

◇学生卒業論文

Some Aspects of Contemporary Japan

—from the point of View of Aum Case—

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Foreword

The postwar years have seen tremendous changes in one's view of Japan.

The latest foreign media criticize contemporary Japan that Japan has grown up to be a great economic power, to be sure, but they were in an ecstasy of the "bubble". In consequence, Japanese have forgotten the original Japanese virtue of modesty and they begin to be haughty.

In the middle of the time when Japan was being looked at critically, the sarin nerve gas attack occurred in the Tokyo subway. Foreign media paid attention to the strange affair in Japan and they began to be more critical of Japan.

People over the world were surprised when this sort of affair took place in Japan. At that time, people regarded Japan as the most safety country in the world.

It is thought that Japan makes rapid progress, and then they lost something important.

The Aum case inform that Japan is now facing a serious civilization crisis and this is a major turning point for Japan.

It is high time that we should reconsider the contemporary Japan.

This paper is intended as an investigation of present-day Japan and how the foreign media see it. As a measure, I cope with this study from the point of view on Aum case. The material in this paper is derived mainly from Newsweek as concrete date of foreigners.

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Discourse

Part I The Actual Situation of Aum Shinrikyo

First of all, we have to inquire into the actual conditions of Aum Shinrikyo, to consider the Japanese social background.

The huge burst of “new religions” in Japan’s postwar years may have had its primary impulse in the end of the God-Emperor. But it also owed quite a bit to the fact that the new legal system made it very simple to receive official recognition as a religious movement, and the tax-free status accompanying recognition was attractive to many whose motives were as much financial as holy. As of 1955, 183,581 groups are registered. According to Robert Marra, executive director of the National Association of Japan-America societies, most of the groups are made up of “very gentle, harmless people.” But as in the U.S., which saw a similar flowering in the 1960s, gentle did not always stay that way.

Asahara was born Chizuo Matumoto in 1955 on Kyushu, one of Japan’s main island, just south of Honshu. At birth he was sightless in one eye and purblind in the other, so his father, a craftsman who made tatamis (straw mats), sent him at age six to the city of Kumamoto, where he could attend a subsidized school for the blind.

Following graduation, he set up shop as an acupuncturist first in Kumamoto, then Tokyo and finally in a rented room in Funabashi. He married a college student, Tomoko Ishii, in 1978, then opened an apothecary specializing in traditional Chinese medicaments. A turning point in his life appears to have occurred in 1982, when he was arrested for selling fake cures. Authorities detained him for 20 days and fined him 200,000yen — about \$800 at that time. The business went bankrupt, and Asahara

was reputedly shattered by the incident. Out of shame at what neighbors thought, for some time afterward he and his wife only left their home to buy essentials.

By 1984, though, the future "savior" began to find his niche. He set up a yoga school that proved to be quite successful. Even if a former student recalls that in those days "we were not followers but members," the time was ripe for gurus. Japan's galloping economic miracle in the 1970s and 1980s also spawned a boom in "new religions" offering spiritual refuge to Japanese alienated by materialism. Asahara's messianic self-image expanded to help fill this void.

After a visit to a Himalayan retreat, he boasted of having achieved satori, the Japanese term for nirvana or enlightenment. At this point he also claimed his first success at self-levitation.

"Aahara established his Aum Shinrikyo religion in 1987, and the movement even put up a number of candidates in the 1990 Lower House Diet election; all of them lost. He synthesized an amalgam of Buddhist and Hindu theology around the practice of yoga. Devotion to his teachings, he claimed in his writings, could lead adherents not only to a state of enlightenment but also to superhuman feats like levitation. Not much later he began conferring on himself such titles as "Today's Christ" and "the Savior of This Century"

With the passage of time his vision grew darker. He spoke ever more frequently about imminent apocalypse. In his book *Disaster Approaches the Land of the Rising Sun*, published in 1995, Armageddon arrives in gas cloud from the U.S., which is said to be ruled by Freemasons (elsewhere he has added those other stock villains, the Jews). The world's end, placed variously in the years 1997, 1999 and 2000, would leave behind enlightened followers of Aum and 10 percent of everyone else." (n.1)

His community branched out rapidly in Japan. The increasing grandiosity of Asahara's doctrine, as well as its increasing paranoia, may have been prompted by the changing fortunes of his temporal empire. Recruiting heavily at universities and attracting a wealthy and educated membership, the cult had a meteoric rise. It became rich, bankrolling chains of discount stores, coffee-shops and a personal-computer assembly factory. Aum was wealthy enough to survive an estimated \$1 million loss on a foolhardy hunt for Australian gold in 1993.

