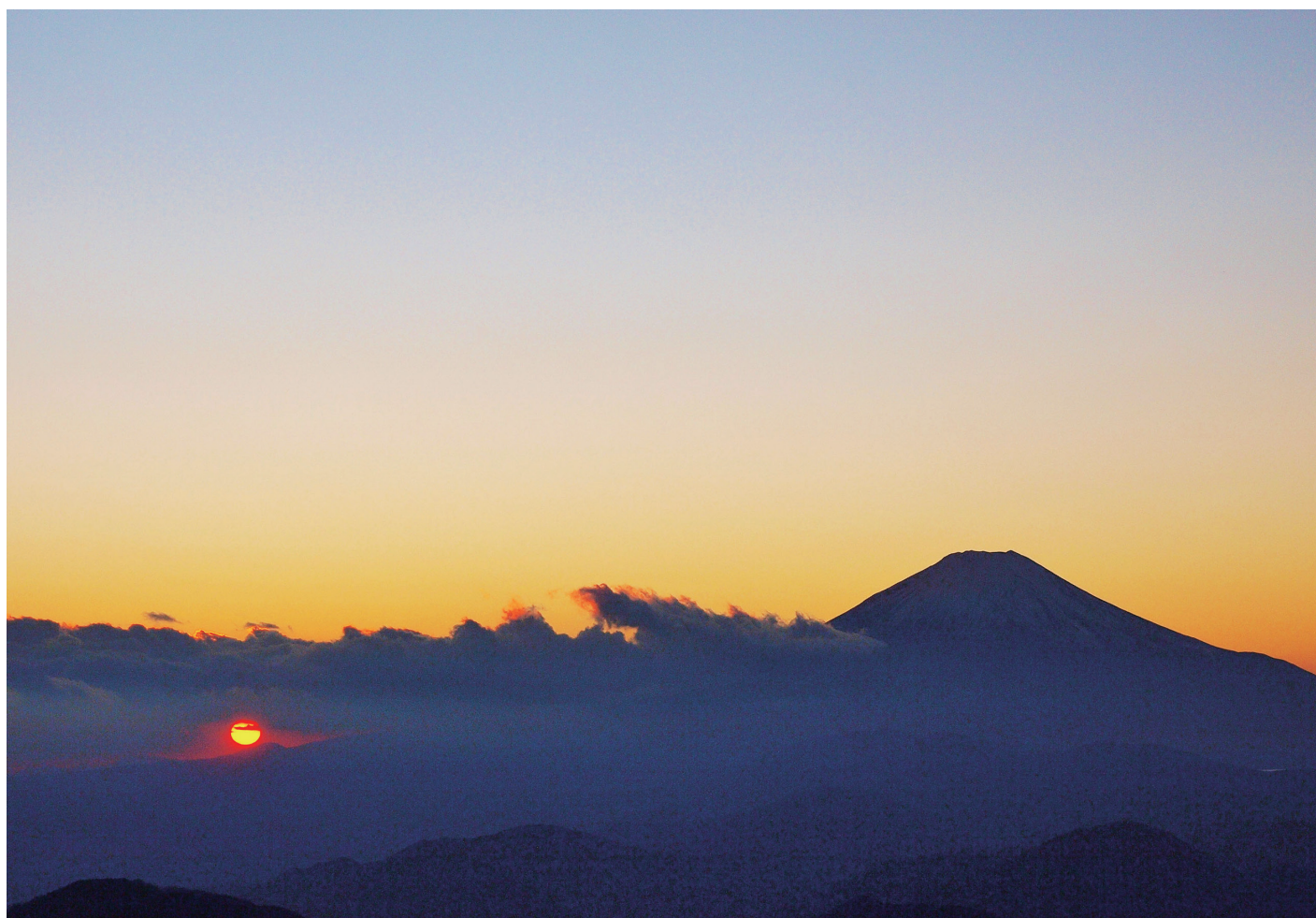

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Mt. Fuji seen from the top of Mt. Tonotake, Cordillera Tanzawa



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Since the first new coronavirus cases were confirmed in China in December last year, the virus has spread around the world like wildfire. By the third week of July, the number of people who had contracted the virus worldwide topped 14.5 million, and more than 600,000 people had lost their lives to the disease.

