidental countries that love should be expressed in word and deed if it is genuine. But in case of *amae*, you cannot say 'I *amaeru* on you' unless you happen to be in a reflective mood to acknowledge your *amae* on the partner. The point is that the genuine feeling of *amae* should be conveyed and appreciated only non-verbally. In case the wish to *amaeru* is to be literally verbalized, it sounds terribly affected and grossly ingratiating. In other words, verbalization spoils the wish to *amaeru* and makes its true satisfaction virtually impossible.

So much about the usage of *amae* in Japanese and its psychology. Now what is most interesting is that the concept of *amae* suggests a continuous spectrum from early infancy to adulthood. In other words, it agrees with object-relations theory and makes it more amenable to introspection precisely because *amae* and its vocabulary refer to inner



experience. For instance, passive object love or primary love as defined by Michael Balint can be equated with *amae* in its pure form and as such his concept becomes something quite tangible. In fact Balint deplores the inadequacy of the word 'love' to catch its essence in nascency, and states as follows: 'All European languages are so poor that they cannot distinguish between the two kinds of object-love, active and passive' (1965, p. 56). It is then remarkable that the Japanese language has this word *amae*, enabling the infantile origin of love to be accessible to consciousness. Incidentally I began to correspond with Balint in 1962 and he confirmed, after reading some of my papers, that his ideas and mine were developing in the same direction. I also had the good fortune to discuss the matter with him personally when I went to London in 1964. I was furthermore delighted that he honoured me later by citing my work in his last book, *The Basic Fault*.

In this connexion I would like to say a few words about the concept of attachment, which was introduced by John Bowlby into psychoanalysis from ethology, since it obviously covers the same area as *amae*. As is known, Bowlby sharply distinguishes attachment from dependence, saying that a child does not become attached to his mother because he has to depend on her. So he prefers attachment to dependence as a term, as the former can be more precise than the latter in describing behaviour. He also mentions the negative value implications of the word dependence as another reason for avoiding it. Even so, it seems to me that he overlooks the fact that attachment involves a dependence of its own, as one necessarily becomes dependent on the object as far as one is attached to it. In this regard *amae* definitely has an advantage over attachment precisely because it implies a psychological dependence in the sense mentioned above and unlike attachment refers to the feeling experienced rather than to behaviour. All in all one can say, paradoxical as it may sound, that the concept of *amae* makes it possible to discuss what is not verbalized in ordinary communication, hence is something that remains totally unnoticed if you are speaking European languages.

Next I would like to explain how the concept of *amae* can be related to narcissism, identification and ambivalence. *Amae* is object-relational from the beginning, therefore it does not quite agree with the concept of primary narcissism. However, it fits in very well with secondary narcissism, in fact it is particularly well-suited to describe whatever state of mind may be called narcissistic. Namely, of the two kinds of *amae*, primitive and convoluted, that I mentioned before, the convoluted *amae*, which is childish, wilful and demanding, is surely narcissistic. As a matter of fact, if you suspect someone of being narcissistic, you may be sure that this person has a problem with *amae*. In the same vein, a new concept of self-object defined by Kohut as 'those archaic objects cathected with narcissistic libido' (1971, p. 3) will be much easier to comprehend in the light of *amae* psychology, since the narcissistic libido is none other than convoluted *amae*. Also, Balint's observation that 'in the final phase of the treatment patients begin to give expression to long-forgotten, infantile, instinctual wishes, and to demand their gratification from their environment' (1965, p. 181) makes perfect sense, because the primitive *amae* will manifest itself only after narcissistic defences are worked through by analysis.

As to identification, it is not equivalent to *amae*, rather one should assume that identification develops when *amae* is not satisfied. However, I think Freud, in a roundabout way, comes to recognition of *amae* when he states that 'identification is the original form

of emotional tie with an object' (1921, p. 107). For it seems to me that here identification is almost equated with *amae*, since *amae* can be said to be a movement to merge with an object emotionally. Freud mentions elsewhere the affectionate current which constitutes a normal attitude in love along with the sensual current that as the older of the two 'it springs from the earliest years of childhood' (1912, p. 180). Curiously, he did not put together these two statements about identification and affectionate current. Perhaps he couldn't do so without the concept of *amae*. Now it should be quite understandable that *amae* and ambivalence are quite closely related, because *amae* is vulnerable as it totally hinges upon another person for its satisfaction. Hence, it can turn to its opposite at a moment's notice, so to speak. In fact one may say that *amae* is ambivalent from the beginning, just as Freud said about identification (1921, p. 105). In this connexion it would not be out of place to discuss projective identification. It is noteworthy that the recipient of such a projection feels disgusted and disgruntled by the 'pressure via the interpersonal interaction', as Ogden describes it (1979, p. 358). I think such a pull or control by the projector will make sense, if it is understood as a form of morbid *amae* on the part of the projector, that is, sweet turned bitter. However, I am not saying that projective identification thus interpreted will be resolved automatically. I should say only that the sensitivity to *amae* will make it easier to detect projective identification when it occurs.

I shall now turn to the question of therapy in terms of *amae*. I think it is safe to assume that whatever conscious motive induces the patient to seek psychoanalytic treatment, the most underlying unconscious motive is that of *amae* or its derivatives. I am not saying that the analyst has to focus on it from the beginning. Nor is it necessary to meet it halfway, that is to say, to respond to it by way of satisfying it. What is important is to keep in mind that it is there, and to wait on it so that it can fully develop in due time in the therapeutic relationship, because I think this is what becomes the kernel of transference. In order to illustrate some of the points I shall use Freud's celebrated case of Dora, 'Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria' (1905). It is certainly fragmentary, as the transference did not develop fully there. Or if there was any indication of it, Freud failed to recognize it. But it was precisely in this case study that Freud emphasized the importance of transference for the first time if only to do so by postmortem, so to speak. In other words, this case serves well the purpose of illustrating the importance of transference, and I would also add, the psychology of *amae* in spite of its not being so called by its name. I shall explain this point below. But let me first present a brief outline of the case.

Dora, an 18-year-old intelligent girl of independent spirit, was taken by her father to Freud for treatment. She was attached to her father, but did not get along with her mother at all, whose only hobby was said to be cleaning the house. Dora's family made the acquaintance of a married couple called K in a resort town to which they moved because of her father's illness. Her father then became unusually close to Frau K and Dora too became fond of this lady, visiting K's home frequently to look after their children. Two years before Dora came to treatment, however, she created quite a commotion by accusing Herr K of making advances to her. He vehemently denied the charge claiming that all this was but the figment of her imagination, as she apparently had read some inflammatory books, according to information from his wife. Since then Dora began to ask her father to sever his relation with Frau K, which he refused, while Dora's condition got worse.

One day her parents found a suicide note on her desk and following this incident she was brought to Freud for treatment.

I think it is clear that Dora was victimized by those adults around her, a fact which Freud did not deny. But in his treatment he focused upon the role she herself had played in her breakdown. Namely, he tried to make her see that she was secretly in love with Herr K, since she did enjoy his company before, so much so that she knowingly overlooked her father's affair with Frau K. In order to bring this point home to her Freud used dream interpretation exclusively, but after three months of intensive work Dora abruptly announced one day her intention to terminate the treatment on that particular day, which she actually did. She returned to Freud, however, fifteen months later, asking for help because of a minor symptom. He learned from her that she had confronted Herr and Frau K in the meantime, forcing an admission from both respectively that Herr K lied to her father about the advances he made to her, that Frau K did have a love affair with her father. Obviously she thus avenged herself upon them. Freud then realized that her abrupt termination of the past treatment had been a kind of revenge in displacement, that she must have returned to him this time because of a guilt feeling over the past termination. He felt, however, that he had nothing to offer her at that point and dismissed her by saying that he would 'forgive her for having deprived [him] of the satisfaction of affording her a far more radical cure for her troubles' (1905, p. 122).

Besides the main points of analysis by Freud which I have sketched above, there is one more, important element in Dora's case. That is her once genuine attachment to Frau K which Freud discusses as follows in a footnote added a few years later after completion of the text: 'The longer the interval of time that separates me from the end of this analysis, the more probable it seems to me that the fault in my technique lay in this omission: I failed to discover in time and to inform the patient that her homosexual love for Frau K was the strongest unconscious current in her mental life' (1905, p. 120). It was not that Freud was not aware at all of Dora's deep affection for Frau K. He definitely was and even mentioned it at some length in the text. What he missed at the beginning was the extent of the significance it had for her, and naturally he could not recognize it in the transference either. In other words, if we follow this line of reasoning, Dora must have terminated the treatment with Freud because she felt her own person was not appreciated by him, just as it was not appreciated by Frau K. Remember in this regard that Frau K had abandoned Dora for the sake of her own love for Dora's father, thus informing her husband of Dora's reading of inflammatory books. Then, if Freud understood her termination of the treatment in the above-mentioned sense, he would not have spurned her request at a later date to resume treatment. It seems to me that his rejection of her request was almost like revenge on his part for having been deprived of the satisfaction of completing her analysis to its logical end. It looks as if he acted like 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. Only if he had known the depth of Dora's disappointment with Frau K, he would have seen how depressed she was and that she was feeling futile in spite of having revenged herself on Herr and Frau K. Furthermore, Freud would not have invited her revenge on himself in the first place in the form of abrupt termination of the treatment. Rather he could have discerned in her disappointment with Frau K the trace of an even deeper dissatisfaction with her own mother.

I think you may have understood by this time that I am equating what Freud meant by the term 'homosexual love' with *amae*. Namely, I suggest that Dora's attachment to Frau K and her subsequent disappointment can be interpreted in terms of *amae*, though the relationship may well have had an aspect that can be called homosexual. Even so I don't believe that such homosexuality was pathogenic in case of Dora. Rather it was convoluted *amae* which developed, if it did, into homosexual love under the circumstances. Interestingly, in one of his later papers Freud expresses a similar view to mine with regard to the case of another young girl who was infatuated with a certain 'society lady' to the great dismay of her father. For Freud states that 'the lady-love was a substitute for her mother' (1920, p. 156). Yet lacking a convenient concept like *amae* and also given his theoretical preference, it was inevitable that he gave more weight to the aspect of homosexuality. Thus in the footnote quoted above he introduces the speculation that Dora had a reason to conceal her 'homosexual' love for Frau K, adding as follows: 'Before I had learnt the importance of the homosexual current of feeling in psychoneurotics, I was often brought to a standstill in the treatment of my cases or found myself in complete perplexity' (1905, p. 120).

In concluding this paper I cannot help adding a few more words about what Freud pointed out in the last section of 'Analysis terminable and interminable', since it also can be related to *amae*. I refer to his statement that there are two themes which give a great trouble in analysis, castration anxiety for men and penis envy for women. He then sums up the two by the term 'repudiation of femininity' (1937, p. 252). Now I should say this repudiation of femininity can be interpreted in terms of *amae*, inasmuch as the nature of femininity here implied is something very much like *amae*, an interpretation which I suspect might appeal to Occidentals. At any rate, the repudiation of femininity amounts, in concrete terms, to the rejection of *amae*. It then follows that there is a strong resistance against acceptance of *amae*, if, as I stated above, *amae* constitutes the underlying unconscious motive in seeking psychoanalytic treatment. Only this resistance would take different forms in men and women, For men *amae* can be dangerous, as it spells submission to others. For women *amae* alone is not enough, as they often feel something is missing. I don't know how this proposition sounds to Western psychoanalysts. Does it sound preposterous, just as Freud's original ideas might have sounded preposterous to his contemporaries? But we are only equally human, are we not? Therefore, if something makes sense to us Japanese, it must make sense to you Occidentals as well. Or somebody might raise an objection that I have overemphasized the universality of the concept of *amae*, that I have tried to explain too much by it. Certainly I have related the concept of *amae* to many psychoanalytic concepts that are usually dealt with separately. But it is not that I have simply equated them all. My point is that if the concept of *amae* can be related in a meaningful way to other psychoanalytic concepts usually not related to one another, that fact could only suggest that it can unify them into a more satisfactory theory. I shall be happy indeed if this paper contributed toward this end.

## Summary

This paper introduces *amae*, a Japanese concept, because of its special bearing on

psychoanalysis. *Amae* primarily describes the behaviour and its accompanying affect of a child seeking his mother or any caring person, but it may refer to the similar situations that occur between adults. *Amae* in its most primitive form is equal to the concept of primary love defined by Michael Balint. It also can be related to the concept of attachment elaborated by John Bowlby and other concepts like narcissism, identification, ambivalence, etc. Freud's case of Dora is cited to illustrate the clinical application of *amae* with a special attention to his notion of homosexual love. The repudiation of femininity, another Freudian notion, is also considered in this regard. It is the author's opinion that the concept of *amae* complements the existing theories of psychoanalysis by unifying many concepts usually not related to one another.

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## Doi's Papers Revisited

### *Amae* and the Western Concept of Love

Takeo Doi

It is true that the reason for my initial interest in *amae* lay in the fact that its unique concept seems to indicate the characteristics of interpersonal relationships in Japan. But it has also been my belief from the beginning that the psychology of *amae* may claim universal interest nonetheless. That is why I presented my first English paper titled “Japanese Language as an Expression of Japanese Psychology,” in which I explained the meaning of *amae*, among others, on the occasion of the First Western Divisional Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in 1955. It was my good fortune indeed that Frieda Fromm-Reichmann was then in the audience. She expressed interest in what I had to say, inviting me later to give a talk on the same subject to a small group gathered at the Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto where she was in residence at that time. She was indeed the first non-Japanese psychiatrist who came to notice the significance of *amae*.

I think it is known to those who followed my work on *amae* in English that I subsequently related it to various psychoanalytic concepts in my writings, notably in that paper I presented at the 35th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Montreal, 1987, titled “The Concept of *Amae* and Its Psychoanalytic Implications.” I shall not repeat here what I wrote there. I rather want to focus in this paper on the psychology of *amae* operating even where the concept of *amae* is not known. In other words, I want to show that *amae* may be detected in those cases where one would suppose the operation of love, but not of *amae*. This seems to be contrary to what I did in the paper I mentioned above, because there I deliberately tried to bring out the distinctive features of *amae* against what is usually meant by love. In this paper, however, I shall instead call attention to the fact that love and *amae* may overlap more often than not.

One more caution. Since I am presenting this paper to the audience that does not have the concept of *amae* in their native languages, I naturally want to emphasize that the psychology of *amae* may exist even without being recognized as such. But in saying this I do not mean that in Japan where everybody is supposed to know what *amae* is, anybody can and does own up to one's *amae* when one is in such a state. That is not the case at all. Remember that *amae* by definition is something that takes place non-verbally. In fact, only the observer can call it as *amae*. This is most typically exemplified by a small child when it seeks its mother, but the same situation will prevail with adults when they take someone for granted or rely on someone's favor as warranted. They themselves seldom realize that



they are engaging in *amae*. Hence it is only natural that *amae* is susceptible to repression or denial. Incidentally, that perhaps explains why many languages can get by without such an explicit vocabulary.

Let me first cite an example from the non-analytical literature to show that *amae* is indeed implied at times when you might think that you are talking about things related to love. The author I want to quote is C. S. Lewis who wrote *The Four Loves*, an excellent treatise on love. He begins the Introduction with a distinction between Gift-love and Need-love and states as follows:

First of all, we do violence to most languages, including our own if we do not call Need-love "love." Of course language is not an infallible guide, but it contains, with all its defects, a good deal of stored insight and experience..... Secondly, we must be cautious about calling Need-love "mere selfishness." Mere is always a dangerous word. No doubt Need-love, like all our impulses, can be selfishly indulged. A tyrannous and gluttonous demand for affection can be a horrible thing. But in ordinary life no one calls a child selfish because it turns for comfort to its mother; nor an adult who turns to his fellow "for company." Those, whether children or adults, who do so least are not usually the most selfless. Where Need-love is felt there may be reasons for denying or totally mortifying it; but not to feel it is in general the mark of the cold egoist.

I think it must be clear from the above quotation that what C. S. Lewis calls need-love corresponds to *amae*. In this regard one may think of the usage of "lovable" as well. It certainly does not refer to the one who is able to love, rather to a person who is worthy of being loved, hence the one who is susceptible to *amae*. So if Lewis is right in calling our attention to the importance of need-love as a necessary ingredient in the concept of love, then we have to conclude that anyone who discusses love will also bring the question of need-love or *amae* into his discussion. This certainly seems to apply to the case of Freud.

Freud postulated, in his attempt to analyze forms of abnormal love, "two currents whose union is necessary to ensure a completely normal attitude in love." They are the affectionate and the sensual current and he stated about the former as follows:

It springs from the earliest years of childhood; it is formed on the basis of the interests of the self-preservative instinct and is directed to the members of the family and those who look after the child.

I think it is clear from his description that what Freud meant by the affectionate current corresponds to what Lewis called need-love, hence, *amae*. But Freud did not make much of this component of love in his later writings because he came to subsume it under the newly formulated concept of narcissism. So much so that it became customary among psychoanalysts to refer to the desire to be loved as narcissistic. Freud stated as follows:

The primary narcissism of children which we have assumed and which forms one of the postulates of our theories of the libido, is less easy to grasp by direct

observation than to confirm by inference from elsewhere. If we look at the attitude of affectionate parents toward their children, we have to recognize that it is a revival and reproduction of their own narcissism, which they have long since abandoned.

There is another statement of his to the same effect:

This situation is that of loving oneself, which we regard as the characteristic feature of narcissism. Then, according as the object or the subject is replaced by an extraneous one, what results is the active aim of loving or the passive one of being loved, the latter remaining near to narcissism.

This is not a place to review Freud's concept of narcissism. But it may be safe to say that it represented for him an ideal state which exists at the beginning of life and to which one aspires throughout one's life. Then both the attitude of affectionate parents toward their children and the need of children to be bestowed such affection would be only a function of original narcissism. No doubt Freud had reasons for reasoning in these terms. It seems to me, however, that this reduces an essentially interpersonal process to one person psychology. It would certainly diminish the importance of need-love, if not love itself. For practical purposes, one may also say, it has an advantage of mitigating the vulnerability in loving, since it implies that what is important is to love and not to be loved. Interestingly, this mind-set agrees with the modern trend of exalting liberty and independence by all means possible, the *Zeitgeist* that Freud surely shared.

In this connection I would like to quote here Erich Fromm's celebrated essay, "The Art of Loving." He states at the very beginning of the essay as follows:

Most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one's capacity to love. Hence the problem to them is how to be loved, how to be lovable.

It is interesting to note that he rests his argument upon the same fact as C. S. Lewis did that people usually don't distinguish between gift-love and need-love. But he, unlike Lewis, treats it negatively. Thus he talks about the capacity to love, but not a capacity for being loved. In other words, his position exemplifies the modern trend of elevating gift-love while downgrading need-love. It must have been against such background that C. S. Lewis felt it necessary to clarify the importance of need-love. Furthermore, this way of downgrading need-love, in my view, most likely goes far back in Western thought. For instance, one may identify its early sign even in Aristotle. One sentence in his *Nicomachean Ethics* reads as follows: "Most people seem, owing to ambition, to wish to be loved rather than to love, which is why most people love flattery." I contend, furthermore, that this tendency of downgrading need-love was reinforced, if anything, by the influence of Christianity in the Western culture.

It is perhaps no wonder under these circumstances that it was only Michael Balint among the early psychoanalysts who recognized need-love as an independent factor to be reckoned with in mental life. As a matter of fact, this became central to his thinking



since he proposed that the primordial object-relation consists in needing to be loved, first and foremost. The Freudian concept of narcissism as an ideal prototype had to be discarded. It then became just a descriptive term denoting a secondary state. He first called need-love “passive object love” in accordance with Ferenczi. But later he preferred to call it “primary or primitive love,” lest passive object love should imply pure passivity. Now this notion of his seems to me to be truly identical with the concept of *amae* as I indicated in my Montreal paper. His reasoning makes perfect sense as far as I am concerned. But I regret that it is not widely accepted among contemporary psychoanalysts. Is that because the legacy of Freudian concepts should not be easily abandoned? Or is it because Balint’s emphasis on the need to be loved is too contrary to the prevailing ideology of the modern world that extols the virtue of gift-love at the expense of need-love?

I want to call your attention in this connection to one more curious fact. It concerns a close parallel between Heinz Kohut’s self-psychology and the theory of Michael Balint. As I see it, what Kohut calls self-object needs should correspond to what Balint specified as “passive object love” or “primary love.” But neither Kohut nor his followers seem to have noticed this correspondence. Of course this is understandable if Kohut developed his theory independently of Balint or even without ever reading him. I also do not want to deny that the emphasis on empathy as well as the terminology of idealization, mirroring and twinship which Kohut articulated are useful conceptual inventions. I do deplore the fact, however, that none of these terms are related to the psychology of love. It is quite possible that one reason for his not linking his theory with the psychology of love comes from the use of the Freudian concept of narcissism as a motivating force. No doubt he was inspired in this by Freud’s dictum that “the passive aim of being loved remaining near to narcissism.” But I wonder if the term narcissism is justified to replace need-love. Need-love presupposes a significant other, since one desires to be loved by that other. But if one is only motivated by narcissism, wouldn’t one love only to be loved or to be in love, no matter whom one may happen to associate with? Then it remains narcissistic forever, does it not?

I maintain that narcissism and need-love can and should be differentiated. In fact I maintain it is very important clinically to distinguish between the two. True, people often confuse the two in their mind. In this regard it should be interesting to note that the Japanese word *amae* may also apply to both cases in its everyday usage. That is why I pointed out in my Montreal paper that there are two kinds of *amae*, primitive restful *amae* and demanding narcissistic *amae*. It was regrettable indeed that Kohut could not come to the similar conclusion in differentiating genuine need-love from narcissism. But undoubtedly he could not have done so without criticizing first the solipsism that is inherent in the Freudian concept of narcissism.

At any rate, it is unfortunate to see that most psychoanalysts nowadays, whether Kohutian or not, would not and could not think of love when they observe the kind of phenomena which Kohut specifically described. What can we make of all this? Surely this is related to the modern trend of extolling gift-love at the expense of need-love. This trend incidentally may be more extreme among intellectuals, including psychoanalysts, since need-love is no longer recognized as belonging to the domain of love. Furthermore, it seems to me that nowadays love itself is being too idolized or romanticized, if not

sexualized, thus losing its natural, robust flavor. In other words, it is safe to say that in loving, one loves love itself and not persons. This then is nothing but narcissism. It seems to me, therefore, that all this proves that gift-love dissociated from need-love only leads to its impoverishment or eventual cancellation. So let me conclude this paper with a plea for the importance of need-love once again hoping that the mundane Japanese psychology of *amae* would help restore the precarious balance in which the too one-sided Western concept of love finds itself at the present time.

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## Original papers

[Interdisciplinary Studies]

# Takeo Doi “wrestled” with Freudian psychoanalysis

Osamu Kitayama

## 1. Introduction

Takeo Doi (1920–2009) is a Japanese psychoanalyst who gained international acclaim by publishing and developing the *Amae* theory. Some of his books and papers have been translated into English, and this journal, too, takes up Doi and his works from time to time. Readers who wish to overview his works are strongly advised to refer to them.

This discussion, which focuses on Doi’s life and *Amae*, is divided into two parts. The first half summarizes “*Amae* and its Hierarchy of Love” (1997), a paper I presented at an annual meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association, and which was later included in *Nihongo-Rinsyo* Vol. 3, a collection of papers entitled “*Amae ni tsuite Kangaeru* [A Discussion on *Amae*]” (1999) in Japanese. This Japanese paper contains Doi’s responses to it. In the second half, I will describe Doi’s struggles with resistance toward Freudian psychoanalysis—a glimpse of which is provided in the first half as well—and their creative solutions.

I was never in a direct educational relationship with Doi. I did, however, receive comments and correspondence from him from time to time, and was influenced by him in no small way. When I think about Doi now, what I remember the most strongly was the “surprise attack” he made when I met him for the first time. In 1981, during the 27th Annual Meeting of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association, I gave a presentation entitled “The intermediacy of positioning and the duality of roles,” and Doi served as the moderator. I discussed liaison psychiatry’s elements of intermediacy, as well as duality as a “bridge.” Doi asked me, “So, Dr. Kitayama, what’s the difference between that and

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the problem of a regulated society?” I remember, very vividly, that I was stuck for a convincing answer, and made a hasty retreat, saying, “I’ll think about it and get back to you.” Even now, I think that his question and my answer did not jive. Using Doi’s favorite keyword, a colleague poked fun at me, saying that I had “sulked” on the stage. I had been taken aback, since I had not expected to be asked a psychosocial question like that at a meeting on psychoanalysis; I also felt angry, thinking that a moderator should not ask about things unrelated to psychoanalysis. The fact that I got angry was the first reason why I could not come up with an answer. On top of this, my immediate reaction was that he had “pulled rank” on me. For a while after that, I moaned and groaned at home, and lost sleep over it.

Doi thus became an “Oedipal father” to me. I regained my equilibrium by telling myself that I would have him find out, one day, what I had wanted to say (the use of a passive form in the original Japanese text, and hence, in the English translation as well, gives the impression of *Amae*; actually, what I really wanted to do was to “make him know” what I had wanted to say). Therefore, a discussion which I later completed, entitled “*Amae* and Its Hierarchy of Love,” questioned my relationship in which Doi is in a high place (this, of course, includes the fact that I’m the one who is placing him in a high place), as being the biggest element of the *Amae* theory. I had Doi read this paper, and, of course obtained his own answers to the question, which I will describe later on.

## 2. *Amae* and its hierarchy of love

### a. *Amae* from below

As you may know, Doi discovered the remnants of the Japanese baby talk word “Uma-uma,” which is often associated with “eating,” in the pronunciation of the word *Amae* (1965). Here, I’d like my readers to say “*Amae*” out loud. The sounds “a,” “ma,” and “e” are pronounced with the mouth open. The fact that it is especially difficult to pronounce “a” and “ma” with our face down is important when we think of the experiential meaning of the pronunciation. This is because we experience, together with these sounds, that the person showing *Amae* is looking up from below and the person being asked for *Amae* is coming from above, just as the Japanese Goddess Amaterasu, which literally means “shining in heaven,” shines on us from the heavens, with us worshipping her from below.

