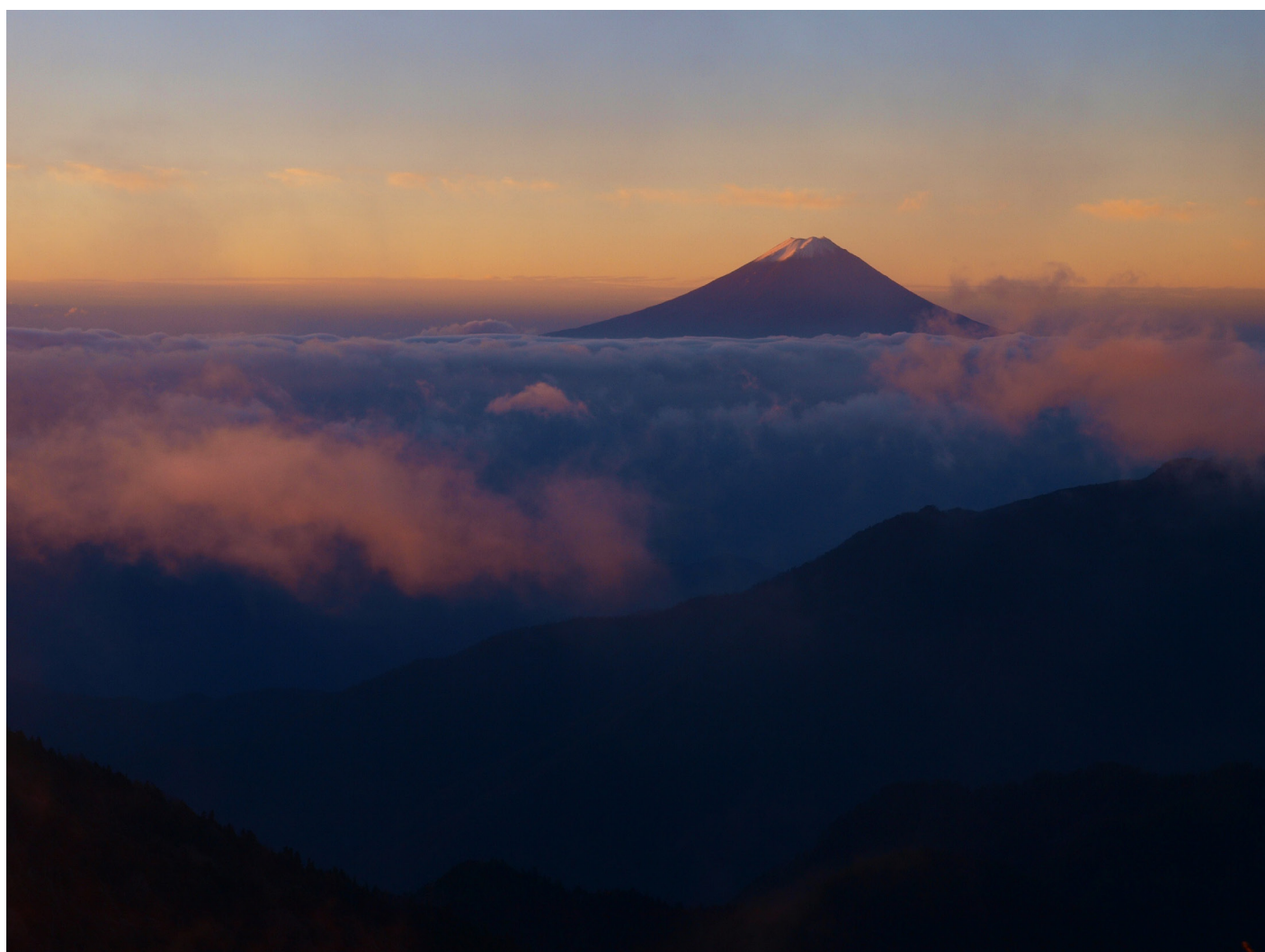

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New Year Message



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New Year Message



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Just as we welcomed some mild good weather, the number of people infected with the Omicron strain of the Novel Corona virus began to rise, and we heard reports that in America on the third of January, the number of infected people was 1,080,000. Then, on the 12th, the World Health Organization (WHO) predicted that within 6 to 8 weeks, across Europe, Turkey, Russia, and Central Asia, 50% of the populations in 53 countries would become infected. In Japan also, on the 9th, measures to prevent the spread of the virus were imposed in Okinawa, Hiroshima and Yamaguchi prefectures, and yesterday, the number of infections in Tokyo exploded to more than 2,000 people per day. As the infections spread throughout all of Japan, we are forced into a real sense how strongly the world is interconnected, and we have to carefully think through the 60th anniversary celebration of our founding and decide what to do about holding the ceremonies on March 4th.

Even though we are amid these challenging conditions, convening the New Year Steering Meeting, even if online, is very much worthwhile, and I am thankful to have the great pleasure of seeing all your faces.

At the same time, in the current situation I thought out what and how I should deliver my greetings. But when I revisited what essentially a New Year's message signifies, I concluded that this was a very good opportunity for me to consider my objective and direction as to how I will spend my days this year and into the future. It was also an opportunity for me to rethink about what I myself should accomplish, and how I will walk together with all of you going forward.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Nomura Center for Lifelong Integrated Education, and we are reaching our full circle "Kanreki" milestone as an organization.

As you know, at the "Kanreki" point, the Oriental zodiac

completes a full cycle, and the zodiac animal that is born again that year returns to the starting point in the cycle. I was struck by the thought that our Center is in the year of the Tiger. The Oriental zodiac is composed of 12 zodiac animal signs and 10 celestial stems. This is the year of the Water Tiger, the exact combination that was present 60 years ago. In other words, the year 1962, when Nomura Center were founded, was also the year of the water tiger.

