Self–Actualization and/or Self–Realization in Japan: A Historical Approach to its Various Aspects

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1．Introduction

The Japanese word *jiko-jitsugen*, which stands for "self-actualization" and/or "self-realization," has become popular in modern Japanese society. *Jiko* means "self" and/or "selves," and *jitsugen* means "actualization" and/or "realization." I have conducted extensive research to clarify the concepts of this term.

In modern society, *jiko-jitsugen* tends to be regarded, in general, as a word symbolizing individualism; moreover, it is sometimes identified with egoism and selfishness actualized by individuals. Thus it is apt to be thought of as a very individual matter, hardly connected to society. However, surprisingly, in exploring the history of self-actualization and/or self-realization in Japan, I have discovered and revealed that the acceptance of the theory of self-realization, in early modern Japan before World War Ⅱ, was a gradual process of denying individuals, preparing unintentionally for one of the spiritual foundations leading to nationalism and, ultimately, ultranationalism and fascism. A curious paradox once existed concerning self-realization and/or self-actualization. This article focuses on the relationship between an individual and society and describes approximately how and why this paradoxical situation occurred.

This case demonstrates how various meanings of *jiko-jitsugen*, have been used and affected by social and cultural conditions, regardless of its consistent shape. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the socially and culturally transformed aspects of the concepts of self-actualization and/or self-realization. The main purpose of this article is to describe the concrete historical changes of *jiko-jitsugen* schematically, by classifying and arranging its conceptual variations in Japan from a historical viewpoint.

2．Methodological Argument

Abraham Maslow, an American humanistic psychologist, remains one of the most famous theorists on self-actualization, despite his death in 1970. He is well-known for establishing the theory of the hierarchy of needs, which constitutes divided levels, such as physiological needs, safety,

belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. Regardless of the diffusion of his theory, he often had to correct various misconceptions of self-actualization and criticized the powerful linguistic habit of identifying "self" with "selfish" in his book *"Toward a Psychology of Being"* in 1962. In fact, he insisted that self-actualizing people are altruistic, dedicated, self-transcending, and social.

However, I think that every term is originally destined to be interpreted in various ways and to be automatically diversified independently of theoretical standpoints. In particular, the vague words subject to human values depend greatly on the fixed ideas easily affected by a dominant number of people. This principle applies to *jiko-jitsugen*, for better or worse.

According to Marshal McLuhan, who is world famous for his study of media theory, the medium is the message. I suppose this noted proverb partly indicates a terminological necessity to grasp a term on the accepted level, rather than on the transmitted level, because even the contents of the same word can vary at the accepted point as soon as it is conveyed by a variety of media. Even if one sends the same message, speaking it is different from writing it. And if one accepts the same message, hearing it is very different from reading it. Recognizing the sounds of spoken language is quite different from recognizing the symbols of written language.

There is a distinction between *de jure standard* and *de facto standard*. The former is the standard legitimated as true or right because of a law, a regulation, or a principle. The latter is the standard that has virtually been justified because of its actual existence although not legally and deductively stated to exist. I think a typical example of the latter is the Windows operating system for personal computers made by the Microsoft Corporation. People use it, not because they are required to use it strictly by law, but because they think that it is a convenient tool for exchanging information. The number of Windows users is increasing around the world and the system is becoming dominant. Thus one cannot help but use Windows, even if one dislikes it or prefers Mac or Linux.

In this article, I focus not so much on a de jure standard of *jiko-jitsugen* but on a de facto standard, which has changed remarkably reflecting the social and cultural conditions of every period. I also comment on the relationship between the two standards, bearing in mind Maslow's theory as a typical de jure standard.

