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#### Abstract

It seems to be one of important issues for people in Japan whether they belong to their culture or not. For example, there are some expressible and inexpressible cultural standards, which people have or achieve until some certain ages. Although such age categories (e.g. to be a full-time employee, to get married, or to have children) have been shifted with some social movements, it is not so different to feel negative when people cannot catch up with lifetime matters of the majority. Therefore about 30,000 people commit suicide each year because they think about themselves unworthy in the society. Why do they think unworthy? It comes from collective ideas, which have been cultivated by Confucian philosophy. In fact some cultural scholars have researched the influence for a long time. Yet, why do people in Japan choose to commit suicide instead of living with own individual situations? It is "Cultural Socialism" that there are some culturally approved standards for being an accepted person in the society, which are less allowable to have individuality but need to embody their socially allowable matters in themselves. Atmosphere of "Cultural Socialism" has been created in their lives. Through the case study of asthma patients, people in Japan need to have more individuality and flexibility for reducing suicide rate.



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### 1. Introduction

Asian religious and philosophical ideas seem to introduce that human wisdom can be "perfect" if they strenuously train themselves in good social environments. According to the concept, numbers of people in Asia do not have ideas of the perfect God, which for example general Christians believe. In Japanese culture people have gods, yet their conceptual gods are occasional, and some gods have human-like characters such as the Greek myths. Since their gods are not omnipotent, a great number of people have to rely on human wisdom and to prepare everything with the wisdom. For instance, if a plan is failed by just bad weather, at times someone is blamed. "Who did choose this day?" "Maybe someone is a bad person, and we got this fail!" If some things do not work well, some people are seemingly censured since they intentionally or unintentionally tend to think that human lives should be "perfect" and things work well if people are "perfect", which human beings should acquire.

Normally people in Japan seek stable life conditions and do not prefer to go through repeated trial and error. Besides, for stability people have to build up a harmonic society. If someone disturbs their harmony, the person is mostly treated as unworthy for the society as if he/she cannot belong to the culture of their society. It comes from collectivistic ideas that people should resemble or do what their culture allows: to belong or not to belong is the boundary line of the life. It is Cultural Socialism. Because of less individual and less flexible ways, they seem to think about "unauthentic" for the society if they hardly belong to the culture. Unfortunately in Japan, about 30,000 people commit suicide each year (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009, p.1) and later of this paper shows the details by the case study. Belonging to the culture of their society is a matter of life or death for them. They need to be worthy of it for their survival. If people accept more individuality and more flexibility, numbers of them will not choose to commit suicide.

Why do they have serious motivation for belonging? Actually as a general belief, no one can live for oneself, and people seek for their possible belonging entities, which criterion is mainly their similarities. Naturally, people commonly feel comfortable or secured when they are with similar ones since they can easily understand each other and act together. There are many kinds of similarities, such as school, work, hobbies, backgrounds and ages. Yet, the fundamental idea of similarities comes from their thoughts: about what they think as good, bad, allowable, unallowable, necessary or unnecessary. With this foundation, what kinds of manners they create? That is the culture of their society including religions, philosophy, custom, legends and folklore. For instance, because of culture, some societies allow women to have higher positions among them, but other societies are not. Some societies have almost no age limit for their marriages, but some societies have strict rules (even unspeakable rules). Culture of their society actually has influence on characteristic guidance on what people should think and act. In Japan, the most manners of their created thoughts come from Confucianism.

# 2. Doctrine of Confucianism

Confucianism mentions philosophical doctrine for politics and morality. It is founded by Confucius (Kong Fu Zi) (c.551 B.C.E.-c.479 B.C.E.) who is described as the great Chinese philosopher. Although other late Chinese philosophical ideas have added to this theory, as Confucianism it has been mostly spread out over North East Asian regions. About from three to four century the doctrine came to Japan, and from the generations, Confucianism has had deep effects on Japanese society. Even though it has more or less received various influences, Confucianism has been used as fundamental political and moral teaching in Japan (Japan-guide.com, 2002) (Maeyama et.al, 1987, pp.102, 144) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013). Normally people in Japan do not learn specific Confucianism, however, the theory still has affected the society as culture, which has cultivated them how to think and act. Therefore, when they would objectively study Confucianism, they would realize why they take things as morality or immorality. Factually, some scholars categorize Japan as Confucian affected culture (Hoppe, 2007. p.2) (Hofstede. 2007, p.418) (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, p.496) (Ham, 2004, p.94).