In response, countries in every region of the world, under varying national conditions, have been directing their efforts to overcoming the onslaught of this coronavirus pandemic. However, the plight of regions struggling with inadequate health systems due to protracted periods of conflict, poverty, and refugee problems as well as hunger, drought and natural disasters due to the impacts of climate change is particularly severe. Since the beginning of July, Japan has faced the challenge of trying to contain the spread of the virus while also trying to deal with crippling casualties caused by torrential rains.

As humankind faces these difficult circumstances, our Director General Mrs. Yumiko Kaneko reminded us of one of the guiding principles of the Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education, whose mission is to promote human education; *everything in life is material for self-education* in the Center's Japanese newsletter (No. 421) published on March 25. Then, she noted as Challenges of New Coronavirus, "This new coronavirus is not the only challenge facing humankind at present. We also have the challenge of global warming, and in recent years regions throughout the world have been hit by devastating natural disasters. We are entering an age where we must recognize that humankind as a whole is at a crisis point, and that life on earth must survive and continue to exist. With this understanding, I believe we must seriously consider the emergence of this new coronavirus that humankind is now facing from the viewpoint of what we in our self-education must learn from this experience."

In her article Challenges of the New Coronavirus 3, Mrs. Kaneko also stated, "I believe it is important for our economy to recover. On the other hand, I am afraid we may repeat the same mistakes in the future if our only wish is to return to a pre-coronavirus world."

At the beginning of 2020, before the new coronavirus posed such a threat to the world, Mrs. Kaneko sent out her annual New Year's Message as guiding words for the year. In her message, she stated that at the macro level, our global ecosystem is at a tipping point, while at the micro level, we live in a society with limited options where we must face the dangers in our own lives. Against this backdrop, she asks what are the viewpoints we should return to and what is the way of life we can create for the future. We paused to think out that we would like to share with our readers her guiding words and we are now presenting in this issue her New Year's Message (January 19, 2020) as well as *Challenges of the New Coronavirus 3* (May 25).

New Year Message



Mrs. Yumiko Kaneko
Director General
Nomura Center for Lifelong Integrated Education

Happy New Year to you!

This is the first New Year under our new Emperor of the Reiwa era. It is also the Rat Year that marks the start of the twelve zodiac years.

And, this year is also the Year of the Olympic Games. As the host nation, Japan anticipates an enormous increase in the number of visitors including athletes from countries all over the world. This will be Japan's second time to host the Olympics, the first time being more than 50 years ago when the games took place in Tokyo in 1964. If we compare the background of these two events, we can see significant changes. The previous Olympics in Japan were held in autumn while the games this time will take place in summer. Considering the searing heat Japan has experienced in the past few years, which is believed to be abnormal, there is much concern that athletes from Japan and other countries will have to endure severe conditions. As a citizen of the host nation, even an ordinary person like myself finds this very worrying.

The reason for holding the Olympic Games during summer months is said to be due to issues relating to broadcasting rights. I checked it out and found that commercialization of sports in the area of television broadcasting rights began in earnest following the economic success of the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984. Broadcasting at that time was enhanced by revolutionary advances in technology that enabled the transmission of television images via geostationary satellites, and this is believed to have triggered an "industrial revolution" in sports. Although various sports are broadcast in countries around the world at present, very few major sport events take place in summer. Therefore, the Summer Olympics for the most part have been held in July or August

for the past 30 years, which is believed to be the ideal time for the coverage of events by television stations. In short, as broadcasting technology advanced, competition to win broadcasting rights intensified and led to the commercialization of sports. Consequently, it seems that economic gains rather than the athletes' welfare have become the main priority in determining when the event is to be held.