By 1994 Aum boasted 36 Japanese branches with 10,000 members and a raft of international offices. Some, like the one in New York City, offer little more than cheap videotapes of the master's lectures to fewer than 100 members. But in Russia, another country experiencing a spiritual land rush, the cult has been successful: it has six offices and somewhere between 10,000 members and broadcasts an hour-long show on a popular radio station.

But all the time, there were intimations of trouble. The downside of recruiting the best and the brightest was that their relatives were articulate about losing them to the cult. Almost from the beginning, there were complaints that Asahara engaged in

psychological manipulation, brainwashing and even coercion. Former group members describe family standard indoctrination practices like banning sex and limiting reading matter to Asahara's books, as well as real rigors: self-starvation, immersion in hot or cold water and drug ingestion, some of it involuntary. Acolytes wearing helmets equipped with electrodes, supposedly to increase their alpha waves, were sighted during the Kamikuishiki raid.

Part II Disruption of the Japanese Safety Myth

Looking back on several years ahead, a lot of strange affairs took place in any part of the world. To take a simple example.

In February 1993, The World Trade Center building in New York was blown up by radical Muslim plotters. Five people died and more than 1000 were treated for injuries. In April 1993, US cult sect Branch Davidian's followers died after being besieged more 50 days and a machine-gun battle with federal agents in Waco, Texas. In October 1994, Mass suicide among members of the Swiss-based Solar Temple.

Many Japanese thought while they saw these news, that these strange affairs cannot be occurred in Japan. For the reason, the sarin nerve gas attack in the Tokyo subway gave many Japanese a great shock.

In March 20, 1995, Tokyo subway gassing occurred, that killed 12 and injured 5500, in what the Nihon Keizai Shimbun called "an assault against society." Few days after, hundreds of police in protective suits and mask headed into the guru's compound, foothills of sacred Mount Fuji.

While many Japanese saw this sight, they were at a loss why an incident like this took place in Japan. The news of the indiscriminate terrorism in a major security power struck terror into the hearts of almost all Japanese.

Japanese mass media reported in chorus that Japanese safety mythology get out of shape, so we discard our pride that Japan is a major security power.

In those days, foreign greatest concern about Japan was only one point. It was an Aum case. Taking advantage of Aum case, foreigners consider Japanese social problems over again. The Aum case made a headlines in American mass media for days on end. The American media reported that there were no precedent for this case in the world. Indiscriminate murder by poison gas took place in the big city of Tokyo.

A media reported that "Up to this point, any atrocious groups didn't make an attempt to use poison gas as a means of terrorism. Though sarin nerve gas is used as a means of terrorism in a most major security power in the world."

At first, American mass media reported that Tokyo sarin attack demolish the

Japanese image as a safe and harmonious country, which had been the boast of Japanese society for a long time.

As the suspicion against Aum Shinrikyo strengthened, each American newspaper began to feature the actual situation of the religious organization.

The Wall Street Journal criticize in an editorial that the postwar Japanese Government control too far on correspondence for the anti-social structure. This case taught as a lesson that if Government tread warily too much for anti-social group, as a result, we have to pay highly. Aum case made the headlines at America, American looks feel relieved in a sense to know that Japan has similar or greater insanity the American cult group.

William Ralhua, a professor at Pennsylvania University, argued. "For some time past, American tended to see Japan as a nearly perfectly controlled society. The Tokyo sarin attack knock down this Japanese image. It is true Aun shinrikyo's fanaticism is quite fearful, but many American got impression that Japan was not a well-ordered and rational country by a series of Aum case. In a manner of speaking, American found something congenial in a terror inside Japanese society." (n.2)

Japanese 'a mental condition' have been occupied the interest of America for a long time. Looking back on about fifty-years ago, America coped with a strategy how to capture Japan and psychoanalysis for Japan eagerly.

A Japanese army treated prisoners of war cruelly and gave rise to a *kamikaze* corps. The Japanese Government made an appeal to the public to fight to the last.

American of those days knew those account of Japan in greater or less degree. From this, they drew the conclusion that the pacific war was caused by the morbid national character of Japanese.