Original philosophical principle of Confucian theory is humaneness and its practice (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013). Humaneness should exist without conflicts, and Confucianism respects harmonic society. Current Confucianism is mixed by ideas of other philosophers, and one of them is Mencius (B.C.E. 371-289 B.C.E.) who explained about a belief that human nature is fundamentally good. This belief has expanded into resemblance of people by birth, but they have become different by environments and practices. Since human beings are good by nature, it is necessary to recover their goodness through taking out evil factors and practicing right manners. To keep harmonic society, Mencius applied this principle to authorities that evil rulers need to be excluded from the society when they misgovern the nation (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013) (Kupperman, 1968, p.177). In other words, evil rulers cannot hold their authorized positions for a long time, and then if they can hold it longer, they are sure to be good rulers with humaneness and morality. This theory also applied to common people that bad entities should not belong to the society if the society prefers to keep good humaneness and morality.

Many scholars have tried to build up harmonic societies by this doctrine. If people rightly use Confucianism principle, the society may work well. However, since they have tried to crate harmony no matter how, their interpretation of moral humaneness laws became less individual and less flexible. For example, it is difficult to have political decisions with fulfilled requests of varied opinions when they do not have enough time. Then, they prefer to have resembling people for conflict avoidance because in Confucianism people are originally good by birth and have likeness. Numbers of people in Western countries or individualistic societies may feel awkward why they seek harmonic decisions for their issues. In many Asian countries, this idea seems to be deeply connected to a fundamental life issue how they produce their staff of life. It is farming. Generally, Western societies are categorized as hunting culture, and Asian society is farming. Although for a large scale of hunting people need to have harmonic team work, they can also do by individuals if they choose small scales. However, for farming especially rice field, it is troublesome if they aim to harvest enough quantity of rice by individuals. Without harmony, people of Asian farming societies would be hard to survive until current mechanized generations. Accordingly, three ideologies are selected from Confucianism, which connect to topic of this paper: 1) Creating admirable models, 2) Having approvals, and 3) Obeying their authorities.

### 1) Creating Admirable Models

In Confucianism, human beings originally have good nature but have diverged from it by environments and practices. To resume goodness, people are required to have right practices under Confucian doctrine, which are to show humaneness as their philosophical principle. As one of examples, men discipline themselves to be a Confucian gentleman, and Chan mentions what kind of person the gentleman is. The gentleman stands for human culture through its doctrine of propriety and social status. Then, he restraints himself and should not engage in fun-making (1947, pp.164, 168, 169). This "restrain oneself" can explain by an important ideologies of Confucianism: oppressing oneself and restricting own expression. Kupperman delineates that Confucian gentlemen should not have open-mindedness because self-expression will introduce spreading out their feeling and opinions. It leads to uncontrollable atmosphere and conflicts that are dangerous for their society (1968, pp.177, 183). If their situation is a strategic meeting, it is time-consuming and cannot make drastically serious decisions. The situation throws the meeting into turmoil. Moreover, if they cannot fix the turmoil, their uncontrollable atmosphere will be bigger and larger. It produces conflicts, and the society cannot keep moral humaneness anymore. For them it is better to avoid conflicts than to fix conflicts because in conflicts people have hardship to restrain themselves. It is not their gentlemanlike. Therefore they strive for how to avoid conflict by collective ways that by resemblance people do not have different feeling and opinions, which cannot cause any factions or cliques.

People are promoted to become their socially admirable models for establishing social harmony. Becoming resembled entities through admirable models may not produce conflicting atmosphere through resembled feeling and opinions. For them collectives are better than individuals. In Japan, this manner sometimes diverts into survival status that they need to be and have what the society admires so as to belong to the culture of their society. In fact general people in Japan strive to achieve what the society treats as good matters, such as to get licenses for jobs, to study other languages or to stay beautiful. If these matters are from their hearts or somehow their necessities, it is their lives and should be fine. Notwithstanding, a multitude of them forcibly do through checking information or ranking. Moreover, people in Confucian culture are normally uneasy to explain own opinions but follow the majority because of fear for non-belonging. After all, if someone has similarity to their majority, he/she cheerfully survives in the society, however, if not, he/she often chooses to adjust oneself or stays away from the main stream culture.

# 2) Having Approvals

Although people in Confucian culture strive for being socially admirable models, it is difficult to examine their achieved levels by themselves. If they are socially unacceptable entities, unfortunately it is clearly understood by negative attitudes from the majority through neglect or exclusion as non-belonging. If people can calm down and survey their situations in order to determine exact reasons for the consequence, it might be just characteristic differences, and they will have possibilities to reconcile one another. However, since they have been instilled good likeness by birth and necessary belonging, difference is hard to accept by great numbers of people, and then unacceptable entities tend to pursue after approvals of the majority. If people cannot

wipe out their disapproval, many of them may have deep anxiety or upset and eventually lose hope for their future. Because of collectivism it is a boundary line for their lives, belonging or not belonging. They care about what the other people mention whether having approvals or not.

