



A personal reflection from Japan: the most aging country with a declining birthrate in the world

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Because of the rapid escalation of the infection since last December, the number of deaths in the Covid-19 has risen to more than 6,000 in Japan. Elderly people of 60 years and over account for 98% of all deaths. Now in Tokyo, the number of the deaths out of hospitals is drastically increasing. But Japanese media don't report the actual condition of the deaths of elderly, the personal episode, where and how they died. The grief of the grandchildren and family members who lost their loved one is not shared in the general public. In the background of the indifference of the public to the deaths of elderly, there is serious discrimination against infectious disease patients and also the division of generation due to the nuclearization of the family after WWII. The self-determination thought based on strict individualism is underlying.

As for the young generation, the trend is to crowd into a narrow central metro area, to live and work in a skyscraper building. Their school life is dominated by deviation-value-oriented education. They have to engage in keen competition within their closed circle. Bullying in the classroom is widespread. The losers often go into seclusion, sometimes for long years, and at worst, commit suicide. Now under this pandemic, the number of suicide by female students is increasing. As for the elder generation, they move to the suburbs and live in the apartment designed for the elderly independently of their children. Their biggest fear is agnosia, incapability of cognition. Their trend is to make the "*Ending Note*" rejecting terminal medicine before they lost their ability of self-determination. Both generations are each other non intervention. Self-determination of the each generation and self-help efforts are crucial.

On the other side, some depopulated and aging provincial cities, but being blessed with abundant natural resources and keeping Japanese traditional religious culture,

have been earnestly trying to create the regional community of mutual aid, rejecting the segregation of the generation. For example, Toyama prefecture along the Japan Sea, called discriminately "the reverse side of Japan" with much snow, is promoting "*Compact City Project*" toward the inter-generational symbiosis in cooperation with our university and the landscape gardening industry. Also "*Toyama Day Care System*" introduced by one retired nurse 30 years ago, has grown up to the national project. Elder persons and handicapped children live together in the Japanese traditional big house designed for a three-generation household situated in the rich natural grounds, supported by family members and various care persons. The remarkable case that the condition of children with ADHD turned better in the house could be reported.

Not only the regional community, Japanese need to create the cognitive moral community as well. For that, we have to overcome our trauma, the lost of Japanese common ethics rooted in *State Shintoism* before WW2. Not to return to narrow-minded nationalism, but we need to delve more deeply into its roots, to trace our national ethics back to its ultimate origin, the supreme common good shared by all human beings. The present World War against Covid-19 is a rare chance for us to escape from an island country's seclusive mentality and to get the cosmopolitan perspective. Now developing *Global Bioethics*, promoted by PAV, that could be traced back to the very common beginning, the Creator of the Universe, could be its powerful tool. Also it could be a tool for the missionary work. In fact, it is common history that not a few intellectual elder persons have been baptized in Japan.

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