In order to schematically present the general background of self-actualization and/or self-realization in Japan, it is necessary to understand the social and cultural acceptance of the word *jiko-jitsugen* dividing its historical acceptance into two periods: before World War II and after World War II. The word "*jiko-jitsugen*" was originally translated from "self-realisation" (British English) or "self-actualization" (American English). During the prewar period, English thinker Thomas Hill

Green's idea of "self-realisation" was introduced into the field of ethics, translated into Japanese and absorbed gradually by young intellectuals. After a gap of several decades following the war, American psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow's concept of "self-actualization" was first translated into Japanese by Yoshikazu Ueda, a Japanese educational psychologist. However, it was curiously introduced mainly into business administration studies and gained rapid popularlity, although most Japanese people have gradually forgotten the name of Maslow in spite of the explosive spread of the word *jiko-jitsugen*. Therefore, we must discuss the concept of *jiko-jitsugen*, bearing in mind the historical gap before and after World War II.

3．Self-Realization in Japan before World War Ⅱ

3－1．Import of Green's theory of self-realization

The history of modern Japan dates back to the Meiji Restoration in 1868, which ended the closed-door policy that had been maintained for more than 200 years. Modern ideas introduced in the early Meiji period came mainly from England and France. Of the Western philosophers, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Montesquieu were popular in Japan.

Rikizo Nakashima, who was one of the many Japanese people who studied in the West, obtained a doctoral degree for his research on Immanuel Kant's philosophy, from Yale University in the USA. After returning to Japan in 1890, he began to lecture on ethics at the Imperial University of Tokyo. In his lecture "On British Kantians" delivered at the meeting of the Philosophical Society at the Imperial University of Tokyo on October 19, 1892, he introduced the ethical theory of Thomas Hill Green, which was a new theory that drawing widespread attention in England and the USA. Accoridng to Nakashima, the theory was evaluated highly as the newest one in those days. This was probably the first time when the term "self-realisation" ("self-realization" in American English) was publicly presented in Japan, apart from the earlier emergence of the Japanese word "jiko-jitsugen."

Green, a professor of ethics at the University of Oxford, was a political philosopher and the leading member of the British Idealist movement in the 19th century. He studied Greek philosophy and devoted himself to a study of German Idealism represented by Kant and Hegel. Most of his major works were published after his death in 1882, including "*Prolegomena to Ethics*," in which he described the concept of self-realization in detail. His theory of self-realization attracted some young Western thinkers, including John Dewey, who effectively absorbed it in his youth and became a strong proponent of Pragmatism.

3－2．A few problems immanent in Green's theory

With regard to my article, I think that Green's theory left enough room for the Japanese misunderstanding about the original idea of self-realization. In other words, some theoretical problems were immanent in his theory of self-realization.

At first, the notion of the self, which is to be realized, is described abstractly and, thereby, remains very vague. As is popularly considered, the self appears to be identified with an individual, but it is impossible to determine it as such, because of the importance of the individual's pursuit of a relationship with society, in the name of self. Therefore, we must not conclude that a self means an individual, and realize that we can insert various beings, such as society, a nation, and even a divine existence, in the term "self," which remains open to interpretation. In addition, it is presupposed that an individual and society are not opposed to, but in harmony with, each other. Green believed that individuals achieve perfection at the same time as society achieve perfection and that the development of individuals is an improvement in the preestablished harmony with the development of society, through the good offices of human reason.

Accordingly, since the position of each individual in society has not been theoretically clarified, it appears as if many contradictions between an individual and society did not exist at all. Indeed, the common good, which Green emphasized repeatedly, might be underlying the relations of human beings with their fellow citizens and could mediate between them, but the good itself also remains an ambiguous and unidentifiable concept. Consequently, when it comes to his emphasis on self-devotion to society, it follows that society predominates over individuals.

How was the abstract harmony between individuals and society in the theory practically applied? The vacuum in values can swallow everything for better or worse. His idea of the relations between individual and society contains not only infinite possibilities but also the actual dangers that may materialize, depending on when and how they are interpreted. As a matter of fact, the acceptance of self-realization in Japan has become one of the historical examples illustrating how his idealistic thought had been made to fall into an imprudent optimism, which was strongly influenced by the cultural and social conditions at that time.

3－3．Characteristics of the acceptance of self-realization in Japan

Green's theory of self-realization attracted widespread attention in Japan. In particular, many young students were very interested in Green's theory after attending Nakashima's lectures. For instance, Kitaro Nishida, who is known as the first thinker that created an original systematic

philosophy in Japan since Meiji Restoration, insisted in his famous book "*A Study of Good*" that the good is to develop and perfect the self, that is, self-realization.