This is the picture that Daniel Freeman (1996) selected from a variety of *ukiyo-e* paintings as the one showing the *Amae* of a child [Figure 1, “Yamauba, holding Chestnuts, and Kintaro,” by Utamaro]. I would support his selection. The picture shows Kintaro and Yamauba. According to the tale, they are not actual mother and child. Yamauba, who is depicted larger than a normal adult, is a substitute mother, and the painter is illustrating an intimate mother-child relationship. This posture of “clinging to something” is a kind of a stereotype seen in *ukiyo-e* mother-child images. Although I have found other paintings depicting a similar pose, I decided to use this as a model for studying *Amae* in a focused way.

Like in Figure 1, when the infant at the bottom of the picture is asking his mother higher up for something, how will this mother react to the child’s request? A typically anticipated interpretation is that the infant is asking to be held by the mother, and the mother will lean



**Figure 1.** Yamauba, holding Chestnuts, and Kintaro (Utamaro)



**Figure 2.** The Theotokos of Vladimir

and pick up the infant in her arms in answer to the infant's request. When one answers to a demand for *Amae* by giving active love, *Amae*, which is said to be a passive desire, corresponds to a positive adaptation of the mother (or substitute mother) who is at a higher rank, allowing someone below to depend on her.

At the same time, however, as I believe in the existence of an infant's inner reality and illusion based on the theory of psychoanalysis and my clinical experience, it is possible to interpret the infant in the bottom the picture as not requesting his/her mother, who is above him/her, to do anything, but rather, is trying to leap up to his/her mother like Superman. Or maybe he/she wishes to grow up rapidly, and become bigger, as in the old Japanese tale, “Issun-bôshi.” In other words, instead of an adult adapting oneself to below, the possibility undoubtedly exists that a smaller and lower subject can reach up to a bigger and higher object by means of imagination, play or magic, if we take into account the presence of an infant's magical or unrealistic wishes and prayers.

Let me juxtapose Iconography in Christianity (Figure 2) by way of contrast. There is a doctrine that states that, in this case, instead of this tiny Christ showing *Amae* to mother Maria and asking to be loved by her, Christ is comforting his sad and depressed mother (Ousoensky and Lossky, 1989). In other words, a baby is expressing active love to his/her mother.

### ***b. The hierarchy of love***

As D. W. Winnicott says, a baby does not stand alone by itself: there always is its mother. To gain an understanding of parental psychology from more than one angle, I would like to take on here, as keywords, the Japanese noun “*ai* [love],” the verb “*ai-suru* [to love],” and the adjective “*ito-shii* [lovely].” Historically, this Japanese word “*ai*” was used to express a one-sided love from the higher to the lower, men to women, husbands to wives,

or parents to children. It appears to have only rarely implied equal or mutual love. For example, Nobutsuna Saigo, a scholar of ancient literature, insists that the word “love” was used to indicate mainly the emotion of the higher to the lower, that is, to one’s subordinates or mere objects. Thus, they said “men’s love” or “parents’ love” but not “women’s love” or “children’s love.”

Here, let me explain the pronunciation of the word “*ai*.” The accent is on the first phoneme, and when one speaks this word, the head moves from up to down as if it were nodding. In my opinion, the word “*ai* [love],” in the aspect of sound as well, shows movement from up to down, thus conveying the fact that Japanese love embodies a vertical movement from the larger to the smaller person. In Japanese alphabetical order, “a-i” are the first and the second letters. Please note that the word “*ai*” is also read from up to down in Japanese vertical writing.

The very reason that Japanese “*ai*” seldom holds horizontality in its meaning, such as equal love or philanthropy in Christianity, rests on the hierarchical relationship in meaning and the vertical movement of the sounds of the word “*ai*.”

Then, how about another adjective often used in daily life, “*ito-shii* [lovely]”? If we look up “*ito-oshi*,” which is an archaic form of *ito-shii*, in the *Kogojiten [Dictionary of Japanese Archaic Words]* (Sanseido Bookstore Ltd.), it gives the following descriptions:

1. unsightly, shameful
2. unfortunate, pitiful, poor, sorry
3. cute, adorable

The love described here is also from the superior to the inferior, the stronger to the weaker, and the parent to the child. What is distinctive here is that the feelings of compassion, pity, and mercy are moving as a motive for love. In other words, when the stronger or the higher cannot look straight at the weaker, the inferior, or the unhappier, a feeling of love occurs to counteract the pain.

Following the discussion above from the viewpoint of language, we conclude that Japanese words of love, such as “*ai* [love],” and “*ito-shii* [lovely],” mean to give love from the higher to the lower. As if it precisely corresponds to this, *Amae* tends to be a request for love from the lower to the higher. Here, let me call this psychology that supports this hierarchical relationship of love a “hierarchy of love.” I believe that, the fact that people did not say “the love of children” or “the love of women” doesn’t mean that those kinds of mindsets never actually existed.

### ***c. Love from below***

In this “hierarchy of love,” the lower’s, or the weaker’s love to the higher, or the stronger, is ignored. If those who are small, weak, or low actively love the higher and the stronger, this kind of love cannot be described as “*ito-shii*” or *Amae* in Japanese. This makes us notice that the Japanese language has little or no effective vocabulary to express the weaker’s active love to the stronger or an infant’s love for its parents. And I think that it was difficult for us to accept the idea of a smaller entity’s love (strong and passionate, at that) for a bigger, until psychoanalysis was imported to our country.

I therefore pointed out that Doi did not consider the hierarchy of love associated with



this *Amae*. Let us return once again to the mother-child image shown in Figure 1. The child in this picture may be wanting to jump up to his mother from below. In this case, I believe that sticking to the interpretation of *Amae* that the child is yearning for the mother to stoop down from above to below and pick him up may be too realistic and objective.

So, here, I wish to ask a question, where does the love that arises between a parent and his/her child originate? Does it originate from the child’s side? From the mother? Or from the father? It is not that one interpretation is the only correct answer; by examining questions in this manner, we are able to obtain a variety of perspectives surrounding the love between a parent and his/her child. We can also replace one with the other, and learn that such interchanges are filled with insights.

### 3. Doi’s responses

Next, I would like to read Doi’s responses to the views I had presented. The title is “*Amae* and judgment of value.”

“What Kitayama pointed out touches the vulnerability—the Achilles’ heel—of the problem concerning *Amae* and love. It is certainly not easy to provide sufficient and satisfactory answers to it. The reason is that this problem is being discussed here from an ideological dimension, and that everything, even judgment of values, is getting tangled up here. For example, when Kitayama uses the phrase ‘the conservatism of the hierarchy of love,’ he undoubtedly positions it as something not very desirable. To him, things that are referred to as ‘mutual love’ and ‘equal love’ are clearly superior. However, I belong to an older generation, and tend to be conservative in my outlook, so my sensibilities do not match Kitayama’s. But here, I will attempt to come up with my own answers, based purely on the facts, without falling into ideological disputes. First of all, I thought that I fully understood that the psychology of *Amae* included relationships of hierarchy. However, I took note of the fact that this ‘hierarchy’ was purely psychology-based, and that it did not necessarily overlap with the vertical relationship that is seen as hierarchy in society.”

As Doi writes at the opening, he appears to have momentarily softened his stance after having the weakness of his own theory clearly pointed out. However, he rebutted my assertion, saying that I had challenged him by opening a dispute about value. In my paper, when I wrote about equal love, for example, I made no claims as to which is more valuable or superior. Instead, I feel that the problem lies in the fact that Doi himself is getting entangled in a dichotomic dispute about which is superior, Japan or Western Europe. I personally think it important that it can be interpreted as both. Clearly, Doi placed his emphasis on the *Amae* side; he admitted that he was a conservative human being, and went ahead and assumed that I considered equal love to be superior. It is this “branding” that I’m reacting to.

I urge all neutral readers to read my paper and decide for themselves. As far as I’m concerned, concerning primal love, Doi insists that *Amae* is more primal than the “love”

imported into Japan from Western Europe, and sets himself in opposition to Freudian psychoanalysis. My assertion is that it is important to also read “active love” from below that is liable to become hidden behind the cover of *Amae*. But I see no further need to develop my assertions here. I am not resorting to *Amae*; instead, I had wanted to highlight Doi’s combative attitude, rooted in his Japanese background, to Freudian psychoanalysis. In his book *Seishinbunseki to Seishinbyouri [Psychoanalysis and Psychopathology]*, Doi made the following statements, which may reveal his ambivalence:

“This may sound a bit exaggerated, but this book was created as a result of my squaring off with Freud and wrestling with him. I wrestled with Freud not because he was my enemy, but rather because I admired him and devoted myself to him, just like Jacob wrestling with the Angel.”

#### 4. Japanese people’s “resistance” to psychoanalysis

I have already wrote about this in my paper (Kitayama, 2010), but wrestling with psychoanalysis while placing myself in it may rightly be called “resistance,” by including some psychoanalytic connotations. Bringing aspects into this forum such as cultural differences and Japanese perspectives, and asserting that new discoveries made through them may have universal applications: we cannot help having this labeled as “resistance” as far as psychoanalytic contexts developed by Westerners are concerned. The fact is, I investigated the history of psychoanalysis in Japan before the Second World War, and felt that Japan had what might be referred to as “the resistance of Japanese psychoanalysis,” and that this was being manifested in training analysis (it used to be called educational analysis) which Japanese psychiatrists and psychologists have undergone. I have tried to summarize the training which four key Japanese psychoanalysts underwent during the early days of psychoanalysis, and came up with the following.

- Yaekichi Yabe (1874–1945): Underwent twenty “educational analysis” sessions in London in 1930 from Edward Glover. After returning to Japan, Yabe wrote that twenty sessions were not enough, but that he could somehow make do with books (Yabe, 1933).
- Heisaku Kosawa (1897–1968): Underwent “educational analysis” in Vienna for three months in 1932 from Richard Sterba. According to *Freud’s Correspondence with Colleagues in Japan* (Kitayama, 2004), or *Freud and Japanese Analysts*, which I later published in 2011, Kosawa received an offer from Freud to be psychoanalyzed, but declined for financial reasons, despite Freud agreeing to cut each session fee from the original \$25 (it may also have been \$50) to only \$10. At the same time, Kosawa asked Freud to review his paper on the Ajase Complex. (\$1 may be converted to 1,000 Yen to gain a clearer grasp of the money involved here.)
- Kiyoyasu Marui (1886–1953): He turned down Freud’s proposal for translations and the integration of research groups, out of “pride” (which is written in his letter to Freud). Marui underwent psychoanalysis in 1933 in Vienna for a brief period (possibly about one month) from Paul Federn. This brevity is interpreted to have been the result



of compromise on Freud’s side (Blowers & Chi, 2001).

- Kenji Ohtsuki (1891–1977): A paper written by historian G. H. Blowers *et al.* refers to Ohtsuki as a “lay analyst.” Ohtsuki was a man of letters who was mainly self-educated; there are no records of his training.

All the training that these individuals had undergone appears insufficient or incomplete. Takeo Doi, who made his debut after the Second World War and the defeat of Japan, is the fifth psychoanalyst after these four, and a leading figure who represents Japanese psychoanalysis. The fact is, Doi underwent psychoanalysis once in Japan and once overseas. Both ended in failure, however (in other words, he did not complete the training analysis). I have not read any materials on these experiences which Doi himself had written about in detail. If any of the readers has any knowledge of them, please let me know. I wrote the following passage under the entry for “Takeo Doi” in *Seishinbunsekijiten [Dictionary of Psychoanalysis]*, published in 2002. I showed my rough draft to Doi himself, and had him check it. He added quite a number of modifications, so there are no problems with its factual content.

“[Doi] underwent educational analysis from Kosawa but decided to break away, objecting to Kosawa’s awareness of salvation and analytical methods. Doi went to the US for a second time in 1955, and studied for a year at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute. He received educational training from Norman Reider but failed mid-way. After returning to Japan, he began his work of putting his self-analysis and clinical experiences into words at Psychiatry Department of St. Luke’s International Hospital.”

The terms that appear in this article, such as “breaking away” from psychoanalysts, and the “failure” of psychoanalysis, carry a strong impact. Doi clearly wrote elsewhere that he had interrupted his analysis in San Francisco:

“Because I found myself at a dead end, discontinuing (the analysis) was the only solution” (Doi, 1958).

And so, I feel that, behind these repeated interruptions were his disillusionment about undergoing psychoanalysis, and elements that may be referred to as “resistance.” Even though he had no objections to the ideology of training analysis, he responded to its actual practice in a critical fashion. I believe that such thoughts that Doi held closely resonated with the following remarks that Keigo Okonogi made, which I still remember vividly:

“Throughout my life, I have had trouble handling the unsolved pathology and the unresolved transference relationships of people who claim to have undergone training analysis.”

For his part also, Doi made comments throughout his life that stressed his distance from training analysis. The following famous comments were extremely provocative as far as

the Japan Psychoanalytic Society was concerned:

“There’s no guarantee that training analysis always succeeds, right?” (Doi, 2003c)

On the other hand, in a presentation (1999) by Nobuhiro Kumakura, a researcher of the Doi theory, he mentions Doi’s failures and breaking away in educational analysis. Kumakura (2010) gave this answer to a personal question I posed to him:

“Doi became aware of his own *amasa*, or weakness, in relying on training analysis, and braced himself to wrestle directly with Freud. He then discovered the self that unconsciously relied on authority and regarded it as *Amae*. I believe that becoming aware of, and getting hurt by, the fact that he could no longer depend on training analysis, is what prompted the creation of his *Amae* theory.”

The fact was, at a meeting of *Nihongo-Rinsho-Kenkyukai* [the Japanese Study Group for Language-Oriented Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis] (1999), Doi admitted that he had nothing but admiration for Kumakura’s sharp insight that Doi’s breaking off from Kosawa had led to the creation of the *Amae* theory. Moreover, as a result of having undergone psychoanalysis in the US, Doi himself noted that he was injured all over (2003b). Keigo Okonogi once showed me a letter written by an American authority on psychoanalysis who described Doi’s analytical experience in a negative light (I tried to look for this letter but could not find it). However, I believe the following passage (2001) traces the relationship between the training analysis Doi underwent in the US, and the *Amae* theory.

“When I first went to America in 1950 to study, it is true that I idealized America. And, in the course of my being knocked about by my various American experiences, I discovered that there was a feeling of *Amae* inside me which was something that did not fit in with a life in the US, no matter how hard I tried.”

In other words, there is the context that the “transference” or “resistive transference” that he was showing *Amae* to an object known as psychoanalysis or the US, was self-analyzed; and then, prompted by his disillusionment, he created the *Amae* theory. In this sense, the training analysis he underwent in the US turned out, paradoxically, to be useful. I believe, therefore, that Doi’s parting from training analysis, as well as his disillusionment with it, and the sense of failure he felt on undergoing analysis and the self-awareness that developed from it, were the turning points that led to the birth of the Doi theory.

Overall, however, Doi is not necessarily denying the value of training analysis. Insufficient training can occur anywhere and to anyone. The problem is how to digest it, sublimate it, and put it to use. I personally want to stress that Doi’s training, which ended with his personal decision to part from it, as well as a sense of frustration and discouragement, and his “resistance” and insight toward it, continued as never-ending self-analysis, using language and culture as the medium. Perhaps because of the repetition of this process, moreover, the psychoanalysis of individuals who have carried on the prewar spirit remains independent from the psychoanalysis of other countries, as

“Japanese psychoanalysis.”

## **5. Language-oriented and language-inspired ways of thinking**

Let me now focus on the close relationship that Doi had with Father Hermann Heuvers (1890–1977) who was a professor at Sophia University and the parish priest of St. Ignatius Church in Tokyo. Doi was believed to have written the following passage (1977) immediately after attending the priest’s funeral. If so, the “22 years ago” which he mentions would refer to 1955, the period when Doi was staying in San Francisco.

“I was unable to attend the wake on the day Father passed away, or on the day after. I finally attended the private funeral service held on the morning of the 11th. After the service ended, and immediately before I was to bid my last farewell to his body, I was suddenly overcome with a strong emotion and could barely hold myself back. I wanted to cry my heart out, if such a thing were possible. It was not that I was sad in any way. Instead, I had wanted to cry for the happiness of having been able to meet him. I had the same experience once, a long time ago. This was 22 years ago, when I was in a foreign country, talking about my past to a certain individual. As it happened, I found myself talking about the time when I met the priest for the first time—it was back in 1942 while I was attending college—that I suddenly burst into tears. The tears I shed in the morning of June 11 were exactly the same as this. ‘Oh Father, why was it that I was able to share this ship of life with you?’” (Underline added)

In other words, as far as we can learn from this passage, Father Heuvers was the first person who was able to psychologically accept Doi at the deepest level: psychoanalysis in America could not hold or carry his thoughts. And, if I am allowed to use the word “method,” the method used by the priest in Japan was nothing other than to take part in the “resistance” known as Japanese culture, and to handle ways of thinking inspired by language while understanding and scrutinizing them. The characteristic of this priest’s theory of Japanese culture and the theory of the Japanese language is that it was a method (that was shared by Doi) that used ways of thinking oriented and inspired by language. The concurrence of these two individuals’ methodologies is clear if we read what they wrote.

“The Father was a person who intuitively penetrated the core of every matter. He demonstrated especially sharp insights in terms of an event’s dramatic viewpoint.” (Doi, 2003a)

Although this is Doi’s description of Father Heuvers, the person being depicted appears as if it is Doi himself. I believe that in the last days of his life, when he talked about the theory of religion, Doi saw parallels between the mission to spread Christianity in Japan and the import of psychoanalysis into Japan. That is to say, his attitude to importing psychoanalysis into Japan was to not bring in theories and doctrines directly from overseas, but to think about them deeply from within the context of Japanese language and

culture, and discover the psychological meaning of such imports. This attitude can be seen also in the method that Father Heuvers used. Needless to say, the priest, too, was met with Japanese-style “resistance,” and said,

“Japanese people love things with depth. If I explain something to them using phenomenological approaches, in particular, I can touch their hearts very easily. It’s useless to shout the word ‘love’ hundreds of times in a sermon. I think it’s better to break down a single word and show its content, like cracking a walnut shell and letting people taste the nut inside it.” (*Heuvers Shinpu Sekkyoshuu [A Collection of Sermons by Father Heuvers]*)

Father Heuvers said that, if you wanted to spread the truth about love in the context of Japanese culture, using the Japanese language, you should take on the ideas and thoughts inspired by the country’s language and culture, and use them. This is about the utilization of polysemy or the ambiguity of words which Freud, too, often found useful. It is also something which I, in the course of pursuing psychoanalytic clinical practice in Japanese, often use. At the same time, the characteristics seen in Japan’s psychoanalytic practice, namely the face-to-face method and infrequent sessions, as well as the double structure between IPA’s international standard (conducting four or more sessions per week, using the couch) and the domestic standard set forth by the Japan Psychoanalytical Association (JPA), of conducting one session per week, are also the structural characteristics of “Japanese” psychoanalysis (Kitayama, 2011). Depending on the context, these facts can be seen as a manifestation of the “resistance” of Japanese psychoanalysis; so understanding them cannot be solved without an investigation of cultural issues, as I have shown in my book, *Removing a Cover and Creating It*. For example, Tetsuro Takahashi wrote the following, in reviewing the book, to describe this thought:

“If we were to depart from the enormous group called Japanese culture and try to pin down an individual person’s mind, a psychotherapeutic session of once a week may do; or rather, it might even be better that way.”

It is already eighty years since psychoanalysis was imported into Japan, so we can no longer say that we are still at the stage of importing, rather than practicing, psychoanalysis. Japanese psychoanalysis is already being practiced in its own way. As a result of the “wrestlings” or “resistance” that were unveiled together with Doi and others, and as a result of its unique history and rich culture, Japanese psychoanalysis is currently divided into two groups: the Japan Psychoanalytical Association (JPA) and the Japan Psychoanalytic Society (JPS). The JPA is mainly based on once-weekly psychotherapy, and has drawn a large number of members by proposing a training program unique to Japan, while the JPS strives to provide training that complies with international standards and has a small number of members (Kitayama, 2011). I do not go so far as to think that “Japanese psychoanalysis” differs from “Western psychoanalysis” (J. C. Moloney, 1953); however, I feel that, as a result of the “resistance” from a different cultural group such as noted above, a “Japanese way of doing things” developed that included parts that vastly

differed from Western ways. In particular, I feel that the duplication of an organization and an intermediate form of practice known as psychoanalytic psychotherapy is not unrelated to the duality of Japanese culture, such as the “Prohibition of Don’t Look” and the themes of “front” and “back” which I have discussed numerous times.

I therefore feel that the “wrestlings” or “resistance” which Father Heuvers as well as Doi and his colleagues embodied, and their self-analyses, are embodied in “Japanese psychoanalysis’ ways of doing things.” I myself am not unaffected by this “resistance;” I’m made painfully aware that my own training is also insufficient because of this and a variety of other reasons. Along with this, I feel that psychoanalysis itself is certainly not an easy discipline for the Japanese people to smoothly import from overseas and accept.

## 6. Conclusion

Ten years ago, I wrote that the duality of the JPA and the JPS was a manifestation of Japanese culture, which I have referred to in this article as “resistance” (Kitayama, 2004). An examination of the history of psychoanalysis in Japan shows that there was a tendency in the past to hide this duality. However, it was not something Doi chose to hide. Instead, he openly expressed what I believe was his disillusion with, or resistance to, Western psychoanalysis, and, through the self-analysis that ensued, he created the *Amae* theory. Instead of putting the failure of training analysis to one side, as something merely personal, he clarified it, sublimated it, transmitted it as information to the rest of the world, and received high acclaim. Japanese people’s resistance is often difficult to see. However, Doi’s analytic attitude of conducting a self-analysis of it, and visibly reflecting his conclusions to both inside and outside Japan, has great value.

At the water’s edge, where we Japanese encounter psychoanalysis in Japanese, we cannot flee from the frictions and conflicts that arise there, so we have no choice but to do it there, “at least for the time being.” But, after a while, something precious is created along that intermediate and two-sided boundary. Here, the conflicts concerning intermediate and double-sided aspects, and our efforts to solve them—things which Doi no doubt encountered, and which many individuals must experience between the inside and the outside as analysts—clearly lead to creativity. A book that recorded Tetsuro Takahashi’s seminars was recently published, and, on the cover, there is a message: “Take pride in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, and become a specialist in it.” I encourage you to take his message clearly to heart.

The word “pride” which Takahashi used in his message was something that Doi, a solitary individual, certainly had. What may rightly be referred to as “his strong sense of pride” as a Japanese psychoanalyst was also something which I once objected to as “pulling rank.” My self-analysis, or resistance analysis, conducted in the context of my small battle of being intensely aware of, and struggling within, a hierarchical relationship with Doi, prompted me to write one paper, and also this new discussion. Thanks to Doi, I was able to identify with it while wrestling with it, but remain productive. I furthermore believe that this relationship should be described more as being “Oedipal” than having *Amae*-like characteristics.

## 7. A final word

Lastly, from Doi's numerous outstanding writings, I wish to touch on his theory of religion. Wataru Kaya, the chief priest of Tanashi Shrine, told me of a lecture Doi gave in 1993 at St. Ignatius Church. It was entitled "Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples and churches," and it is currently my favorite lecture. In it, Doi stresses that, to bring foreign culture into Japan, it is necessary to understand the hearts and minds of the Japanese people. And, as if this was a metaphor of psychoanalysis in Japan, he explains the reason why the number of followers of Christianity does not grow in this country:

"One thing I find the most amusing is that, during Communion in Mass, numerous individuals who have yet to become baptized step forward, bow their heads in front of the priest, and receive his blessing. When I see this, I cannot help but think how compliant and malleable the Japanese people are. I've never witnessed anything like this in the Western world."

A person who is not a believer in Christianity receives a blessing by a priest at a church: Doi says that, in this intermediate and Janus-faced forum, people become compliant and malleable. According to Doi's view, "a non-believer receiving a blessing" is a way for the Japanese to become compliant and malleable<sup>1</sup>. This also overlaps with the circumstances where the Japan Psychoanalytic Association is seeing a continuous growth in the number of its members who perform psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

The fact is, my presentation, "The intermediacy of positioning and the duality of roles," a theme which Doi could not understand, is related—although unintentionally—to this phenomenon. So I had a strange sense that I was meeting Doi in person at this very moment, and I, who went against him, am made painfully aware of my limitations now. Presumptuous as it may sound, I feel that it is none other than there that I, too, have a "mission"—and a proud one at that—known as the *Nihongo-Rinsho*, or the Japanese Study Group for Language-Oriented Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, which is a forum for me to wrestle with psychoanalysis and Japanese culture while remaining committed to both. I feel that resistance analysis that is constantly created and continued in the here and the now, together with my numerous colleagues, and which should become the "private work" for this, is psychoanalysis itself. When we stand between Japan and other countries, or between inside and outside in psychological terms, or between the front and the back, we can lead the way to the creation of an original domain called "Japanese psychoanalysis" or psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

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1. Despite being in the midst of undergoing training analysis from Doi, Wataru Kaya was invited to this lecture and was greatly moved. Both individuals later admitted that this training analysis was a failure. Kaya then said that it took another ten years before he was finally able to understand the profound significance of his analysis as a forum for human encounters.



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## Original papers

[Theory and Technique]

# The *amae* theory as a type of object relations theory

Naoki Fujiyama

**Abstract:** Takeo Doi's *amae* theory is the most innovative theory produced by Japanese psychoanalysts. In this article, the author reflects on how Doi created the *amae* theory through Doi's cross-cultural, training and clinical experiences. The author then outlines the framework and originality of the theory and emphasises that Doi, while undergoing ego-psychological education and training in the US, independently developed a theory similar to the British object relations theory, which focuses on the mother-infant dyad, at about the same time as the British object relations theory was being established. The author then attempts to bring Doi's theory into dialogue with the work of the three British object relations theorists, Balint, Bion and Winnicott. He argues (i) an analogy between Balint's primary love and *amae*, (ii) Doi's implicit therapeutic theory similar to Bion's idea of containing (iii) Doi's shared recognition with Winnicott of the importance of the core of the personality that is invisible to and unknown by others.

