
Nomura No.87 *Center News*

New Year Message



Onaga-Azure winged magpie picking up red berry



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New Year Message



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I would like to wish everybody a very happy New Year.

This is a different new beginning from most, and I'm wondering how all of you spent your holidays in the midst of the coronavirus situation.

By the end of last year, the number of people infected in Tokyo had topped 1,000. No doubt, anxiety hung in the air for many spending time with their families.

In the more than two weeks that have since passed, infections have continued to spread with many more regions, somewhat different in its rising speed, being impacted in greater numbers and the virus has become a nationwide threat. This so-called third wave has taken us all far beyond where we were when a state of emergency was first issued on April 7th of last year. The situation is worsening, not just for Japan but for the United States, Western European nations, and in fact the whole world. Now, as of January 17th, global infections have exceeded 94 million with the 100 million line to be crossed very soon. And, sadly, 2 million are dead from the disease.

Furthermore, we learn that the number of daily infections has topped 300,000 (as of January 4th) in the United States and 50,000 (also as of January 4th) in Great Britain. Britain's entire population, incidentally, is 67 million, roughly half that of Japan.

Meanwhile, the coronavirus is evolving, and new strains have even been found inside our own borders.

Getting the word out and making sure the public understands what this emergency means and how to best respond is tantamount. Mixing and intermingling of peoples should be cut down by 70%, avoiding crowds and close-contact settings, and sufficiently taking due care when having meals, all these are what the virologists have been stressing, and we must remember the basics.

And then there are our activities at the Center and what to do about these. We spared quite a time on this subject at the board meeting for weeks around the turn of the year.

Firstly, we had determined last July that, for the first time ever, we would take our monthly national seminar course online.

Unfortunately, however, with the rash of new infections across the country during the last month, even participating in online events creates family worries for those in certain regions who should cross the prefectural borders to attend. At the same time, the operation of online distribution at the head office requires some members reside in neighboring prefectures commute to downtown Tokyo. Another very important consideration is now that hospitals are overwhelmed, those connected with the medical world should not be stretching themselves too thin during these unusual times. We need to do what we can do the best possible to avoid making medical settings worse any further as it will eventually affect us. For these reasons, we have decided to postpone our first study meeting of the year.

The Center's head office essentially consists of volunteers from Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures. I would like to take this opportunity to share with all of you the fact that all the work of the organization are done by these people. On the other hand I would like to remind all of us that our regional members spontaneously and continuously promote respective activity to contribute to the public, bearing a responsibility that it is each of us that had created the present society.

And, as a result of that process, I know that we must refrain from certain activities while we are in this COVID-19 state of emergency. I believe this to be a time during which we should all be pondering how and what we can do now in

this situation.

As an individual who has studied the principles of Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education, I ask myself, “What must I think and do?”

The principles of Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education is the educational theory derived from the natural world.

It teaches us about the importance of perception of time and self as follows.

“We humans living in this age must adopt a key premise. Both ‘self awareness’ and ‘age awareness’ are essential. By this I mean that we all need to grasp and understand not only what we are but what kind of era we are living in. To be cognizant of both is of vital importance.”

With that as my starting point, I try to search for what we are suggested by this new coronavirus. I got on the internet to learn more about what this virus is all about in order to better understand this age, the era in which mankind and all of the world is facing and battling COVID-19.

What I was led back to, was the fact that we humans, the other animals, plant life, other living things, and, yes, even the viruses, all are inhabitants of the natural world. We are, all of us, parts of nature herself.

I read and learned a lot from the research by virologists, environmental scientists, veterinary medicine experts, and medical institutes.

Viruses themselves are hardly a product of these modern times. Viruses have been with humanity through the ages. All of the news relating to the coronavirus has no doubt made all of you keenly aware of this.

One thing I found when I was doing my research was a handy easy-to-understand metaphor for explaining just what a virus is. Think of a bit of genetic material jumping out of the cell in which it was contained and trying to start something new on its own.

It is believed that our earth came into existence some 4.6 billion years ago and the first living microbe popped up 3.8 billion years ago. This would mean that viruses predate humanity and we would have been struggling with them for all of our human existence.

Here are some examples in the form of illnesses caused by viruses and bacterial infections from the 14th century onward, even though those of earlier ages would not have understood the root causes:

- the *Yersinia pestis* which brought on the Black Death plagues of the 14th to 16th centuries.
- the smallpox virus wreaking havoc from the 16th to 17th centuries.
- the *Vibrio* bacterium causing cholera in the 19th century.
- the tuberculosis bacterium in the 19th to 20th centuries.
- viral influenza and HIV (AIDS) in the 20th and 21st centuries.