Thus, Green's ideas gradually became more popular in Japan in the early 20th century, not only because of their influence on Japanese future, but also because of their familiarity with Japan's past, although a national intent strongly operated at that time. However, his ideas were separated into two mainstreams.

First, his idea on the relations between an individual and society could be easily utilized to construct a strong modern nation. Some Japanese educators and politicians extracted from it the interpretation that an individual can realize a true self by rendering great service to society as a whole. With the spiritual climate of anti-individualism and the tradition of selfless devotion, an idea such as this was so adapted to national morality that it was welcomed by a constitutional monarchy centering on the Emperor in modern Japan.

Second, Green's theory of self-realization was very compatible with Oriental ideas, such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism, although it actually has its roots in Occidental ideas. Obsessed by the desire to adopt new Western ideas, Japanese intellectuals felt at ease on discovering the Oriental aspects of Green's theory, with which they were familiar. Self-realization was very acceptable for individuals who unconsciously clung to Japanese traditional conventions, in spite of the Westernization of various social institutions.

Nonetheless, the absorption of Green's ideas in Japan was not so much a process of interpreting them correctly as it was a process of Japanizing them. In fact, Green's ideas were partially understood by Japanese thinkers at that time who read "*Prolegomena to Ethics*" and its translations, despite the fact that they had little interest in his other works. Moreover, Nakashima, who introduced the first introducer of him into Japan, understood them within the framework of empiricism and positivistic science, and removed the divine principle, regardless of the importance of his religious elements. Hence it follows that he mutilated the core of Green's ideas.

Indeed, some young intellectuals paid attention to Green's religious aspects and developed them and, in a sense, deepened them, but they advanced their own original theories, after thoroughly studying the essence of his religious ideas. Their concerns about these ideas branched off in two directions. On the one hand, there was an educated person like Ryousen Tsunasima who took a strong interest in the "eternal consciousness," which Green regarded highly as an origin of the self and personality and tried to encounter the absolute divine existence, seeking the absolute ideal of human life. On the other hand, there were some researchers, who were not very interested in the Christian

God, but extracted the Oriental elements from his religious ideas. Shinichiro Nishi, one of the favorite pupils of Nakashima, completed a voluminous translated work on Green's thoughts, but afterwards devoted himself exclusively to the Oriental ideas, such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism.

3－4. Nationalistic development of self-realization

Nakashima not only played a leading role in developing Japanese academicism, but also was instrumental in building Japan as a modern nation. He had a strong influence on some textbooks on ethics that were used for moral training, but I must mention that there existed a philosopher who was more influential than him. Tetsujiro Inoue, who was on good terms with Nakashima and later became a member of the House of Peers, wrote a textbook for moral training in secondary education especially for young intellectuals. He adopted the idea of self-realization as the most sublime ideal in this book, looking upon moral training as an important educational means of forming the nation.

Indeed, self-realization was considered as the ultimate purpose of an individuals' life, but it was expected to restrain individualism, which began to become popular among young intellectuals at that time. Inoue argued that the specific contents of self-realization led to individuals' devotion to society through self-discipline, and that self-realization could not be accomplished without self-sacrifice. The point emphasized here was not so much the harmonious development between society and each individual, as the superiority of society to individuals. It was intended to restrict individualism, which was assumed to be a tendency among the young to take care only of themselves while disregarding other peoples' affairs.

After a while, Nakashima and Inoue began to adopt the Japanese term "*jinkaku*," which they translated from the English word "personality." This was because they believed that the word "self" was very often associated with individualism, which was regarded in the same light by them as egoism and selfishness. They utilized "personality" in order to exclude the individualistic image attached to the word "self," although "personality" is also one of the significant keywords in Green's theory. Nakashima proposed a newly coined word "*jinkaku-jitsugen*" which corresponds directly to "personality-realization" in English, and made an effort to authorize it by trying to gradually eliminate the phrase "self-realization" from the official literature, although his intent was hardly accomplished.