When we examine the characteristics of the water tiger, we see both the "infant-nursing tiger" and the "mother tiger." There seem to be a variety of implications here, but about the mother tiger with the still-nursing newborn infant I read that their nature was the fiercest of all the tigers and also family-minded. There are various explanations for this, but I imagine that in the wilds of nature, this water tiger becomes the fiercest as they protect their child.

They say also that the year of the water tiger is a year of preparation for entering a new stage, after surviving some severe winter conditions. The reason for this comes from the meanings of the two characters used to write what is translated as water and tiger. We can see the ancient character used here for "water" as part of the character that means the word pregnancy. It implies a sense of building up energy. Out of the 10 celestial stems it is the 9th, so it signifies a time of preparing for the next cycle, just as a severe winter waits for the spring. It also implies settling down and becoming still.

Next is the character used for tiger, which is found in one half of the character for earthworm. This carries the notion of starting new work for the next stage of development. Consider the image of the earthworm inching in the soil and aiding in the fruitfulness of the crops. If we look at the characteristics of the zodiac signs, the tiger is the third from the beginning.

It expresses a connection to birth, and great growth.

Let's look back 60 years ago to 1962, to see what happened then. America accomplished the first manned flight around the earth. The rock band the Beatles debuted. In Japan, the first flight of the wholly domestically designed and manufactured aircraft after the war, and the Route 1 of Tokyo Metropolitan Expressway opened. I wondered if this was our first step in the great growth and development in the postwar period. This was also the year that Nomura Center for Lifelong Integrated Education opened its doors.

And this year, 2022 is the 60th anniversary of our founding. I now think about the kind of growth our Center will need, and whether it would mean for us to being reborn.