And we have newcomers like SARS, MERS, and COVID-19 in the 21st century as well.

It wasn't, however, until the invention of the electron microscope in the 20th century that humans became aware that viruses existed. Viruses are smaller than bacteria and it is difficult to even compare to the dread of our time to the fear that people of earlier ages must have felt not even knowing what it was that caused their illnesses.

An example of people struggling with the unexplained would have been the outbreak of the plague that was actually brought by mice and turned into an epidemic following a large increase in the rodent population in the 14th century. Not understanding the cause, people of the time started a rumor that the Jews were spreading the Black Death by putting poison in the wells. This led to increase expulsion of the Jewish people and a witch hunt. Out of fear people would make someone a scapegoat to find stability and also, almost invariably seen under such circumstances hoaxes, discrimination and persecution.

Even today, we can watch as fear of the unexplained in American society ushers in racism and fake news. Meanwhile, in Japan we find the need for precautionary measure policing when shops do not respond to official requests. I think that this demonstrates the sort of phenomena that occur when we humans have fears that cannot be immediately resolved and we don't know what to do with.

In fact, history shows that the outbreaks of infectious diseases drastically alter the structure of the society upon which they land.

My online investigation of viruses brought me to many important things.

Among these is the fact that, while viruses may include pathogens such as the coronavirus, rotavirus, and influenza virus, they are not all bad. This is in contrast to the negative and harmful impressions that I believe fill the minds of most people on hearing the word “virus.”

As it happens, the number of viral particles existing in our global environment is 10 to the 31st power (in other words, a 1 with 31 zeros after it). There are many viral particles in living things. And, so far, only 5,000 types of the multitude have been discovered and categorized. The first one was found in 1892, just 130 years ago, and for a long time research focused only on those that caused diseases in humans, plants, and animals. Hence, I doubt many people have a very positive impression of viruses.

Surely, there are still many unknown viruses that cause diseases. But there are also many other viruses that co-exist with living things and do not bring disease. The majority of viruses, it is believed, probably fall into this second category.

A newer branch of research now involves studying the types of viruses that are a positive part of human beings and normal living.

One example from research that has only been going on for 20 years is the discovery of a virus that protects mammal embryos in the womb. It has been found that a resident virus

in the placenta will collect itself to form a film which wraps around and protects the baby. The virus film dispels attacks toward the growing fetus from the mother's immune system. In other words, if we had no viruses at all, we would also have no human beings.

Findings such as these make me all the more aware that we humans still know very little about the natural world and how it operates.

This also makes the case that we are likely disrupting the flow of a complicated and intricate ecosystem without really understanding them.

Going back to the coronavirus, the thinking has been that it originated inside of bats and was passed on to humans either directly or through some intermediate animal.

The idea is that it was then transmitted from person to person, quickly and in increasing numbers, until it became the global phenomenon that it is today. But first infections would have been spread from bat to bat throughout forests and caves. The seed of the pandemic would have been sown slowly and quietly until the transfer to humans occurred and the disease took off.

But why did that first human become infected by a virus that was only in bats?

Considering the habitats of bats, most humans would have few opportunities to come into contact with one. It would seem that the chance of a cross-species infection should have been relatively small.

If all humans had a true awareness of and respect for the way that animals and plants co-exist in nature, if we all had a remorse in cultivating and developing in harmony with nature's plan, there would never have been any contact between such wild animals and human beings. But the new gourmet boom and changes in food culture have brought about practices in which wild animals and humans are unnaturally close to one another.

In other words, the virus was originally hosted by wild animals in their own habitat. But humans then stole the animals' habitat for development. The economic ambitions of humans in recent years have been seemingly insatiable. The former homes of plant and animal life has been snatched away without pause, unconsciously destroying the environment, in order to build resort hotels and the like. The plundering of natural environments has left many other living things without homes, and has reduced many a population. Consequently, viruses originally co-existed with wild animals should have a wide range of host in order to survive by infecting humans and other animals.

What indication of this new coronavirus we should learn from.

As our Founder had been saying since the economic boom of the 1960s, we must remember that humans are not the center of creation. Rather we human beings are given life

according to the laws of the natural world, living with nature and all other creatures.

Through discovery and invention by wise persons in the past, humankind has gradually begun to know more about the world and to understand it. We have accumulated wisdom and evolved.