This conclusion formed the nucleus of the American perception toward Japan for a period of time since the war. Looking back on history, a victorious country cleared out as soon as capture an opponent country. But America was completely different. America psychoanalysis on Japanese and want to know what makes Japan a morbid society. In manner of speaking they tried to do psychotherapy on Japan.

At 1951, Douglas MacArthur said that we should treat Japanese as a twelve years old child. By contrast, the German were regarded as mature. This notorious statement agree with American *Froite* way of thinking. The way of thinking is mental age exist on each society like an individual.

Furthermore, Mackercer thought Japan need Christianity. He considered that Japanese should have mature religions like Europeans and Americans.

A tendency way of looking at Japanese as special has morbidly continued much longer.

An essay says that the Japanese heterogeneous is caused by toilet training in babyhood too early. When Yukio Mishima took his own life at 1970, an American scholar spotted it as the suitable pathogenic.

Though, following a decade the state of affairs have changed dramatically. An act of cruelty by an American army in Vietnam come to light. Some soldiers returned with a mental aftereffect in mind. America was infested with drugs, dreadful crimes are increasing rapidly. American self-confidence began to weaken slowly and certainly by a main cause like these things. The country was labeled that America was disqualified of criticize other society.

In 80's, the Japanese-American state of affairs were almost reversed.

The number of gun-crimes increased, disruption of a family, mass-suicide of cult member. These incident took place just in front of America, they began to talk their society's illness publicly.

At same time, Japan achieved sudden economic development and gained self-confidence. For all that, some European and American commentators try to psychoanalysis Japan. Ian Burma, a Dutchman journalist, says blend longing and repellece that Japan is abnormal and a sexually perverted country.

Aum as it really is come to light now, Burma labeled Japan as a society suffering from emotional upset.

"In Japan, the so-called new religions have been the rage in recent years, but Aum exceeded them all both in its extremism and its power to draw talent. It is says that power of cult group was caused, first of all, by having agency of envelop estranged people from society. In that respect, the members of the Aum followers are truly unique. Top-ranking cult members included physicists, chemists, doctors and lawyers, most of them attractive, articulate graduates of the best schools.

In short, those who might be expected to form the elite corps of Japan Inc. They were committing themselves instead to its destruction, all in the service of a misfit millennialist whose cockeyed preachings included claims that he would soon begin to fly." (n.3)

Peter Tusk, a reviewer, criticized Aum's feature.

"Aum had in a great success in taking the elites like doctors, lawyers, technical experts and made them believe their doctrine which is an impractical. If superior talents like them did not belong to the central core of the order, Aum did not make full use of a high technology technique to active. In that sense, Aum was complete in contrast to Branch Davidian sect. The Branch Davidian complex burned following the cult's shoot-out with federal agent in Waco, Texas in 1993. They believed David Koesh was the Savior. The sect had been organized followers who have a problem of family and low income. They might not understand the means of genetic recombination or gas chromatography. It was only natural that they made their appearance on 150 years before.

By contrast, Aum is a cult sect of the 21th century. Shoko Asahara has a gift for making an organization and to have made full use of high technology technique. I want to call him 'Bill Gates in cult world'." (n.4)

G•K•Chesterton, an English catholic novelist said that today is not necessarily unbelieving simply because they came to not believe in God. If anything, they began to believe in anything. Men of today are looking for something which fill up a mind blank caused from disruption of a strong value system. A fantasy political ideas and religious movement made an appearance to make up a thirst for mind of them. It doesn't much matter whether these values are quite different from common sense. The irrationality principle is more convenient for a cult group and an extremist group. If followers completely isolated from their surrounding more and more, it is difficult for them come back to the general society.

Chesterton argued that society's something to believe in is only weak relation as disruption of values to be social normative. In now, any principle has same worth and to discuss the merits are regarded as unsuitable. Now that value judgment were gave up, there are no the silly way of thinking, a rubbish ideology and any wickedness. There are only various ideology and belief, that an opportunity of self assertion are gave impartiality.

Part III A Special Feature of Contemporary Japan

Up to this day, people thought that it is hard for a cult group to prosper in Japanese society. The group attracts the best known college graduates and to grow up to be a huge organization with abundant capital is highly improbable. People thought that Japanese society was a collective community homogeneously, and Japan is complete stranger to diversity and social differentiation like America.