While I hope that we will not experience a particularly hot summer this year, given that Japan has been directly hit by a number of typhoons for the past few years, and is also a country that experiences frequent earthquakes, I cannot help but have various causes for concern. Environmental problems similar to those we have been experiencing were reported at COP25 last year as urgent global issues. It was not only Japan but Europe has also experienced severe heat waves. Meanwhile, Africa has suffered from drought, and India from repeated floods due to unusually heavy rain. The Amazon has suffered from horrendous, large-scale forest fires, while Australia has been afflicted with seemingly uncontrollable bushfires. In Japan too, natural disasters caused by typhoons continued to occur. Amid these global conditions, an assessment at the end of last year indicated that Japan had sustained the most severe damages of any country in the year 2018. Despite this, Japan was unable to propose measures to reduce CO2 emissions, and it is regrettable that our country received the ignominious "Fossil of the Day Award," for its reprehensible lack of environmental awareness.

It has long been said that human economic activities have major impact on rising temperatures and if we continue to emit greenhouse gases at the current rate in an

environment that has not seen improvement, it is predicted that temperatures will rise by a maximum 4.8 degrees by 2100, and 40% of the world's glaciers will melt. When this happens, sea levels will rise by a maximum 1.1 meters. Under these conditions, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that many islands in the Pacific will become submerged, storm surges will continue to occur along Japan's coasts, annual damages from inundations along coastal areas around the world will increase exponentially from the present level, and the likelihood of extremely high temperatures, heavy rains and heavy snowfall will also increase. If these environmental problems requiring urgent remediation are due to human economic activities, what should we be doing? We must seriously consider that our very survival is under threat unless we manage to overcome human obsession with economic prosperity.

Put simply, in our world today, there is a strong tendency to consider everything from an economic viewpoint. One example we can all relate to is when we shop for goods. Basing our judgment on whether the price is expensive or cheap, we have a tendency to look at products from the viewpoint of their being good or bad simply because they happen to be cheap or expensive when, in fact, the issue should be the substance or content. I believe that we tend to make judgments without seeing these qualities. I wonder whether the very fact that we subconsciously make decisions on economic bases creates an orientation that causes our society as a whole to revolve around the economy. In that sense, I believe we must become a society where we want to hold events like the Olympic Games under truly pleasant circumstances where athletes can fully demonstrate their abilities, rather than basing decisions on their timing on the economy, in this case, broadcasting rights.

Early in the New Year, a major incident in the Middle East made headline news. General Soleimani, Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force, was assassinated by the United States, and there was talk that this could develop into a major war. One person issued an order to kill another person, and this order was executed. When acts such as this is backed by a country it is considered as legitimate, and are apt to escalate to a war. I believe it will be a serious problem if we live in a world that gives it tacit consent to such acts. While hostilities between Iran and the United States have been ongoing for about 40 years, the current tense situation is said to be unprecedented.

Furthermore, on December 27 last year, the Japanese Government made a cabinet decision to dispatch Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to the Middle East. In the name of diplomatic efforts aimed at easing tensions and stabilizing the situation in the Middle East, the plan is for the SDF to commence activities in mid-February. Although Japan adopts a pro-American stance, our country has considerable credibility in the Middle East. I believe this is because we have earned the trust of

countries in the Middle East on the basis of Article 9 of our Constitution that renounces war as a sovereign right. Since Japan appears to be dispatching SDF without any rationale, it is unable to indicate what kind of stance it will take in regard to either Iran or the United States. I sincerely hope the Japanese Government will actively play its role as an intermediary as it understands both countries well, rather than remaining unable to clarify its position but because it maintains friendly relations with both countries passively.

For nearly six decades, the late Mrs. Yoshiko Nomura, our Founder, maintained the point repeatedly that issues like the ones I just mentioned are not problems of some faraway place in the world but problems of the very earth we all live in. Today we live at a time when each and every one of us must take an interest in such problems rather than leave them to the people in power. If we fail to understand this right now, we will put our precious earth and our own survival in jeopardy.