**Key words:** *amae*, the *amae* theory, object relations theory

## Introduction

Takeo Doi's *amae* theory was not only his most outstanding achievement but also the most significant contribution that Japan's psychoanalysis has made to global psychoanalysis.

I wish to examine the object-relational implications within his *amae* theory here. The position that the *amae* theory is likely to occupy, going forward, within the system of practice and theory called psychoanalysis depends on the extent to which dialogues are possible with the various theories contained in psychanalysis. After Doi's death, the *amae* theory was forced to leave its founder and walk independently. It is meaningful to scrutinise, at this point, the potential for the *amae* theory to engage in dialogues with other

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theoretical systems.

Doi often stressed that *amae* was an everyday word and that it was inherently polysemic or had multiple meanings, thus making it impossible to define. Doi seemed conscious of the significance of making *amae*, an everyday word, the key concept of a theory in psychoanalysis, just as Freud used *Trieb*, a concept derived from everyday language, as the key concept. This, however, is liable to impede dialogue since fundamental difficulties always accompany dialogues with theories whose key concepts are not clearly defined.

In this paper, with these as my premise, I will attempt a dialogue between British object relations theory and the *amae* theory.

## **Establishment of the *amae* theory**

Doi conceived his *amae* theory and created its shape in the latter half of the 1950s when he was in his late 30s. It took clear form in Doi's doctoral theses, entitled *Shinkeishitsu no Seishinbyouri (Psychopathology of a Type of Neurosis)* (Doi, 1958) and '*Jibun*' to '*Amae*' no *Seishinbyouri (The Psychopathology of Jibun [Self Awareness] and Amae)* (Doi, 1960). Later, in 1961, *Seishinryouhou to Seishinbunseki (Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis)* was published, a book that longitudinally examined the process of psychoanalytic psychotherapy from its initial period to the end, focusing on the *amae* concept. In 1965, he published *Seishinbunseki to Seishinbyouri (Psychoanalysis and Psychopathology)* (Doi, 1965), adding substantial corrections from the *amae* theory viewpoint to *Seishinbunseki (Psychoanalysis)* (Doi, 1956), which had been published in 1956 as a compact review book for psychoanalysis. Doi more or less completed the *amae* theory at that point.

Based on this academic achievement, *Amae no Kouzou (The Structure of Amae)* (Doi, 1971) was published in 1971, targeting general readers and making Doi known among non-psychiatry experts. Two years later, this book was translated into English and published as *Anatomy of Dependence* (Doi, 1973).

Several subsequent books were also translated, and, as a result, the number of people overseas who knew of Doi and the *amae* theory increased. Eventually, in 1987, he attended the International Psychoanalytical Association's (IPA) Montreal Congress and gave a presentation entitled "The *amae* concept and its psychoanalytic implications" (Doi, 1989). His theory thus came to be recognised, finally, within mainstream psychoanalysis. This is a rough outline of the history of the development of the *amae* theory, as seen from his writings.

When we consider Winnicott's theories, for example, we must consider how he interacted with Klein and became independent of her. Likewise, when we consider Doi's theory, we cannot ignore the process by which he built it. Through what sort of process was it established? If we can read object-relational implications in the *amae* theory, is its establishment process also connected to the object relations theory? If not, how, then, did such common implications come about? Questions like these should naturally be raised.

Doi describes the chronology of events that led to the establishment of the *amae* theory at the opening of *The Anatomy of Dependence* in a chapter called "The First Idea of *Amae*." In it, he stressed the inter-cultural differences he had experienced during his

two stays in the US, from 1950 to 1952 and from 1955 to 1956. He states that he became aware of *amae* through his various emotional experiences as a Japanese student away from home. In a word, the experience of having his perfectly 'normal' behaviour as a Japanese was regarded, from a Westerner's perspective, as passively assuming and expecting the consideration and goodwill of people around him. He brought the term '*amae*' into this situation.

However, this is the sort of experience most Japanese who have lived in Western countries must have had. I frequently heard this during interviews for entrance exams for overseas returnees at the university where I worked. However, not all Japanese who have lived in Western countries end up establishing the *amae* theory. Doi probably left a crucial point unsaid.

What I think is this: the fact that Doi was engaged in psychoanalysis provided the basis for establishing his *amae* theory. Otherwise, his cross-cultural experiences would have ended merely as his personal experiences. Ever since Freud founded psychoanalysis, the act of closing in on the universality of the human mind through personal emotional experiences has remained the fundamental nature of psychoanalysis. Tackling psychoanalysis is, after all, about training and practice. Doi's training and clinical experiences refined his personal cross-cultural experiences in a psychoanalytic style. Thus, the *amae* theory came into being as a truth about the universality of the human mind.

It is a well-known fact that his training and education as a psychoanalyst embodied some challenging problems. During his second stay in the US, he underwent training analysis in San Francisco. I am unsure if this meant that he had officially become a candidate at the Institute. In any event, he began receiving training analysis from a training analyst named Norman Reider. However, the training faced difficulties; Doi fell into quite a disastrous state, discontinued his training, and returned to Japan after a year. This suspension of training must have been a tremendous setback for Doi and left him with something significant and severe. However, he remained silent about it, not talking in detail. He must have had some experience that led to his discovery of the *amae* concept. It cannot be ruled out that his *amae* was not adequately dealt with in that analysis and that the results of his self-analysis after returning to Japan may have had a lot to do with the birth of the *amae* theory. Whatever the case, despite not having completed his training analysis in San Francisco, Doi was registered with the Japan Psychoanalytic Society as a psychoanalyst by Heisaku Kosawa.

Training analysis is not the only form of training for becoming a psychoanalyst. There may be supervision and more intellectual and theoretical educational programs, such as seminars and lectures. Doi studied at the Menninger School of Psychiatry in Topeka, Kansas during his first stay in the US and then at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society and Institute during his second stay. In those days, American psychoanalysis was practically synonymous with ego psychology, and psychiatry had become psychoanalytic. The psychoanalytic theory which Doi had studied in Topeka and San Francisco must have been ego psychology. No lectures whatsoever must have been given on British object relations theory, and Klein's discourses were described only in a highly critical light. Doi's *amae* theory focuses on preoedipal mother-child relationships and places emphasis on love that differs in nature from sexual love. While ego psychology seeks the essence

of neurosis in Oedipus complex, it limits analyzability to the pathology of neurosis, and leaves supportive treatment to tackle preoedipal mentality, the *amae* theory focuses on the preoedipal mentality. It also looks for the essence of neurosis in *amae*, a preoedipal form of love. Characteristics of the *amae* theory such as these are fundamentally incompatible with the education that Doi had received. Why, then, was Doi able to jump over such wide crevasses?

The 1950s, when he was immersed in thoughts towards the *amae* theory and attempted to rewrite his inner psychoanalysis from the perspective of *amae*, was also a period when the British object relations theory was beginning to bear significant fruit. A generation of psychoanalysts who underwent training in the UK after going through the age of Great Controversy after Klein and Anna Freud landed in the UK at the end of the 1920s and 1930s, respectively, finally began presenting their original ideas. A leading example may be Winnicott, who introduced the concept of transitional objects and transitional phenomena in 1950. Bion continued to publish clinical papers that were later included in his *Second Thoughts*. Doi was thinking in isolation, all alone, while these movements were taking place.

At the time, Doi had read only a few of Winnicott's writings. However, he once confessed to me that he realised how interesting and large-scale they were only considerably later. On the other hand, he read Bion intensively in his later years, during the 1990s. In any event, it appeared that he had not referenced these two analysts while establishing his theory. Meanwhile, he read Balint's writings in 1959 for the first time and later said that he learned, after all these years, that there was a psychoanalyst who thought similarly to him. By 1959, Doi had already formed his basic ideas about the *amae* theory.

If seen this way, we may say that Doi had established, all by himself, a theory that fundamentally differed from the theories he had been taught. He had made a theoretical 'jump', which, of course, is not an easy thing to do. One apparent reason for pressing forward in that direction was that his clinical experiences after returning to Japan had shown the significance of the concept of *amae*. The inevitability of this can very well be understood if one reads the cases presented in two papers that became Doi's doctoral theses, *Shinkeishitsu no Seishinbyouri* (*The Psychopathology of a Type of Neurosis*) (Doi, 1958) and *Jibun to Amae no Seishinbyouri* (*The Psychopathology of the Awareness of Amae*) (Doi, 1960), as well as *Seishinryouhou to Seishinbunseki* (*Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis*) (Doi, 1961) that contained ten or so detailed case materials.

However, other Japanese analytical clinical practitioners who had seen similar patient cases could not make such a jump. Thinking about why Doi was able to do this, I came to understand his religious journey from his adolescence to early adulthood (Doi, 1990). I think about the process he took, of how he had familiarised himself, since childhood, with Protestantism but left it, involving his search for the nature of true faith, then, after going through fierce struggles and a harsh soul-searching journey, he arrived at the Catholic church. Based on his attitudes that had been cultivated during this process, of being highly aware of things he cannot agree with or accept and meticulously seeking the truth until becoming completely satisfied, Doi created his *amae* theory by interpreting his clinical, training, and personal experiences in a psychoanalytic manner.

## The framework of the *amae* theory

Doi established his *amae* theory almost simultaneously with and independently of British object relations theory. My point of argument is that, regardless of the independence of its origin, there are ideas that the *amae* theory shares with British object relations theory, and I wish to identify them. As a premise for this, I will summarise Doi's remarks (Doi, 1989) about what sort of theory the *amae* theory is and briefly describe its framework. *Amae* is a 'wish to be loved'; it is a mentality that presupposes, as a matter of course, being loved and becoming the object of interest. It basically starts with mother-child relationships. If the (m)other perceives a child's wish to be loved, *amae* emerges *there* quietly and only very latently: if no one perceives it and responds to it, this wish becomes apparent in various troublesome ways. Doi called the former *amae* 'primitive *amae*' and the latter 'convoluted *amae*.' He believed that the latter appears in various noisy and annoying mental states, such as sulking, becoming sour or grumpy, biting, getting suspicious, and becoming envious.

*Amae* is also connected to subjectivity and the sense of self. Individuals subjectively encounter the mature experience of '*jibun*,' or awareness of self, through sufficiently becoming aware of *amae* and tolerating the non-fulfilment of *amae* (Doi, 1960). In neurotic patients, this '*jibun*' has not been sufficiently established. In other words, neurosis is not merely a pathology involving conflicts of desires but also includes the pathology of self that is based on the non-awareness of *amae* and the inability to tolerate its non-fulfilment. Therapeutically, handling this part also becomes related to the root of the treatment of neurosis. It is natural for children to *amaeru* to their parents; however, parents also *amaeru* to their children, and even teachers often *amaeru* to their students. A top-down hierarchy is not presupposed here.

Unlike Western-style love, *amae* is not expressed in words, which is perfectly natural. Once it is expressed verbally, it transforms into something different, such as flattery, fawning, and pandering. *Amae*, by nature, is not expressed verbally and only experienced almost preconsciously. *Amae* is quiet love, a wish, and a relationship.

*Amae* often tends to be misunderstood as an expression of a Japanese-like mentality. Doi asserted, however, that *amae* was not an expression of Japanese-like mentality, but a concept that cuts out the essence of the universal primordial mentality of human beings. Doi felt that because the Western language lacks words to express this concept clearly, people in Western countries tended to exclude this psychology from their awareness. Because of this, Doi felt that concepts that Freud or subsequent psychoanalysis had created, such as narcissism, identification, latent homosexuality, denial of femininity that includes penis envy and castration anxiety, as well as attachment, can be defined even more clearly by a concept called *amae*, and that the relatedness between those concepts can be explained by *amae*. Doi described *amae* as a form of non-sexual love, a type of instinct, a type of relationship, a type of emotion, and a type of behaviour. It is a concept that spans various areas of psychic phenomena, such as motivation, thoughts, emotions and relationships and is difficult to define. We Japanese use the word *amae* routinely in our everyday lives and do not think at all that it is a problematic word. This is precisely why it is undefinable and may seem to be a fatal flaw as an academic term. Conversely, however,

Doi found the basis for the fertility of the concept in its polysemy and indefinability. The fertility of the *amae* concept can be compared to how the word *Trieb*, an everyday German word that Freud had used, carried enormous fertility.

### **Dialogue between the *amae* theory and the British object relations theory**

At any rate, since the *amae* theory focuses on the preoedipal area of the mind and emphasises mother-child relationships and a dyadic world, it has elements that are close to the ideas of the British object relations theory. What should be noted, however, is that the British object relations theory took shape within dialogues and disputes that involved Klein's discourses; so, in that sense, the origin of the *amae* theory presented by Doi, who seldom mentioned Klein, is entirely independent of British object relations theory. This aspect also shows that Doi was in a highly isolated position. Klein's ways of thinking, which start with unconscious phantasy that originates in the life and death instincts, never came into Doi's view.

Doi had no one whose presence might be likened to Klein for Winnicott, Klein for Bion, or Ferenczi for Balint. Doi had no father in the world of psychoanalysis who was alive and stood before him. Kosawa, for Doi, was not a father. Moreover, Doi could not fully experience training analysis, which should have allowed him to encounter his "father." That must be why he said he "had wrestled with Freud, just like Jacob wrestling with the Angel" (Doi, 1965). Doi chose not to have anyone other than Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, to talk to. In this sense, he was good at reading Freud's writings from viewpoints that did not focus on the drive theory. He tended to pick up object relations theory-type aspects from Freud's writings. Doi did, in fact, discover the patients' *amae* in Dora's case and Hans's case.

Doi can, therefore, be said to have made an object-relational turn almost on his own. Here, I will bring Doi's thoughts such as these into dialogue with the thoughts of some object relations theorists.

#### **1. Balint**

In 1959, just when Doi had more or less shaped a rough outline of his theory, he found a book by Michael Balint in the library of the International Christian University in Tokyo. Drawn to its title, *Primary Love and Psychoanalytic Technique* (Balint, 1952), he picked it up. On reading it through, he immediately recognised that there was an analyst who thought in highly similar ways to him. Doi maintained this awareness after that. The two analysts continued to correspond with each other. Each time Doi completed a paper in English, he sent it to Balint and received comments, then had Balint's paper sent to him and commented on it. In his last theoretical writings, *The Basic Fault: Therapeutic Aspects of Regression* (Balint, 1968), Balint quoted Doi's works and confirmed the similarities with his ideas.

Balint's concept of 'primary love' was the progressive form of 'passive object love,' a concept that his mentor Ferenczi had established. In *Primary Love and Psychoanalytic Technique*, which Doi had read, Balint had not arrived at 'primary love,' a concept that became clear in his subsequent theoretical developments, especially in 'basic fault.'



Instead, the book deals with ‘primary object love,’ which is the direct progressive form of the ‘passive object love’ concept. In the completed form of Balint’s theory (Balint, 1968), primary love is characterised by a ‘harmonious mixed-up’ at a stage before distinctions can be made between the self and object and the infant and its mother or when the primary object has not been recognised. Balint later redefined primary object love, calling it ‘ocnophilia’ and contrasted it with ‘philobatism’. He began to think it comes after primary love as a primitive fusional state.

In any case, ‘primary object love’ was discussed in Balint’s 1952 book, and the concept struck Doi. It is love that is passive, non-genital, and unsensual, yet is directed towards an object. It closely resembles one of the aspects contained in the word *amae*. The Japanese word *amae* is not only the name of a type of love; it also shows a type of behaviour, such as “That child is *amaeru*-ing.” However, when Doi talks about *amae*, he stresses its aspect of being a type of love.

Balint realised early on that Western languages do not distinguish between active and passive love. He had stated, in 1935, that passive love could not be expressed using a Western language, or, in other words, that Western languages cannot describe passive objective love in a single word. Balint’s mention of Doi in 1968 was made in this context. Doi explicitly touched on this subject in his 1962 paper written in English, which he had sent to Balint, explaining that the verb *amaeru*, taking an active form, describes passive love. The critical fact here, however, is that Doi had taken a step further and contemplated this issue.

Doi asked further if linguistic transmission was possible with *amae* in the first place. Asking this question is itself difficult, in principle, for Westerners. As Balint pointed out, the reason is that they have no words to express *amae*, which is passive love. On top of this, Doi asked this question: When a subject says explicitly, “I am *amaeru*-ing to you,” is he/she really *amaeru*-ing? If a person is truly *amaeru*-ing, he/she would never say such a thing. When he/she expresses the fact that he/she is *amaeru*-ing to another person, flattery is often involved. In the end, it shows that the individual has not been able to *amaeru* to another person.

In short, when *amae* is put into words, it is lacking. People can put *amae* into words only as “I was *amaeru*-ing.” That is to say, *amae* can only be put into words to show a lack of it or as *après-coup*. If we note that psychoanalytic treatment is performed via words, this paradox should be consistently noted; it also shows part of the essential nature of *amae*.

## 2. Bion

Doi explicitly mentioned similarities with his ways of thinking, points in common, and mutual influence only in Balint’s work. In his later years, Doi developed a strong interest in Bion and openly showed his respect for the analyst, partly because he had enjoyed reading Bion’s writings and exchanged friendly letters with the philosopher John O. Wisdom, a friend of Bion’s. However, during the formative years of the *amae* theory, Bion was also still establishing his own theory, so Doi never referenced Bion. However, I perceive a type of commonality between them.

Doi was undoubtedly a therapist who did not provide the patient with lengthy

interpretations. He may not have made interpretations by referring, in minute detail, to the patient's unconscious phantasies, anxieties or defences. I underwent supervision from him for a long time. I recall Doi criticising me when I tried to make lengthy interpretations that touch on those things, with comments such as "You are being uncouth," "You are too blunt and outspoken," and "That would put the patient in an awkward spot and make him lose face." With keen intuition, he is a type of therapist who instantly grasps the core of a patient's pathology. He made it a rule to put only a small portion of such understandings into words and communicate them to his patients.

In that sense, *Seshinryouhou to Seishinbunseki (Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis)* (Doi, 1961), a book that best expresses the essence of Doi's clinical attitudes, is extremely interesting. The book deals with about ten patients he had treated during his 30s and describes each case, covering the period with each patient from the initial phase to the end. Of these, the most important case appears to be Patient A. She was a case of oral hysteria, with the book recording all the aspects of her treatment.

Doi actively invites her to undergo treatment. However, once she begins to show *amae* as if biting at him, Doi acts out impulsively without being fully aware of the sense of annoyance, such as by appeasing her, changing the therapeutic setting, or pushing her away in the form of recommending her to get married. During this course of treatment, we find frequent descriptions throughout the book, such as "It would have been nice if the therapist could have said this and that..." Doi has not been able to have any idea what interpretations to give her. He repeatedly makes mistakes. However, the treatment definitely moves forward.

A chapter of this book entitled "The Method of Interpretation" describes the patient's turning point.

From my standpoint, I became exhausted from the core just by being criticised by the patient, so if she clung to me, on top of that, it was hard for me to tolerate. However, this time, I tolerated it and was lost in thought, looking for a way for the patient to come out of this dependent state.

After this type of situation continued for several months, the patient one day declared, "I have been *amaeru*-ing to you, but I have just become aware that a sense of scepticism has actually operated in the background." (P. 152)

This description shows that there was a significant turning point in the treatment of this patient. The fact that Doi submitted it to a chapter called "The Method of Interpretation" also surprises me. Here, we find no interpretations whatsoever, but only a therapist who was lost in thought and tolerated.

Doi also writes the following in this book about such hopeless situations in treatment:

A therapist...may feel that this sort of patient is irredeemable and beyond hope... As long as the therapist stagnates in this emotion...the therapeutic relationship suffers the consequence of being broken...This emotion...is believed to be counter-transference. It also reflects a sense of helplessness and despair lurking inside the patient's mind. If the therapist...can reach the patient's feelings in the background,

it will be possible to overcome this crisis. (P. 125)

This account expresses that the process of change occurs when the patient's experience is thrown into the therapist, the therapist experiences it as his/her own, and through the experience, the therapist touches the patient's mind. It is Bion's idea of 'containing' (Bion, 1962). His honest account of a clinical fact makes it clear that Doi's practice had surpassed his theory at that time, or, in other words, he was experiencing the act of 'containing,' which is the universal therapeutic action of psychotherapy, without being aware of it.

In fact, when this patient passed over her turning point, she began saying that she had had no '*jibun (subjective sense of the self)*' until that time. Instead of just being engulfed by her own experiences, she now became able to learn from and think about them. This passage vividly depicts a situation in which the ability to think is brought about as a result of going through 'containing,' and the mentality of the depressive position becoming created.

Therapeutic attitudes such as this have much in common with what Doi said that things never move unless there are—this is what I had heard Doi say in my subsequent personal communication with him—impacts that stir the heart and make it pound; that psychotherapy is a product of chance, and must be played as it comes; and when a patient is healed, it is primarily an unexpected success. From here, we get the impression that Doi is pure and alive. Doi can open up to things he does not know, tolerate them, and even enjoy them. He is a therapist with a high 'negative capability.'

### 3. Winnicott

Winnicott's and Balint's theories have many things in common. In particular, after late Balint came to emphasise a primitive state of fusion, the similarities with Winnicott's concept of the mother-infant unit became even more prominent. Winnicott, Balint and Doi depict 'a quiet infant,' which presupposes the presence of a mother. There is a sharp contrast to the infant, as depicted by Klein, who is crying fiercely and frantically.

However, there are, of course, differences. Winnicott did not see love inside the mother-infant unit (Winnicott, 1965). In it, there is the illusion that 'there is nobody' because its needs are being met, and, because of this illusion, an infant is 'isolated.' Winnicott felt that no subjective experiences known as love existed. This may differentiate him from Balint, who regarded a primitive state of fusion as the ultimate form of primary love.

Doi also considers *amae* to be a type of love. However, *amae* has a paradox. When *amae* functions well between two individuals, it is not experienced subjectively. One becomes aware of *amae* when he/she cannot *amaeru* to another person. Therefore, if *amae* fills the space between a mother and her child, it may be love, but it is silent love and love that is invisible. It may be the kind of love observed and assumed by outside observers, but the infant itself is not at all aware that he/she is *amaeru*-ing.

In that sense, Doi's theory ends up having a point of contact with Winnicott's theory. Quiet and satisfied ways of living, which Winnicott had described as 'isolation,' become equivalent to Doi's 'primitive *amae*'. However, while Winnicott, who was a paediatrician, naturally used infants as the starting point of his ideas and thoughts, the image of 'primitive



*amae*’ that Doi had in mind appeared to be that of a small child who fidgets shyly in front of an adult. It is true that the child is not aware of *amae* and is not demanding anything but is nevertheless experiencing some emotion. The emotion may be referred to as shyness and is believed to be an emotion that is associated with the embarrassment of having others learn that one is seeking something and the awareness of the secrets of the mind surrounding love.

Winnicott felt that this isolation lay at the core of human nature. He was aware that the essence of human beings is “an isolate, permanently unknown, in fact unfound” (Winnicott, 1965). This connects to Doi constantly emphasising the significance of the concept of ‘secrecy’ in his clinical thoughts. Just as Winnicott felt that the sense of being alive is backed up by aspects that are not discovered by anybody, Doi, who had a slightly more developed mentality in mind, asserted that preserving an aspect known as a ‘secret’ is decisive for the mind to experience a personal sense of life. A toddler who fidgets needs an adult who accepts his *amae* without asking why he is fidgeting in the first place.

Doi and Winnicott can be said to be analysts who are incredibly close in the sense that both are seeing evidence for a person living psychologically in a world that is not being subjectively experienced or known by oneself or by other people and in mental domains that are kept a secret to the self and others.

## Ending remarks

A dialogue between the *amae* theory and object relations theory is a significant subject that probably requires a whole book. I was, in fact, unable to mention, in this paper, Fairbairn, a psychoanalyst who, in an isolated state like Doi, established a unique theory and similarly touched on an infant’s object-seeking. I have a faint hope that I will be able to investigate this subject in detail from a more comprehensive perspective. What I have written here is just the gist of this hope. Still, it was meaningful to have attempted to give it shape.

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## Original papers

*[Interdisciplinary Studies]*

# Passivity in amae relationships and the fantasy of “unconditional love”

Kenichiro Okano

**Abstract:** Amae, a concept that Takeo Doi introduced to psychiatric terminology almost 50 years ago, represents a relationship in which two persons relate to each other with overt passivity in their expression of love and dependency. The parties in the amae relationship share assumptions and logic that create a fantasy that they have achieved “unconditional love.” The unconditionality of love is (felt to be) measured by how spontaneously each party shows love to the other without it being requested or demanded. This fantasy of unconditional love originates in the early mother-child relationship, in which the mother gives the child quasi-unconditional love and care. The amae mentality commonly held among the Japanese into adulthood may foster masochistic devotion and subjugation to others and society. Although the amae mentality is considered most prevalent in Japanese society, it may also exist in Western cultures.

## Introduction

More than 50 years have passed since Takeo Doi (1971a) introduced the notion of “amae” to the psychiatric and psychoanalytic arena as a key concept in understanding human emotional relatedness. Amae is defined by Doi as a noun form of the verb “amaeru,” which means “to depend and presume upon another’s love or bask in another’s indulgence” (Doi, 1989, p.349). Recently, amae has received attention from non-Japanese clinicians and scholars, and it has been discussed in various contexts such as transcultural psychiatry and infant psychiatry.

Although the amae relationship may be universal, as Doi suggests, amae is not an

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easy concept for people in Western cultures to grasp. There are several reasons for this. First, there seems to be no equivalent term for *amae* in Western languages, as Doi initially postulated (1973).

