Every day at Jiyu Gakuen is connected to the rest of your life



TAKAHASHI, KAZUYA — President

Society today is at a major turning point. As the world we have known all our lives is shaken by grave problems such as environmental destruction, war and unrest, and income inequality, the future is becoming increasingly hard to see. Moreover, it is estimated that half of the children who will become adults and join society a decade from now will enter occupations that do not exist today. The society that awaits these young people will pose questions with no right or wrong answers. It will be a society in which they will need to forge their own independent path forward.

The situation today brings to mind the words of Albert Einstein, who said, "A problem cannot be solved with the same mindset that brought it about." "Mindset" refers to one's psychological approach to things, one's values, biases, and so on. A worldview that values

economic growth above all else is also the source of major problems—nuclear accidents, for example. This same worldview is unable to find solutions for the problems it produces. This also applies to education. Education is said to be the key to building a person's future. In today's world, it is no longer possible to educate those who will face contemporary issues in society with the same kind of education that we adults received when we were in school. Transforming our educational mindset is therefore vital, and educational institutions all over the world are searching for new approaches to learning.

The central concern of the new education is not "how much knowledge can be memorized" but "how we cultivate self-learning and independent thinking skills." This shift in the main focus of education has made another transformation in the field of education of paramount importance. Namely, a shift in education from "learning to know" to "learning to transform oneself and society."

Inspired by the vision of a communal society rooted in "freedom, cooperation, and love," Mrs. Motoko Hani, who founded Jiyu Gakuen with her husband in 1921, called for a transformation of the educational and social mindset of the day. In her address delivered at the sixth New Education Fellowship conference in 1932, Mrs. Hani said, "A school is more than an intermediary for sending human resources into society as some people might think. Instead, we would like to establish the belief that education is what builds society anew."

Every year at the Jiyu Gakuen entrance ceremony, incoming students are greeted with the President's words that "you are admitted to Jiyu Gakuen to make this school better. For us, there is only one teacher; that is Jesus Christ." This message can be interpreted as meaning that "through the school life that you start today, we want you to think for yourselves and do what you believe is right. We want all of you to work together to build a better society which pleases God." We always have only one teacher, Jesus Christ." Our goal is the education that fosters a strong character which will serve as the foundation throughout the students' entire life and at the same time instills the creative vitality for shaping a better future.

"Living" is something that all animals do, but "living right" and "shaping a better future" are conscious acts that only human beings with free will can do. It is during our formative years that we attain volition and grow into an independent person with our own ideas. This is why cultivating a well-grounded character by sharpening the intellect and exercising the body is so important during our early years. It is during this period that we need experiences which first make us ask ourselves and seriously ponder the meaning of such questions as "what is proper living" and "what is a better future" and then, based on our answers to these questions, provide a guide to our behavior. Our learning is not for the test scores but indeed ultimately rests in grappling with these kinds of questions. The answers to these questions are not written in textbooks or in study guides. The answers given by friends and teachers are not our own answers. Yet, we cannot discover the answers to these questions by ourselves. We can get answers only gradually through rewarding experiences that draw out our potential, through stimulating relationships with our fellow friends with whom we share our daily lives, and through daily living that thoroughly exercises mind, body, and heart, and these answers steadily mold our approach to life.

Jiyu Gakuen provides every student with education that takes time to develop their ability to live well and to live independently in order to build a better tomorrow. The way we live everyday shapes our future selves. To live with all our mind today shapes how we approach life in the years ahead. Every day at Jiyu Gakuen is intimately connected to the rest of your life, and it is all of you who make the connection.