At the start of the 1960s, our founder Mrs. Yoshiko Nomura looked at the problems seen among the children of the people she knew around her. She wondered about the purpose of education, and who should benefit from education. She looked into the actual conditions in society as well as the problems that era presented and started this Center's activities by constructing her educational theory and principles. One of the important points of the educational theory of hers was what the assumptions that the people in that century had to hold, "the Perception of time and perception of the self". There was the importance of having had an awareness of the era within which we were living, and the importance of a recognition of our own self-awareness and identity as we lived our lives in that era. Our founder continuously taught us that, in other words, a macro-awareness of the era and a micro-focus on ourselves were two sides of the same coin of our self-awareness.

So let us now take a look at what kind of an era 2022 is in, that it is an era drastically changed from 60 years ago in 1962. This is our third year since the spread of the Corona virus, which we still have not seen its end. Rather, humanity is plagued by the appearance of new variants, and even if the Omicron variant dies out, we will still be in a situation where we fear a different new variant will emerge.

Then, on top of this, what concerns me even more now is the destruction of our biological environment and the issues of global warming.

One of the issues prompting the significant motivations for our founder to start this activity was the apprehensiveness that as humans possessed nuclear weapons, if used, would result in the destruction of the entire earth and human life.

Yet the issues of the 21st century seen to continue into the start of this year, which obviously includes the natural concerns over war between nations and races, the problems in Ukraine, the struggle between absolute despotism and democracy, the rivalry between the US and China, but also the excess of our economic activities destroying tropical rain forests accelerated CO2 emissions, and has hastened global warming and a loss of bio-diversity. And under the influence of what have become chain reactions, the reality is that a variety of living creatures

in the world are going extinct at a very rapid pace.

At the end of last year, my husband introduced me an article with connections to the Principles of the Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education, and as a result I read a book by the Tokyo University Quantum Biology Research Institute Professor Takehiko Kobayashi, who had written that article. According to Professor Kobayashi, the earth is now entering an age of mass extinctions, and from the estimated 8 million plants and animals currently existing on earth, it is said that at least 1 million varieties can become extinct within a few decades. Basically, this is the result of environmental change brought about by human activities, and it is progressing at the highest pace in world history. In other words, if humans refrain from tampering with nature more than necessary, a balanced ecosystem will most likely be restored.

As varieties of living things become extinct and diversity decreases, we may wonder why we had a relative lack of a sense of crisis. In his book, Professor Kobayashi writes that in answering why weren't we interested and why didn't we have that sense of crisis, it was because we had never encountered that sort of crisis. However, this is actually a very important point. Biologists view diversity as extremely important. Even though there are people who think, for example, that it would be good if cockroaches and bloodsucking mosquitos disappeared, we are all interconnected in this biological environment. Interconnected means that all life started from a single cell, and that in the evolution of living things over 3.8 billion years, we could be said to be siblings, or relatives, and are all connected. This interconnection within the diversity means that differing species support each other.

We have learned, through the Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education, how precious life is. We have learned that life is not just human life, but every living thing that is alive. I again reflected on this as I read Professor Kobayashi's point of view as a biologist. And indeed, I felt a greater, more immediate real sense that humans have brought about our current situation because of upsetting that balance of the ecosystem.

The Professor also says that although it has taken a long time from the beginning of the earth to the birth of the first cell, from that one cell's descendants, evolution has produced the existence of a diversity of life forms, and through another long period of time, humans have been born. And from the birth of humans, if we go back about 6 million years ago, in terms of generations through about 300,000 generations, we reach the same ancestors with gorillas and chimpanzees. And if we further go back about 3.8 billion years, all living things come from the same single cell. And while the birth of the first life was truly a miracle, the Professor also talks about the repeated process thereafter of evolution and selection over time.

This I believe brings a very real sense to what we have learned in the Principles of Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education Part 2 "The Construct of the Nomura Lifelong Integrated

Education”, that the history of humankind is the history of education itself.

What shocked me the most in Professor Kobayashi’s book was the fact that in the past, the earth experienced five cycles of mass extinctions. The most recent extinction was about 66.5 million years ago, known as the Mesozoic end of the Cretaceous period, where dinosaurs and about 70% of all life forms disappeared from the earth, and even further back, at the end of the Paleozoic period 251 million years ago, 95% of all life became extinct.