In fact, in those days, distinct differences emerged between the thoughts of Nakashima and Inoue despite their common interests in self-realization and personality. Harmony in various levels was a high-priority matter for Nakashima. He laid much emphasis on harmonious conditions between

an individual and society, between an individual and a nation, between his own country and other countries, and so on. Nakashima also conceived an idea that a state has its own personality, which was expected to compromise the reciprocal interrelationships between each individual and society. In contrast, Inoue insisted on the superiority of society over each individual, regarding a harmony of an individual and a state as an unrealistic slogan. This concept of Inoue was easier for the Japanese to accept than that of Nakashima, in Japanese society where most people were hardly familiar with the theory that the relationship between a state and individuals was based on social contracts. Realizing that personality had a tendency to be understood not so much as a harmonious interconnection between a state and each individual, but as a priority of national interests over individuals' rights. Therefore, with the introduction and gradual spread of the idea of personality-realization, many Japanese nations took assumed that each individual was subordinate unilaterally to a state. Regardless of the failure in familiarizing the public to the term "personality-realization," the term "personality" became an ambivalent term that not only meant the character of each individual but included an ambiguous implication of the vertical relation between each Japanese individual and the Japanese state. This is how the stereotype of the superiority of society to individuals was established in the 1930s.

To put it plainly, what conclusion did thinkers who were influenced by the studies on Green's theory draw in terms of the relation between an individual and society?

The few influential philosophers mentioned above directly imposed upon the people their opinion of the superiority of a state to each individual, which was transformed into the figure serving the spirit of the Constitution granted by the Meiji Emperor in 1889. For example, Kumaji Yoshida, who had systematized the national morality just before World War II, made an assertion that "loyalty to the Emperor" meant "perfect self-realization." According to Tadayoshi Kihira, who tried to reorganize Oriental thoughts by applying the Hegelian dialectic to them, insisted that self-realization was identified with "perfection of personality," with self and/or selves be realized always based on his and/or her selfless devotion to the sacred State.

Furthermore, some thinkers inclined toward the Oriental ideas proposed that a real self could be found in a unified body of a state and individuals. According to one of the Buddhist ideas, which often motivated individuals to leave themselves integrally to a grand existence and to vanish themselves, for the sake of attaining their own happiness, the real self was the fusion of a lower self with a greater self. When each individual was regarded as a lower self and the state as a greater self, self-realization meant a harmonious merger of the latter with the former. As a result, the more eagerly self-realization was encouraged, the more closely the combination of a nation and individuals

was promoted. In fact, Nishi concluded, during World War II, that human beings as a whole were a state itself. In this manner, the theorists interested in Oriental ideas indirectly supported the absolute superiority of a state over individuals.

3－5. Escape from being Individuals

Needless to say, however strong the national influences by the ideas and the textbooks may have been, they did not necessarily reflect the direct effects on the overall social consciousness. I can point out two tendencies that were going out of the control of the Japanese administration, which were in striking contrast to each other. This contrast resulted from the various possibilities of interpreting the term "self" remaining a void in its range of meanings. It was considered as a symbol of the idea that an individual is allowed to live freely as an irreplaceable individual. A few young intellectuals went to extremes, giving themselves up to pleasure. In contrast, self was regarded as the divine existence going far beyond an individual. There were some people who longed for a sacred self as a whole in the world, trying to abandon themselves as individuals in the name of self-renunciation. Interestingly, some intellectuals who knew the term "self-realization" disliked it in terms of its unsocial nature, but the others rejected it, having doubts about its mystical nature. In any case, both positions of self-realization had indifference to human society in common, and were, therefore, powerless against a gradual rise of nationalism, ultranationalism and fascism.

Eventually, the idea of the superiority of a state over individuals penetrated into the Japanese society after many twists and turns, with the social atmosphere becoming intolerant about individuals' freedom. In addition, in spite of its compulsory nature, many people felt as if their behavior of selfless devotion to a state had been voluntary and spontaneous actions, because of a widespread acceptance of the notion that national commands were destined to coincide with each individual's inner desire at all times. Some of them were enthusiastically intoxicated with the dream that they could be integrated with the state, identifying it with the real self, regardless of whether they called it self-realization or not.