In addition to environmental issues, our world is beset by a number of other pressing issues such as differences of economic issues, problems of immigrants and refugees, and the challenges of people demanding democratization as seen in Hong Kong.

While economic disparity is an issue even within Japan, an international charity organization working to alleviate poverty points out that the world's richest 26 people own wealth equivalent to the gross assets of 3.8 billion people, half of the world's population who possess the least, and that the gap between rich and poor continues to widen.

When we check why such economic disparities occur, there is a general view that following the collapse of a socialist system resulting in the mainstream of capitalist-based thinking of the United States becoming the sole superpower resulted in deregulation and proceeded in an environment of market universalism. This is referred to as neo-liberalism but during the period of transition, the gap between the so-called "winners" and "losers" widened.

In Japan, during the period of high economic growth, from around 1964 when Japan hosted the Tokyo Olympics for the first time until the period of stable growth some time later, Japanese as people were said to have a universal awareness of being middle class, and this notion supposedly lasted until its dissipation around 1998. In relation to this, I would like to refer again to the newspaper article I shared with you during my lecture at last year's National Seminar Course. It was titled "Increase of dual income families and decline of full-time housewives."

In 1980, there were 11.14 million single income households with full-time housewives, and 6.14 million dual-income households in Japan. In 1997, 17 years later, the figures had changed to almost the same, with 9.21 million and 9.49 million households respectively. In 2018, roughly 20 years later, there were 6.06 million single-income households

with full-time housewives, and 12.19 million dual-income households, indicating that over a period of about 40 years, the figures for households with single-income full-time housewives and dual-income households reversed, with the period around 1997 as a turning point. This being the case, if we accept that the collapse of the middle class as well as the notion held by Japanese people that all Japanese are middle class occurred during the same period when there were similar numbers of single-income households with full-time housewives and that of dual-income households, one cannot help but wonder whether there was some connection with the rise of neoliberalism in the world and the increase of dual-income households. Considering these facts, I wonder whether the era when the economy became the center of ordinary households in the late 1990s, and family life, centered on that economy, unknowingly fell in step with changes in the world, establishing this pattern. At the same time, a brief look at conditions today shows that despite an increase in the number of people working in dual-income households, disparities have occurred and are widening further. I believe this situation requires further investigation.

Even the world's immigrant and refugee problems have their roots in economics. Historically, people have become refugees as a result of conflicts and civil wars over vested rights in resources such as oil, or as a result of famine and drought due to climate change, and the number of refugees last year was reported to be the largest ever recorded. Trade friction between the United States and China is widely reported by the media at present, and from a historical viewpoint, conflicts between countries have never ceased. Even in Japan, we do not have to look far to find incidents involving money occurring non-stop, such as the corruption of members of parliament over integrated resort bidding, or improper sales of life insurances.

In problems like these, I see an impasse in our present society, and I strongly feel there are three issues at play.

The first is the illusion that material wealth brings happiness. In today's world where people get caught up in the belief that material wealth equals happiness, Mrs. Nomura continually reminded us that the world of phenomena visible to us was not the only world, that we humans have a spiritual world. She taught us that happiness was something material goods alone could not provide. Having things does not make us happy, and not having things does not make us unhappy. It is the spirit we sense within us that leads us to happiness.

The second is the attitude of many countries at present to ignore the fact that the present is an extension of our connection with the past, and to attempt to achieve immediate results while completely disregarding the past. This is particularly the case with the current president of the United States, who consistently rejects the policies of the previous administration. I feel that various problems are emerging because of

this tendency to reject these connections. A similar trend can also be seen in countries in Europe. I wonder if there is a need for each country to carefully examine various issues in light of the past.