Though, Peter Taska criticized that present-day Japan has some convenient feature for the cult group. His argument can be classified into three main groups.

"First, it is a lack of value. From the first, Japanese society tend to the principle toward of relativity. There is no kernel tenet of standard of decision in Japan. The Japanese tolerance in religion is not Japanese respect a way of various belief, but they have no interest in religion essentially. Otherwise a wedding ceremony in church cannot be in fashion. These days, a Buddhist priest also hold a wedding in church. This is a sign that Japanese dose not react the concept of belief seriously." (n.5)

Michael Harsh express the same opinion.

"Despite Japan's vaunted social regimentation, proper behavior is enforced not by an absolute sense of right and wrong, as in Judeo-Christian-Islamic ethics, but by devotion to social unity and harmony. Morality is 'relativistic', shifting with time and circumstance and after built around a social purpose, like the postwar rebuilding effort." (n.6)

In postwar Japan, freedom of religion (Article 20 of the constitution) is provided in

the constitution of Japan. The Subsection 3 provides that the religious education and any religious activities by a country or an organ is prohibited.

It says that Japanese are too unenlightened. For instance, Japanese hear the watch-night bell at a Buddhist temple on New Year's Eve. Their first visit of the year to a shrine. On Christmas Day, they keep Christmas. Funerals are held in temple. They pay visits to Shinto shrine when a baby was born. And they holding weddings in church. Europeans and American find it hard to understand this Japanese behavior.

In a country with a deep-rooted religion, the religion is deeply ingrained in their daily life. For instance, in a Christian country, people come in contact with Christianity from childhood. Though, the topic that people in England who go to church get fewer, got into the news, and yet they come into contact with Christianity at their home and school. In the Islamic world, religion stick to their life. By contrast, if Japanese would not like to contact with religion, it is possible in this country. People say that the country like Japan is very rare in the world.

The Japanese have never followed one religion. Shinto, an animistic nature cult, has coexisted for centuries with different Buddhist sects; there is also a Christian minority. But starting in the late 19th century, an official attempt was made to bring all Japanese under one spiritual roof. The nation was taught to follow the imperial cult, called State Shinto: the belief that the Japanese Emperor is divine, that the Japanese are descended from their ancient gods, and that any order from a superior – in the government, in the army, at school – must be obeyed without question. State Shinto turned the Japanese state itself into a cult that reached its most extreme form from the late 1930s until the end of World War II.

Much of State Shinto was invented, but like many religious cults, it was based on traditions. The 20th century Emperors, in their role as commander of the Imperial Japanese Army, cut Napoleonic figures, riding white horses in splendid military uniforms, but they were also the high priests of State Shinto, donning traditional ceremonial garb and communing with the Sun Goddess in ancient shrines. If the forms were sometimes very old, the idea of the Emperor as the apex of a modern state religion was new.

“Every Japanese school had a shrine that contained a picture of the Emperor. History lessons began with myths told as truth about the divine ancestry of the Emperor and, by extension, the Japanese race. Self-sacrifice was extolled as the highest virtue. When winning the war had become hopeless, the Japanese people were told to prepare for a suicidal last stand.

Not every Japanese believed in the imperial cult, but for nearly two decades State Shinto monopolized Japan's spiritual and political life. No wonder that when the cult was abolished by order of the Allies after their victory in 1945, it left a lot of confused Japanese behind. What had been inculcated as religious doctrine was suddenly forbidden as dangerous militaristic propaganda. The Emperor could stay on

his throne, but had to renounce his divinity. It was, perhaps, the first time in human history that God had to declare himself dead.

This made some Japanese permanently cynical: they would never believe anything again. But the spiritual vacuum of the post-war years provided fertile ground for all kinds of new cults and creeds. Most of them were organized around a charismatic figure. It was as though the demise of the Emperor as a god produced many little emperors, all with their own worshippers." (n.7)

Taska goes on with his statement.

"A tenet except for religion is given up easily according to interests in Japan. It is a proper instance that a Japanese statesman who has argued consistently that the Self-Defense Force was unconstitutional at first, but from the moment he received government post, he made a complete change in his argument.

Aum's doctrine and behavior may sound strange for a majority. The argument that merely criticizes the Aum for being anti-social is not persuasive, because Aum can counter arguments that the society is anti-Aum. Their argument has got completely bogged down at the point in Japan which hasn't a sure principle.