However, just reading the work of virologists and environmental scientists reminds me that what we think we know is only a very small part of the whole. We don't really understand the mechanisms or inner workings of the natural world. Though we ourselves are living beings within that world, we don't really know why or how living beings come to be or continue to be.

Meanwhile, ordinary parts of our daily lives that we took for granted as recently as 2019 are now off limits. Small things we felt as if it were air to have a family and we did not try to realize how small things are valuable and how we were blessed with nature.

Those insatiable economic ambitions may appear small on the individual level. But it is perhaps when too many people with a little too much greed come together that capitalism becomes king and we get the sort of society that we have today. In a sense, we have perhaps brought the coronavirus plague upon ourselves, believing the illusion that the human beings are superior to other animals and plants, and giving license to our collective greed. This may be something that humanity needs to realize.

The coronavirus may be offering us the lesson that we have been strangling ourselves without realizing it.

We have long learned the perspective that we are let alive by nature.

There is an order and law in natural world in which we live and our lives are regulated by its laws. When we look into ourselves living in the natural world, we human beings with form and substance, have consciousness and spirit, being alive interconnected with nature.

Learning the Nomura theory has led us to realize that in our modern age, we are fascinated by our own results and



achievements disregarding our real feelings which we cannot see with our eyes. We ignore both our own spirit and the spirit of others and treat them poorly.

But human beings are connected to the environment through their minds as well as through their bodies.

Our minds forge our bodies and environment, and at the same time the environment has a great influence onto our minds.

From before humankind knew what viruses and bacteria were, and even after science allowed us some understanding, this force of nature too small to see and too complicated to understand has managed to fill us with dread and greatly influence our behavior, and such behaviors reproduce the fear among others. We see humans falling into cycles such as these throughout history.

And even in our modern age, we find ourselves led about by this virus so small that we cannot see it. Yet the fabric of our society is now in danger of collapsing. So vulnerable still are we of these times.

So what should we be doing? What can we learn from this virus?

Perhaps first, we should question whether it is fair to make the virus, in other words unfavorable and inconvenient thing, the villain.

There is little we know and much we don't know. Are we not jumping to conclusions armed with only partial information? Are we not dispensing too quickly with the process of checking and verifying?

I think we need to calmly ask ourselves how much we understand and whether or not we are understanding that bit correctly.

Also, we ought to remember that there are good sides and bad sides to most things. I believe we have a tendency in the modern world to exclude the bad rather than to focus on the good sides.

The bad needs to be recognized and truly dealt with, and this requires effort and work. I have to wonder whether we apt to be concerned about what we do not have and to forget about what we already have.

Do we not tend to make similar mistakes in evaluating those around us? When we look at our family members, our partners, our colleagues, we find ourselves to easily get irritated about their failures. Yet do we not too easily overlook the indispensable ways that those close to us help us and complete us?

An important step forward would be developing an awareness of "knowing contentment."

Every one of us has to realize that prejudices and discrimination derived out of fear is the traps that all humans are subject to, and to know that nothing comes out of them. Being aware that every living creature co-exists in the natural world, and that it is us who plunder the homes of other animals even though we did not intend to, and therefore as it is humans who

made this dangerous situation, we must know the order and laws of natural world of living together. And we must try to implement them consciously in our family and society as we all co-exist intrinsically. The oriental view of nature teaches us that, for the structure of Mother Nature, man as well as all living things are interdependent and mutually related and that there can be no existence outside this. We must know how we receive many relationships and concerns from the people around us, so to say, selfless service from parents, many others, society and the nature. Those selfless service cannot be expressed in terms of money.

When we are able to be cognizant of this, throughout our daily lives, then vegetables may be seen as nature's bounty and the meat and fish that we are privileged to consume may take on a different meaning. In the time of our Founder and our parents, there was a different appreciation for food and its importance. Sayings such as "each grain of rice contains seven gods" remind us of those values. It was said that meat and fish were the "givers of life."

Incidentally, the Chinese character for rice comes from the number 88. It is said that this is because it took 88 steps of exertions to grow rice. Meanwhile, rice was believed to contain the afore-mentioned seven gods, which included the gods of earth, wind, clouds, water, insects, sun, and the farmer. Why insects, one may wonder. Apparently, this was to guard the grain as insects such as dragonflies and spiders would eat the pests that might be attracted to the rice.