The third issue is an attitude of following blindly, without looking closely at the era in which we live. In this time of change, I see some people who are entirely focused on carrying on traditions as they are, and who become isolated from those around them. In that respect, I feel that while the Liberal Democratic Party has advocated revising the Constitution as its party platform since the party's inception, the party also seems to be adhering to a particular form of "revision." What was it that fostered the relationship of trust Japan has built with countries in the Middle East, which I mentioned earlier? I believe it is very important to have a mediator. For example, if some of our members happen to get into an argument on occasions, when there is a third party who listens to what each side has to say, both sides begin to understand each other and become closer.

If such a role existed in the world, I believe that our founder would have argued that Japan was capable of fulfilling such a role, if only it would awaken to its potential. I believe the existence of the Article 9 of our Constitution gives Japan an important background.

We are fortunate to have been introduced to the Principles of Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education as a theory of education that meets the challenge of the times, coming into being through the keen insights of Mrs. Nomura. While we had a tendency to be caught up in the tides of the times during the months and years that we as individuals studied, Mrs. Nomura continually challenged us by asking, *What are the important values for us as human beings?* Over and over again, I believe that we have responded by verifying the virtues we have received from our parents and forbears in the past, and confirming what and how we have inherited these, and how we will pass them on. Furthermore, we continue to consider how to connect these values to the next generation in an era when our very survival may be in danger. Constantly considering what values should not change, we endeavor to eliminate precedents that are mere formalities and determine what forms must be changed to ensure that things that must not change do not change. One of the waypoints of our efforts is where we are right now.

In the comments all of you made last year as we brought our activities to a close for the year, I felt feelings akin to appreciation and a sense of happiness. I heard some of you comment that because you had persevered in your learning, husbands and wives, and parents and children had come to understand each other. I also heard how senior members and fellow members listened to your feelings, as you opened up your heart to them and described how you confronted your partner on many occasions but at last realized, "I cannot

change my partner, but I can change myself.” Since you were guided in the direction of coming to terms with your own selves, I believe a sense of happiness was born within you. Those of us who were once caught up in the tide of the times and believed material and monetary values to be true values learned, “You also have your own mind.” This words opened our hearts and minds. And once we attained enlightenment, we understood what true happiness is. In this way, I believe we learned to cherish our own minds as well as the minds of others.

Money is important in everyday life but money alone will not make people happy. What is important is the self-knowledge that human beings are also part of a world without form, a world invisible to the eye, where our spirits and souls reside. Mrs. Nomura often spoke of the recklessness of people who talked about education without understanding what it means to be a human being, and constantly reminded us of the reality that we as humans are given the privilege of living in the natural world. In essence, we must first understand that all human beings possess an invisible soul, consciousness, and a spirit at the micro level, and are given the privilege of living in the natural world at the macro level, and we must fully realize the significance of this. We have actual proof of our practicing the theory that we can change our immediate environment, that is, our family and those around us, once we regain our own souls and become aware of ourselves through this learning. I believe that if we are able to confirm in ourselves this educational process of understanding humans and actual proof of practice can extend it to others, the direction of our society and world will, even in a small way change for the better.

I fear that the people who created machines in a civilization ruled by machines are now in danger of losing their souls just like machines in a world full of such machines.

Our founder taught us the infinite possibilities inherent in human beings. Although human beings created the crisis

we face at present, it is also the infinite possibilities inherent in human beings that can save us from this crisis. Our global environment is already close to the limits of what can be tolerated. We must raise awareness of this critical situation and share it with others. If we spread this awareness across society, we may be able to leave a better society for our children in the future. The younger generation in the world is casting considerable doubt on us adults at present. I believe that we, every one of us as human beings who came into the world a little before them must be aware of our enormous responsibility, and live in a manner that reflects our earnestness in assuming that responsibility.

In today’s global society, I believe many of you have children who are living abroad. With this understanding, realizing a world that lives in harmony and families that can share close relationships become shared tasks. Therefore, I wish to confirm the value of the world of the soul that is invisible to the eye, and widely communicate to others what I have learned about human beings and myself.