Secondly, support for Japanese development is a sort of cult group. For instance, it is central government agencies, a political party, a big bank and a trading company. They are all super uncommunicative groups in which elite gladly accept their nonentity states.

These groups are almost never called cults, but they are much the same as Aum at the point in having morals and understanding of reality isolated from the outside world. They brainwash a new employee in induction courses. Once new employees join the group, it is difficult to leave.

In a large enterprise, a young employee is crowded into an exclusive institution. It is nothing out of the ordinary for an employee to be forced apart from his family by an order from above. There is a case like sacrifice their life. All members are forced to dress the same and to take a toxic substance.

Thirdly, a stress following a social and economical change rising rapidly in present-day Japan." (n.8)

Japanese goals, however, have now been achieved, and little has arisen to replace it. As a result, many university graduates and salary men see their long hours and straightened social lives as somewhat vacant. A private institute in Tokyo in 1994 found 15 percent of Japanese white-collar workers in their 20s to be "mentally unstable." "For a while the economic ride was enough for some people, but there is not a whole lot you can hook into in Japanese society if you are looking for something to give your life meaning," says Patricia Steinhoff, a University of Hawaii expert on Japanese extremist groups. "Some studies suggest that, even if Aum is disbanded, new groups - about 25 to 30 sects have formed in just the past decade in Japan, most of them harmless - will always crop up to satisfy this existential ache." (n.9)

Taska statement last. "There are plenty of condition for cult groups in Japan. For example, the opaque future, a lack of fundamental value and mental pressure to make individual lie buried in group. Aum took advantage of this environment skillfully.

There are many computer companies in the world. Bill Gates needed a special environment as America in the 1990s in order to take the Microsoft up to its current scale.

Similarly, there are many cult group in the world. Asahara needed a special environment as present-day Japan for the growth of Aum Shinrikyo." (n.10)

Newsweek also pointed out any problems of the Japanese legal system. "If Asahara Shoko was born in France, 'Aum Empire' might not be formed.

"Under French legal system, a religious organization cannot do a commercial enterprise without permission from the government. It is highly improbable that a religion group could build a chemical factory, and receive a large sum an offering.

Still more, Aum was not even gave the authoritative assurance that they are a religious organization. Any religious organization are regarded as a kind of a noncommercial enterprise in France. However, this is completely different in Japan. Aum Shinrikyo was protected by a religious corporation bill, and they were not closely watched under the pretext of 'freedom of religion.' They could develop their various activity." (n.11)

"A role of the law is to secure a right of individual. Unless cause damage, a right of commit offense are included." says Aran Bibian, an expert on a newly-risen religion. Bibian thinks that the law is no longer a panacea, though law can control very wicked activity.

Common fundamental ways of thinking in Japan and Western are people can put in a word in activity of religious organization, but it cannot control the very belief.

This problem is very subtle in Japan where oppress of religion was in practice before the war.

Freedom of religion was guaranteed under the Meiji constitution, but unsparing control done for an anti-Establishment religious activity. 'Omotokyo' was a good illustration. *Omotokyo* was a mass religion hold up an anti-Establishment and anti-war. The authorities arrested principal members of the group and cracked down on *Omotokyo* for long time. Eventually, they blown up the administrative building of the religious order.

The existing religious corporation bill came into force in 1951, put emphasis on guard against abuse of power.

Japanese religious corporation come under the category of most liberal in the same kind laws of advanced countries and it is not applied strictly.

A notification of a religious corporation does not forced. The main purpose is to have a favorable step like exemption from taxation.

A necessity for get a religious corporation's right are to have some doctrine, to

have the structure of followers and to record income and expenditure, to have a place of worship.

A religious corporation is approved to do lawful 33 different types of a commercial enterprise. A religious corporation bills admit the authorities give orders of dissolution in case that a religious corporation's activities come to a standstill, or they do harm public welfare remarkably. There has never been a case like this. People say that the law should apply to Aum Shinrikyo.

The orders of dissolution does not forbid activity the very thing of a religious order. A religious order lose favorable step of a system of taxation, but to continue their belief and to maintain the religious organization are free.

Aum case showed that the Japanese authorities hesitated to become involved in religious group. Aum Shinrikyo built an illegal structure. They kept dangerous pharmaceutical products in large quantities. They did not make follower's children go to school. The authorities did not pay attention to these illegal activity.