In Japan, the theory of self-realization, which had been originally essential to the careful attention to each individual, was transformed into the idea that rejected the self as a separate individual. This historical fact was indeed very paradoxical. To paraphrase the words of Erich Fromm "escape from freedom," I would like to call this "escape from being each individual."

4．Self-Actualization in Japan after World War II

4－1．A gap in the perception of *jiko-jitsugen* between the periods before and after World War II

Around the beginning of World War II, the term "self-realization" went out of fashion, in spite of an intense yearning for it among a few intellectuals. With the Japanese defeat in World War II, it seemed to the Japanese people at that time that the value of the ideas of prewar Japan has declined sharply. In particular, since Japanese ethics of the prewar days were connected directly to harsh Japanese militarism, the slogans and ideas of self-realization, which were regarded as part of the former, had also been incorrectly consigned to oblivion.

In the mid-1950s, Abraham Maslow's theory of self-actualization became very popular in the USA, and his idea was imported into Japan. Translated from the term "self-actualization" into Japanese, the Japanese term *jiko-jitsugen* was revived after a long time, around the 1960s. That is to say, there was a big void in Japanese history on self-actualization and/or self-realization. In addition, this historical void had not only a gap of time span but also a gap of interpretation, because *jiko-jitsugen* continued to be discussed solely as a matter of each individual after the war, as compared with the prewar association to the relations between an individual and society.

4－2．Concepts of Self-actualization Popularized in the 1970s

Ideas about self-actualization were introduced from the U.S. into Japan during the 1960s and 1970s mainly in the psychological field. However, these ideas were especially welcome in financial circles in Japan and spread into various fields such as economics, labor and management, and politics and education. Self-actualization was considered a social success that inclined to an economic one, reflecting the social atmosphere in Japan of those days, when human happiness was said to be attained by national economic growth.

A keyword characterizing self-actualization in the 1970s is "meritocracy," namely, the system in which member of an elite group are rewarded and advanced, based on their ability and talent. Self-actualization, then, could be achieved not so much by your natural capacity as by your ability and effort, and was located, in a sense, at the top of the social hierarchy in Japan. Self-actualization became an ultimate goal for the working men.

Thus, self-actualization had a tendency to be dealt with as a matter of ability rather than humanity. Indeed, in Japan, where education has been regarded as responsible for building character in children, self-actualization has been an ideal of humanity, but this notion has never dominated

Japanese society, since the actual content of self-actualization remained very abstract and ambiguous, even though it has been an educational goal from those days up to today.

Also, let me add the ideological role that Maslow's theory played. His theory of a hierarchy of needs came into fashion particularly among Japanese businessmen. It was, however, apt to be misunderstood without careful deliberation as a theory stipulating that economic growth is a prerequisite for human happiness. In fact, the ideal of self-actualization could be an effective incentive for people motivating them to work industriously and earn money enthusiastically. This is why self-actualization was a word symbolic of economic success in Japan in the 70s and was, ironically, related to the rumor that the Japanese were "economic animals." As a result, Maslow's ideal of self-actualization had in many cases become merely a name. In fact, curiously, Maslow was labeled as a typical capitalist and condemned by some socialists in Japan, to whom he seemed not so much a famous psychologist as a notorious economist.

4－3． Conceptions of Self-actualization Popularized in the 1980s

Many Japanese wished to actualize themselves, but they simultaneously thought it was very difficult, if not impossible, to succeed in economic life and make their way in the world. Self-actualization in the 1970s was dominated by an elitist image and regarded as something restricted to a part of the population, but not to everybody. Nevertheless, large numbers of people had been yearning for self-actualization, and in the 1980s; a new form of it appeared amidst the then current social circumstances.

In Japan, the "consumer society," which was brought about by economic growth, had matured from the 1970s to the 1980s, and it had a remarkable effect on the idea of self-actualization. That is, there was a conspicuous difference between the cause of economic growth and its effect, in terms of the concept of self-actualization. Many people began to find their amusement in life by consuming material things, such as goods, facilities, equipment and so on. Thanks to Japan's mature materialistic society, they could select their fun and joy, making the most of these things, for example, via hobbies. In the meantime, people emphasized the value of living their lives as consumers, and some thought this situation deserved to be called self-actualization.