Chan explains this trait as "the Great Affirmation" (1947, p.168). For conflict avoidance their society has to have harmonic integration through Confucian ideologies because human beings resemble one another, which tends not to consider individualistic characters. Instead, they need to have approval form their society. For creating a harmonic society, they strive for being admirable models through Confucian ideologies, and admirable people should be automatically included in the society. It is important having approval for social belonging. This explanation sounds overstating, yet an example in Japan, there are some certain age categories for social approvals: be a full-time employee, to get married, or to have children. Although such age categories have been shifting with some social movements, it is not so different to feel non-belonging to the culture of their society when people cannot catch up with lifetime activities of the majority. For Confucianism, human beings are alike each other and have less individuality. Therefore, to be different among the society seems to be unacceptable, and in an extreme case, they cannot belong to the culture of their society anymore because they will be treated as negative factors for disturbing their harmony.

### 3) Obeying Their Authorities

As above-mentioned, people in Asia generally do not have concept of the Almighty perfect God, which is monotheism like Christianity, and numbers of them prefer to rely on human wisdom. Simultaneously they need to take responsibilities through the human wisdom. If they fail something, they are often treated as imperfect ones compared with, for instance, Confucian "perfect" figures. Kupperman cites as one of "perfect" figures when Confucius depicted his attaining enlightenment, "at seventy I could follow the desires of my heart without transgressing the right" (1968, p.184). People in Confucianism culture necessarily strive to be their higher admirable models and have social approvals. Such trained Confucian people will be "perfect" and can be also "perfect" authorities with humaneness and also righteousness. At the same time, Kupperman describes Confucian elements as training, culture, intelligent discrimination and refinement, and then "perfect" Confucian people should retain these characteristics (1968, p.178). Therefore, Confucian ideas encourage people to train themselves for becoming the socially acceptable figures with affirmation. With their practices, people will be "perfect" like what Confucius mentioned, and they may have no transgressing the right anymore and can say what they prefer.

Normally only some respectable or prominent people can have authorities. In fact without better characteristics it is hard to be an authority since authorities have a role to lead. This kind of belief turns to that their authorities are "perfect" in Confucian influenced societies. Although this ideology currently seems to be reduced because of globalization, which introduces various kinds of ideologies, it so often works in Japan. They might not believe just their authorities, yet, they have tendency to believe culturally authorized matters or information. Besides, this ideology includes other meaning. People have resemblance by nature but through environments and practices their characteristics are unlike each other. If they have some particular training, they

can be alike and achieve resembled respectable or prominent characteristics with higher abilities. Then if "perfect" authorities say something, it should be "authentic" for the culture of their society and "unauthentic" people should follow that: for building a harmonic society, individual originality is less required because their good nature by birth is alike. If someone shows individual originality, in many cases he/she might be treated as an unusual figure. Then he/she might be non-belonging to the culture of their society, which does not need him/her.

It is not only in politics but also in numbers of areas among societies. Some famous or socially admirable people are regarded as authorities through ideological interpretation from Confucianism that more "authentic" and "perfect" people can have authorities. Then when such authorities mention something, other unauthorized people are prone to follow them without enough examination that because of Cultural Socialism they eager to be culturally admirable and have approvals. These "authentic" and "perfect" includes popular movies, winners of the athletic competitions, current fashions or some popular entities, which impress on people since prosperous and successful atmospheres are treated as the evidence. Moreover, with resemblance ideology, a multitude of people believe without individuality that they can be like them by imitating what such authorities are doing. Many people tend to belong to such "authentic" and "perfect" people and avert to belong to "unauthentic" people. Although their main meaning of "unauthentic" people is individual originality or characteristic differences from the majority including physical or mental traits, such "unauthentic" entities are often treated as unnecessary to the culture of their society. Since many of them believe environmental influences on people, they have tendency to exclude such "unauthentic" entities from their environments in order to avoid further influence. It is Cultural Socialism that without individuality, people seek what the majority of the culture say admirable. Labelled "unauthentic" people are sometimes regards as unsuitable and unnecessary entities: 1) Not being cultural admirable models, 2) Not having cultural approvals and 3) Not obeying their cultural authorities. In extreme cases, they are cut off from the culture of their society. How about such "unauthentic" people's end? Because of collectivism society, they will struggle with belonging, and some of them face the boundary life or death, and commit suicide.