Second, this relationship is not clearly visible because it is nonverbally initiated and maintained, which makes it difficult for those from different cultures to understand it cognitively. Third, some assumptions behind *amae* are not typically found in Western culture. These assumptions involve the positive and influential meanings of passivity and invisibility in human emotional relationships (Okano, 1996).

To briefly state my basic ideas in this article, I believe that the *amae* mentality and *amae* relationship are not specific to the Japanese people but that they potentially exist in both Eastern and Western cultures. The *amae* mentality and *amae* relationship form a basis for a two-person emotional relationship, which finds its roots in the early mother-child relationship in the period of attachment formation. Participants in this *amae* relationship often develop a fantasy<sup>1</sup> that in passively receiving each other's spontaneous love and indulgence, they experience pure and unconditional love. I would like to illustrate these points by citing examples used by Doi in his work.

### **Amae, an “actively passive” emotional communication**

*Amae* implies a close emotional relationship between two individuals. In this relationship, I will call the individual who has needs for *amae* the “*amae* claimer” and the person who fulfills that need the “*amae* gratifier.” In this relationship, one's need for *amae* and willingness to fulfill *amae* needs are communicated to each other nonverbally to a large extent. This creates a distinct difference between the *amae* relationship and a relationship based on dependence in its ordinary sense, in which one's needs are clearly expressed or demanded.

In the *amae* relationship, the *amae* claimer's stance can be characterized as both passive and active, or more accurately, “actively passive.” The *amae* claimer expects and waits for the *amae* gratifier to notice and fulfill their needs. In this sense, the *amae* claimer's attitude is passive and nonspontaneous. However, the *amae* claimer does not always “wait” until someone notices their needs. Instead, they may actively seek someone who senses and identifies their *amae* needs.

In this nonverbal form of affective interchange and communication, the *amae* claimer's needs cannot be gratified if others are insensitive to them. This is why Japanese people often experience bewilderment and disappointment in the initial phase of their contact with Western cultures. Curiously, Doi's own experiences brought to his attention the stark contrast between Japanese and American culture, which led him to propose the concept of *amae* as the key to understanding this difference.

In his first book, Doi (1973) discusses several personal experiences in the United States that demonstrate failed emotional communication due to the significant cultural gap he faced in his initial encounter with American culture. In one example, Doi was invited to a house in which an American host asked him if he was hungry. Although he was hungry, he

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1. The term *fantasy* used in this article primarily denotes conscious imagination and assumption and is different from unconscious *fantasy*, which often spells “*phantasy*” in psychoanalytic terminology.

said that he was not. The American host took his statement at face value and did not offer him any food. Doi resented this, thinking that in Japan, people would still offer something, while in the U.S., people did not understand that their guest could actually be hungry. In another example, Doi attended a tea party where the host told him to “help yourself.” He felt this remark was blunt and distant. In Japan, a host anticipates what guests need and provides it spontaneously instead of asking them to take care of themselves.

In my view, these examples clearly demonstrate how Americans fail to recognize Japanese people’s passive wishes. Japanese and Americans have different rules and assumptions regarding the communication of their needs to each other. In the Japanese-style relationship, the unwritten rule dictates mutual mind-reading so that people understand and fulfill each other’s needs. Frank and straightforward communication is discouraged in Japanese society. Instead, people are expected to receive each other’s nonverbal messages and decide their behavior accordingly, instead of clarifying what they really need.

As can be seen in this context, the amae claimer’s attitude is not completely passive. If the claimer’s needs are not met, they can actively seek someone who can take the role of perceiving their needs. Doi (1992) makes this point clear in his writing: “I want to emphasize that even though amae requires a generous partner for its satisfaction, it is not necessarily a passive state. Amaeru is an intransitive verb: therefore, it presupposes a certain capacity on the part of the person who does amaeru, the capacity to initiate the action leading to amae and to enjoy it” (p.9).

Doi stresses the amae claimer’s capacity to influence or even entice another person in an amae relationship. In this context, the passivity of the amae claimer can be characterized as soliciting and seductive. This lack of spontaneity to directly show one’s needs, coupled with the eagerness to receive others’ love and care, is what I describe as the “active passivity” of the Japanese, which is typically exemplified in the amae relationship. Recently, I comprehensively discussed the paradoxical nature of passivity in a psychoanalytical context (Okano, 2018).

In contrast, the American rule of emotional communication prescribes that needs should be clearly stated to each other for better communication and understanding. Obviously, this contrast is caricatured. There are many intermediate ways in which Americans and Japanese communicate their needs to others.

The amae claimer’s passive attitude can also be considered active from a different perspective. While passively loved and cared for by the amae gratifier, the amae claimer fulfills the amae gratifier’s needs and wishes. The amae gratifier fulfills the amae claimer’s needs through the vicarious satisfaction of their own amae needs. In this sense, the amae claimer’s nonverbal communication of their needs is an act of giving love and affection to the amae gratifier. In the child-parent relationship in Japanese culture, the adult child sometimes fakes amae behavior and shows childish dependency to please the parents, who still want to play the parental role of amae gratifier.

## **Assumptions in the amae relationship**

Another characteristic of the amae relationship is that the amae claimer, and possibly

the amae gratifier, has a strong sense of justification for establishing and maintaining a relationship. When an amae claimer cannot meet their amae needs, the person typically feels treated unjustly. The amae claimer believes that it is morally wrong if the nonverbal claim is not responded to or fulfilled. However, this resentment does not lead the person to verbally claim their amae needs to others. As I discuss further, verbalizing this need would change the nature of the amae relationship. The amae claimer would rather look for someone else who could respond to the amae need nonverbally.

Although those in amae relationships generally tend to justify their relationships, some are considered enmeshed, excessively regressed, and pathological. Doi (1969) proposes notions of “simple” and “convoluted amae” to distinguish between benign, growth-promoting amae relationships and regressed pathological ones (p. 350).

There are some assumptions and logic behind the amae claimer’s sense of moral entitlement and demand for understanding. To show some of these assumptions, I use an example that Doi himself mentioned in his original text on amae (1971a, p. 87; also see 1971b). An example is in a novel by Soseki Natsume, a famous Japanese novelist in the Meiji era who greatly influenced Doi in his elaboration of the notion of amae.

Botchan (the protagonist of the novel) is a young, active schoolteacher newly assigned to a high school in a rural area of Japan, where he develops relationships with fellow teachers through many conflicts and struggles. He is depicted as a typical man who has breathed the new “free atmosphere of Meiji times.” However, his relationship with Kiyo, a maid in his home since childhood, is based on the amae mentality. For example, Botchan borrows quite an amount of money from Kiyo but does not return it for five years, yet he never verbally thanks or apologizes to her. What is curious is Botchan’s following statement: “Not that I can’t, I just don’t [return the money]. Kiyo is not in any way relying on me to pay it back immediately. And me—I’ve no intention of feeling an obligation to return it immediately, as though she were a stranger. It would be as though I didn’t take her kindness at its face value, like finding fault with the goodness of her heart. Not to return it doesn’t mean I don’t think she matters; it’s because I consider she’s a part of myself.... (T)o accept a favor from someone who’s not one of your own people and to do nothing about returning it is doing him a favor, because it means you’re treating him like somebody who matters to you. If you pay your own share, the matter ends there, but to have a feeling of gratitude inside for a favor done to you—that’s the kind of repayment no money can buy” (p. 88, 197).

Although Botchan’s statement could sound somewhat self-serving and hypocritical, there is also a coherent logic that typically represents the reasoning of those who claim amae needs. As Botchan implies, there is a nonverbal agreement between him and Kiyo regarding the handling of the money he borrowed from her. His failure to return the money is intentional, and Kiyo seems to find it agreeable without ever mentioning it.

I would like to stress that Botchan is not the sole beneficiary in this relationship. Kiyo also seems to enjoy maintaining this relationship, and it possibly satisfies her own amae needs. As Doi himself comments in his book *Study of Amae in Soseki’s Novels* (1972), it is likely that Kiyo’s amae needs are even stronger than Botchan’s. Here, I would like to state some of the assumptions and logic Botchan uses to justify their amae relationship.

***Assumption 1: Not repaying what one owes another person reflects the desire to sustain the relationship and expresses affection toward that person.***

The most obvious agreement between Botchan and Kiyo is that both parties remain non-spontaneous regarding money; they do not ask for money or return it. Botchan's justification, as stated in the quotation, makes sense. If you do not return what you borrow from a person, you might have a lingering image of that person in your mind, as though it is a reminder to remain connected with them. This is certainly one way to maintain a relationship with another person. In Japanese culture, people know this well and find it rude to return something right away or flatly reject another's offer for help. These behaviors are considered rigid formality or “Tanin-gyogi,” which practically alienates others.

Sharing the same assumption, Botchan and Kiyo test each other by their apparent passivity regarding the money issue; Botchan tests Kiyo by not returning the money to see if she will initiate ending the relationship by asking for the money back. Kiyo is also testing Botchan by not asking for the money, to see if he will end the relationship by returning it.

***Assumption 2: Not verbally expressing one's amae needs to another person reduces the feeling of abandonment and hurt when ending a relationship with that person.***

Botchan agreed that one reason he and Kiyo did not verbalize their amae needs was to avoid a sense of bashfulness. As Doi (1971a) also suggests, Botchan probably never said thank you to Kiyo for whatever favors she did to him. It is commonly seen among the Japanese that those who are in an intimate relationship do not exchange formal words of gratitude, apology, or simple greetings because these words create a bashful and awkward feeling. I submit that this sense of bashfulness indicates that not verbalizing emotions serves a defensive purpose. Although people wish the amae relationship to last, there could be an end to it, as in any other human relationship. The nonverbal nature of this relationship makes a potential breakup less humiliating and hurtful. Returning to Botchan and Kiyo's relationship, to separate from Kiyo, Botchan returns the money to her without mentioning anything else. This act would not appear to be abandonment or rejection because Botchan is morally expected to return the money. Because there was no mention of emotional commitment between the two parties, they could still protect themselves from hurtful feelings if they broke up by telling themselves that there was no real relationship to begin with.

***Assumption 3: The amae relationship allows a fantasy of pure and unconditional love.***

The other, and perhaps the most important assumption in Botchan's argument is that he strongly justifies this amae relationship, as though he could not think of any other relationship that could be an expression of true or unconditional love and affection. He feels that his relationship with Kiyo is truly meaningful and considers other relationships to be superficial and valueless. Although Botchan could use this assumption as an excuse to not return the money, it is also true that he finds Kiyo's not asking for the money back valuable and respectable. He asserts that being concerned about whether Kiyo expects him to return the money is akin to “finding fault with the goodness of her heart,” which could



also be translated as “finding fault with her *beautiful heart*” (my own translation from the original Japanese text, with italics added). Botchan certainly attached aesthetic qualities to his relationship with Kiyo, who showed consistent affection for and care for him. I believe that this aesthetic quality in the amae relationship stems from a fantasy of genuineness and the purity of love within that relationship. This issue is discussed in detail in the next section.

### **Amae and the fantasy of “unconditional love”**

The fantasy of unconditional love shared by both the amae claimer and amae gratifier explains the sense of entitlement and justification in establishing and maintaining this relationship. They fantasize that this type of relationship is ideal and that their amae needs should be sensed and fulfilled by others. What leads to this fantasy? I believe that the key is the passive (or “actively passive”) and nonverbal nature of the amae claimer’s attitude.

*(Case example)*

*I became acquainted with a Japanese couple who were struggling with their affective expression. They had moved to the United States several years before. The husband adjusted well to American culture, but his wife was still struggling with a frank and direct way of communicating with others in a foreign culture. One of the wife’s major complaints about her husband was that he did not understand her emotional needs. For example, he would not do laundry or wash dishes when she was overwhelmed by other chores. The husband reasoned that she did not always clarify what she expected him to help her with. He said that there would be no trouble if she only explained what she wanted him to do or let him know that she was overwhelmed. (His claim seems plausible because the wife herself acknowledged that when she did not feel overwhelmed, she felt that the husband’s help with the chores was rather intrusive and disturbing. Therefore, it was very important for the husband to know if she was feeling overwhelmed, which was sometimes difficult to tell.) The wife asserted that it was no longer a true love if her husband would only help her upon her verbal request. In response, he stated that he could not always mind-read his wife, and if she really loved him, she should let him know what she wanted because all he wished was to avoid confusion.*

Although the struggle between this husband and wife seems to have deeper layers and implications, the miscommunication in this example typically represents how love is conceptualized differently by the Japanese wife and her half-Americanized husband. For the wife, love means gratification without verbal demands or requests, while the husband believes that verbal clarification of what she wants is the best expression of her love.

If the act of loving consists of actively and spontaneously identifying others’ emotional needs and fulfilling them, the essence of being genuinely loved should be characterized by its passivity, as the wife in this example asserts. This passivity seems to be typically achieved in the fantasies of participants in amae relationships. The amae gratifier actively notices the amae claimer’s needs and gives the latter love and support, while the latter

remains a passive recipient. One of the main features of amae is its nonverbal emotional exchange. The amae claimer expects the amae gratifier to notice their wishes intuitively and nonverbally. If amae needs are verbally claimed, it means that the gratification that might be provided is on command, and the fantasy of unconditional love collapses.

Doi (1989) stresses this point: “The genuine feeling of amae should be conveyed and appreciated only non-verbally.... In case the wish to amaeru [a verb form of amae] is to be literally verbalized, it sounds terribly affected and grossly ingratiating. In other words, verbalization spoils the wish to amaeru and makes true satisfaction virtually impossible” (p. 350).

Love in amae relationships can be distinguished from love in the ordinary sense. Regarding the relationship between love and amae, Doi (1989) states: “What distinguishes amae from the ordinary meanings of love is that it presupposes a passive stance toward one’s partner, as it invariably involves a dependence on the receptive partner for its fulfillment, though it is quite possible to pursue such a passive stance actively.... you can easily say ‘I love you’ in order to convey your feeling to whoever you happen to love.... but in amae, you cannot say ‘I amaeru on you’” (1989, p. 350).

Thus, the amae claimer’s passivity seems to form an essential part of the fantasy of unconditional love. However, the amae claimer’s attitude is not completely passive. As mentioned previously, the amae claimer’s needs for amae could be an act of loving the amae gratifier.

The sense of unconditional love is reinforced by the feeling that the amae relationship is not based on selfish demands but is mutually beneficial. As we saw before, both the amae claimer and the amae gratifier satisfy their amae needs by identifying with the amae claimer. This sense of mutual gratification strengthens the sense of unconditional love in amae.

### **Amae as the search for the maternal cocoon**

It can be assumed that the prototype of the amae relationship is found in the early mother-child relationship. Doi (1973) does not hesitate to make that point: “It is obvious that the psychological prototype of amae lies in the psychology of the infant in its relationship to its mother (p. 75).” The amae claimer’s sense of entitlement and justification for establishing an amae relationship are understood in this context. Since an amae-based relationship with the mother forms a core part of the infant’s emotional development, the adult child wishes to re-establish it as much as possible. The nonverbal nature of the infant’s claim of amae needs is also explained in this context, since in the primordial mother-child relationship, the baby’s emotional needs are to be met nonverbally and unconditionally. If a child’s wish is not met until they verbally claim it, it indicates insufficient maternal care that the child can and should resent.

In Japanese culture, maternal devotion and preoccupation with childcare are highly valued and tend to be prioritized over anything else. The primordial form of the amae relationship is generated in this close mother-child relationship. Japanese people tend to indulge in amae relationships later in life to recapitulate infantile relationships.

However, this amae-based mother-child relationship is by no means limited to Japanese

culture. Analysts in Western countries have described a similar relationship. Doi (1965) stated that the notion of *amae* is close to Balint's notion of primary love or passive object love. In *The Basic Fault* (1969), Balint commented that his idea of primary love had much to do with *amae*. According to Balint, primary love means "an all-embracing harmony with one's environment, to be able to love in peace" (p.65). Balint proposed that this notion replaces Freud's initial notion of primary narcissism, postulating that there is no object in the initial phase of human development.

In another context, Doi also mentioned that *amae* corresponds to "need-love," a notion that C.S. Lewis proposed. Doi spoke highly of Lewis's distinction between need-love and gift-love, the capacity to love other people. Doi was somewhat critical of Western culture's "elevating gift-love while downgrading need-love"(Doi, 2004).

The theory of *amae* is also similar to some of Winnicott's ideas. It is this primordial two-person relationship that he described vividly as the basis for the matrix of the mind. Winnicott's (1965) notions of "primary maternal preoccupation" and "illusion" also describe the minds of the *amae* claimer and the *amae* gratifier.

It should be emphasized, however, that the *amae* relationship does not represent a recapitulation of an actual maternal relationship itself. Again, it is a fantasy of the original mother-child relationship created by the *amae* relationship. *Amae* needs are a search for a primordial maternal cocoon, which can never be fulfilled in later life. Doi (1971a) stresses that in the *amae* relationship, there is already a separateness involved, since "a child is not said to *amaeru* until, in the latter half of the year following its birth, it first begins to become aware of its surroundings and to seek after its mother. *Amae*, in other words, is used to indicate the seeking after the mother that comes when the infant's mind has developed to a certain degree and it has realized that its mother exists independently of itself" (p. 74). Doi further stresses the defensive nature of *amae*, stating that "*amae* mentality could be defined as the attempt to deny the fact of separation that is such an inseparable part of human existence and to obliterate the pain of separation" (p.75). A question arises here: Why do the Japanese have this strong sense of entitlement to *amae* even in adulthood? Why do they not become disillusioned and give up their wish to reestablish the maternal cocoon? One plausible answer is that at many levels, Japanese society tends to partially gratify *amae* needs. For example, both the government and private corporations encourage family-like closeness and intimacy. In these organizational settings, bosses are regarded not only as superiors in professional relationships but also as paternal figures who are demanding and caretaking. This relationship can also be extended to marital relationships, in which mutual dependency and mind reading occur. However, the latter can create more problems if each partner conceptualizes love and care differently, as in the case example in the previous section.

## **Amae and masochism**

In the last part of this paper, I briefly comment on the masochistic quality of the *amae* relationship and how it is expressed in human relationships in Japanese culture. As previously mentioned, after Japanese people leave their mothers' emotional orbit, they tend to stay in *amae* relationships at different levels of society, such as in marriage or in the

workplace. These amae-based relationships demand masochistic self-sacrifice for others because each individual is expected to be sensitive to the other's amae needs and to satisfy them while also satisfying their own amae needs.

Nakakuki (1994) also described this situation. According to his view (which I agree with), Japanese masochism originates from the mother's devotion and attitude toward her child. The mother-child relationship, as a primordial form of amae, develops in the child's relationship with the “devoted (masochistic) mother” (p. 248). She sacrifices herself for her child and, through identification with the mother, the child acquires a passive masochistic attitude that they impose on others in adulthood.

## **Conclusion**

Amae represents a relationship in which two people relate to each other in a way that is characterized by overt passivity in their expressions of love and dependency to each other. The assumptions and logic shared by both parties in an amae relationship generate a fantasy in which unconditional love is generated and maintained through a passive relationship. The genuineness of love is (felt to be) measured by how one shows love spontaneously to the other, without it being requested or demanded by the latter. This fantasy of unconditional love originates in the early mother-child relationship, in which the mother gives the child unconditional love and care. This amae mentality may impose masochistic devotion and subjugation on others in marital relationships and at other societal levels.

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## Original papers

[Interdisciplinary Studies]

# Amae as a multifaceted concept: the contribution of Y. Taketomo

Soh Agatsuma

## Introduction

This review article explores Yasuhiko Taketomo's contributions to the psychoanalytic concept of *amae*. Yasuhiko Taketomo, also known as Fred Taketomo, was a contemporary of the renowned Takeo Doi. Taketomo made significant contributions to the discourse surrounding *amae*. This review primarily introduces and examines Taketomo's work on *amae*, particularly his insights into the need for a more succinct definition and understanding of *amae* than was originally proposed by Doi.

It is noteworthy that Taketomo and Doi shared certain aspects of their career trajectories. Born in the early 1920's, they both graduated from medical schools in Japan and then pursued further training and studies in psychiatry and psychoanalysis in the United States, both of them on the same scholarship, GARIOA scholarship (Government Appropriation for Relief in Occupied Area scholarship, funded by the United States government, which later evolved into Fulbright Program).

Their professional paths from then on significantly diverged, however. After his stay in the United States, Doi decided to return to Japan. For decades, he played a pivotal role in fostering the growth of psychoanalysis in Japan, significantly influencing Japanese psychiatric and psychoanalytic communities. He was an exceptionally talented psychoanalytic clinician and a sought-after supervisor in the Japanese psychoanalytic community. He was also well known as an academic educator, eventually teaching as a professor at the University of Tokyo.

On the other hand, Taketomo chose to stay in the United States after completing his psychoanalytic training. He established himself as an attending psychiatrist and

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psychoanalyst in New York City, having received his certification in psychoanalysis from Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, often referred to as Columbia Psychoanalytic Center. Furthermore, he made notable contributions as a clinical professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Whereas Doi was widely influential among Japanese psychiatric and psychoanalytic circles, Taketomo's influence in Japan was relatively limited. This is of course due to the fact that Taketomo's professional activity took place in the United States. Notwithstanding the geographical disadvantage, Taketomo initiated *transcultural psychiatry fellowship* program at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, which offered an opportunity for aspiring Japanese psychiatrists to immerse themselves in psychiatric practice in a different cultural setting. This was an attempt to introduce to Japanese colleagues what Taketomo experienced in the psychiatric and the psychoanalytic community in New York. He also frequented Kansai region of Japan, the major cities of which include Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe, to teach younger colleagues. Taketomo's influence in Kansai region gradually became more and more tangible.

Doi and Taketomo came to know each other early in their career, and their relationship was friendly and collegial. Taketomo was about a year younger to Doi, and Taketomo respected Doi's sophistication very much (Taketomo, personal communication). Despite being continents apart, both became luminaries in psychoanalysis in their own way.

### **Doi's conceptualization of *amae***

It was during his stay in the United States that Doi was confronted with the differences in sensibilities between Japanese and American individuals from a psychoanalytic perspective. The backdrop to this was Japan's transition from a medieval society to rapid Westernization and modernization following the Meiji Restoration in the late 19th century. Since then, Japan continued to westernize its higher educational system. Without doubt, by the time Doi arrived in the United States, he must have been already very familiar with the western civilization. But the cultural transition must have involved far more than knowing about a different cultural style on the intellectual level. Doi's inner mentality as Japanese indeed did not seem to be keeping up with his intellectual understanding of the western culture. Doi started to explore his inner sense of uncertainty. As is well known, this exploration culminated in the development of the concept of *amae*, which has since gained international recognition. Notably, the concept of *amae* is featured in the IPA Inter-Regional Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, marking it as one of the most significant achievements in Japanese psychoanalysis. Doi was also honored with the prestigious Sigmund Award, being the only Japanese recipient of this accolade.

Doi introduced his *amae* theory in *The Anatomy of Dependence* (Doi, 1971), and developed his theory in subsequent papers (Doi, 1989, 1992). For Doi, *amae* is a concept which evades categorical understanding. When closely examined, however, Doi's conceptualization of *amae* seems to have evolved around a certain point of view.

This is evident in Doi's following statements:

Another important thing about the concept of *amae* is that though it primarily



indicates *a content state of mind* [emphasis added] when one's need for love is reciprocated by another's love, it may also refer to *that very need for love* [emphasis added] because one cannot always count on another's love, much as one would wish to do so. Hence it follows that the state of frustration in *amae*, the various phases of which can be described by a number of Japanese words, may also be referred to as *amae* and in fact it often is so called, since obviously *amae* is more keenly felt as a desire in frustration than in fulfilment. (Doi, 1989, p. 349).

I shall now turn to the question of therapy in terms of *amae*. I think it is safe to assume that whatever conscious motive induces the patient to seek psychoanalytic treatment, the most underlying unconscious motive is that of *amae* or its derivatives. I am not saying that the analyst has to focus on it from the beginning. Nor is it necessary to meet it halfway, that is to say, to respond to it by way of satisfying it. What is important is to keep in mind that it is there, and to wait on it so that it can fully develop in due time in the therapeutic relationship, because I think this is what becomes the kernel of transference. (ibid, p. 351)

Note that Doi proposed *amae* both as “*a content state of the mind*” as well as “*that very need for love*”. It was Taketomo who saw the latter as suggestive of *amae* as a motivational concept (Taketomo, 1986b), and I agree with Taketomo's reading of this aspect of Doi's *amae*. I further propose that, in addition to apparently having understood *amae* as a motivational concept, Doi also included *amae* as a state of the mind in its definition. What Doi meant by saying that *amae* is a *state* of the mind is not very clear, but I speculate that Doi included here the *emotional repercussions* resulting from the need of the mind, motivated either positively or negatively. By resorting to the ego psychological and object relational concepts, we could say that, in addition to conceptualizing *amae* as a kind of motivational force as suggested by Taketomo, Doi conceptualized *amae* as a descriptor of the internal world of the psychic representations, both of positive as well as of negative affective valences, under the influence of *amae* as a motivational force.

It may be somewhat puzzling at first glance to notice that he stated that *amae* also refers to “the state of frustration”, given the fact that Doi defined *amae* as a motivational force and as the resultant state of the mind. Doi's argument here is indeed convoluted, but if we imagine the negative (i.e., frustrated) object relations in the sphere of the ego when *amae* need is not met, what he meant will be clearer. Doi's second dimension of *amae* is the resultant state of the mind with either positive or negative affect valences.

### **Taketomo's *amae* theory**

As we have seen, Doi's definition of *amae* is rather broad. It had its distinct merits: by defining *amae* that way, one could use *amae* concept either as a motivational concept or as a descriptive concept related to the state of the mind, depending on the context. This certainly had some advantages, but there were serious disadvantages in this conceptualization, as we will see next in Taketomo's critique of Doi's *amae* theory.