"In American case, society is more permissive regarding freedom of religion than Japan. But, make use of law is severe. Article 1 of revision of the constitution declare that the government must not decide a state religion and not infringe on freedom of religion.

In America, it is not proper that a government do registration and observation of religious organization. Somebody can establish a religious order, to take advantage of favorable system of taxation, only a report need to the taxation business authorities. A government show 'necessary condition'. There is no provisions concerned with content of belief.

Still, if illegal act are caught, the law carries severe penalties. A religious organization having an exemption from taxation step cannot take part in politics. The founder of a religion or an executive are not allowed that to have illegal income from a religious organization and an unreligious act is subject to taxation. American system seems generally work well." (n.12)

A Branch Davidian's affair came to an end, in April 1993. The Criminal investigation authority rush into the administrative building of a religious organization. The fire by the battle claimed more than 80 lies.

A authority's line were argued. But there was hardly vocal criticism that freedom of religion was menaced.

In the meantime, a greatest concern of Japan and Europe is how to ensure public safety. People think that an activity of a religious organization should have controlled in France since mass suicide among members of the Swiss-based Solar Temple, says Selju•Forvel.

Newsweek reported that there are many unprecedented point in this Aum case. "There is much that is uniquely Japanese about the Aum phenomenon. Dissent of any kind in Japan has usually been an all-or-nothing proposition: in a tradition going back

centuries, dissidents either overthrow the prevailing warlord or lose their heads. Such unkindness to deviance is true even of postwar democratic Japan, when a powerful bureaucracy fastered population of unquestioning 'economic animals.' In Japan there is no California or Montana to drop out to, no islands of nonconformity where those who think or act differently can make a retreat. And more and more bright young university graduates despair at the idea of becoming company me like their fathers, particularly after four years of recession. It is a long way from this dilemma to mass murder, but such people have virtually no place to go except into marginalized groups like Aum, and they are then trapped. Asahara enticed many with freedom and financing to pursue science, along with a promise of supernatural and spiritual exaltation they could not find in traditional religions. The Aum episode, says Richard Young an expert in East Asian religion and society at Yokohama Meiji Gakuin University, is a reflection of a 'larger malaise' in Japanese society 'its unwillingness to allow young people to find themselves in their own way.'" (n.13)

That so many Aum members joined right out of college is particularly striking. In Japan university life is freewheeling, consisiting laregely of drinking parties and sports clubs, but students know it is merely a recuperative break between the examination hell of their childhood and the rigidly ordered life they must lead as anonymous adults salary men. Even taking trip to Europe for a few months after graduation is difficult: you are expected to be around when companies distribute their job. "It is terribly hard to get back in the system, much less take a few years and develop yourself seriously," says Young. For those who try the latter, "their options are nearly zilch."

Asahara's arrest has not entirely erased the fears of Japanese that they will fall victim to his twisted vision of apocalypse. Young adds, "If Japanese society stays the same ... I am afraid that a similar group may sprout up again." How or when that might happen, however, is something no one has dared prophesy.

Foreign media warn against Japan that unless Japan change the cause from a wrong course the whole society going foward on the right course, the second and the third Aum arrive. It is certainly.

Couclusion

At first, the aim of this paper is to consider the Japanese social background that brings Aum case. I have two problems with the Aum case. First, why an unharmony and uncommunicative religious order, like Aum Shinrikyo was formed in present-day Japanese (peaceful and stable) society? Furthermore, why many excellent young people come to believe in the strange religious group?

I think there is a primary factor as these root cause. It is economic growth of

Japan in my opinion. In Japanese society that achieved economic growth, a mental soil as cult is prospering are completed.

Japan was defeated in the war and as far as the eye could see there was nothing but burnt-out ruins. Japanese have been worked frantically to Japan's postwar rehabilitation until recently to work for national aim counted as fulfillment in Japan.

Consequently, Japan has grown into an affluent society materially. We are making a serviceable living through technological development. The remarkable rehabilitation of postwar Japan has caught the attention of the whole world. Japan came off second best in Gross National Product. Japanese can live in affluence, but many people cannot easily find their reason for living.

We have a great store of matter, on the other hand our mental world has turned out poor. Consequently, various problems, like selfishness of people, disruption of the community, a sudden rise of divorce, increase of bullying, juvenile crime and a marked increase of a law suit, are originating in.

