

第2回京進英語エッセイコンテスト 優秀作品紹介

②英語エッセイ部門『日本からみた世界、世界からみた日本について考えよう』

第2回エッセイテーマ：私が世界に発信したい『日本』

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Harmony and Caring

An article I read recently discussed the results of an experiment a British social anthropologist conducted in Britain. In it, she tried to find out whether or not the “reflex” apology blurted out when the English either bump into or brush against someone is a particularly striking example of “English courtesy.” To do so, she started bumping on purpose into people of different nationalities.

Results showed that 80% of the English said “Sorry,” and she concluded that the “sorry-reflex” is a peculiarly English response, except for one other nationality, Japanese. She reported that only the Japanese seemed to have anything approaching the English sorry-reflex, but that they were frustratingly difficult to experiment on, as they appeared to be remarkably good at sidestepping her attempted collisions.

I think the experiment indicates that Japanese are not only particularly courteous but also that they are conscious of their surroundings and show unusual care toward others. In other countries, people often sue one another for trivial things, and others may sell fake brand-name products. On hearing of such things, Japanese people tend to realize the importance of maintaining harmony in their own society.

In order to maintain harmony, we try to avoid conflicts and confrontations as much as possible, and, both physically and mentally, we are apt to sidestep to let other people have their ways. People in many other countries are more inclined to prioritize their own interests and even their self-centered desires. As a result, they face confrontations and conflicts with one another. What is worse, they may take this as a matter of course.

By way of contrast, Japanese are likely to avoid confrontations whenever possible. One case that illustrates this occurred two years ago, after a concert I had gone to. Special goods were being sold at the venue, items that were not available at stores or online. People formed an orderly line for the sales counter, and I myself had stood in it for about two hours when the sponsor suddenly announced that all the goods had been sold. After this announcement, I felt disappointed at having stood in line for two hours for nothing and looked around to see how other people were reacting to the announcement. To my surprise, they all broke up calmly and left without shouting or complaining. It seemed to me that this might have triggered a rebellion had it occurred in another country. I like the common Japanese way of thinking and attitude, and I really think that I was lucky to have been born in Japan. I think it can truly be said that Japan is a country of harmony and caring.