

Examination

🕒 30 min

次の英文を読んで、設問に日本語で答えなさい。

There is a new cell-phone ring tone that can't be heard by most people over the age of twenty, according to a report. The tone is derived from something called the Mosquito, a device invented by a Welsh security firm for the noble purpose of driving hooligans away from places where grownups are attempting to ply an honest trade. The device emits a 17 kilohertz buzz, a pitch that is too high for older ears to register but, as we learn from additional reporting by *The New York Times*, is “ear-splitting” for younger people. (A) A person or persons unknown have produced a copy of the Mosquito buzz for use as a cell-phone ring tone, evidently with the idea that it will enable students to receive notification of new text messages while sitting in class, without the knowledge of the teacher.

The Times, in a welcome but highly uncharacteristic embrace of anarchy, celebrated this development as an ingenious guerrilla tactic in youth's eternal war against adult authority — “a bit of techno-jujitsu,” as the paper put it. (B) But it's not entirely clear which side is the winner here. When you hear the tone, it apparently sets your teeth on edge, which means that, if the entire class suddenly grimaces, it's a good bet that one of the students just got a text message. Anyway, what was wrong with “vibrate only”?

The real interest of the story, of course, lies elsewhere. The news is not that students are fooling their teachers, which was never news, even in ancient Greece, or that technology is rapidly unraveling the fabric of trust and respect on which civil society depends, which everyone already knows. It is that one more way for middle-aged people to feel that they're losing it has been discovered.

People tend to regard the gradual yet irreversible *atrophy of their faculties as a bad thing. Is it, though? Sure, it's tied up with stuff that you don't

want to think too much about. One day, you learn that you can't hear a sound that is perfectly audible to teen-agers and dogs. (Any significance in that symmetry, by the way? Do we feel diminished as a species because dogs can hear a noise that we can't?) Soon after that, you realize that you have forgotten how to calculate the area of a triangle, and how many pints there are in a quart. From there, it's not long until you find that you are unable to stop talking about real estate, which is the first step down an increasingly rocky and overgrown path that leads, almost always — all right, always — to death. What is there to like about (C)any of this?

Well, first of all, who *wants* to hear someone else's cell phone? The Mosquito tone is like (D)the squirrel's heartbeat that **George Eliot refers to in *Middlemarch*. "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well ***wadded with stupidity." The Mosquito tone is one of those things you're better off not knowing. The world is probably full of such things (though how would you know?). Maybe the area of a triangle isn't that important either. Maybe, in the end, it *is* all about real estate.

The point is that mental and physical development never stops, no matter how old you are, and development is one of the things that make it interesting to be a being. We imagine that we change our opinions or our personalities or our taste in music as we ripen, often feeling that we are betraying our younger selves. Really, though, our bodies just change, and that is what changes our views, our temperament, and our tolerance for Billy Joel. We can't help it. The chemistry has altered.

(E)This means that some things that were once present to us become invisible, go off the screen; the compensation is that new things swim into view. We may lose hormones, but we gain empathy. The deficits, in other words, are not all at one end of the continuum. Readers who are over twenty may not hear the new ring tone; if they had it on their phones, it might as well be silent. But most readers who are under the age of twenty will not be able to "hear" this Comment.

Yes, they will see the words, and they will imagine that they are reading something, and that it makes sense; but they can never truly “get it.” The Comment is simply beyond the range of their faculties. ^(F)For all intents and purposes, if you’re under twenty, this page might as well be blank.

〔注〕

*atrophy (身体を)衰えさせる

**George Eliot 19世紀イギリスの小説家(1819-80)。 *Middlemarch* は代表作の一つ。

***wad 詰め込む

設問(1) 下線部(A)を日本語に直しなさい。

設問(2) 下線部(B)のように述べられている理由を、本文に即して 80 字程度の日本語でわかりやすく説明しなさい。

設問(3) 下線部(C)が示す内容を一つ挙げ、日本語で説明しなさい。

設問(4) 下線部(D)は、どのようなことを示す例として挙げられているか、日本語でわかりやすく説明しなさい。

設問(5) This の指す内容を明らかにして、下線部(E)を日本語に直しなさい。

設問(6) 下線部(F)を日本語に直し、そのように述べられている理由を、本文に即して 50 字程度の日本語でわかりやすく説明しなさい。