

Face masks can foster a false sense of security

What's happening in Japan is written all over our faces—our blank, expressionless, masked faces. Never before, it seems safe to say, ①(gone / many / have / masked /
5 about / people / so).

Thus we confront the microbes that assault us.

Are the microbes disconcerted? It seems not.

“As self-protection, your mask is practically useless,” says Shukan Gendai magazine this month. Commercial face masks, medical authorities say, can block particles
10 measuring 3 to 5 micrometers. Wear it against pollen, by all means. The coronavirus currently raging, however, measures 0.1 micrometer.

②Why is a mask like a hospital waiting room? Because both foster a false sense of security.

“The most dangerous place is not the concert venue or the packed commuter train,”
15 Shukan Gendai says. “It's the hospital waiting room.”

It stands to reason. All close, confined, crowded spaces are viral. How much the more so a refuge for the sick? And yet the magazine finds, to its horror, waiting rooms crowded as usual with outpatients keeping nonessential medical engagements that could easily be put off.

20 A Tokyo orthopedic* surgeon's clinic is a case in point. It's packed early one morning with 70-odd people, mostly elderly, (a. wait) for their turn for rehabilitation therapy.

“The female therapists are very friendly and very conscientious,” says a 71-year-old patient. “And with everything (b) insurance, coming here has become almost an everyday habit.”

25 He's masked, of course. Everyone is masked. The doctors must know, though the patients may not, how little that's worth—but business proceeds as usual, with waits as long as four hours shrugged off* as an agreeable way to pass the time. “I have lots of ‘rehab friends,’” the patient says, “so it's always pleasant to be here.”

In 2018, 18,560 people nationwide were infected in hospitals by antibiotic*-resistant

30 microbes, statistics cited by the magazine show.

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Beginning as a defense against colds, flu and pollen, the mask gradually became habitual. We feel naked without it. Think of all those strangers—tens, hundreds of thousands, it may be, in the course of a single day—who saw your face. Granted their total indifference; still, anyone choosing to take a whimsical* interest in you could
40 freely observe your features and expression, the state of your make-up, your age lines and worry lines, whatever—drawing conclusions to his or her heart's content, unbound by even the most elementary constraints of truth. Outrageous though they may be, those conclusions will constitute “you” as far as that individual is concerned. So what? Nothing and, yet, once the thought takes root, its eerie* impact is hard to shake.

45 Such are the perils of exposing your face to the massed masses. Better be faceless. The impulse antedates the coronavirus, and will outlast it, Yoshikawa predicts. It's harmless in one sense; ③in another sense not, he feels.

There's more to communication, he explains, than the exchange of words. We study each other's facial expressions, and learn much from them. Emotions such as sympathy
50 or anger, pity or contempt, friendship, indifference, wariness and dislike are generated by, or detected in, the eyes certainly, but also the set of the mouth. Is it smiling or serious? If smiling, how boldly or timidly? If serious, how grimly or reassuringly? Faceless, Yoshikawa says, “we know less of each other. It's harder to penetrate a person's feelings. We sympathize less with each other. Close relationships may grow
55 less close.”

The mask represents, he says, “the anonymity of the internet transferred to the real world.”

What this might mean in “the real world” may therefore be gauged by what it means

on the internet. That theme is the core of a dialogue published by Bungei Shunju
60 magazine (April) between novelist and essayist Mariko Hayashi and neuroscientist
Nobuko Nakano. The key word in it is “bashing.”

It’s hard to know which spread first: the English loan-word, or the temper it
describes. Net anonymity encourages and intensifies bashing. It frees us from all
accountability. Who gets bashed? Anyone potentially; most often, those who are least
65 anonymous, most exposed, most famous: celebrities.

Do we idolize* them today only to bash them tomorrow? Three we may think of as
much are actor-model Masahiro Higashide, actress-model Erika Karata and
actress-singer Rebecca Eri Rabone, aka* Becky. Hayashi and Nakano marvel at the
fury of the public response to these celebrities’ marital infidelities*. Who cares? What’s
70 it to us? Are our own lives so spotless that we can afford the luxury of moral outrage?

“It’s like ants swarming around sugar.” Nakano says. ④Like the masked swarming
around the unmasked.

We can’t help ourselves, maybe. Viewing our social behavior through her neurological
lens, Nakano sees the brain at war with itself, torn between contradictory genetic
75 inheritances that divide our nature between social and anti-social impulses. There are
snippets* of DNA in us called arginine vasopressin (AVP)*, which Nakano tartly calls
“the infidelity gene.” Go forth and multiply, it says in effect. Monogamy* is a social, not
a biological virtue. ⑤AVP had free rein before society evolved and, with it, certain
rules of behavior called morality.

Well, morality’s fun too. Marriage ⑥underpins social stability. Infidelity undermines
80 marriage. Therefore it undermines society. Therefore your infidelity *is* my business.
Therefore the pleasure I get from bashing you is righteous pleasure. The dopamine it
generates is my just reward.

Nakano mentions a scientific experiment involving 6-year-old children. They’re
85 shown a kid (c. cheat) in a game and told, “This child will be punished.” Then they’re
asked, “Do you want to see it?”

Of course they do.

“(It’s) a cruel experiment!” Hayashi exclaims. So it is. Cruelty and virtue seem odd
bedfellows, but cruelty is shy. Virtue gives it confidence. It’s a veil, you might say. Or a
90 B .

(*The Japan Times*, March 29, 2020)

*問題の都合上一部省略、修正した箇所がある

(注) *orthopedic 整形外科の

*antibiotic 抗生物質の

*eerie 気持ちの悪い

*aka also known as の略

*snippet 断片

*arginine vasopressin(AVP) アルギニンバソプレシン

*monogamy 一夫一婦制

*shrug off 無視する

*whimsical 気まぐれな

*idolize 崇拜する

*marital infidelity 不倫

問1 (a)、(c)の動詞を適切な形に変えよ。また、(b)に当てはまるものとして最も適切なものを下の選択肢から一つ選べ。

(b) ア covering イ covering up ウ covered with エ covered by

問2 下線部①の語を意味が通るように並べ替えよ。

問3 下線部②について、その理由を100字以内の日本語で具体的に説明せよ。

問4 下の1～4の文を並べ替えて、空所Aの段落を完成させよ。

A	<p>1. His observations are part of a feature the Asahi Shimbun ran in February under the title “The Mask-Dependent Society.”</p> <p>2. Consider the mask as a cultural phenomenon.</p> <p>3. Yoshikawa suggests another name: “the faceless society.”</p> <p>4. That may come closer to its true significance than the medical standpoints, says Hannan University psychologist Shigeru Yoshikawa.</p>
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問5 下線部③について、その内容を日本語で具体的に説明せよ。

問6 下線部④について、その内容を日本語で具体的に説明せよ。

問7 下線部⑤を日本語に訳せ。

問8 下線部⑥の語と同じような意味を表す語を下の選択肢から一つ選べ。

ア stimulates イ oppresses ウ supports エ weakens

問9 空所Bに当てはまる最も適切な一語を本文中から抜き出して答えよ。

問10 新型コロナウイルスへの感染を防ぐためには、三つの「密」を避けることが大切だと言われているが、その三つの「密」に当たる英単語を本文中からそれぞれ一語で抜き出せ。

(解答欄)

問1	(a)	(b)	(c)	
問2				
問3				
問4	→	→	→	
問5				
問6				
問7				
問8		問9		
問10	(密接)	(密閉)	(密集)	