Taketomo published several articles on *amae* and related cultural dynamics that are of



significant interest. They included as follows:

- a. Toward the Discovery of Self: A Transcultural Perspective (Taketomo, 1986a)
- b. AMAE as Metalanguage: A Critique of Doi's Theory of Amae (Taketomo, 1986b)
- c. An American-Japanese Transcultural Psychoanalysis and the Issue of Teacher Transference. (Taketomo, 1989)
- d. The Application of the Core Conflictual Relationship Theme Method to Japanese Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. (Popp and Taketomo, 1993)
- e. "Inter-actional Amae" and "Intra-psychic Amae": Problems of the Psychoanalytic Concept of "Amae" as an Extended Conceptualization of "Amae" as an everyday language. (Taketomo, 1999)

Taketomo presented his criticism of *amae* by highlighting several key points, which could be summarized as below:

1. Lexical sources of *amae* and Doi's theory
2. Interactional *amae* and intrapsychic *amae*
3. Reintroducing *amae* as a metalinguistic term

I will examine each point in the following.

### **Lexical sources of *amae* and Doi's theory**

Taketomo closely examined Doi's understanding of the definition of *amae* as was originally presented (Doi, 1971). Taketomo then found that in the definition in *Daigenkai*, a well-respected Japanese dictionary, *amae* is defined as "to lean on a person's good will". It also suggested that the word is basically used for behaviors of adults, and not related to the infantile world.

Taketomo then criticized Doi's etymological argument as confusing. Doi related the Japanese word *ama* to the sound of *uma*, which for Doi represented the sound of infant's cry for mother's milk. But Taketomo maintained that such an argument was only too speculative, and harshly rejected Doi's argument as a mere "imagination" (Taketomo, 1986b, p. 530).

Taketomo's scathing criticism did not stop here. He continued his dispute on the etymology of *amae*, and pointed out that Doi actually not only expanded the lexical meaning of *amae* inappropriately to include the infant life, but also overlooked the fact that, in the same *Daigenkai* for which Doi attempted to seek a solid basis to support his hypothesis, *amae* is in fact explained as related to both adult and infant life, but in a completely different way that Doi suggested. Taketomo stated:

...the lexical source suggests that there is a common denominator for the use of *amae* in the childhood years and adult life...the lexical source does not suggest, as Doi does, that the common denominator is the emotion of longing for milk. (Taketomo, 1986b, p. 530–531)

Taketomo then introduced another lexical source, *Standard Japanese-English Dictionary* edited by Takehara (1937). The definition of *amae* he found in this dictionary included: “to behave as a spoiled child”, “to be coquettish” and “to trespass on, to take advantage of”.

Here, Taketomo found another point of divergence from Doi’s concept of *amae*. He stated that, whereas Doi’s emphasis was on the motivational aspect of the infant minds, he could not find any lexical support of it. To the contrary, *Standard Japanese-English Dictionary* reaffirmed Taketomo’s idea that the *amae* concept has more to do with a behavioral dimension, rather than with a motivational dimension.

Taketomo then stated:

...Doi’s definition of *amae* fails to note at all the deviation from propriety (being spoiled or too familiar) and the release from restraint (being playful or indulging oneself). In other words, *amae* entails a playful interaction with a parental (especially maternal) figure in which social pressures on the child to behave age-appropriately are temporarily relaxed. (Taketomo, 1986b, p. 531–532)

Then Taketomo continued:

...(the infantile situation related to *amae*) involves an interaction in which the child *playfully mimicks the infant’s attachment behavior* rather than becoming an infant in the way Doi proposes. (ibid, p. 532)

According to Taketomo, *amae* is not what drives the infant-mother object relationship as Doi maintained. *Amae* should be better conceptualized, Taketomo argued, as an *interactional* behavior, the specific meaning of which he called “*a mimicry of a mimicry of the infant-mother prototype*” (ibid, p. 532).

Taketomo went on to propose that a different kind of language that characteristically defines interactional dimensions of attachment behavior, and not motivational determinants, is called for: a “*metalanguage*”, as he calls, that defines what and how things are talked about. Taketomo explained it as follows:

What do I mean by metalanguage? ... (Bateson) demonstrated the cogency of a metacommunicational approach in his work with schizophrenics and their families. In this approach, the behavior—taken as communication—is studied in its communicational frame, often a dyadic one. The communication is carried out either through digital signals (verbal) or analog ones (nonverbal). Such communication, however, becomes meaningful only when its setting, or context, is shared by both interactants. Metacommunication (communication about communication) sets the context. (ibid, p. 535)

## **Interactional *amae* and intrapsychic *amae***

I believe that one of the reasons why Doi's theory of *amae* became widely accepted across cultures in the world of psychoanalysis is that he linked it to the theory of desire or *motivation*, which is arguably the most important idea in psychoanalysis. Doi considered *amae* as equivalent to the motivation for self-preservation, which Freud had abandoned later in his career. In addition, while considering *amae* as such, Doi also consistently asserted that *amae* is object-relational, making *amae* concept appealing for even wider range of psychoanalytic scholars.

Doi consistently discussed *amae* as an *intrapsychic* concept. This conceptualization of Doi had definite advantages. Doi's understanding renders *amae* as amenable to psychoanalytic discussions from traditional psychoanalytic points of view, such as from the motivational or the object-relational point of view. Doi's *amae* became a useful tool for explaining psychoanalytic ideas from a non-western cultural perspective.

Taketomo clearly disagreed. Taketomo's proposal was to think of *amae* as an *interactional* concept. The following case, a psychotherapy case of a Japanese woman, Kimiko, who migrated to the United States after marrying an American man, presents an example of Taketomo's interactional *amae*.

In psychotherapy with Japanese patients, Taketomo stated that *amae* is a "culture-specific term" which requires the clinician's understanding of the most subtle nuances. Taketomo quoted what Kimiko said in a session:

*My mother has never said she was lonely because I was living away from her in New York. However, I would write to her in the form of Amae, intending to be supportive of her desire to feel that I need her [e.g., by seeking her mother's approval on certain matters]. In order to express my indebtedness to her, I let her think with me. There is an aspect of her living through me. (Taketomo, 1986a)*

In explaining this clinical moment, Taketomo argued that Doi's formulation of *amae*, especially the notion of *amae* as corresponding to Balint's notion of "primary passive love", fails to explain the intricacies of this interaction between Kimiko and her mother. Taketomo argued:

the mutuality of the mother–daughter relationship described...It is the daughter, that is, who is motivated to support her mother. She temporarily forfeits her own independence in the process, but this loss proceeds, not from a primary search for a passive dependent relationship with the mother, but from a caring initiative on behalf of the mother...(F)rom the motivational standpoint, the positions of provider and receiver are reversed, with the mother being passively loved by the daughter. (Taketomo, 1986b)

## **Reintroducing *Amae* as a Metalinguistic Term**

As we have already seen, Taketomo attempted to define *amae* as a metalanguage. This

point needs more explanation. Taketomo, who considered himself as a scholar and clinician of “transcultural psychiatry” and “transcultural analysis” (Taketomo, 1989), was inspired by the linguistic studies by Bateson, Whorf and Sapir.

Taketomo said that he was indebted to Bateson (1956, 1976) in his theorizing of *amae* a metalanguage. Bateson introduced the concept of metacommunication where communication is considered to be performed in the context set by its metacommunicational frame. Metacommunication can be further divided into metalanguage and nonverbal communication. To consider *amae* as a metalanguage means that *amae*, as a verbal metacommunicational frame, sets up the context where certain behaviors that are not ordinarily allowed are mutually agreed-upon and accepted. Taketomo argues that *amae* should be better framed as that which provides an interactional context, allowing “a mutually agreed-upon suspension of some ordinary restraint(s).” (Taketomo, 1986b, p. 541)

In this view, *amae* is not so much a matter of intrapsychic motivation as a highly contextual, interactional *metatalanguage*. Yamaguchi (1999), a renowned social psychologist, also points out the ambiguity in Doi’s definition of *amae*, in agreement with Taketomo’s interactional as opposed to intrapsychic proposition about *amae*. Furthermore, Yamaguchi examines the definition of *amae* by Okonogi (1999) as a type of ritual that involves mutual interpersonal interaction, including the expectation that one’s self-dependency is at the same time a source of the other’s pleasure and the confirmation of that expectation. However, Yamaguchi still finds that even Okonogi’s rather interactional definition is still wanting further clarification. Yamaguchi acknowledges that Taketomo’s definition is superior in terms of objectivity.

## Two *Amae* Theories in Contemporary Psychoanalysis

I have found Taketomo’s arguments to be highly convincing. Notwithstanding, it is necessary to acknowledge that his arguments were shaped by the constraints of his time. This is because even if we consider *amae* as one of the forms of interaction as he proposed, even then *amae* could be seen as grounded in some form of motivational system.

In recent years, discussions have been held about how the intrapsychic world, which includes motivational systems, manifests itself in the form of observable interpersonal behavior. For instance, discussions around concepts such as “role responsiveness” (Sandler, 1976), total situation (Joseph, 1985), and enactment (Feldman, 1997; Bromberg, 2006; Stern 2010) have touched upon this idea. From this perspective, whether or not *amae* is defined in terms of interpersonal behaviors has only an indirect relationship with how motivation is related to *amae*. In other words, even if *amae* is related to motivation, it may not be visible on the surface and may appear only through a ritualized form of interpersonal behaviors. Conversely, repeated patterns of interpersonal behaviors can be seen as a repetition of patterns, or *repetition compulsions* in relationships, and this repetition itself can be conceptualized as resulting from a kind of motivational drive.

In contemporary psychoanalysis, it has become challenging to neatly separate intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions. This kind of discussion started to gain prominence after the debates between Doi and Taketomo, making it clear that their

arguments were constrained by the Zeitgeist of their time. The broader discussion in contemporary psychoanalysis, however, is moving toward encompassing both intrapsychic and interactional dimensions of *amae*. The debate over whether to view interpersonal interaction as derived from intrapsychic motivational systems or to prioritize interpersonal relationships over the intrapsychic has become less meaningful. Instead, in today's psychoanalysis, discussions on intersubjective dimensions of motivations and mutual interpersonal interactions have become central. In this sense, the debate between Doi and Taketomo can be seen as the germ of the subsequent development of psychoanalysis.

## Conclusion

This review article introduced Yasuhiko Taketomo's innovative and challenging critique on the renowned *amae* theory Takeo Doi. When first appeared, many in Japan might have been taken aback by Taketomo's critique of Doi's notable contributions, especially given the fact that Doi was widely known and respected as a distinguished psychoanalyst. It was a defying challenge, and Taketomo's stance could be called a bold one. However, his critical examination of *amae*, I believe, stirred up the discourse surrounding *amae* in Japan which, while eliciting mixed reactions, eventually lead to further elaborations of this important concept. I consider this as one of the Taketomo's major contributions to Japanese psychiatry and psychoanalysis.

## Acknowledgements

During my psychiatry residency at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, I had the privilege of receiving supervisions from Dr. Taketomo in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. He was not only my mentor but also a generous and warm-hearted individual. Despite my close personal tie with Dr. Taketomo, in this article, I have tried to maintain a scientific and neutral stance. I dedicate this article to Dr. Yasuhiko Taketomo—a remarkable transcultural psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, and a truly exceptional person.

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## Original papers

*[Theory and Technique]*

# SENSEI Transference: Teacher (SENSEI) both as an oedipal symbol and a hidden AMAE-like attachment symbol in Japan

Takahiro A. Kato

I always called him “Sensei.” I shall therefore refer to him simply as “Sensei,” and not by his real name. It is not because I consider it more discreet, but it is because I find it more natural that I do so. Whenever the memory of him comes back to me now, I find that I think of him as “Sensei” still. And with pen in hand, I cannot bring myself to write of him in any other way.

(# Introductory part of the novel “Kokoro” by Soseki Natsume; Translated by Edwin McClellan, Published by Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1957.)

## Introduction

Psychoanalysis has long advocated that the formation of attachment between parents and children in childhood is the foundation for lifelong emotional interactions. The “*kawanoji*” culture inherited from ancient times in Japan, where father, mother, and child sleep side by side in the same room, has greatly influenced the formation of the mental foundation of Japanese children and the lifelong love-hate life stories of Japanese people (Kitayama 2023). In Western societies that do not have a “*kawanoji*” culture like Japan, it is common practice for children to be separated from their parents’ beds at the age of one or two. In other words, in Western society, the father openly intervenes between the mother and the child, and the child is not allowed to sleep with the mother indefinitely. The Oedipus complex is the original foundation of the human unconscious proposed by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, based on the tragic Greek myth of King

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Oedipus, who killed his father and married his biological mother. According to Freud's developmental theory, 2–3-year-old boys are anxious about being castrated by their fathers when they approach their mothers, but when they abandon the mother's approach and move toward identification with their fathers, this is the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Freud named this period the phallic period (Oedipal period), which is important for mental development, especially for the formation of the superego. In Japanese society, the practice of sleeping with one's parents in the "*kawanoji*" style in the same room continues into elementary school and, in some cases, into junior and senior high school, thus the cultural differences between Japanese and Western societies are obvious. In the "*kawanoji*" culture, Japanese mothers tend to think, "It would be a pity to leave the child alone!" and these ideas of the mother prevail and take precedence for long. Furthermore, in today's Japanese society, where fathers often do not come home until late at night or live without family members for job, there are very few opportunities for children to experience the Oedipal experience of castration from the father in the home with the approval of the mother, as is the case in the West.

However, this does not mean that the superego does not reside at the foundation of our Japanese minds. So, what or who is responsible for the superego of Japanese? In this regard, The author would like to focus on the presence of *SENSEI* (先生), or teachers, at schools in Japan. The world symbolized by the "*kawanoji*" culture is one in which parents and children are forever aligned side by side, with no top and bottom. However, when children attend school, they experience for the first time the absolute hierarchy of *SENSEI* (teacher)-student, and are sometimes scolded by teachers, which forces them to experience the superego. The author believes that these school experiences may have formed the Japanese superego.

In this article, the author introduces the concept of *SENSEI* transference and *SENSEI* counter-transference, and presents a fictitious case with prolonged suicidal ideation and pathological social withdrawal (*hikikomori*) to highlight such transferences. Finally, the author proposes the existence of a pre-Oedipal transference under the *SENSEI* transference, which is related to *AMAE*, in addition to an Oedipal transference.

## **SENSEI transference**

"*SENSEI*" is an everyday word used to refer to teachers in Japanese schools, but in Japanese society, the word "*SENSEI*" is so common in everyday conversation that not only school teachers, but also doctors, politicians, karate masters, and even the neighborhood senior persons who know things are called "*SENSEI*!" *SENSEI* is a convenient word. Grammatically, a conversation in English cannot be conducted without subject terms "I" and "you." On the other hand, a conversation in Japanese language can be conducted without a subject term, but when a subject term is needed, a new conversation can be initiated by simply addressing someone as "*SENSEI*" without using the second person's "name" or even "*Anata*"

The Japanese word "*Anata*" is the second person term used when directly addressing the person in front of the person. In a conversation between two people, the word "you" must be used in English. In Japanese, however, a conversation can be established even if

the word “*Anata*” is omitted. However, only when the intention is to make the presence of the other person clear, “*Anata*” will appear in the conversation. In this article, the all-caps “YOU” is used when a patient/client calls the therapist “*Anata*” directly in the session.

Even in modern Japanese society, Japanese people are benefited by the word “*SENSEI*”, and they are able to communicate with each other through the word “*SENSEI*.” It is undeniable that Japanese people are able to smoothly conduct their social interactions by being called “*SENSEI!*” In my daily clinical practice, I am usually called “*Sensei*.” When I am walking in a crowded street, I am always tempted to turn around when I hear a voice saying, “*Sensei!*” But at the same time, I sometimes feel like walking away without turning around.

“*SENSEI*” in the *KOJIEN* (one of the prestige Japanese language dictionaries like Oxford English Dictionary) means: “(1) A person who was born before you; (2) A person of superior learning and virtue, one’s teacher. (3) A school teacher. (4) An honorific title for a person in a leadership position, such as a doctor or lawyer. (5) A term used to refer to others in a friendly or teasing manner. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts are (or should be) called “*SENSEI*” in the sense of (4) above in the Japanese clinical practice that we Japanese experts are practicing with Japanese people. And those who are called “*SENSEI*” are (supposed to be) acting in the role of *SENSEI*. But is this really the case? Yasuhiko Taketomo (1921–2015), a Japanese psychoanalyst who lived and worked in New York, discovered the *SENSEI* transference “teacher transference” (1989); a unique Japanese therapeutic relationship in which the teacher-student relationship of the student years, when the students were called *SENSEI*, is reproduced in the therapeutic relationship. (1989). Taketomo received his schooling and medical education in Japan, and then moved to the U.S. to receive psychoanalysis (i.e., educational analysis) from an American analyst. Taketomo recalled that he was very confused when the American analyst suggested that they address each other by their first names from the beginning. In Japan, one can simply call a therapist “*SENSEI*”. In 1998, Osamu Kitayama introduced Taketomo’s work as follows:

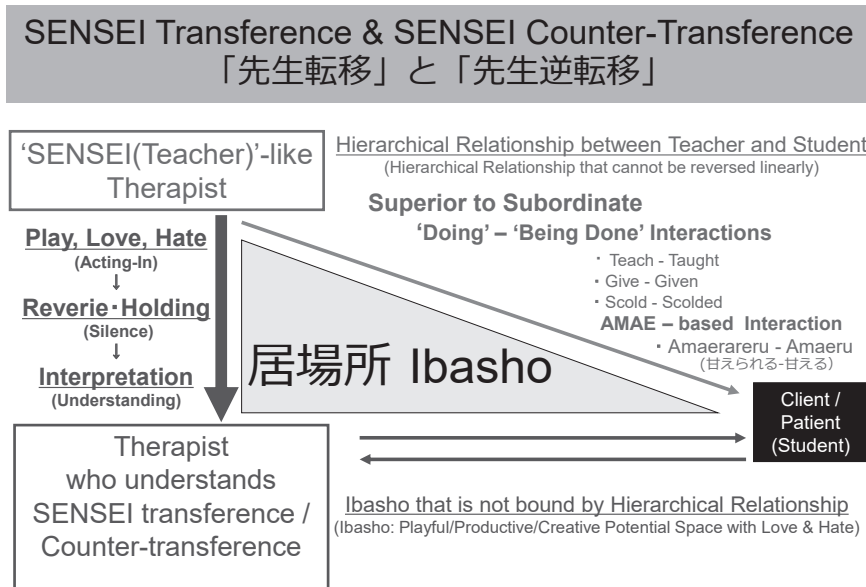
*For example, in the U.S., we call our students by their first names, but for us it is SENSEI, and this is one of the factors that should be noted when we think about the education and training of the Japanese people. SENSEI transference is right there. When we go to a SENSEI reunion and are in the presence of our old SENSEI, we are still the same students we were then, even after all these years, and we enjoy it just as much as we did in the past. If it lasts a lifetime, the educational effect of SENSEI transference will be tremendous. If we do not have good memories of SENSEI, this misfortune will also follow us. Not having a good SENSEI is especially serious for those who will become SENSEI. (Kitayama 1998)*

### ***SENSEI* transference and *SENSEI* counter-transference in clinical situations**

There is nothing more convenient than the term *SENSEI* in clinical situations in Japan. In Japan, where clinical practice is conducted under the honorific title of “*SENSEI*,”

both patients and therapists benefit from *SENSEI* transference to a greater or lesser extent. Especially in the early stages of treatment, the presence of the word “*SENSEI*” is very much appreciated. The patient calls the therapist “Sensei” the moment the patient meets the therapist. The therapist would be horrified if patient did not call the therapist ““Sensei” but by first or last name of the therapist, such ‘Kato-san’ or ‘Takahiro-san.’ Since entering kindergarten and elementary school, Japanese people have had numerous experiences with teachers called “*SENSEI*,” or teacher. Importantly, we have experienced a one-way hierarchical relationship in which the teacher gives and the student receives, such as “teach - be taught” and “scold - be scolded. The term “teacher transference” refers to a phenomenon that has taken root in Japanese culture and society, in which the mental foundations of these school experiences are reproduced in the therapist-patient relationship even after adulthood (**Figure 1**). In Japan, teachers and therapists alike are called “*SENSEI*!”, which is why the teacher transference proposed by Taketomo in the 1980s went unnoticed. In fact, “*SENSEI* transference” must exist in various dimensions of the therapist-patient relationship mediated by the polysemous term “*SENSEI*” beyond the teacher transference (Kato 2006; Kato 2009; Kato 2015; Kato 2023].

*SENSEI* transference for each of us is determined by our past relationships with *SENSEI* (teachers, mentors, etc.). Some patients may seek *SENSEI* as an extension of their school teachers, or if they have learned karate, they may seek *SENSEI* as a karate master. Based on the therapist’s own experiences with teachers, the therapist may also act as a *SENSEI*, like



**Figure 1.** SENSEI transference and SENSEI counter-transference

This figure was translated and modified from Kato 2015 & Kato 2023. The first draft of this figure was presented at the annual congress of the Japanese Clinical Language Research Association at Kobe in 2005 April.

a schoolteacher or a karate master. Such experienced hierarchical relationships between a teacher and a student, that cannot be reversed linearly, are unconsciously enacted in Japanese therapeutic situations. The author has named this phenomenon on the part of the therapist as “*SENSEI* counter-transference”, and we Japanese clinicians and therapists are constantly exposed to *SENSEI* counter-transference. In a successful treatment situation, a therapist who is called *SENSEI* is unlikely to look back and realize that he or she is *SENSEI*, but in a deadlocked situation with a serious patient or a particularly difficult patient, he or she cannot help but be aware of *SENSEI*. The more desperately the therapist moves as *SENSEI*, the more stuck he or she becomes. As *SENSEI*, the therapist desperately gives things, teaches, sometimes directs, and even scolds. If the therapist is still unable to break through, he or she may feel helpless and guilty. However, the therapist’s feeling of helplessness and guilt may threaten his or her position as a respectable *SENSEI*, and it is easy for the therapist to feel compelled to protect only his or her position as a dignified *SENSEI*. In such cases, the *SENSEI* therapist’s own problems may be put on the back burner and unilaterally dismissed as problems on the part of the patient. The patient may be reacting to the therapist’s desperate attempt to maintain his/her position as *SENSEI*, and the impasse here is a stalemate in the linear, one-way *SENSEI*-versus-patient relationship, i.e., the therapist has failed to handle the *SENSEI* counter-transference (Kato 2006).

## **Soseki and Sensei**

As material for considering *SENSEI* transference and *SENSEI* counter-transference, the author would like to refer to Soseki Natsume (1867–1916), one of the most famous Japanese novelist. He used to be a teacher at an ordinary junior high school, a teacher at an old high school, an instructor at the University of Tokyo after studying in England, and finally, a novelist who continued to sit in the position of *SENSEI* in Japan.

“I am a cat. I don’t have a name yet. I have no idea where I was born”.

In Soseki’s first novel, which begins with the introduction “I am a cat,” a cat that cannot be a human being talks about the human world in Japanese. The author believes that the cat may have been a projection of Soseki himself, a lonely Japanese who had become a Japanese but not Japanese, a rare example at the time of his knowledge of the non-Japanese world of England (“I am a Cat,” serialized in the Asahi Shimbun from 1905 to 1906).

Soseki, who initially created his works from a third-person perspective, observing the Japanese people from the sidelines in a cat suit, gradually began to depict the love-hate relationship between the Japanese people and their inner world from the perspective of the Japanese people themselves. *SENSEI* appears in many of Soseki’s works, including “Bo-chan,” and while Soseki may have projected his own image of *SENSEI*, he also portrayed the image of *SENSEI* held by the Japanese people of his time.

In 1914, in his later years, Soseki published a novel titled “Kokoro” (こゝろ), which begins, “I always called that person *SENSEI*.” In “Kokoro,” Soseki beautifully depicts the hearts and minds of Japanese people through the painful wills and monologues of two Japanese men, “Sensei” and “I (watashi)”. The young man “I,” the protagonist, wanted to call the man “*SENSEI*” the moment he first met him, and it can be said that the two

of them were in a so-called *SENSEI* transference and counter-transference relationship. “Sensei” kept advising “I” that “love is a sin,” and he continued to carry the guilt of the love triangle between his wife and Mr. K, who committed suicide, in his solitude. And “Sensei”, without confiding his guilt to his wife or to “I,” disappeared, leaving behind the only long, long suicide note, keeping a lid on his guilt that “love is a sin”. This is the conclusion of the *SENSEI* transference and *SENSEI* counter-transference in the novel “Kokoro”.

## Beyond the Conclusion of “Love is a Sin”

Not limited to Soseki’s novels, the sense that “love is a sin” must be a familiar feeling to Japanese people who call or are called “*SENSEI*.”

*SENSEI* is a school teacher who teaches everything, but never “love” or “romance”. The students’ love story takes place after school, after *SENSEI* is gone. *SENSEI*, who does not teach “love,” may be the worst at teaching “love”.

However, in actual clinical situations, *SENSEI* transference or the “love is a sin” experience of the novel “Kokoro” often accompanies the relationship between therapist (*SENSEI*) and patient, whether the patient is aware of it or not. Nevertheless, if therapists keep a lid on such experiences, saying, “There is no such thing as love here,” the therapy will not make progress. On the other hand, the therapist cannot honestly admit that “love is a sin,” and he or she must not disappear like *SENSEI* in “Kokoro”. Therefore, the author believes that for therapists called *SENSEI*, handling such a situation of love transference is very dangerous, but at the same time, it is one of the most important part of therapy.

I would like to present an imaginary clinical case regarding the handling of *SENSEI* transference situations, which tend to be covered with a “love is a sin” kind of lid that occurs between two people, “therapist (*SENSEI*)” and “patient,” in the closed room of an interview room. (This case vignette is based on several cases that the author has actually encountered in his clinical practice, and was created in consideration of privacy and protection of personal information.)