However, our modern society is more about stimulating the economy through mass consumption than it is valuing, preserving, and not wasting nature's bounty.

Surely we ought to review the trends of the day, become more aware of the things that are truly precious and irreplaceable, and strive to figure out what we should be doing instead.

Otherwise, when the coronavirus epidemic comes to an end, we humans are likely to pump even more fuel into the economy than it needs. And in so doing, in the name of further progress, we are likely to further damage the ecosystem and consequently strangle ourselves all the more. That is the future that worries me, so I'd like us to seriously ponder these matters.

Yes, the economy is important. But when you think on what our human existence means at the end of the day, you open your eyes to things that are far more important.

Having a consciousness of being co-existed with all living things in nature, we must try our best to minimize the flow of people in order to avoid a crash of the health system that is the most pressing issue at present. And at the same time, we should consider what we can do at home, for example, to know ourselves and see how we should discipline oneself in the relationship with our family members and various things as well as with nature.

Also important is being mindful of how grand, intricate, and still unknown the natural world truly is. I was reminded

Responses to D.G. Kaneko's New Year Message Questions and Answers

of this once again when I did my research on viruses. Nature is awe-inspiring, and I think we should be humbled by her.

We are born of nature. And her natural elements are our own. We, therefore, like nature herself, are teeming with unknown possibilities. The majesty of life itself is an amazing thing to think about.

The accepting and remembering of that premise inspires us all to uncover the hidden potential within ourselves, even as the outside world offers up challenges.

By not telling ourselves we can't do things because of the current situation, but by instead asking ourselves what we can do under the circumstances, we begin to move in a direction that will promote our own growth as well as benefit society. We begin to tap that potential inside of us. I believe it is nothing short of limitless.

In closing, I would like to talk just a bit about this being The Year of the Ox.

According to the Chinese history tome The Book of Han, the character for ox comes from a word for "stringy" or "bending" or "twisted." The character also represents seedlings that its sprout are about to germinate but would not reveal themselves under the earth.

Cows and oxen, of course, have long been important creatures for agriculture and farming. They brought milk, gave their meat, and helped plough the fields. Through the perseverance of these animals, even the difficult crops could eventually be worked through and brought to harvest. From that aspect, the year of the Ox also represents tolerance and preamble of development.

It looks as though the COVID-19 situation will extend for some time. But I would like to think that, through ox-like perseverance and patience, we will make it through.

The scientific understanding of our civilization is ever evolving. Civilizations cannot turn back; they must continue forward. In order to confront the future, we should take stock now in the present of what is truly important and valuable.

How we should pass that awareness onto the next generation and relate to future development and evolution?

Our big challenge is depending on our individual growth of each person.

Humanity, and the earth itself, seems to be going through the most dangerous of times, we must wake up to the dignity of ourselves which we are losing its value. At the same time all of us has to realize the value of our existence and try to draw out our innate potential and mobilize them. I hope that this will be our theme for the year.

Thank you all and I am looking forward to working together with you this year as well.

(New Year Message delivered on January 18th, 2021)

With the coronavirus mounting its third offensive in Japan and greater Tokyo under its second official state of emergency as of January 8th, head office of the Nomura Center continues to operate at a smaller scale its day to day activities even further.

Our New Year steering meeting and study meeting, which was to be held online for roughly 200 leader members throughout the country, has been postponed as we continue to monitor the tight situation at medical setting and keep ourselves abreast of the best ways to prevent infection.

At the start of every year the leaders throughout Japan normally find fresh inspiration and direction in the new year message of Director General Mrs. Yumiko Kaneko at the steering meeting. However as was mentioned above, but all the more because of the circumstances, the leader members expressed their earnest hope to receive a guidance for this year from Mrs. Kaneko.

Under these circumstances, with her wish to convey her thoughts and feelings on the new year in person as much as possible, Mrs. Kaneko delivered her new year message to secretariat members at the head office on behalf of all the leaders of regional branches on January 18th. Those listening expressed their feeling and Mrs. Kaneko responded to these.

We introduce some of them.

Mrs. T (70s): I have heard that humans have co-existed with viruses, however, I was deeply moved to learn that fetuses are actually protected by viruses while in the wombs of their mothers.

I must admit that I too am inclined to clean house at once as I think bad is bad, but this bit of knowledge about how humans relate to viruses helps me to remember that there are positive and negative aspects to everything.