Last but not least, I would like to say a few words about the year of the Rat. According to the zodiac, the year of the Rat is a year of many changes, and indicates the start of new life germinating from seeds. Thus, it is a year suited for taking on new challenges.

Although it is difficult to directly convey the essence of the concept “fluidity and transitory” and “eternal and immutable” as an important value in a manner that speaks to people today, I believe we need to be willing to take on this challenge. To survive in this day and age, we must awaken our dignity as human beings and believe in our infinite possibilities. As Mrs. Nomura taught us, “the remaining resources lie within human beings.” I look forward to mutually affirming this with all of you as we meet the challenges of this year.

I look forward to working with all of you again this year.

(New Year Message on January 9, 2020)



Challenges of the New Coronavirus 3

Mrs. Yumiko Kaneko
Director General
Nomura Center for Lifelong Integrated Education

Unlike the Golden Week holidays in the beginning of May of ordinary years, the long holidays this year came to a close with a feeling of apprehension as we resumed our everyday life in self-isolation.

The growing number of infections, which had been a cause for concern, is now decreasing, and on May 14, the State of Emergency Declaration in Japan was lifted in 39 prefectures. This was followed by the lifting of the declaration in a further three of the remaining eight prefectures including Osaka and Kyoto in the Kansai area. Although the self-isolation request remains in place for three prefectures and Metropolitan Tokyo in the Kanto area as well as Hokkaido, the declaration was finally lifted nationally on May 25.

The accuracy of the decline in the number of infections has been questioned, since there has been no increase in PCR testing, but I believe the improvement was achieved through people's conscientious efforts at voluntary compliance with the government's request to exercise self-restraint during the Golden Week.

Many experts, however, believe that such efforts on their own will not be enough to eradicate the disease. In short, their view is that the decline in infections we are witnessing now is temporary and that there will definitely be a second and perhaps even a third wave of infections with the onset of the colder autumn and winter weather. Many experts also believe that this pandemic will not subside until roughly 60 to 70% of the world's population has been infected by the virus. Thus, they predict that we will have to coexist with the virus for a period of one and a half to two years until a vaccine is developed.

With that understanding, we must firmly acknowledge the contribution of our efforts to date in the declining number of infections, and we must also take a critical look at what stage we are now at and where we go from here.

Golden Week is now over, and the major issue that looms before us is the economy. The fallout from COVID-19 will vary from one business sector to the next but the effects are likely to be more noticeable across the board in the future and, with the understanding that the virus is here to stay for some time, it is clear that self-restraint on its own will not support

the economy-based everyday life of our society. In addition to antivirus measures that directly affect life, I believe we must consider the hardships of our everyday lives in the context of economic stringency and even life-threatening circumstances.

Furthermore, while we were able to avert the problem of the collapse of our healthcare system this time, it is understood that preparation right now for an assumed second wave of the virus is essential.

In the course of exercising voluntary compliance and ever mindful of the coronavirus, I suddenly began to think about the various conditions we have experienced since last year through the beginning of this year, and I wondered about people's frame of mind as they witnessed and reflected on various events.

Last year was also a year marked by the occurrence of frequent natural disasters worldwide. There was widespread damage due to earthquakes, floods, and volcanic eruptions, and the reports of raging bush fires in Australia that began around September last year and continued into the new year were very worrisome. Even in Japan, the number of typhoons making landfall on Honshu (the main island) increased, and damages occurred across the nation. This year, however, the Olympics were expected to revitalize the economy, and the entire country had high expectations for the success of Japan's athletes. At the same time, people in general, including myself, expressed concern as to whether the athletes and visitors from other countries could withstand the heat of Japan's summer.

Reflecting on then and now, I realize how different our reality today is from what we had on our minds up until a few months ago.

There are various studies as to why this new coronavirus has emerged at this time. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the virus is "zoonotic" in nature, in other words, a disease that can be transmitted to humans from animals, and it is highly probable that a bat was the pathogen.