## Case material

Hanako (pseudonym), a widowed woman in her late thirties, had been hiding at home alone for several years, suffering from physical pain and vague feelings of hopelessness. A certain *hikikomori* (i.e., pathological social withdrawal syndrome) support organization referred her to the author (hereinafter referred to as “I”). For a while, I treated her as an outpatient of a general psychiatry department. After several years, I introduced psychoanalytic psychotherapy using the face-to-face method once a week. During her outpatient psychiatric visits, especially in the early days, Hanako gave me, the therapist, the strong impression that she was a male student (boy) confronting a dignified *SENSEI*, a teacher. Hanako, on the other hand, told me in a straightforward manner that she had been abandoned by her biological parents when she was a child, placed in foster care, and had lived as an over-adjusted good child under her foster parents and as an honor student at school. She continued to talk about her regretful life, saying that her foster parents had

abused her, that her first husband had been violent and divorced her several years later, and that she had a good relationship with her second husband, but lost him in a tragic accident. As time went by, Hanako's examination time became longer and longer as she continued to talk about a wide variety of topics. At that time, I thought that there must be "something" in the depths of Hanako's unspoken thoughts, and in the hope of discovering that "something," I proposed the introduction of psychoanalytic psychotherapy to Hanako, to which she agreed. I explained to her, "From now on, I will be interviewing you regularly every Wednesday for 45 minutes from 11:00 a.m., and I will finish when the time is up". Hanako's calm expression turned grim and she said, "KATO *SENSEI* is cold, isn't he?"

I did not use the couch for a while. In a psychoanalytic treatment structure that strictly emphasized neutrality, I refrained from the directive and teacherly manner of my previous general outpatient consultations and refrained from giving active advice, and the sessions tended to be silent. However, Hanako continued to speak, trying her best to avoid silence, and when I seemed to be merely listening and not offering advice, she sarcastically remarked, "*SENSEI* is an ear person, *SENSEI* is an eel!"

And then Hanako looked back on her own life that she had been placed in foster care, had married and lost her beloved husband, and muttered, "I'm a stray cat".

Hanako, who at first seemed boyish and without a hint of femininity, gradually began to nonverbally bring a sexually seductive "color" into the interview room and continued to stare at me with her seductive eyes. In this ascetic and seductive world, I, as a therapist, tended to try to keep a lid on Hanako's seductive feelings about love, as a typical Japanese *SENSEI*. As Hanako kept calling me an eel to my face, I desperately resisted her temptations, and inwardly, I kept wondering what I could do about her seductive attitude. I suddenly thought of Freud's theory of technique.

*"I have always adhered to the practice of putting the patient in a chair and sitting behind him, out of sight of the patient. (omitted) It is a personal motive, but (omitted) I cannot bear to be stared at by another person for eight hours a day (or more)." (Freud 1913)*

I decided to change the treatment setting from the face-to-face method to orthodox psychoanalysis using the couch.

With the introduction of the couch, for the first time, I, as a therapist, was able to relax my mind. By not being stared at face-to-face by Hanako, a private space beyond the therapist's *SENSEI* role appeared in my mind, and I was finally able to observe Hanako's inner world without being distracted by her outward appearance. Thus, having regained a sense of mental composure, I was able to verbally handle the "color" she brought into the room between the two of us in the closed room.

I gave her my interpretation: "You have lost your husband, and perhaps in your place, you want me as like your lost husband."

She was embarrassed, but she confided in me, her therapist, that she was in love with me. It became clear that for her, expressing her love for me was an intensely painful experience that she had to face the guilt she had been born with even though she herself was innocent. It became gradually clear that Hanako understood the trauma of being placed



in foster care and losing her husband in an accident as a trauma that, on an unconscious level, “my love was too strong and the object disappeared”. It also became clear that she also had a fear that if she expressed her love for the *SENSEI*, she would destroy and lose the therapist, the *SENSEI*, as well”.

**[A vignette of a session]**

During a session in the rainy season, Hanako, who entered the room with a dull expression on her face, lay down and without silence told a really delicious, sweet story about food. She told me that “the food there was the best...” “The strawberry cake on the way back here is really sweet and tasty, I’m going there again today, *SENSEI* should go there too...”

I told Hanako, who seemed to be vainly trying to satisfy her hunger outside, as follows:

<You want to eat me here, but there is no way to eat me here even if you wanted to, and you are so hungry on your way home that you are barely trying to fill your heart by eating that food instead of me.>

After a short silence, Hanako muttered to herself:

“*SENSEI*, no, *YOU* are very close, but *YOU* are the furthest away... (moving her lying arms toward the chair I was sitting in, far above her head) If I reach out like this, I can almost reach *YOU*, but *YOU* are so far away. Sadly, since I met *YOU* as a patient, we can never be lovers, we can never be together. It’s really hard to think like that...”

Hanako wept quietly.

<You, however, wanted to be, and you still want to be...that’s how much you want me>. Silence.

Hanako wept.

[End]

**[Another vignette of a session]**

As more years passed, Hanako was emerging from her social withdrawal, but she had entered a somewhat manic mode, and her empty outings without socializing were increasing at an accelerating pace. During one of our sessions around that time, when there was a moment of silence between Hanako, who continued to talk without silence, I accidentally muttered, “*YOU* go out, but you are lonely”.

Then she said, “I come here four times a week, so why am I lonely? I feel as if *SENSEI* is rejecting me!” Hanako shouted furiously on the couch. Hanako continued to accuse me, but I remained silent for a while. I finally told her the following:

“Let’s put it this way: a sense of loneliness (intersolitude: a time-space and physical space of intersubjective solitude) has arisen between me and *YOU*... Even here you feel lonely with me, and when you are not here, you are too lonely to be without me, and you cannot help being absorbed in things outside”.

Hanako recalled her loneliness as a child when she was sent to foster parents and sang the song of the red dragonfly (a typical Japanese lullaby): “It’s snowing and snowing, and somehow I’m outside alone with my bare feet... Yuya-ke-ko-ya-o no akatombo... (Red dragonflies are flying in the evening glow)”.

[End]



The above presented a fictional psychoanalytical case. Hanako used to be an honor student attitude toward her teacher, but as the *SENSEI* transference progressed, she expressed feelings of sexual love, and eventually it became clear that a pre-Oedipal attachment and yearning for affection was latent.

In the early stages, Hanako continued to call me, the therapist, “*SENSEI*,” but continued to seek and seduce the therapist subconsciously as an action in an unspoken dimension, but she went beyond the word “*SENSEI*” and began to utter the intimate words “I want you” and “YOU” to me. In this way, Hanako began to bite back her loneliness, and the session room became *IBASHO*, a place for holding such feelings of love, guilty, anger, and loneliness, and Hanako escaped from withdrawal, graduated from psychoanalysis, and nestled into the real world where exist love and hate.

### ***SENSEI* transference and “Amoe”**

Takeo Doi, who advocated the theory of “*AMAE* (original mean is sweetness in Japanese)”, discusses Soseki’s works from the perspective of *AMAE* in his book entitled “The Psychological World of Soseki: A Study of *AMAE* in Soseki Literature” (Doi 1982). In the chapter of “Kokoro,” Doi describes the relationship between *SENSEI* and I (the protagonist) as a homosexual relationship, and points out that the transference that I (the protagonist) feel toward *SENSEI* is a paternal transference. In the novel, the idealization of *SENSEI* accelerates in parallel with the de-valuing and disillusioning of his own father.

The father-son relationship depicted in “Kokoro” seems to be no different from the contemporary Japanese society in which the father figure is weak and lacking in presence, and the children make fun of him. Therefore, this material supports the author’s hypothesis that *SENSEI* may play a superego role instead of the father in the “*kawanoji*” culture described in the introduction of this article. In other words, the original roots of *SENSEI* transference might be transferred from the original parental relationship. Based on a classical psychoanalytic viewpoint, Freud believes that superego formation takes place after the phallic period, while Melanie Klein believes that it takes place during infancy. Interestingly, Kitayama has discussed the issues of Japan’s “*kawanoji*” culture in the latest issue of this journal (Kitayama, 2023), proposing the Oedipal triangulation, in which the child competes and clashes with the father, might be delayed in “*kawanoji*” culture. The author also believes that the Oedipal situation tends to be delayed in the “*kawanoji*” culture, but that the Oedipal situation is facilitated by interaction with teachers after entering school, which form the basis of *SENSEI* transference and Japanese-style superego. Especially, the nuclear family in Japan tends to induce absent fathers, and such absent fathers tend to be transferred to schoolteachers who are not absent.

On the other hand, surprisingly, Doi does not refer to *AMAE* at all in the chapter of “Kokoro” in his book. However, from the author’s point of view, the relationship between *SENSEI* and I (the protagonist) is marked by “*amae*,” which, in the context of the theme of this article, means that the relationship between *SENSEI* and I (the protagonist) is covered by a longing for attachment that is fostered between mother and child in the culture of the “*kawanoji*” culture in Japan. Soseki’s early life is well known as the earliest episode in which he was sent to a foster home soon after his birth and was not allowed to sleep

with his foster parents. The author imagines that Soseki himself may not have had the experience of “*kawanoji*.” Therefore, The author suspects that Soseki’s lack of experience with love and attachment in the “*kawanoji*” culture may have been the reason for his intense longing for such an experience, and that this longing may have been the driving force behind his creativity as a novelist.

In the case material, with similar to Soseki’s early-life experience, Hanako was abandoned by her parents and sent to a foster home. When Hanako was abandoned by her birth parents, the parental figure was not a loving one, but an unconscious object of rejection and persecution, and this may have been the original form of Hanako’s superego. According to the Kleinian theory, Hanako’s persecutory superego led her to be an honor student toward her teachers and to be excessively polite to the therapist at the beginning sessions. Interestingly, Soseki himself is known to have experienced psychotic conditions with persecutory ideations several times in his life. Therefore, the author herein proposes that the absence of the “*kawanoji*” experience like Soseki and Hanako may be one of the crucial roots of the stronger *SENSEI* transference and also a possible risk factor for the development of mental disorders in later life.

Yasuhiko Taketomo, who advocated teacher transference, argued with Doi about the theory of *AMAE*. Against Doi, who focused only on “intra-psychic *AMAE*,” Taketomo harshly pointed out that Doi failed to deal with “inter-actional *AMAE*” (Taketomo 1999).

In the same book, Osamu Kitayama referred to Doi’s blind spot in the *AMAE* theory and proposed the hierarchical consciousness of love that accompanies *AMAE* (Kitayama 1999). Generally, love acts as a vector from the superior to the inferior, but Kitayama emphasized the significance of love from the inferior to the superior. Kitayama pointed out that there are few words in the Japanese language to express “love from a subordinate to a superior,” and the word *AMAE* is often used in Japanese in such situations. In such situations, the subordinate is easily excluded by superiors and the world as a form of “*amaeruna!* (don’t be lenient, or stop *AMAE*-oriented behavior)”.

In other words, to return to the theme of this article, in the situation of *SENSEI* transference, students are not allowed to love their *SENSEI* (teacher). The teacher (*SENSEI*)-student relationship that we Japanese people have experienced is all a linear, one-way arrow relationship, and in principle, reversal is not allowed. However, the actual *SENSEI*-student relationship also includes, at a deeper unconscious level, the relationships where the student depends on the teacher and the teacher depends on the student, such as “hold - be held,” “depend on - be depended on,” and “spoil - be spoiled”. The author suppose that such relationship must be also contained at a deeper psychological level for long in Japanese society.

Even now in Japanese society, movies and TV dramas (e.g., “*Shitsurakuen*”) with the theme of forbidden love between *SENSEI* and students are receiving high viewer ratings, and in the relationship between *SENSEI* and students in Japanese society, the deep psychology of “love” that is covered by a lid, such as “love - be loved” and “be loved - love,” also lies.

Therefore, the *SENSEI*-school student relationship that we Japanese people have experienced is, on the surface, a linear, one-way arrow relationship, but in the depths of our psyche, the students are seeking a relationship of love that transcends both top and

bottom, a relationship that is neither above nor below.

In sum, the original SENSEI transference could also be viewed not only as a father transference and an absent father transference but also as a mother transference and an absent mother transference. Kitayama (2023) describes the roles of obtaining mothering functions in the kawanoji culture as follows.

“We must also emphasize that this culture of sleeping together nurtures not only pathology, but also the Japanese people’s amae, or interdependence, or a sense of solidarity (the Japanese word is ‘*tsurumu*,’ meaning ‘to get together ‘), and a feeling of security and peace of mind.”

In the “*kawanoji*” culture in Japan, father/mother or absent father/mother, which tend to form an inadequate Oedipal triangle and an inadequate attachment, may be easily transferred to schoolteachers as SENSEI transference, which form the Oedipal and also AMAE-like relationship. In other words, therapists in Japan tend to be transferred teacher (SENSEI)-like persons both as an oedipal symbol and a hidden AMAE-like attachment symbol in clinical settings.

## **SENSEI transference and love transference**

In the fictitious case described earlier, Hanako had put a lid on the “love is a sin,” and had continued to lead a withdrawal life, but through our mutual psychoanalytic dialogues as we reenacted the tragedy surrounding “love is a sin,” she finally began to change course in her life. Hanako finally started her life on the right track. I, as a therapist called “SENSEI,” was puzzled to share the experience of “love is a sin,” but I did not put a lid on it and continued to deal with it in my psychoanalytic treatment.

Freud had already discussed these difficult love transferences in his 1915 article “OBSERVATIONS ON TRANSFERENCE-LOVE”. Freud’s own failures in the treatment of Dora, and his concerns about the transgression of the relationship between Jung and his patient, Speerlein, seem to have been behind this discussion. By looking directly at these situations without turning a blind eye, Freud must have discovered “transference,” and “counter-transference,” and came to the conclusion that the most dangerous and the most effective treatment in psychoanalysis is the handling of transference and counter-transference.

In his article, Freud does not say that the movement of romantic feelings in a closed room itself is something that should be kept under wraps, even within the strict psychoanalytic therapeutic structure. However, Freud wrote, from an ascetic and ethical perspective, as follows:

*The analytic psychotherapist thus has a threefold battle to wage - in his own mind against the forces which seek to drag him down from the analytic level; outside the analysis, against opponents who dispute the importance he attaches to the sexual instinctual forces and hinder him from making use of them in his scientific technique; and inside the analysis, against his patients, who at first behave like*

*opponents but later on reveal the overvaluation of sexual life which dominates them, and who try to make him captive to their socially untamed passion.[.....] in medical practice there will always be room for the 'ferrum and the 'ignis' side by side with the medicina: and in the same way we shall never be able to do without a strictly regular, undiluted psycho-analysis which is not afraid to handle the most dangerous mental impulses and to obtain mastery over them for the benefit of the patient.*

*'In medical practice there will always be room for iron and fire alongside medicine. Likewise we do not forget to treat the most dangerous mental impulses and to gain control over them for the benefit of the patient . We can never do without strictly standardized and undiluted psychoanalysis.'*

*(Freud S, the end part of " OBSERVATIONS ON TRANSFERENCE-LOVE" 1915)*

The re-reading of "Kokoro", a suicide note reflecting the Japanese people's mind, will shed new light on the social and mental pathology of modern Japanese people, a country with one of the highest suicide rates in the world and a mass production of "social withdrawal (*hikikomori*)", also called passive suicide, even though the Edo period when the ritual of seppuku existed has long since ended. We Japanese tend to keep a lid on what is ugly (difficult to see), but in "Kokoro" lurks a hidden world of "turning a blind eye (Steiner, 1985)" and "the prohibition of don't look (Kitayama, 1993)".

In "Kokoro," "SENSEI," who covered up the guilt associated with love by saying, "Love is a sin," was he really able to wipe away the guilt and loneliness that he had been carrying in his solitude by leaving his will and disappearing? The characters in "Kokoro" are filled with a "turning a blind eye" attitude in a world of "prohibition of don't look". Not only "SENSEI," who barely left a will and disappeared, but also from "Wife," who does not suspect her husband's regular visits to the grave, to "I (the main character)," who does not try to get deeply into the distant relationship between "SENSEI" and "Wife," but keeps calling him "SENSEI," saying that it is not reserved to the end.

The sense of guilt that makes one want to "turn a blind eye" and turn away from the relationship is a guilt that overlaps with the guilt that Oedipus, who in the Oedipus myth murdered his own father King Laius without knowing him and later took the widow Jocasta (King Laius' former wife and Oedipus' own mother) as his wife, could not shake off to the very end. The Oedipus play is also a tragedy, ending with Oedipus poking himself in the eye with the brooch of the decapitated Jocasta, leaving him blind.

If Oedipus, "SENSEI (who committed suicide in the novel "Kokoro")", or "I (the protagonist of the novel)" had undergone psychoanalysis to handle love transference and *SENSEI* transference, the tragic ending might have been rewritten, albeit in a muddy way.

## Conclusion

This paper introduced *SENSEI* transference and *SENSEI* counter-transference in psychotherapeutic situations in Japanese society, where the term "*SENSEI*" is frequently used. In clinical situations where there is no understanding of *SENSEI* counter-transference, it is easy to fall into a hierarchical therapist-patient relationship from the top (teacher-therapist)

to the bottom (student-patient), and to become blind to the patient's anger, love, and attachment craving that is contained in *AMAE* (see figure). By understanding *SENSEI* transference and *SENSEI* counter-transference, the therapist becomes a good-enough mother, as Winnicott suggests, and the therapeutic space between therapist and patient becomes a potential space, or *IBASHO* in Japanese word, where emotions are mutually exchanged in both directions, not merely up and down. By internalizing this *IBASHO* in the patient's inner world, the patient acquires the skills to live in the raw, love-hate real world, graduates from the therapy, and returns to the muddy, swampy real world. Further investigations should be conducted to clarify the interaction between *SENSEI* transference, *SENSEI* counter-transference and *AMAE*.

The issues of suicide and social withdrawal (*hikikomori*) are not only a problem of Japanese society, but also increasingly important global issues, and of great international significance especially in east Asian countries (Kato et al. 2011, 2019, 2020, Lo et al. 2023). The word *SENSEI* is commonly used not only in Japan but also in China, Korea, and other East Asian countries. To combat such psychosocial issues, we should also deepen our knowledge of *SENSEI* transference and *SENSEI* counter-transference in other countries in the future.

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## Original papers

[Theory and Technique]

# Amae and attachment: Their conceptual and cultural organisation and clinical implications

Shimpei Kudo

**Abstract:** *Amae*, a mentality unique to Japanese people identified by Doi (1971, 1989), has been examined about the relationship with attachment (Bowlby, 1969/1982) as both are the infant's primary relationship with the caregiver. This paper discusses the relationship between the two. 1) Conceptually, it is suggested that both are terms that are fundamental prototypes of human relationships or object relationships and entail affective and positive feelings. Still, they are distinctively different in terms of the quality of the experience (gratification of oneness or security), the psychological context and psychodynamics in which the desire arises (the implications of separation), their relation to explorations and autonomous activities, and their desirability in society and development. Furthermore, 2) in relation to culture, it was contrasted that attachment is established basically on a biological basis, while *amae* has the precondition of a cultural context that includes the prohibition of desiring. A silent wish fulfilment through the back door, "it actually isn't allowed, but ...." is *amae*, and its dynamics include a temporary lift of the reality principle. In other words, *amae* has threefold sweet experiences; from the desire for oneness itself, the lifting of the reality principle to achieve this, and the expectation of the lifting by the other person. And the desire includes security (attachment), omnipotent nature (narcissism), sexual satisfaction (sexual desire), as well as aggression. It was emphasised that *amae* is, as such, a culturally constructed complex emotion and/or a complex desire. 3) In order to examine the clinical significance of such a relationship, sexual crimes are focused on because one of the author's clinical fields is forensic psychotherapy. Sexual offences have the drive to relieve psychic pain through sexual contact and acts, bridge the need for security as a child and sexual gratification as an adult, as indicated by the phrase "sleep with the mother," and also involve the omnipotent/narcissistic expectation for others (victims) to agree to have the sweet experience. Thus it can be viewed as a pathology of *amae*. However, it

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would be pointed out that in treatment and analysis, its vague outline of mental states because of the nature of *amae* as a complex emotion/desire is the disadvantage while the use of daily language is the advantage. Attachment perspectives straightforwardly retrieve the need for security from the complex, and a more elaborate analysis will be possible. The relationship between *amae* and attachment would be, I believe, organised as such.

**Key words:** *Amae*, Attachment, temporary lift of the reality principle, cultural construct, sexual crime as pathology of *amae*

## Introduction

“*Amae*” is an everyday language that describes the mentality associated with dependence in Japan, and it has attracted attention as a concept that captures various phenomena in Japan. However, Doi suggested that this was a pan-cultural mentality and saw it as a concept that “bridges dependence and attachment” and encompasses “the feeling of attachment” (Doi, 1992). As the primary relationships that begin in infancy, both *amae* and attachment are terms of therapeutic significance, and if they overlap, to sort out how they relate to each other would be a foundation for thinking about daily clinical work. Yet, it seems to me that so far there has not been a deeper discussion of the relationship between the two.

This may be due, to a large extent, to the lack of clarity in the concept of *amae* itself. As often criticized, Doi never clearly defined it. Since he originally took up the word that was widely used in everyday life to describe a clinical situation in everyday language, Doi had refused to define it as an academic term. This made the discussion difficult for scientific thinking, such as comparison and critical examination, while it is sensibly understandable to those (mainly Japanese) who use *amae* as an everyday language. The association with attachment is one such example.

On the other hand, half a century after its theorization by Bowlby (1969/1982), the concept of attachment has become an essential clinical concept that cannot be ignored within and outside psychoanalytical circles. In developmental research, it has been shown to be a pan-cultural, basic human infant-caregiver relationship (Bakermans-Kranenburg, & van IJzendoorn, 2009). Sorting out the relationship between *amae* and attachment here and now will, on the one hand, reiterate the nature of the “everyday” relationship in Japan, and on the other hand, provide an example of how the human pan-cultural relationship can be varied.

This paper attempts to clarify the relationship between *amae* and attachment (albeit one that Doi has rejected). I will first provide a conceptual overview of the relationship between the two, then redefine the psychodynamics of *amae* in a viewpoint of cultural context for examination, and thereafter, again consider the relationship between the two in terms of their clinical significance, focusing on sexual crimes.

(In this paper I use the singular “they”)

## 1. Conceptual Overview

*Amae* is defined lexically as “to depend and presume upon another’s love or bask in another’s indulgence” (Doi, 1989, 1992). Its prototype is the infant’s relationship with their caregiver, namely, pleading for a cuddle, burrowing their face or body into the caregiver’s body, being lonely or crying when the caregiver leaves, and conversely, feeling secure, expressing joy, or being satisfied when they are physically clinging to their caregiver. *Amae* refers, on the one hand, to the “wish” to “become one with the object” and to “expect” others to do so, and on the other hand, to the “state” in which such wish and expectation have actually been fulfilled. In this respect, this was regarded as passive love (Doi, 1973).

Empirical studies support this nature of *amae*. For example, Taketomo (1986) investigated *amae* in childhood and adulthood and found that it is characterized by “the temporary lifting of the code of ordinary, or ‘proper’, mature behaviour”. Following this, Yamaguchi (1999) assumed “inappropriate behaviour with the expectation of being accepted” (Behrens, 2004) as *amae*, and found that there is a difference in whether inappropriate behaviour would be considered *amae* or not, depending on the presence or absence of expectations to others. In interviews with Japanese mothers, Behrens (2004) revealed that *amae* is a concept that follows a developmental change from infancy to adulthood, and found that the affective features observed in infant-caregiver relationships are continuous, while the manipulative and reciprocal aspects are gradually present, and that in adulthood, there emerges obligatory and presumptive qualities in a non-intimate relationship.

Doi emphasizes the emotional aspect of *amae* to a greater extent, noting the original meaning of *amae* as “sweet” and describing it as a “sweet” experience (i.e., Doi, 1989). As mentioned earlier, he considered *amae* to encompass dependence and attachment, and specifically to represent the emotional aspect of attachment. Probably it refers to the gratification, the “sweet” experience, of being physically attached and nonverbally merged with one’s caregiver.

When considering the association with attachment, it is critically important to note that *amae* is centred on the “sweet” experience. This is because the concept of attachment would in fact be a distinct concept at this point, distinguished from *amae*, even though there is some overlap. Attachment is not concerned with gratification, but rather with fear.

Attachment is often defined as an “emotional bond” with a caregiver (Bowlby, 1988). At first glance, it resembles *amae* in this respect. However, this is a rather simplified definition but refers to a bond that seeks protection and comfort for the sake of survival. Attachment behaviour is the behaviour of seeking and maintaining proximity to a caregiver at times of danger or signs of danger, and its biological function lies in protection from predators, namely survival (Bowlby, 1969/1982, Ainsworth et al., 1978). Not only can they flee from dangerous situations, but if they flee to another individual that will protect them, they have a greater probability of survival. Such a tie to another individual is attachment (at the same time, the inherent disposition that produces such a tie is also called attachment). Proximity to a caregiver may be accompanied by gratification, but essentially it is a feeling of security resulting from being protected from danger.

For example, a two-year-old child may hide behind their mother when barked at by a large dog, or cling to their father when startled by a thunderstorm. Such behaviour could be called *amae*. But when a family flees to a shelter after a hurricane or an earthquake and hugs each other, this would not be called *amae*. Nor would the example of the two-year-old child be called *amae* when there is a frightened, drawn-out appearance. It is this emotional experience that sharply distinguishes between *amae* and attachment. The former is associated with sweet gratification, while the latter is associated with security that is “without fear” (Ainsworth, 2010).

There is another important distinction. Doi describes the psychology of *amae* as “the attempt to deny the fact of separation that is such an inseparable part of human existence and to obliterate the pain of separation” (Doi, 1973). This is not merely a descriptive definition of *amae*, but rather a psychodynamic definition that addresses its meaning, and in this sense it is more significant both psychoanalytically and psychologically. According to him, young children and adults do *amae* to others because they recognize that they are separate entities from others, feel pain over this, and wish to negate it. Hence, *amae* involves the desire for oneness. The sweet feeling mentioned above is this emotional experience. Doi also stresses that this psychology is not unrealistic or defensive, but rather that the dynamic brings people together.