At the end of last year, I reflected on my life from the relationship with my daughter and realized that I have been living my own life while truly, at the same time, being let alive as well. I also reflected on my not being pleased with my number two position inside the division I belong to. Mrs. Kaneko's response was that my husband thought I was his most precious person but her statement did not fully convince me at the time. However, listening to you talk today, I found myself not noticed how I have been cared by people around me.

Mrs. S (60s): Infections are spreading more rapidly now. Just yesterday, I heard city officials broadcasting warnings to local resident urging them not to leave their homes for non-essential business. It made me wonder about our place in the current situation. As Mrs. Kaneko has stressed, we are doing all our activities on a volunteer basis. Personally, it is reassuring to meet with everyone at the head office and I do wish to continue to come to the office. But do we qualify as "essential workers?" In the narrow sense, not really, as the Center's aims are not medical in nature. But in a different sense, surely, what we are doing is essential. I would like to ask how should I think of us coming to the head office in this situation.

Also, we now have a vaccine that makes me marvel at

the things human technology can accomplish. In a sense, being confronted with a problem and then overcoming it with science is the history of humankind. We have defeated other infectious diseases, and it is not so surprising that we should be able to defeat this one. That said, I worry that such triumphs will also fuel human arrogance. Listening to your message, I became to think that technology may be important, but I also want us to remember that we are natural beings and need to coexist with the rest being part of nature. I would like to develop my thinking on that perspective reflecting upon myself.

Mrs. Kaneko: Is the Center essential? Or is it unnecessary and non-urgent? Well, since our Center is a volunteer-powered private education organization, some might see it as less than essential. From my point of view, however, it is both necessary and urgent. Personally, I have been worried about my health issues since my student days. It was only through learning the Nomura lifelong integrated education that I was able to gain a new perspective on my sense of values that plagued me through an overall change in consciousness. Without that change, I would probably still be sick and suffering.

I believe the consciousness, that is something that cannot be seen, is invaluable and transcending money.

What I can do is to convey the importance of that consciousness.

At the very least, relationship that Mrs. S has with other members at our Center serves as a lifeline to keep her feel stable. Just yesterday, I had some conversation with a member of senior citizens division who in her 80s managed to hold online meetings with her colleagues. The links are unseen, they may not be profitable, but is there not more to life than money?

I have no doubt that what Nomura Center offers is essential. Each person may have their own take on what is necessary and what is urgent. Since we are living in such an age where people have a strong tendency toward attaching value to something that can be seen and monetized, I believe that the activities that we engage in are essential, universal, and vital.

Furthermore, as Mrs. S has noted, I agree that humans get over difficult obstacles, and a good vaccine will be developed. But medicine also has its limitations. I know from my own experience that drugs can have side effects and put strains on other organs. Such is not the case, however, with natural healing.

As was also mentioned earlier, when we become conscious of co-existing with other living things, I think it is important to cherish the understanding that meat, fish, even vegetables are living and we eat them with gratitude. We should not let our spiritual consciousness slip away, and simply try to avoid the so-called bad things. Rather, we should partake with gratitude and awareness. This will lead us all to a better place. And it is something we can all do.

On first being told that in her husband's eyes Mrs. T was

number one, she no doubt felt that she wanted more people to see her that way. However, I think she has realized that she is blessed to be so highly regarded within this essential relationship but just wished for what she cannot have. And I believe that the more we focus on how fortunate we are to have those dear things we already have, the more we will all be able to help build a better world.

Mrs. M (70s): What I have heard here today has given me courage. I am a nurse, working in a night clinic, and yesterday I experienced to sense what is tight in the medical settings. Previously, when a patient complained of a high fever, we would take them in right away. Now, however, we must have them phone first and question them about whether anyone else in their family is infected with the new coronavirus or is showing symptoms. Only with a doctor's approval, might we then receive them. Yesterday, I heard from my co-worker that the father of a single-male parent household called to say he would not be able to go to work if his son could not see a doctor right away. It is painful to have to disappoint the patients. Also, there have been reports of people testing positive at schools nearby, so I feel that the virus is getting closer.

Mrs. Kaneko: Certainly, being at the front lines is enough to make you want to plug your ears. This is why I suggested it would be nice if you could come to the Center and open up to those around you. Then, what I told you was that it might be good for you to be able to hear the feelings and sufferings of your colleagues in your workplace. It seems that you put my advice into practice. Feeling a weight in your chest when you must turn away patients in your practice is very understandable and human. So, I would like you to try to open up your feelings to the members at the Center and become feel relieved and I hope if you can listen to your colleagues in turn.