In a newspaper article that appeared on April 9, Mr. Yutaka Kamioka, chairman of Ecology Online, an environmental protection NPO, indicated that the spread of this new coronavirus was due to worldwide destruction of the environment. Animals that lose their habitats due to destruc-

tion of the environment make their way into towns inhabited by people in search of food. This has resulted in humans and animals coming into close contact with each other, and the outbreak of new infectious diseases. Moreover, animals suffering from stress due to the destruction of their habitats are more susceptible to disease, and the infectious diseases they contract end up infecting people and spreading throughout the world. According to him, this is the fundamental structure underlying today's pandemic. Mr. Kamioka also points out that global warming has driven the habitats of many animals further north, causing the worldwide spread of tropical infectious diseases.

I believe we must acknowledge that human economic activity is one factor in both global warming and viruses.

In fact, it has been reported that the volume of greenhouse gas emissions has decreased globally by 25% since the implementation of lockdowns and restraint in human activity worldwide due to the new coronavirus. In Punjab in northern India, the Himalaya Mountains, previously shrouded in air pollution, have become visible for the first time in 30 years. Dramatic improvements in air quality have also been recorded in China. One theory proposed in a study by Stanford University claims that the improvement in air quality alone may have saved the lives of as many as 77,000 people.

It has also been reported in Hawaii that large numbers of sea turtles are gathering on beaches once crowded with tourists. Likewise, in Venice, water in the canals, now free of floating litter discarded by tourists, has become clearer, and fish can be seen swimming at the bottom of the canals in some places. In Wales, it has also been reported that herds of wild goats have been seen in towns where people have been absent during the lockdown period.

I feel that these occurrences resonate with what I wrote in my previous article published in Japanese monthly organ early May.

As living creatures (human beings), we have a history of coexisting with other animals and plants in the natural world. In our daily lives, however, while we may be unaware of it, we are robbing these animals and plants of their habitats for the sake of human development. Isn't the situation we face today a consequence of our own creation? As someone who embraces the belief from the standpoint that the world of Nature makes us be alive, I cannot help but feel this way.

From another perspective, it also seems that animals, in search of the places where they belong, are returning to places humans have vacated.

Even without the views of experts, certain economic conditions or the appearance of new viruses, I believe we must reflect on the abnormal weather we have been experiencing – as if the ecological balance has been lost – and re-examine our way of life, which is inordinately biased towards concerns for the economy and places too much emphasis on gains and

outcomes in the visible world.

Of course, I believe it is important for our economy to recover. On the other hand, I am afraid we may repeat the same mistakes in the future if our wish is simply to return to the pre-coronavirus world.

We must recognize the importance of our lives as humans who are not only part of the world of phenomena where, as living creatures, we coexist with the flora and fauna around us and are given the privilege to live on this earth, but also part of the invisible world of the spirit. With this understanding foremost in our thoughts, we must look long and hard at the post-coronavirus world we would like to see and to accept this challenge.

The basics of a human being are the various aspects a human being possesses as a living creature endowed with the same life as other animals and, at the same time, as a spiritual being with an invisible spirit and a social being belonging to a herd. When I re-examine the basics of human beings that possess such aspects and consider the world that we as humans must strive for, that is, a world that unifies and maintains a balance between the various strata and domains that exist in a society created out of necessity, I immediately think of the importance of human education based on such an understanding.

Today we hear people say, "It's either life or the economy." It may be easier for us to make decisions in either-or situations. On the other hand, achieving a balance is far more difficult. However, when we consider that human beings are allowed to live and do live in an exquisite world of balance, I hope that as human beings we will all reconsider ways of life that lack balance, and aim to realize a society where as individuals we develop our potential as human beings. In this endeavor, I hope the world will pool its wisdom and come together in cooperation.

(Written on May 25, published in the Center's Japanese newsletter No. 423)