Some commentary is necessary here. In Japanese editions of his book (Doi, 1971), obliterate here is written as “*shiyo*”, which usually means the German word *Aufheben*, normally translated into English as sublation. Since the English translation was not done by Doi himself, it is not clear whether this is an appropriate word choice, but at least in Japanese, it is understood not as a mere negation of the pain of separation, but as a concept placed in the oscillation between the existence of the fact of separation on the one hand and its negation on the other.

Here again, a point of clear difference from attachment is indicated. That is the implication of separation. In Doi’s context, separation means that an infant and a caregiver, or one person and another person, are separate entities. The dynamics that attempt to fill this separateness of being are said to be *amae*. From an infant’s existential anxiety when they discover that their caregiver is a distinct person, to the desire to obtain worldly gratification from others, any discrepancy with others is called separation, and the drive to dispel this discrepancy and form a relationship that cannot be obtained elsewhere is the psychodynamics of *amae*. On the other hand, the concept of separation also has an important place in attachment theory, where separation also activates attachment behaviour. However, separation by definition refers to a more specific, physical separation. When a caregiver is unseen by an infant when a distance exists such that a young child cannot achieve immediate proximity, or when a caregiver and a child are separated for a period of time (in Bowlby’s time, it could be an evacuation or hospitalization), that is, when a caregiver is temporarily not accessible to an infant, it is called separation (if permanent, it is loss). Both of *amae* and attachment have dynamics to resolve the separation, but one seeks to negate the existential and psychological otherness of the other, whereas the other is involved in assuring physical and psychological availability for protection and comfort. Thus, the two belong to completely different layers.

Furthermore, two additional differences can be pointed out. First, the endpoint of *amae*

is gratification, and that is where the story ends. Attachment theory, however, proposes that attachment behaviours terminate when the danger has gone and fear has been assuaged, and then switches to exploratory behaviours. A sequence of danger-fear-proximity-protection-secure-exploration is included in the concept of attachment. Second, *amae* is often viewed by the Japanese as negatively undesirable, in fact, it is their normal response (Okonogi, 1992). Attachment, on the other hand, has no such negative connotation. Bowlby distinguishes it from dependence which is socially undesirable.

Thus, while both *amae* and attachment are terms that describe the infant's relationship with their caregiver, are fundamental prototypes of human relationships or object relationships, and entail affective and positive feelings, they are distinctively different in terms of the quality of the experience (gratification of oneness or security without fear), the psychological context and psychodynamics in which the drive arises (the implications of separation), their relation to explorations and autonomous activities, and their desirability in society and development. An empirical study (Mizuta et al., 1996) found that, in the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) that is widely used in attachment research, there are no differences in security between Japanese and American preschoolers, but Japanese ones showed a greater degree of *amae* behaviours (in this research, it was operationally defined as clambering up on the mother's lap, burying face against the mother's chest, sustaining close physical contact, and persistent requests or demands of the mother). Therefore, it seems plausible to me to conclude that they are distinct concepts.

## **2. Cultural construction of *Amae***

Now, I would like to further examine the pan-cultural nature of the two. The examination will shed more light on the relationship between *amae* and attachment, with anticipation that the psychodynamics of *amae* will be clearer through this examination. In particular, by taking into account the cultural context, an obscure outline of *amae* will hopefully become elaborated.

### ***Attachment and Culture***

To begin, I would like to summarize the discussion on attachment and culture. Empirical studies of attachment were founded by Ainsworth, and when she developed the SSP, the infant's behaviour toward the mother named secure was taken up (Ainsworth et al., 1978). This was considered to be a normative pattern of infant attachment behaviour, but the argument was raised that such behaviour may be observed only in American and Western cultures (see van Ijzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz, 2008). Attachment research was criticized for not taking cultural differences into account.

However, at the time of the development of the SSP, she had noticed that the behaviour of infants toward their mothers observed in Uganda was not observed in the U.S., possibly because there was less stress to cause infant attachment behaviour, and she devised the SSP setting to add this stress. She confirmed that environmental and cultural differences cause differences in infants' behaviour toward their caregivers, yet similar patterns are retrieved in different cultures. In fact, decades after the development of the SSP, studies have been conducted around the world using the same procedures, resulting in a consensus

that secure infant behaviour is observed in approximately 60% of the community sample and that therefore this could be considered a normative attachment (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz, 2008).

On the other hand, research in non-Western countries has shown that the distribution of insecure attachments varies by country and region, for example, compared to Western countries, in Asia, including Japan, an ambivalent pattern is more likely to be found, in which a child is preoccupied with whether the caregiver is paying attention to them, does not calm down under stress even by being comforted, and does not return to exploration. Van Ijzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz (2008) concluded that, on the one hand, there is a biologically determined normative attachment behaviour, while on the other hand, it is influenced by environmental and cultural determinants and that there are interactions between attachment and culture. The observation by Mizuta et al. (1996) cited above is one such example.

Probably, attachment development follows a primarily biological program until 12 months old, when the first attachment is formed. An infant who experiences distress seek protection and comfort from their caregiver. This mechanism is common to humankind across cultures. However, in between, it has come to show subtle cultural differences, and the cultural context may be incorporated as a strategy as to what is the appropriate way to obtain protection and comfort, and how to lead to security through the experience of interaction, which behaviours and emotional experiences are acceptable or even welcome. This tendency is likely to become more evident as the child's neurological, cognitive, emotion regulatory, and behavioural development progresses. One could say that a child's attachment is a culturally influenced actualization of their biological disposition (along with other environmental factors).

### ***Precondition for Amae***

Doi assumed likewise that the mentality of *amae* exists as a latent desire across cultures.

even when *amae* is not present as an emotion, it can exist in a different form ...  
*Amae* here is not an experienced emotion, but a hidden wish ... one may say that  
*amae* exists even in Western society where it is not apprehended consciously as  
such. (Doi, 1971 (1973))

Here I would like to take a detour and dig into the psychodynamics of *amae* through sharable examples which will reveal how it interacts with the cultural context.

What I will discuss first is a scene from Natsume Soseki's "Meian", cited as an example of *amae* in "The Anatomy of Dependency" (Doi, 1971 (1973), here utterances of characters are quoted from Doi's book). A couple is invited by their relatives to a theatre show. However, it turns out that the husband has an illness. The wife does not like to turn down the invitation, but the husband says it does not matter. The wife says, "But I want to go," to which the husband replies, "Go if you want to, then". The wife replies, "Then why don't you come too?" "Don't you want to?". At this point, the husband sees the strange power lurking in the wife's eyes, but it soon disappears, and she smiles. "Don't worry. I don't particularly care about going to the theatre, I just wanted to endear myself to you

(*amaeru*).” *Amaeru* is an intransitive verb of *amae*.

One can speak of the difference observed here as a separation. We may feel *amae* in the wife’s sulky tone. The wife’s words are not just an expression of her wish to go to the theatre, but also include a desire for her husband to come with her and for him to willingly agree to this. It may be that she wants her husband to accept the whole of this desire, while at the same time, it may also contain a quiet protest against her unkind husband. If I could add a few words to this sulking attitude, it would be like this; “I know I should just give up, but I don’t have to do so, do I? I wish you would just say, ‘Okay, I understand’.”

Given it in this way, it seems possible to point out three things about *amae*: first, the obliteration of pain of separation is not just the sense of oneness with the beloved, but also extinguishing the misalignment of one’s wishes with the way the world is, which includes a wide range of unfavourable facts. Second, such obliteration and the resulting fostering of a sense of oneness are not done by oneself, but by the object of one’s love, that is the expectation of affection, favour, and indulgence. Finally, there exists the precondition that this obliteration, or in other words, the fulfilment of the wish, should not be sought, and thus, *amae* can express “specially” what is “really” not allowed to be wished for. The wife expects her husband to say, “OK, then, I will do so,” and when he responds in this way, she can experience a sense of oneness with the world. It may consist of passive love. However, it is the last point that is noteworthy here. *Amae* has the context as its precondition in which wishes are not actually allowed to be had, and it means the fulfilment of such unallowable wishes. This sense of “it actually isn’t allowed, but...” is an important element to talk about *amae*.

### ***Temporary Lifting of the Reality Principle***

In fact, when Doi (1953) first referred to *amae*, this negative element was experienced (the following is a quote by Okonogi [1999]). Doi describes how a patient, who had been speaking ill of him extensively up to that point, was then turned to him with a positive transference, and he responded to this patient’s attitude with a countertransference, feeling “embarrassed” and “it’s just fluttery”.

In other words, I described the patient’s expression of positive emotions in terms of “*amaeru*” or “*suneru* (sulking).” These words naturally include the meaning “it is incorrect” in them, ..... (Doi, 1953, quoted in Okonogi, 1999, my translation)

Now that we are well informed about *amae*, holding, and containment, or after we have gone through the discussion of transference-countertransference, we may find signs of change in such a patient’s attitude. Also, in discussion of *amae*, we tend to think of it as a desirable and valuable aspect of the primitive infant-caregiver relationships. However, returning to the ordinary perception of it, *amae* is likely to be treated negatively, as Doi himself was so. *Amae* is thus an action or expectation that is allowed only in a specific relationship or under specific circumstances, and the pleasure that constitutes *amae* is actually accompanied by prohibition. Because of the reservation of “it actually isn’t allowed, but...” in it, *amae* is felt as something hidden or secretive, which renders *amae* itself “something inappropriate.” This structure regarding *amae* could be stated in the



following way using psychoanalytic terms. “*Amae* is concerned with the temporary lift of the reality principle. The pleasant sensation obtained upon it is the feeling of *amae*. *Amaeru* is the experience or the expectation of this experience.” This is consistent with the definition of *amae* found by Taketomo (1986). *Amae* cannot be formed by itself. It cannot be overemphasised that *amae* is an experience that becomes possible only with the reality principle of the prohibition of wishing.

### ***Refrain—Considered Binding***

What, then, is this reality principle? What is prohibited? To think about this, I will look into the story of beginnings, again, the introductory part of “The Anatomy of Dependence.” The first chapter, entitled “The First Idea of *Amae*,” opens with the following episode. It was when Doi while studying in the U.S., visited someone who was an acquaintance of a Japanese colleague. Doi was rather hungry, and just then the host asked him if he wanted some ice cream. However, Doi politely declined the offer as the Japanese usually did. He could not say he was hungry in front of someone he met for the first time. But the host immediately withdrew the offer. Doi had expected the host to press him for a little more and thought that a Japanese host would have offered him ice cream without saying a word, and regretted that he should have asked for it. In this way, he realized that he was unconsciously expecting kindness from the other person.

This is the attitude known as “*enryo*” (refrain, restraint, or holding back) in Japanese. It is noteworthy that this episode constitutes the beginning of Doi’s discussion of *amae* and inspired him to conceive of *amae*. The word “*enryo*” was originally imported from China, where “*en*” meant “far away” and “*ryo*” meant “thoughtful,” referring to thinking about a far distant future. In Japan, however, it gradually came to mean refraining from one’s desires in anticipation of the distant future. If one wants to express one’s desire, it must be offered hesitantly. Or, they must expect to be fulfilled through the goodwill of the other party. The desire is then captured by “*hairyo*,” “*hai*” meaning to “distribute” and “*ryo*” again “thoughtful”, referring to care, concern, and thoughtfulness. It is an attitude or behaviour that carefully perceives and responds to what others want and need. This is how an individual’s desires are met. Refrain and concern are a pair and wishes are binded in this context.

The change in meaning from the original *enryo* seems to have occurred during the Edo period (1603–1867), and some may find it interesting to mention that during the period, a punishment called *enryo* was imposed on higher class as Samurai (member of the Japanese warrior caste) and Buddhist priests. The punishment was counted as a free (restraining) punishment and was light as a penalty. The individual was forbidden to leave the house, and the gates of the house were forced to lock. However, only a small gate, beside or back of the main gate, was left slightly open or unlocked, and the person was silently allowed to go out if they were not seen by others. The attitude of refraining, which was originally meant to consider the distant future, turned into restraining oneself from doing what the person wants, and more, there must have been a silent demand by the people around to refrain from doing so. But at the same time, it was acceptable to sneak out the side gate if the individual had a special status. That is, *hairyo* is given. If we replace “individual” with “wish,” “house” with “mind,” and “special status” with “special relationship,” we can



directly apply this to the structure of *amae*.

People in the *amae* country live in a culture that requires them to be modest and reserved in expressing their wishes. *Amae* has a psychodynamics that is formed under this culture. The reasons for the formation of such norms are left open to question, but at least there is a demand here, such as “do not express yourself freely,” and perhaps a moral sense, such as “do not bother others,” is relevant. The reality principle to be lifted in *amae* is this culturally inherited prohibition against desiring.

### ***Difference in Matrix***

Having detoured somewhat, I would like to return here to the discussion of the relationship with attachment, summarizing the psychodynamics of *amae*. *Amae* is a construct that can be called a complex emotion or a complex wish if we can put it that way. In my understanding, *amae* is the pleasure of enjoying the temporary lift of the reality principle under the cultural norm of withholding the desire. *Amaeru* behaviour requires the other person to agree with this release. This is not done as an explicit negotiation. Rather, it is hinted at and conducted implicitly. *Amae* thus has an element of hiddenness. For this reason, it causes a secretive, coy emotion. Now, the reason why this pleasure is regarded as a feeling of oneness with the object is because the nature of the desire itself is to seek a state of total unity. Therefore, from the desire itself, from the lifting of the reality principle, and from the object’s agreeing to it, a threefold sweet experience arises. This multilayered nature, I believe, makes *amae* argument ambiguous and complicated. Furthermore, when this desire is underpinned by a perception of separation in the sense of physical distance from the object, the sense of oneness would include security (i.e., an element of attachment). If this desire is mixed with sexual wish, then the state of total unity would contain feelings of sexual fulfilment (Doi’s take-up of “Meian” is close to such an example). If this is motivated by a drive to deny the reality principle, then a sense of grandiosity or omnipotence will be experienced. What Behrens (2004) describes as manipulative or obligatory *amae* may include the outcome of this narcissistic desire to deny the reality principle. *Amae* is thus, I believe, not a single emotion or wish, but a composite product, with multiple elements assembled therein.

There is certainly an emotional component of attachment in *amae*, as Doi says. However, firstly, attachment do not have “hiddenness”. The sense of “it actually isn’t allowed, but ...” characterizing *amae* is not assumed in attachment. Rather, attachment behaviour is a manifestation of innate disposition and is a need expressed in a straightforward manner (strictly speaking, Bowlby did not even use the word “need”). If this cannot be expressed straightforwardly, the manner stems from a strategy internalized in the caregiving experience. Hence, secondly, secure attachment is not culturally prescribed. Although it is conceivable that the proportions of cultural influences may increase with age, its nature, and formation itself, are established on a biological basis. This mechanism of formation is different from that of *amae*. If a straightforward expression of desires were culturally encouraged, or at least not marginalized, it would be unlikely that an *amae* mentality would develop. Needless to say, it is not plausible that in such a culture *amae* is not observed at all (as we will see later, we can also discuss a certain pathology in terms of *amae*). However, it still seems unlikely that the culture would position *amae* as a

normative relationship. In this sense, I believe that *amae* is a cultural construct.

Thus, in terms of their relationship to culture, again, it is not appropriate to equate *amae* with attachment; their psychodynamics are distinctly different. As a result, it is not plausible that *amae* encompasses attachment. Conversely, it is also unlikely that attachment would encompass *amae*. The two concepts, while related to each other, are still to be regarded as distinctly different.

### 3. Clinical Implications

In light of these discussions, how could we restate the relationship between *amae* and attachment? And what would be the clinical implications that can be drawn from this relationship?

Since one of my clinical fields is forensic psychotherapy, I would like to focus on the issue of sexual crimes. The relevance of attachment to sexual crimes has been argued for a long time (Baker et al., 2006), and the sexual domain was the birthplace of psychoanalysis in the first place. At the time of writing this paper, a large-scale paedophile sex crime in the entertainment industry has been unveiled in Japan, a country of *amae*, where hundreds of victims are believed to be involved (in addition, during the revision of this paper, another alleged sex offence was reported). The Me Too movement has also spread around the world. It is timely to address the crimes as a clinically suggestive issue related to *amae* and attachment here and now.

Sexual crimes are often discussed as issues of sexual desire, masculinity, dominance and power, or sadism. However, while these may be the means, strategies, personality factors, and defences that constitute the crime, they are unlikely to be the core elements, such as goals or motives, of sexual crimes. Dominance and power, for example, require others over whom control is exercised, and in that sense constitute disguised dependence. Behind the face of the perpetrator, there hides a helpless and vulnerable self. A sexual offence is actually a drive as well as a defence that arises in order to sexually comfort this psychic pain. Research on sexual offences supports this idea; the offenders often have conflicts in their close relationships just before committing the crime (Miner et al., 2010), and when in psychological distress, they resort to masturbation and conduct the offences in their fantasies (Hyatt-Williams, 1998; Maniglio, 2012). Sexual contact has effects to alleviate suffering, and the fact that masturbation is called “*ji*” in Japanese is an obvious illustration of it (“*ji*” means self, “*i*” comfort, and thus it is self-soothing or self-comforting).

One of my offender patients had repeatedly threatened women to keep the routine of picking up women, having sex with them, and sleeping with them overnight, but in the course of treatment, it turned out that the criminal pattern had stemmed from a fear of spending the night alone. This fear originated in the desperate loneliness he felt when he discovered that his mother, whom he had slept with as a child, had disappeared to be with his father, thus constituting his sexual offending, along with his anger at her betrayal. Hyatt-Williams (1998) wrote about a case of a boy who slept in stolen underwear as if buried in his mother’s breast. The expression “sleeping with a mother” is an excellent example of how the experience of infantile gratification is bridged to sexual relatedness.

Sexual crimes could be considered as a distorted derivative of the child's "sweet" experience.

Here involves the sense of gratification and merging through sexual contact, comfort and consolation derived from it, obviously selfish and egocentric narcissistic nature, that these are experienced in an undifferentiated way, moreover, the attempt to accomplish this desire mutely without negotiating with others in a socially acceptable manner (note that *amae* is often a non-verbal interaction), and often to attempt to wipe out boundaries with others in the hope that the other would accept these desire (recall the justification that "(s)he wanted it too" and "(s)he didn't rejected" known as a cognitive distortion or even a "rape myth"). So, security, narcissistic desires, and a wish for unity are included. In addition, when the anger at the betrayal of *amae* is confluent with this, the violent and destructive nature of the experience becomes more noticeable. Non-criminal sexual experience itself can have sweet elements, but the difference between it with sexual crimes can be explained, in Freudian terms, as a difference in the proportion of each partial drive in the experience, or, in terms of the object relations theory, as the miserable and helpless self and the love object are, in sexual crimes, simultaneously projected onto the victim, and the comfort is sexualized. Thus sexual crimes can be said as a pathology of *amae*.

The particular discussion of *amae* and attachment paves the way for the treatment of people who have such problems. A therapist might think about "healthy" *amae* and distinguish it from "pathological" *amae* (Okonogi, 1992). They might work with the patient on better *amae* along these lines. However, *amae* itself contains a backdoor, as I have discussed, as "it actually isn't allowed, but..." in the first place. What would be a socially appropriate back/side door? Does such a thing exist? Is it possible to distinguish between good *amae* and bad ones by sensing the difference in compositions of undifferentiated "*amae*" complex emotions?

The difficulty in understanding human behaviour and wishes from the viewpoint of *amae* is that it is multilayered and encompasses a wide range of wishes. Any desire that turns into a "sweet" experience is named as *amae*. There is uncertainty that the experience would be lumped together as *amae* if there is sweetness, even though in reality emphasis should be put on an attachment need, a narcissistic demand, a sexual wish, or even one including anger. Furthermore, one's behaviour is not determined by any one desire. If they seek protection from fear and anxiety, but are dependent on others for this beyond what is necessary, and consciously or unconsciously feel that this is their right, then there is a narcissistic undertone to their behaviors. When these are treated in a single concept of *amae*, not only a patient but even a clinician might find it difficult to discern if this is something appropriate or not. What are the internal facts of "sleeping with a mother"? Notwithstanding the advantage of being able to describe clinical phenomena by everyday language, the interpretation in terms of *amae* can lead to the mistake of carrying out the analysis with ambiguity as to what it is actually referring to. We might call this the blurring effect.

This is where the clinical significance of juxtaposing *amae* and attachment lies. There is no such thing as a backdoor or "hiddenness" in attachment. Based on the concept of attachment, the clinician can think straightforwardly about the need for protection and comfort. By separating a clearly articulated need from the idea of *amae*, which has a vague

outline, it is possible to analyze this complex emotion, complex desire, more precisely. We can clarify the inner substance of *amae*, and, using Winnicott's words, distinguish the attachment need as an ego need from the narcissistic and aggressive drives, id needs, and extract its original form of sexualized security from the *amae* complex. In that way, we can be informed where the mind is directed and which part should be responded to by others including the therapist. We could say to the perpetrator, "After all, what you really wanted was not sexual gratification, but do *amae* to your mother as a child. And what this *amae* meant was not just to have a sweet experience, but such love as to notice and comfort you when you were so lonely, thus protect you as a child, and care for your sorrows." In this way, we are in touch with depression, not with pleasure or gratification.

## Conclusion

*Amae* and attachment are distinct concepts. One is an everyday language, the other an academic term, each with differing clarity of outline. *Amae* is a structured expression of love under cultural norms, a secretive mentality hinted at through a back or side door. Attachment has no such connotation; it is a biologically prescribed disposition that motivates instinctive behaviours. Because *amae* is such an externally predetermined form of affection, a question arises as to "who calls it *amae*" (Maruta, 1992). When a two-year-old child is startled by a thunderstorm and clings to their parents, it is in fact someone else who names it as *amae*. Perspectives of attachment point that there is a genuine need for ego here. These differences represent well how the Japanese mind is formed and exemplify how love can take different forms depending on the culture.

Both are fundamental infantile emotional elements in the primary relationship as well as any important relationship. Pathologies, defences, and desires and wishes stem from the states of mind and they are accompanied by specific object relations and phantasies that are not mentioned here. Sometimes they are conscious content but mostly, especially in severely disordered personalities but even in healthy ones, they function unconsciously and form symptoms and problems, such as a sexual offence. Knowing them well would set up a basis for analysing the psyche. Clarification of their differences should contribute to the elaboration of such analysis.

It is such conceptual sorting that I have undertaken in this paper. I hope that this work demonstrates the potential diversity and complexity of love and will one day lead to someone else's novel work in future (how sweet if it happens).

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## Materials

# The *Amae* theory: Historical background and developments (abridged translation)

Keigo Okonogi<sup>Note 1)</sup>

### Editor's notes

This is an abridged translation of a lecture Dr. Keigo Okonogi gave at the April 1997 meeting of the Japanese Association of Clinical Linguistics and Semantics in Tokyo, in which he discussed his personal connections with Takeo Doi and summarized the historical outlook of the *Amae* theory. The paper is included in *Thoughts on Amae. Nihongo Rinsho* (3), edited by Osamu Kitayama (1999), Seiwa Shoten Publishers, Tokyo. (Editors: Satoko KAMO and Kohei HARADA)

## Introduction

I was very much looking forward to today's lecture because it would be a great opportunity for me to look back on my forty-five years of academic interactions with Dr. Takeo Doi. Dr. Doi is exactly ten years my senior. One of the events that prompted me to study psychoanalysis in the first place was hearing him talk at a meeting of the Study Group of Psychoanalysis, the predecessor of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association, hosted by Dr. Heisaku Kosawa<sup>Note 2)</sup>. Dr. Doi had just returned from his first, year-long overseas study in Topeka, Kansas, or to be more precise, at the Menninger Clinic there. At this regular meeting, held in September 1952, Dr. Doi gave a lecture entitled "Characteristics of American Psychiatry" to mark his return to Japan.

In today's discussion, I will talk about several exchanges I had with Dr. Doi in a historical context. I hope to shed light on a certain aspect of *amae*, if not give an overall picture of the *Amae* theory.

### *The latest definition of amae by Doi*

Explanations about the *amae* concept that Doi himself gave, which I feel are the most appropriate, are included in a paper he posted in "On the Concept of *Amae*" featured as

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a special section in *Infant Mental Health Journal*<sup>5)</sup> which I planned and edited in spring 1992.

“...there is a concept in Japanese that bridges dependence and attachment, two concepts which are conceptually separate in English. That concept is *amae* and I shall explain how it combines the two meanings.”

“*Amae* is a noun form of *amaeru*, an intransitive verb meaning ‘to depend and presume upon another’s love or bask in another’s indulgence.’ It has the same root as the word *amai*, an adjective meaning ‘sweet.’ Thus *amae* can suggest something sweet and desirable. Perhaps what is most significant about the word *amae* is that it definitely links with the psychology of infancy, for we say about a baby that it is *amaeru*-ing when it begins to recognize the mother and seek her, that is to say, long before it begins to speak.”

“Later, when a child begins to speak, he or she will eventually learn that such a feeling is called *amae*. But that does not change the situation that the feeling of *amae* is something to be conveyed nonverbally.” “Interestingly, the word *amae* can be predicated not only of a child, but also an adult when he or she displays a certain behavior vis-à-vis another that indicates the presence of a feeling of being emotionally close, something similar to what prevails between a baby and its mother.

In other words, the assumption is that there is a continuity between children and adults so far as *amae* is concerned...However, it is important to remember that though one may apply the word *amae* to a person to whom one is speaking or to a third person, one cannot do so for oneself when one is actually *amaeru*-ing, like saying ‘I love you,’ unless one is in a reflective mood to acknowledge one’s *amae*. *Amae* then may not be visible to the person referred to in the same way as it is to the observer, that is to say, one may not be aware of one’s own *amae*. The discrepancy between an emotion and its verbal recognition is not something unusual or rare. Rather it happens often, as we all know. However, it may be most pronounced in the case of *amae* because of its originally preverbal and nonverbal nature. At any rate, this explains, perhaps at least partially, why certain languages, like English, can manage without such a vocabulary.”