To sum up, Japan achieved a great economical success but they lose mental opulent. Japanese psychology hesitated between self-intoxication that prosperity brings and uneasiness for the future, People seeks something to believe in. But some Japanese misunderstand that it is Aum.

Japanese economic growth was not only to make expansion of a feeling of satisfaction in life, but also to make recover Japanese self-confidence. Japan was greatly shocked by the defeat in the War, and ethnocentrism vanished. As result, Japanese tradition was denied. A religion was also a link in the chain of traditions. However, as Japan succeed in economic development, Japanese began to recover Japanese ethnocentrism and to revise Japanese tradition. Reassessment of religion was the fruit of it.

At one time, many Japanese people had a consciousness that Japanese are worse than Westerns. Japanese suffered from inferiority complex to Europeans. But as Japan developed, Japanese recover themselves by degrees, they came to think that Japanese are superior to European.

Japanese have grown overconfident and humility were lost because of economic growth.

A success as a great economic power on the other hand brought the forfeiture of an aim. An insecure a state of mind that goal is not settled approachable. When the affluent life dreamed for years is realized, the man try to seek meaning in life.

At once, it is says that 'poverty, illness, fight' bring man near religion, but 'the affluent society' also maybe bring them.

In contemporary Japan, people seeks after money and things, if one can get only money, some people believed that life come to happiness. Some young people have a suspicion for these contemporary Japanese practical sense. So some gave up all their property and their family, then they devoted themselves entirely to Aum.

Japanese believed that if come to wealthy, one felt life as happiness. But it was

completely wide of the mark in my opinion. We lose very important things like a human relationship.

When people feel themselves happy? What is happiness? Up to this point, people only run after happiness and did not analyze its true character. Some investigation for various people at every corner of the world shows objectively ranking of construction elements of happiness. To my surprise, 'success' 'youth' and 'beautiful figure' were not put high on the list of happiness. 'Human relationships' has a long lead. 'Happiness marriage' ranks second, 'religious faith' ranks third.

"Most important thing is a close relationship with another person which supports oneself," says David Myers, writer of 『The Pursuit of Happiness』.

In the affluent society, people give a wide berth to nuisance things. They turn their eyes to only their life and they make a living keep in away from friction and a relationship with society and others.

In modern times, there are brimming over with only things. There is a low opportunity that people let oneself out and clash with each other. It is quite natural that many young people who wish for fulfillment strong in mind, search for any meaning in life and to incline toward exceed rationality.

Some Japanese who put into practice the affluent society criticize a selfishness tendency. People think that, the present day many people only take oneself into consideration and are uninterested in others. Relations with people are few and people are reluctant to deepen human relations are increasing.

A way of thinking as individualism permeated rapidly from the postwar period, many people supported this. On the other hand, criticism of selfishness tendency also came into existence. In time when change a trend and consideration, a standard people have no doubt the least lose its stability. The things people believe it valuable turn valueless.

If a way thinking around oneself, a way of looking at things and values fall into utter confusion, everybody probably face problems like what is aim of life. I think, people may reach religion at the time. Japanese needs something to believe in. Some quarters might pick religion out for the subject.

Up to this time, cult-group appear in an advanced countries here and there. All sorts of people include Japan, people go forward in wrong direction. One pursues things and money. Man comes to fortune with rich materially, with technological development. Man is going forward to believe these absurd superstition.

The time has come to reconsider Japanese society. Some people began to look for a feeling of satisfaction mentally rather than economically. This trend maybe go ahead increasingly.

When Japan accomplished economic growth, foreign countries set a high valuation on Japan. But, they look at Japan critically these days.

The world's coming to prosper unflinchingly. People are more making a good living.

Japan will also change in the future. Social awareness perhaps will not be what they used to be. Japanese of today crave for a great life power than a great economic power.

I hope that Japanese will build up life-style that Japan can be very proud of in the future.

Notes

(n.1)	..	<i>TIME</i>	April	3, 1995
(n.2)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	April	26, 1995
(n.3)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	May	29, 1995
(n.4)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	April	19, 1995
(n.5)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	April	19, 1995
(n.6)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	May	31, 1995
(n.7)	..	<i>TIME</i>	April	3, 1995
(n.8)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	May	31, 1995
(n.9)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	May	29, 1995
(n.10)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	April	19, 1995
(n.11)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	June	7, 1995
(n.12)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	June	7, 1995
(n.13)	..	<i>Newsweek</i>	May	31, 1995

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