It is said that the cause of both extinctions was a natural catastrophe such as an asteroid hit or a volcanic explosion. What Professor Kobayashi now says is that the cause of the current mass extinction is inexcusable human activity. In other words, humans are inflicting damage on earth on the scale of an asteroid impact, and when I read this I could not help but feel how deeply sinful humans are.

I am convinced that what we are doing unconsciously is truly no trivial matter. If humans continue their economic activities without change, by the end of the 21st century we can anticipate an approximate 4 degree rise in temperature, and as a result that will bring about irreversible effects.

There are only 78 years left in the 21st century. Today, 60 years from 1962, we are in a world we never imagined at that time, but 60 years from now, if things turn out as we have projected, the world in our grandchildren’s lives will be in a terrible state.

Around 1960, the economy had grown bountiful, but in reverse proportion to this economic wealth, our founder keenly felt that something had caused a variety of social unease that had not existed when Japan was in an era of material poverty and started this Center’s activities. I again reflect on the significance of this cause.

Our founder continuously taught us the importance of what we had possessed in the past and now are missing due to our excessive clinging to economic wealth.

As one means of knowing this, about 30 years after 1962, which was about 30 years before now, in January 1993 our founder’s New Year’s message was recorded in her collection

of essays “Komorebi—Dappled Sunlight Beneath the Trees” in which I felt a part of this. There, the New Year’s scene of that age was described as follows.

When the first three ceremonial days of the year are over I enjoy the ritual of taking extra care and time to put away the lacquered cups and containers the spiced sake and holiday food were served in. As a child I was told to wash them in lukewarm water and wipe them carefully at least three times with a clean soft cloth, and I still keep up the time-consuming old custom.

Everything has become so simple nowadays. Convenience and immediate results are rated so highly that one can quite easily dispense with formalities. As I lovingly wiped the nest of lacquered boxes I thought to myself that perhaps this sense of leisure was what plenty and abundance was all about.

We tend to avoid troublesome chores or to be physically involved and to take time over things in exchange for expediency, efficiency and achieving results without physical strain. I think that the society of the future is going to need the opposite of what is trendy today.

Reading about this real wealth of a spirit that does not feel bad about taking effort gave me, myself, a feeling of healing and comfort. Our founder continued, “In anticipation of the future when science will no longer be almighty we must find time to think about what is really most valuable and truly indispensable in our lives. These are not just spiritual matters. Recognizing that we are actually in the process of depleting the finite resources of the earth, we need to build an entire new system of values” she writes.

Today when those feelings have become distant, and right now 30 years after the time when that was written, that spirit is being lost, and I think our global environment may be in a dangerous situation. To create the new values that our founder describes, this is in other words, discerning what is a really important value and what is a secondary value. We may find more convincing fundamental criteria of what is important if we reconsider about the value in a global scale perspective, not in a narrow viewpoint.

Our Founder explains that the Western European scientific civilization that has led the world has come to an impasse now in the 21st century, it is the Eastern spirituality that Japan possesses, the animism, that should be able to contribute to the world.

The spirit of animism is the thought that something similar to human spirits exist widely in the natural world, recognizing the spiritual value in the natural world, where worship of this is one of the basic patterns of religion and is a view seen worldwide. Here in Japan, from ancient times, people believed that all things had spirits within them — everything from the mountains, oceans, rivers, animals, and plants to houses and even toilets, everything had spirits, and people believed that gods lived in them and protected people.



The spirit of animism is seen in places like Japan where the climate and weather are relatively peaceful, and there is no need to see nature as something to be overcome, but rather seen with awe and respect.

Modern man has seen nature as a tool for their use, and there is a strong tendency not to recognize the spiritual value of the world of nature, but now, the philosophy of protecting nature has started a movement to reevaluate the animistic feelings and inspiration.

