

Before The End

Kazuhito Komiya

Recently, I remembered that I thought "all others are myself" by reading the books the philosopher Immanuel Kant and the philosopher Kitaro Nishida wrote when I was young.

No one puts their hand into a burning fire. That is because we know fire is hot. However, that is not knowledge we are born with.

The fact that a fire is hot is something that we must learn through experience or be taught. The first time we see a fire, we might

hold a hand over it out of curiosity, not knowing that it is hot. If we touch the fire, we will know it is hot, and may even be burned. From this sort of experience, a person learns not to touch fire. A person who knows that fire is hot may still touch a red-hot stone, but will likely not do so again.

That is the definition of learning. We are incapable of determining whether an object is safe to touch based purely on the innate abilities we are born with. We are only capable of experiencing the sensation of heat and reflexively withdrawing our hand when we touch a hot object. In fact, with just our innate abilities, we are not even aware that fire is fire, much less that it is hot. Like in this example, a person's behavior is formed through the combination of the things he or she has learned. In other words, everyone is shaped through their own cognitive capabilities and what they have learned.

Human thought formed by experiences and studies is very bad at thinking about the future, however, and tend to forget a crisis after

it passes us by. The Great East Japan Earthquake proved that. After the tsunami, many stone markers admonishing future generations not to live below that point—based on the lessons of past tsunami—were discovered in elevated areas. Many people lived below those markers, and many lost their lives in the tsunami. Now that COVID-19 is menacing the world, I hope that humanity will no longer have this weakness.

We have no way of knowing whether globalization will continue or whether the world will devolve into a state like the remote past. However, even if the world should move backward, the experiences and lessons of history from particular past will serve little or no purpose in an age in which we have access to information and communication technologies and artificial intelligence.

When the future is uncertain and there is indecision about which course of action to take, only one is sure to be the right one, and it is one that only humans can make: Take actions that will benefit

the next generation. Now is the time for all of you to think about the society of the future—and all the major socioeconomic changes coming—and act.

Now that humanity is facing a crisis, it is vital that we should return to the true essence of humanity—live for others rather than for ourselves. Since "all others are myself", it is nothing but living for myself.

16th June 2020