But I must emphasize that the essence of self-actualization of this type did not lie in the materialistic alone. Whether they felt themselves actualized was dependent on how they spent their time and how much of a sense of fulfillment they felt. Indeed, people living in the 80s did find the time for self-actualization in their leisure hours, but this situation was partially for a negative reason,

namely, that they believed it would be very difficult to experience satisfaction within their working hours. Nonetheless, whether at work or in leisure, the essentials of self-actualization consisted basically in degrees of fulfillment in time.

Let me compare self-actualization in the 1970s with that in the 1980s. In particular, we need to take notice of some striking differences of the images of self or selves between these two periods.

First, as opposed to the productive image of the self in the 70s, in the 80s, a consumptive one stood out. To be specific, the former was regarded as an economic subject actualized by self-investment, such as diligent work and industrious study, while the latter was regarded as an amused subject actualized by consuming materials and spending or wasting time. The former was, if anything, stoic, but the latter was evidently epicurean.

In addition, one aspect of the culture of Japan is that people enjoy studies and learning activities. I think this idea had been born long ago, but became diffused, especially in the 1980s. Curiously, in Japan, the term "lifelong learning" tends to be understood not as engaging literally in learning activities from birth till death but as a means for discovering a life worth living, especially for the aged people. In Japan, adult education has been looked upon as consumption in the present rather than as an investment for the future, and lifelong learning is considered to be an important activity for actualizing the self. In fact, self-actualization is often highly thought of as a symbol of lifelong learning. Moreover, university extension courses are sometimes regarded as an opportunity for this by the elderly.

Second, the sense of time in the 1980s differed from that in 1970s. In the 70s, self-actualization was thought of as a distant goal, while in the 80s, it was thought of as a readiness that could be acquired in the present. There was a remarkable difference in the time-theoretical basis. Until the 1970s, many people had firmly felt their living time as a continuous stream, consisting of the past, the present and the future. In contrast, some people in the 1980s unconsciously felt their living time to be a repetition of successive moments called the "present."

Third, the sense of space in the 1980s was different from that in the 1970s. The latter decade sought for quantitative extension, sometimes taking risks, but the former aimed at qualitative satisfaction, always in the safety zone. The self and/or selves of the latter period were regarded as expanding toward society, while those of the former were regarded as condensing into private life. In any event, according to this idea, whenever you wish, you can actualize your self, or your selves, relatively easily.

A keyword in characterizing self-actualization in the 1980s is "privatism," namely, a concern

with or pursuit of your personal or family interests, welfare, or ideals to the exclusion of broader social issues or relationships. Material abundance was a condition of producing the images of self-actualization in the 1980s rather than a cause of it. For people of the 80s, private time was suitable for their own self-actualization. Therefore, *jiko-jitsugen* was apt to be identified with self-satisfaction and selfishness.

If this idea had spread widely, Japanese society would have become full of strong egoists and might have dissolved into pieces, despite the famous solidarity of this small island country. In Japan, the term "*jiko-jitsugen*" was sometimes criticized, and assumed to be an evil against society without knowing what it actually meant. For instance, some conservative men have labeled the desire of women for self-actualization through working outside the home as selfish.

4－4. Conceptions of Self-actualization Popularized in the 1990s

Self-actualization both in the 1980s and 1990s had a present-oriented and consumption-driven nature. But there was an obvious difference between the two decades. Although those who pursued self-actualization in the 1980s had a tendency to retreat into their own inner world, their counterparts in the 1990s showed a tendency to express themselves on the outside. They began to desire not only their own self-satisfaction but also the esteem of others. Thus, the new standard of self-actualization depended on whether they could meet their desire for self-expression.