We Japanese should have a spiritualism like this as the Japanese originally valued, but in the flow of time what we come to value on the surface layer of consciousness is Western European rationalism. Yet when we look at reality once again on this global scale, we ask ourselves to what degree we can contribute this spirit of animism to the world, but first we as Japanese must dig up this spirit within ourselves. This is where Japan and the Japanese people should discover our potential, and where we should discover what the Japanese can contribute to the world. In order for us to discover what Japan can do, we must first discover our own possibilities.

Therefore, we must change ourselves to wake up to the great value of what the Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education aims such as the self-actualization, self-perfection, and development of our humanity, as well as the preciousness of life for ourselves, families, friends, including plants and animals, and at the same time to exert an effort to rid ourselves of the idea that we know everything we learned. From having these thoughts in our minds, we must act to flesh this out in reality. Of course, what we have practiced in reality has become the happiness of each and every one of us, but a large part of that has come from the guidance of the predecessors.

Now it is us to have self-awareness as leaders of new generation and practice what we learn and this is the meaning and significance of our 60th anniversary.

Human history is still a short history of 2 to 3 million years, and our founder tells us “We cannot think that stupid actions that bring destruction to humans and the earth are the acts of a man of wisdom.” As I touched on earlier, regardless of these kinds of conditions in the world, the world is headed into division and opposition.

From the birth of primitive life, through long evolution, from amphibians to mammals to primates to present-day humans, from lower animals to more highly developed animals, we have gone through a long history, and in this process all the traces have accumulated in the subconscious thoughts in human beings. We are able to know this subconscious awareness to some degree through our own internal reflection and analysis, but only in an extremely tiny area, and at the bottom below is the accumulated past experience of billions of years of the experience of life, and everyone has a self that is an undiscovered and unknown self. We see this as one facet of humans that is ungovernable. We often experience in our

daily life how fragile our rationality, that people today see as absolute, under the restrictions of subconscious awareness.

Our founder talked about the self-centered nature and ignorance likened to human 3-year-olds, and that the lust, jealous, envy, evil and cruelty are the areas where people these days must focus on and try to eliminate. It is essential that each and every one of us must look inside ourselves and in our relationships and see the self-centeredness of humans plundering the world of nature that let all life and all things in nature alive. In other words, it is certainly a problem that we are not aware that all life forms must live together in the diversity of life forms in the global environment. But before that, we must think through the discord at our own feet in households, to the discord between nations brought about by dissidence of humans, and realize the importance of facing the issues of conquering my own and the own self-centeredness of each and every one of us. Here, we aim to restore human nature and weeding out the human potential for infinite evil while developing the potential for infinite good and conduct educational work from both these facets that Nomura Lifelong Integrated Education teaches.

In 2022, we are to cultivate our own selves through our human relations taking up the issues on national and ethnic levels as our own themes under our principles of education looking at the global scale environmental issues.

We have, without any self-awareness, taken the world that has raised us into an unviable direction. And with a self-awareness that we have responsibility for a part of that situation, I do hope that we make this year for us to seriously consider that we are a valuable existence in the eternal cycle of life and open our eyes to the preciousness of all life forms other than our own.

I mentioned at the beginning, this is the year of the Tiger and a characteristic of the Water Tiger in the cycle. The character of the female Tiger with its newborn infant is domestic, yet its nature is the fiercest. And the significance of this year is that having survived a harsh winter, we are getting ready for the next stage this year.

It is my belief that the Center must take the steps to be ready for that new stage. If we do not point ourselves at any risk in the direction of saving our world for our grandchildren’s era, for me this means I will be abandoning my responsibilities brought from living in this age. I do not want to become that kind of person.

The mother tiger with a new-born infant will become fierce, and I would like to think that it is because she wishes to protect the child by any means necessary. Transcending that fierceness into the strength of belief, and into a discovery of the path to our shared responsibility to connect to the next generation, is what I would like to learn along with all of you in this coming year.

(New Year Message delivered on January 13th, 2022)