

## **KAZE, July 2019**

### **Let's not rely on technologies alone!**

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Nowadays in Japan, social conditions are getting worse and worse making people worry about their future life especially when extreme weather events caused by climate change frequently happening in various parts of the country. Furthermore, terrible crimes have been increasing these days, which makes us realize how difficult it is to maintain a sustainable and environmentally friendly society while protecting the dignity of people.

Amid such confusion, Abe Cabinet cannot show us what type of country Japan will become in the future. It is provoking our anger to see that politicians are just discussing ad hoc measures to win the election and will not at all discuss the very bases of politics, namely to what direction they are leading this country. It is even strange that people seem to accept the short-sightedness of this cabinet.

I wrote in the above that the current cabinet averts the discussion of Japan's future, but to be precise, the cabinet approved the "investment strategy for the future" in June 2017, featuring a futuristic concept of Society 5.0 (meaning the 5th new society following Hunting, Agriculture, Industry, and Information societies) making full use of IoT and AI. The cabinet also approved "Japan's Long-term Strategy under the Paris Agreement" on 11 June 2019. As you see, these two strategies center around the economy and technologies, indicating that the current cabinet prioritizes the economy to the environment and business/technologies to the life/dignity of each person. Formerly, the economy and technologies were considered a way to realize welfare or social sustainability. However, as the economy and technologies have been powered with authorities in the past few decades, they became a cause of further disruption of society.

Historically, technologies were expected to expand industries and economies, and eventually change/improve our society. The first industrial revolution was incurred by the invention of a steam power engine, pushing up the UK to the factory of the world. In the second industrial revolution starting in the late

1800s, electricity and petroleum brought about mass production. They also mainstreamed heavy industries which made the US and Germany as major world powers. Personal computers appeared in the latter half of the 1900s are said to have triggered the third industrial revolution, transforming various aspects of our lives. Likewise, it is believed that the fourth industrial revolution with AI and IoT will change the industrial structure and our lives dramatically.

Many Japanese including those in the current government seem to believe that AI and IoT will make us happy and help us develop a rich society in the future. However, it is just an illusion. I even worry that AI will take place of human labor and will lower the integrative capacity of human beings, or will widen the information gap or educational inequity as well as economic disparities, and eventually increase social instability.

Asahi Newspaper dated 6 June 2019 reported that Robert J. Gordon, an American economist, said that any innovative invention today will not bring about a dramatic rise of productivity and that AI will not change the business styles or increase productivity as electricity and gasoline engines did in the past. Susumu Tonegawa, a Nobel laureate, said that there are a lot of useless or harmful technologies. We can lead a good life without them, but human beings make every effort to produce "things" using all available technologies and energy, and end up in pollutions. He also said that a human mind is necessary for the wise use of technologies; what policy we hold and how to control technologies is a key for human beings to survive on the earth. The famous Mahatma Gandhi even pointed out that science without humanity is a deadly sin.

The first industrial revolution in the UK resulted in pollutions and low wages, which caused the expansion of colonial policies. Until today, those environmental degradations and economic gaps have been continuing and are becoming even more serious. Then why people excessively rely on technologies when it is becoming clearer that they will not make us happy or make society sustainable.

I can understand that new technologies excite our intellectual curiosity, and there is nothing wrong about it. These days, however, new technologies are introduced to our society without discussing/examining if they are really good and useful for our well-being. They are introduced just because they provide political or

economic merits to authorities or business activities. Should we accept such technologies as having negative impacts (nuclear power generation, linear motor cars, weapons, etc.) on society, rather than benefit?

It may be time for us to face the fact that a substantial amount of taxpayers' money has been invested in new technologies (including those trendy climate change countermeasures as CCS or CCUS) without being reviewed if they are effective and necessary. It is only those interested parties that will be befitted from those new technologies. We have to realize that those conventional idea and ways of doing things mentioned above are depriving futures of children. Now we have to show our courage to change such old ways of doing things.

Here, let's remember the words of Greta;

*"You only speak of green eternal economic growth because you are too scared of being unpopular. You only talk about moving forward with the same bad ideas that got us into this mess, even when the only sensible thing to do is pull the emergency brake."*

*"Our civilization is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making enormous amounts of money."*