In general, Japanese people are said to be modest and poor at expressing themselves. So far education in Japan has partly encouraged children to stifle their individuality, because in Japanese society, collectivism has been considered a virtue and a very effective method for economic growth. In the 1990s, self-expression started to be stressed in public school education, partly because many Japanese felt that they expressed themselves poorly. They began to think highly of self-expression, all the more because they were aware how impoverished they were in this area. Thus they connected self-expression with self-actualization. At first glance, then, self-expression looks like a keyword for characterizing self-actualization in the 1990s. But I object to this view.

People in this period did not necessarily like to express themselves, although they were very much interested in it. The truth is that deep down, they wanted human relationships with others, and for many of them self-expression was nothing but a means or a step to create these relationships. As long as they felt satisfied in their need to connect to others, they did not show a positive desire for self-expression. On the contrary, some people felt a sense of oneness, unity and fusion with others to be self-actualization itself. In this situation self and selves seem to include others. I call this

"relationship-actualization." It is human relations that sufficiently satisfied the needs of esteem, belongingness, love and so on. Although these needs are only prefatory stages of self-actualization according to Maslow's theory, they were identified or confused with it. This is why I conclude that "relationship" was a main keyword in characterizing self-actualization in Japan in the 1990s.

Now I must point out that the "information society" was an influential aspect of the social background producing this image of self-actualization. Interactive media like the Internet and cellular mobile phones are worthy of special mention. These media spread rapidly in the second half of the 1990s in Japan, and powerfully influenced the formation of these images of self-actualization. They enabled individuals to connect with whomever they wished, whenever and wherever they liked. They have therefore provided the conditions for infinite possibilities of creating relationships with anyone, anytime, and anywhere.

In fact, the youth have been increasingly dependent on their incessant connection with others via interactive media. In Japan, mobile phones have become more popular among the young Japanese people than personal computers, and the more they use them, the more restless they become without them. In the 2000s, we see young Japanese using portable phones not only to make calls but to send and read text messages and e-mails all the time whenever they do not have anything else to do at home, at school, on the train, on the street and so on. I call this situation "addiction to connection." Although they are in the presence of their friends, they are always connected to other friends in other places via cell phone.

As human beings in general find pleasure in connecting to others, they are in danger of being addicted to connections. Paradoxically, it is because we have become excessively accustomed to potentially connecting to somebody whenever and wherever we like that we cannot feel at ease without connecting to someone anytime and anywhere.

Indeed, although relationship is an important clue to self-actualization, it can also bring about addiction to connection under some circumstances. When this occurs, we must reconsider the matter of autonomy and independence.

Provisional Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to simplify complicated things as much as possible in order to arrange them in a rough scheme, thereby making it possible for us to classify and divide them into some categories from a historical viewpoint. In fact, although these images of self-actualization and/or self-realization in each period have gained and lost prominence by turns, they have accumulated

gradually. However, the gap between these images before and after World War II was very large and significant. Therefore, it is natural to think that various sorts of self-actualization and/or self-realization have intermingled in Japan at present.

Nevertheless, we must note that each image of *jiko-jitsugen* to which people of each period have excessively adhered would lead to something similar to mental and social problems. If a state abused people's responsibilities as individuals in society, it might lead to the misunderstanding that intense devotion to a state was the only way through which the people can realize themselves. Obsessed with the idea that they must achieve a high executive position to actualize themselves, they would become slaves to the values of meritocracy and become blind to their true or *natural* self. If they were too particular about their personal time and ignore their social relations, they would not be able to avoid being considered selfish. On the other hand, if they overestimated human relations to actualize themselves, they would be dependent on others and remain mentally attached to them.

In fact, an increasing number of Japanese nationals have desired mental satisfaction and longed for self-actualization and/or self-realization for a long time, partly because Japanese society has become more materialistic. At present, some people are preoccupied with certain illusions about *jiko-jitsugen*, while others are impatient and irritated without having understood anything about it.

What should we researchers do if they demand an immediate answer? In my personal opinion, one of the surest ways to reach *jiko-jitsugen* is to avoid taking unnecessary and unimportant things seriously and to adopt a lifestyle in which focus is on the "here and now." Moreover, the most important principle is to maintain a good balance in everything. However, we must never be satisfied with this simple principle, and should continue to explore this important fact.

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