“I think it must be clear from what has been said above that *amae* involves a certain psychological dependence, because one who wants to *amaeru* requires another person who senses one’s need and can meet it. Thus *amae* is vulnerable and, being susceptible to frustration, it undergoes various transformations. This explains, in my opinion, the existence of a rich vocabulary in the Japanese language to express variations on the theme of *amae*. This is an indication of the elusive and delicate quality of *amae*.”

“Lastly, I want to emphasize that even though *amae* requires a generous partner for its satisfaction, it is not necessarily a passive state. *Amaeru* is an intransitive verb; therefore, it presupposes a certain capacity on the part of the person who does *amaeru*, the capacity to initiate the action leading to *amae* and to enjoy it. In other words, though *amae* indicates a feeling in the state of satisfaction, it can be felt as



a desire in frustrated states. The facts about *amae* mentioned above make it a very useful word in describing the emotional life of a person which is why it can shed light on various psychoanalytic concepts.”

Doi's definition of and explanations about *amae* described above are the best he had written so far, and they largely match my own views on *amae*. Today, I would like to talk about how Doi arrived at this definition after going through various ups and downs.

### **International reputation of the *Amae* theory**

Doi's *Amae* theory is highly regarded by psychoanalysts in Europe and the US who corroborate Doi's descriptions that I have quoted just now, starting with Frieda Fromm-Reichmann and other researchers into infant mental health, represented by Robert Emde. Dr. John Padel, a member of the British Independent School of psychoanalysis and having the closest connections with us here in Japan, said,

“The concept of *amae* can add something to the theory of psychoanalysis, enough to require reconsideration of this theory. The concept of *amae* that Doi arrived at is the formalization of a dyadic relationship: something that both Freud and Klein had failed to capture. As Doi said, British psychoanalysts, especially Balint, made observations that were the closest to those of Doi. Winnicott also created different variations to add to it. In any event, the concept of emotional and physical dependence was central to Winnicott and his predecessor Fairbairn. However, they were unable to appropriately link this concept to psychoanalytic theory which Freud had formalized. Doi realized this.”

(Quoted from a personal letter from Dr. Padel to Doi, dated June 27, 1993)

I believe this quote clearly conveys how highly Doi's *Amae* theory is regarded in the international community.

### **Controversy about the *Amae* theory at a symposium held in 1968**

The first symposium on *amae* was held in 1968 at the 13th annual meeting of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association. The discussions that took place at this symposium adequately describe the basic issues in understanding, or criticizing, the *Amae* theory, so I will present the remarks made by various speakers and Doi's reactions to them.

First, Naotake Shinfuku, then a professor at the Jikei University School of Medicine, referring to *amae*, which is originally a term to describe a phenomenon, said, “You have coined terms to correspond to *amae* such as desire for dependence/dependency desires and desire for *amae*/pampering, and yet you are now using *amae* as a psychodynamic concept to understand Morita neurosis<sup>Note 3)</sup>, of ‘wanting to depend on someone but not being able to.’ Isn't this a contradiction?” The answer Doi gave to this question goes to the heart of the *Amae* theory.

“The use of the term *amae* is not merely as a word to describe a phenomenon that occurs in front of us, but to show the mental processes that underlie this phenomenon, is by no means my personal invention. It is already present in demotic Japanese. As an actual example that demonstrates this the most clearly, I can mention the fact that when we see people who sulk, become jealous and/or cynical, we often comment, ‘Oh, they’re just *amaeru*-ing.’”

“Based on its common, even daily, use in the Japanese language, I have come to employ the word *amae* to show infantile and dependent desires. What I have mentioned above, however, is that, apart from the inherent usage of *amae* of being attached closely to a phenomenon, I have separately set up a notion called ‘dependency desire’ as a metapsychological concept that accords with Freud’s terms. Still, I see no inconvenience whatsoever in allowing *amae*—as a genuine form of expression, so to speak, for dependency desire—to represent this desire.”

This debate often occurs in connection with the *Amae* theory. I personally support Doi’s views on the function that the word *amae* has, of bridging both a phenomenal and a dynamic description. In other words, it is a word that bridges the conscious and the unconscious, which is why it comes to life as a clinical term in psychoanalysis. This, I believe, is the most important area of interest for members of the Japanese Association of Clinical Linguistics and Semantics. In other words, this ambiguity of the word *amae* is what Osamu Kitayama refers to as the ‘bridging function.’

The second debate that took place at this symposium was carried out by Koichi Ogino, a psychopathologist who discussed phenomenology and dynamism by methodologically contrasting them. He focused on *amami* or ‘sweetness’ and *shibumi* or ‘bitterness,’ which were topics handled in *Reflections on Japanese Taste: The Structure of Iki*<sup>Note 4)</sup> (stylishness and a chic look), a book written by philosopher Shûzô Kuki. What Ogino brought to light had rich implications. In particular, Ogino noted that, compared to *amae* (a noun derived from the above *amami* and which also means sweetness in Japanese), the word *shibusa* (a noun derived from the above *shibumi* and which also means astringency and/or bitterness in Japanese), when used as a verb, does not link to people’s direct emotions or desires, but instead describes passive or self-defense-type stances in interpersonal situations (its Chinese character can be used to form the word *jumen*, indicating frowning, or *shibuchin*, or stinginess), or things related to the anal stage. He wondered why *amae* (both sweetness and dependence/pampering) had become so universal in society, but *shibusa* (bitterness) had not spread more. This, I believe, is an interesting point at issue.

The third debate took place from inside the world of psychoanalysis, between Masahisa Nishizono<sup>Note 5)</sup> and me. In using this lecture as an opportunity to look back on this symposium, I find that Doi’s *Amae* = Narcissism theory of 1968 was a theory of secondary narcissism, and that the discussion initially developed from passive object love to self-love or narcissism, and the question of Doi’s narcissistic ego appeared thereafter. Regarding this discussion, Nishizono had already stated the concept of ‘healthy narcissism,’ quoting Heinz Kohut.

What is more, Nishizono was the symposium’s only participant who asserted that *amae* is being discussed within the overall psychoanalytic theory framework in relation to oral

love. He cited a case of a female hysteria patient in whom he, during free association, thought that an Oedipus Complex had appeared, but saw oral regression occur, of wanting to ‘depend on others and be pampered,’ after which she continued to freely associate an oral desire for dependence. Nishizono also dealt with themes such as desire for *amae*, desire for dependence, and conflicts involving oral desire and asserted that studies on these dependency desires, or on *amae* which already has an overall psychoanalytic flow, should be actively positioned within the framework of this flow that focuses especially on pre-Oedipal issues and mother-child relationships.

## Doi’s subjective background (Part 1): Separation and independence

In this symposium, I asserted that, even before the content of the *Amae* theory itself, I saw significant value in Doi’s subjective background that had led him to propose the *Amae* theory. Regarding this view, there was an issue that both Doi and I had emphasized to Japan’s psychoanalytic community from the 1950s to the 1960s.

It concerned the assertion of protecting Freudian therapeutic attitudes which I had clearly conceptualized, or, in other words, sensibleness or sincerity as a physician; analytic incognito; the rule of abstinence; and keeping the therapeutic structure. I emphasized these facts because, in the context of the Japanese history of psychoanalysis, they were not yet being fully shared at the time. And in Doi’s case, these attitudes were narrated under the themes of separation and independence in relation to the *Amae* theory. They also led to his views that, to make Freud’s psychoanalysis—which assumes a European mentality—take hold in Japan, it was important for the Japanese people to first acquire this mindset. The problem of *amae* had been clearly objectified by reflecting it conversely from this viewpoint. This, I strongly feel, is where the main backbone of the *Amae* theory lies.

At the symposium, I stated as follows:

“The contribution of Doi’s *Amae* theory, first and foremost, is found within his therapeutic attitude that supports it. The *Amae* theory essentially originates in Doi’s psychotherapeutic observations. However, this observation does not in any way focus on observing the patient only. Rather, we must note that it existed within the subjective issues of the therapist Doi himself. For example, as a paper in which he discussed the *Amae* theory and his own subjective issues by relating them in academic form, there is a special lecture he gave at the 9th general meeting of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association, entitled “Psychoanalytic treatment and the people of Western Europe.” As the title of this presentation, he had initially chosen “The adaptation of psychoanalytic treatment.” This adaptation implied ‘adaptation to social and cultural demands.’ The theme, in other words, was making Western European psychoanalysis adapt to Japanese society/culture. In this paper, he described the process by which he had taken note of the Japanese people’s unique psychology of *amae* through comparing his own experiences of treating American and Japanese patients. However, I personally believe that, behind all this, the problem of psychoanalyst Doi’s personal adaptation to these two societies is being expressed. In other words, I would like to show my appreciation of the

significance of Doi transcending the unique situations in Japan that comprised our country's psychoanalysis in those days, as well as its environment, and clarifying Western-style, or Freudian, therapeutic attitudes towards Japanese psychoanalysis."

## **Differences in the feeling of *amae* between Doi and Okonogi**

Omitted

### **Doi's subjective background (Part 2): Countertransference that rejects or denies *amae***

In investigating Doi's subjective background, I would like to go back fifteen years prior to the symposium in question, that is, to about 45 years ago. The part I am going to discuss was actually the point at which I began to understand Doi's view of *amae*. I'm not too sure, though, if Doi would have liked this or not.

From 1952 to 1953, Doi was giving lectures each month at the Study Group of Psychoanalysis, which was the predecessor of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association, by submitting cases of his patients for which he was being supervised by Dr. Kosawa. I would like to cover what he said at this study group by quoting the remarks I made at a symposium in 1968.

"I would like to examine Doi's task that is even more subjective as a therapist. Back in 1952, at a meeting of the Study Group of Psychoanalysis, Doi presented the following report on his own countertransference concerning a certain male patient's anxiety neurosis.

'I had failed, even after much effort, to accurately evaluate the positive transference which had finally emerged here. My reactions to this may also have been a 'tickling sensation,' or, to delve a little more deeply, they were something like, 'After criticizing me all this time and saying bad things about me, you're now praising me. That's just flattery; I don't buy it.' This is definitely my countertransference. As a result of this, I ended up giving the wrong interpretation to the patient. What I did was to explain the manifestation of the patient's positive emotions using the words '*amaeru*' or 'to sulk.' Words such as these naturally imply feelings of 'not what you say is right, good or acceptable,' so the patient saw his positive emotions that had finally emerged being crushed from the start. As a result, his negative emotions were re-awakened and manifested in the form of an explosion of dissatisfaction. This is clearly shown in the comments that the patient made during his 14<sup>th</sup> free association, 'You're a doctor but you're also a human being,' and 'I won't get any better by simply clinging to you'...

In summarizing his report, moreover, Doi stated that the patient's biggest problem probably concerned his relationship with his mother, and described how an analyst's countertransference can complicate the treatment. This was the first case report on *amae* that Doi had presented at an official forum on psychoanalysis

in Japan. It is extremely interesting to note that, having been motivated by countertransference like this, Doi had already used words such as '*amaeru*' and 'sulking' to interpret a patient's denial of *amae*. This fact shows that he had already paid attention to *amae* in those days, and that this attention had developed as a result of his countertransference. What is more, he had experienced difficulty with this type of dependence, and had used the word *amae* while rejecting it as a therapist.<sup>3)</sup>"

The fact was that I, too, had attended this study group meeting at which this case report was presented, and told Doi: "I feel that the attitude you take towards me when I ask you a question, trying to approach you in a friendly manner, is very similar to the attitude you took towards this patient." What I had wanted to say was that I found Doi's countertransference there—or rather, his personality. At the time, what I felt about Doi was something like, 'I know that *amae* has more fun aspects, too, but why is he not admitting this straightforwardly? Could it be that he is embarrassed to reveal his *amae* to others?'

Another thing I wish to mention—this is quite interesting, by the way—which also appears in Nobuhiro Kumakura's book <sup>6)</sup>, is a passage that describes Kosawa's advice to Doi during one of the supervision sessions. Referring to Doi's use of the word *amae* with his patients, Kosawa reportedly said, "The phrase, 'You are *amaeru*-ing' in Japanese often has negative implications, so you must be careful when using it in therapeutic relationships." In other words, the numerous problems that subsequently occurred with the *Amae* theory and the discussions/debates about *amae* that followed had already appeared in this situation. One problem is deciding what sort of attitudes we as therapists should adopt towards *amae*. The discussion, simply put, is whether or not we should overcome *amae*, or affirm it and take it as a given, and what sorts of words and tone of voice we should use.

One of the arguments that everyone gives here is this: *Amae* is actually used, not as an infant's experiences that had been described thus far, but more frequently as an everyday language which either an adult, or a person in a senior position, or a person who is being depended upon, uses towards the other person, and often with negative connotations. Examples of comments include "You are *amaeru*-ing," "Don't *amaeru* like that; shape up," and "That shows your *amae*." Doi's clinical experiences did, in fact, begin from this problem.

Based on my personal history-like experiences with Doi, I feel that Doi himself, too, had his own internal path of development on *amae* that spanned 45 years, and that his feeling of *amae* gradually changed. I believe that Doi's attitude in those days, of appearing as if to persuade the patient to overcome their *amae*, was the result of the following two factors that are deeply connected on every level: his feeling of personal countertransference, and his withdrawal and sense of independence from Japanese society whose members all depend on, or *amaeru* on, each other. I also feel that this subjective background had an extremely high historical value at that time.

### **'A child who does not *amaeru*' was extremely Oedipal**

Omitted

## ***Amae* and the theory of latent homosexuality**

Doi discusses this in his book, *The Psychological World of Natsume Sōseki*<sup>3)</sup>, in which he deals with questions such as a young man's infatuation with his teacher in *Kokoro* and Freud's experiences with Wilhelm Fliess, and points out that what Freud calls a latent homosexual relationship is in fact an *amae*-linked problem. In other words, by using the perspective of *amae* to think again about what was being expressed in psychoanalysis as 'homosexual' to describe the relationship between two men, Doi presents a new understanding of Freud.

What comes to mind concerning this, is Freud's reaction to Sandor Ferenczi. Having become fed up with the latter's *amae*, Freud warns him, "Stop *amaeru*-ing like that." It is true that Freud was trying to overcome his *amae* in this sense towards his same-sex teachers and superiors (a paternal figure), beginning with E.W. von Brücke, Jean-Martin Charcot, Wilhelm Fliess, and Joseph Breuer. It appears, however, that, no matter how hard he tried, Freud immediately interpreted emotional intimacy as being sexual, and adopted abstinence; he was unable to successfully conceptualize love and intimacy in the broader sense, as well as the value of emotional responsiveness or availability to emotions. Precisely because of this, I feel that the debate with Sandor Ferenczi that emphasized the significance of these types of emotions was in fact the first-ever argument on *amae* in the history of psychoanalysis.

## **Affirming or overcoming *amae***

My conclusion is that Doi's feeling of *amae* underwent generational changes and that his attitude towards *amae* also changed from overcoming it to affirming it. The University of Tokyo Newspaper organized a conversation between Doi and me in 1987, which gave us the chance to talk about his change. At the time, Doi said that he was able to clarify his attitude towards *amae* and confirm that he was an outsider in Japanese society, adding that these were positive outcomes<sup>Note 6)</sup>. Thus, to recap this lecture, I would like to describe our exchanges that took place during this conversation.

Okonogi: Dr. Doi, you understand the Japanese people's *amae* in the direction of overcoming it and becoming independent of it. The way our society in general interprets *The Anatomy of Dependence* is that *amae* is something that should be overcome. This view has become quite commonplace. My view, however, is that problems associated with *amae* cannot be solved simply by 'overcoming' it. This is because, at the level of conscious psychology, the Japanese act as individuals, but, on the unconscious deep psychology level, there is a strong aspect of us living our everyday lives with a Japanese sense of unity.

Doi: It is true that *The Anatomy of Dependence* has become something like common noun, and *amae* is frequently used in a critical context, such as "*Amae* is something that should be overcome." In the book, I too, have used the phrase "overcome *amae*," but in just one instance. However, this does not mean that we should deny or negate *amae*. I've used the word in the sense that, when Japan enters into global relationships



with other countries, it should not be immersing itself in *amae*, but overcome *amae* and move beyond it. I am neither criticizing *amae* nor negating it. In the book, I evaluate *amae* positively in some sections, and view it critically in others. However, it is wrong to regard me as being negative towards *amae*. Rather, I believe that Japan's strength lies in *amae*.

Okonogi: But I am quite familiar with the subjective background through which your *Amae* theory was formed. It is not just how you describe it in your book: I also think that, in your subjective background, there was a move towards overcoming *amae*. I'm also looking at you through the generations, over time. I believe it was about twenty years ago that you passed beyond adolescence and established your own identity. When I look at your writings of that period, I find that you are distancing yourself from the Japanese people's *amae*, and looking at it with a critical eye, based on the perspective that the type of people you aspire to become are individuals who support Western-style rationalism and individualism. This is helping make the *Amae* theory hold up and not fall apart. I also assume that your ways as a subject towards *amae* in you personally, from your 30s to 50s, have undergone subtle changes. I believe that the Dr. Doi who looked at Japanese society from a certain distance while you were studying in America differs from the Dr. Doi who is now rooted in Japanese society.

Doi: I must say that your observations, Dr. Okonogi, are largely correct. Since my days as a student, I have been aware of being an outsider in Japanese society. It is not incorrect to say that, psychologically, I attempted to escape Japan. That is why *amae* came into view. You should understand that it's my own *amae*, not that of the Japanese people. If I had been an insider, I probably would have been unable to see it, but as an outsider, and a person who had attempted to escape Japan once, I was able to observe the structure and anatomy of Japanese society and psychology. Am I correct in thinking that, as an insider, you are reacting to my outsider-like stance? I neither affirm nor deny *amae*, at least in words, but you, Dr. Okonogi, have sensitively detected my outsider-like nature.

## Conclusion

Omitted

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## Editor's notes

Note 1. Keigo Okonogi (1930–2003). Psychiatrist. Served as president of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association (1988–1991), professor at the Faculty of Environmental Information, Keio University, and professor at Tokyo International University's School of Human and Social Sciences. In addition to further expanding the Ajase Complex proposed by Heisaku Kosawa, he wrote a large number of monographs that cover a wide range of themes, aimed at both the general public and clinical practitioners, including moratorium and the therapeutic structure theory. He played an important role as an organizer, coordinating various psychoanalytic movements.

Note 2. Heisaku Kosawa (1897–1968): Worked at his psychoanalysis clinic both before and after the Second World War. As a psychoanalyst during the formative period of psychoanalysis in Japan, he fostered followers who later became dominant figures, such as Takeo Doi, Masahisa Nishizono and Keigo Okonogi. He was the first president of the Japan Psychoanalytic Society and the first president of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association (1955–1959). Proponent of the Ajase Complex.

Note 3. Morita neurosis: As psychotherapy for neurosis, Masatake Morita (1874–1938) established Morita Therapy, a technique unique to Japan. He recognized that personality traits commonly seen with neurosis (introversion, introspection, an overly cautious nature, hypersensitivity, world-weariness, perfectionism, idealism, and being a bad loser) were present behind the disease, and called it the *shinkeishitsu* (neurotic) temperament.

Note 4. *Reflections on Japanese Taste: The Structure of Iki* (stylishness and a *chic* look) (1930): A book written by philosopher Shūzō Kuki (1888–1941), analyzing Japan's unique sense of the beauty of *iki*, or stylishness and a *chic* look. According to the Daijisen Dictionary, *iki* signals that a person's temperament, attitude, and appearance are clean and polished, also making them sexually attractive.

Note 5. Masahisa Nishizono (1928–2022): Psychiatrist. Served as president of the Japan Psychoanalytic Society (1992–2007), president of the Japan Psychoanalytical Association (1985–1988) and professor at Fukuoka University's Department of Psychiatry. Has made significant contributions to the clinical practice of psychoanalysis in psychiatry, and the development of dynamic psychiatry. His viewpoint of positioning *amae* within various pre-Oedipal problems and mother-child relationships likely comes from his having focused on the practice of team medicine featuring interdisciplinary collaboration, and from close observations of nurses' maternal involvements.

Note 6. Doi's summary, entitled "On ending the conversation" is as follows.

"I had some reservations about conducting this conversation, but now that it's over, I'm glad I did it. I reaped two harvests from it. One was that I publicly admitted, for the first time, my awareness of being an outsider. I have not explained the reason why I have this awareness, but I feel that I must reveal it one of these days. Another was that I was able to clarify, to some extent, the meaning of 'overcoming' *amae*. This is not about criticizing *amae* or accusing it of being bad, or denying it. Instead, it is about becoming aware of it hiding inside one's self. It is not about criticizing *amae* as a concept, but instead, consciously becoming aware of it. In short, it is about making the unconscious *amae*, conscious. Only then can people transcend the horizons of *amae*."



## **Postscript**

It is a treasure for the Japan Psychoanalytic Society that the word and concept of “amae” is now a part of the international psychoanalytic dictionary. Since amae is an ordinary word in casual conversation for Japanese, paradoxical though it may sound, it causes some difficulties for us, the Japanese psychoanalysts, to tackle the concept of Amae psychoanalytically.

However, when we decided to publish this special issue on “Amae,” some analysts showed their willingness to submit their original papers on Amae.

Thanks to their cooperation, we could happily publish this issue. I would like to show my great respect to those brave writers who belong to the third, fourth, and fifth generations of the Society.

I would also like to mention that the passion of our younger editors was an essential ingredient to publishing this issue. I am quite happy to praise the hard work of those four psychoanalysts.

Lastly, I would like to show my gratitude to the International Journal of Psycho-Analysis for giving us their kind permission to reprint an original paper from the late Takeo Doi (1920–2009) in here.

Kunihiro Matsuki  
Editor in Chief

**The ideals and editorial policies of *The Journal of the Japan Psychoanalytic Society*: Principles, editorial policies, and manuscript submission guidelines** (Prepared and approved on April 12, 2018. Revised and approved on February 18, 2019)

**Basic principles**

1. The Journal of the Japan Psychoanalytic Society offers a forum for individuals linked to the Japan Psychoanalytic Society (JPS) to publish information on their clinical practice of psychoanalysis and academic studies based on it. English is the language used.
2. As the bulletin of our Society that informs on Japanese developments, the Journal aims to be a forum by which to release, globally, information on clinical practice and research being carried out in Japan, and to conduct international exchanges.
3. As an academic journal for psychoanalysis, it aims to present an abundance of highly sophisticated content.

**Editorial policies**

1. An Editorial Committee will be organized. Members of the Committee, chiefly the Chairperson and Vice Chairpersons, will be responsible for the editing work. They will ask overseas IPA Members for their assistance in serving as Visiting Editorial Committee Members.
2. Eligible to submit manuscripts are members of the Japan Psychoanalytic Society and other suitable individuals; members of other countries' psychoanalytic societies and who are approved by members of the Editorial Committee as being eligible; and individuals within other institutions whose papers and articles are approved by the members of the Editorial Committee as worthy of being featured in the *Journal*.
3. Language used: Papers and manuscripts are to be submitted in English. Japanese language editions may also be inserted if the authors so request, and with the Editorial Committee's approval. When contributing a paper, authors are advised to attach, where possible, a Japanese translation.
4. Publication will be in an e-journal (electronic edition) format. The *Journal* will be distributed only to JPS Members and related individuals, to overseas psychoanalytic societies, and psychoanalytic institutes.
5. The content will consist of two types of manuscript: reviewed and not reviewed. The details will be outlined in the Manuscript Submission Guidelines.
6. The *Journal* will feature papers related to the acquisition of qualification as a JPS-certified psychoanalyst and psychoanalytic psychotherapist.
7. Because the *Journal* uses English as its official language, it will be a separate entity from the *Annual Report*, which is published in Japanese.
8. The *Journal* is planned to be published once a year, prior to the Society's Annual Meeting held in June.

**Manuscript submission guidelines**

1. Manuscript format: Papers should be about 5,500 words in total, including references and charts that have been kept to a minimum. The total should, in principle, not exceed 8,000 words. All material must be produced in MS Word form and sent as an email

attachment. Essays and reports must not exceed 4,000 words in total; and letters and book reviews, no more than 2,000 words in total. These numbers include all the content, not only the body text but also the title, affiliation, references, acknowledgments, etc.

2. Criteria for acceptance or non-acceptance: To be decided by the Editorial Committee.  
The paper must not have been already published in English: papers that have already been inserted in other English journals will not be considered for review.  
In conducting our investigations, three members of the Editorial Committee, selected to look at each paper, will review the manuscripts. The opinions of non-Japanese analysts, who are Visiting Editorial Committee Members, may also be obtained as necessary. The Editorial Committee will then study each paper, based on the comments made during the review.  
The date on which a paper has been submitted will be designated the Date of Receipt, and the date on which inclusion in the Journal has been decided will be designated the Date of Acceptance.
3. The paper/report must comply with accepted ethical codes that govern scientific research. The authors will be responsible for meeting confidentiality obligations.
4. The themes and categories of manuscripts acceptable for submission are as follows.  
Theories and Techniques, Clinical Communications, Child Psychoanalysis, History, Interdisciplinary Studies, Psychotherapy, Educational and Professional Issues, Essays, Letters to the Editor, Obituaries, and Book and Journal Reviews. These themes and categories may be revised and/or enlarged.  
Authors submitting their research papers are asked to submit an original paper, as a basic rule, which will then be reviewed. However, direct insertion of invited lectures or presentations given at international conferences, etc., may be approved, based on examination by the Editorial Committee. Educational and professional issues, essays, letters, book reviews and the like will be proofread by the Editorial Committee.
5. The submitted paper should be constructed as follows.  
The author must clearly write, above the title of the paper, the category in which he or she requests the paper to be published.  
Next should follow the title (if needed, a subtitle may be added), name, affiliation, postal address and email address; then the key words (up to 5 words), abstract (up to 600 words), body text, and references. The IPA Journal's writing style should be followed when writing the references.
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