### 3. Case Study: Consequences of non-Belonging

Why do people choose to commit suicide? Although there are multifarious causes, mostly people feel themselves useless and valueless with painful matters and have no hope for their future since in many cases if they have hope and keep motivation for life, there can be still some ways no matter how they are. If societies have collectivistic culture, their ratio of suicide should be higher because the causes are not only personal factors but also social ones, which people cannot usually handle by themselves. In contrast, many people in individualistic culture can choose life more since their life criteria are not other people in their societies. Besides, even other people seem not to treat negatively if the reason is just different characteristics: they are not Cultural Socialism. There is statistics of suicide rate of their populations in each country: 1.Lithuania 38.6%, 2.Belarus 35.1%, 3.Russia 32.2%, 4.Slovenia 26.3%, 5.Hungary 26.0%, 6.Kazakhstan 25.9%, 7.Latvia 24.5%, 8.Japan 23.7%, 9.Guyana 22.9%, 10.Ukraine 22.6%, 11.South Korea 21.9%; 12.Belgium 21.1%. In fact, except Belgium, countries with collective atmosphere including previous

socialistic ones have higher suicide ratio than individualistic countries. In the statics, China is the number 15, and the suicide ratio is 13.9%. It seems not so huge compared with the first rank Lithuania. However, in China about 287,000 people commit suicide each year (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009, p.1) (Bi, 2011). If their societies may be Cultural Socialism, it may have a reason for suicide whether socially "authentic" figures or not as boundary line of the life.

In Japan about 30,000 people commit suicide every year. According to the statistics in 2009, about 59.8% is unemployed people and 37.6% is employed. The worst reason of suicide is health issues 64.9%, and the second is financial and life issues about 34.0%. Consecutively, it is domestic issues and then working issues. Both unemployed and employed, the worst factor was health issues (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009, p.5). For these consequences, people can see two points of situations from health issues: with illness to have a job and to keep a job are hard. Illness itself causes physical or mental suffering, and with the suffering people cannot concentrate what they do. Eventually, illness causes unproductiveness at work. Some kinds of diseases are chronically sudden attacks, which make people not know how much they can manage their assigned work. Some other diseases require workload limitation, which make people not allow even some important matters in the workplace. After all sick people are hard to belong to the majority at work, the culture of their workplace. With their suffering by illness and non-belong to the working societies, they think themselves unsuitable and unusable. Furthermore, their distressed feeling leads to think themselves useless and valueless for many kinds of socially related matters through Cultural Socialism: "unauthentic" figures cannot belonging to the culture of their society. They lose hope for their future, and eventually numbers of them commit suicide (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Preventive measures against suicide, 2002, p.10).

For this case study, although it seems not to be the worst causal disease of suicide, asthma patients are an applicable example because of two reasons. Firstly, the highest suicide ratio in Japan is sick people, and asthma is one of illnesses. Secondly, considering Cultural Socialism, some of characteristics of asthma are treated as unsuitable, unusable and in some cases "unauthentic" for the society, which are largely connected to reasons of suicide in Japan. Unfortunately general people misunderstand asthma patients by their intangible and uncertain disease characteristics as "only a fit of coughing" or "noisy breathing". Notwithstanding, in reality, it is a respiratory disorder. In other words, patients have difficulty in expiration and a feeling of constriction in the chest. The symptom of asthma attacks is sudden wheezes and suffocated feeling by chronic inflammation of one's respiratory tract (Dictionary.com, n.d.) (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.) (Asthma and cough phlegm.COM.Genjou, 2011). In short, they are chronically more or less suffocated.

There are generally three asthma characteristic levels: slight, moderate and refractory. Slight level patients can run and go upstairs although it is not always easy and often feel suffocated. In contrast, ten percent of the entire asthma patients are refractory level, which is hard to move, difficult to talk and to have disturbance of consciousness (Nabe, 2005, p.190) (The first asthmatic guide, 2005). When patients have sudden or heavy asthma attacks, they are at risk to die within one to three hours. Factually in Japan each year about 3,000 people die from suffocation (Asthma and cough phlegm.COM.Shibou, 2011). The majority people believe that asthma is only

children's disease, and actually about 80 percent of infantile asthma patients become healthy in their adolescence almost naturally. However, about twenty percent of infantile asthma becomes bronchial asthma although most of them have tried to recover from it by exercises and/or medication. As of April 2014, total population in Japan is about 127,000,000, and the about 4,500,000 people have asthma, and the number is increasing since many of people start to have asthma attacks from their forties to sixties (Asthma and cough phlegm COM.Genjou, 2011) (Statics Bureau, 2014).

The reason why asthma characteristics are intangible and uncertain is generally even patients themselves cannot expect when and how their disease gets worse. Of course many of them have proper medication and try to control it under advice of medical personnel. However, like even trained athletes fall ill, controlling asthma patients get asthma attacks. Besides, once they get the attacks, numbers of them cannot also expect the time of recovery. Moreover, the outside of asthma patients look normal when they are just sitting and stay calm, yet, in some cases when they trot, go upstairs or sing, their asthma suddenly gets worse. Since asthma patients try to avoid heavily choked physical conditions, they often decline when they are asked something including work. Nevertheless, because their outside is just normal, many non-asthma people misunderstand and unfortunately doubt as if they tell lies or "unauthentic" ones. Furthermore, asthma patients often need to decline even social activities, nonasthma people start not to include them their activities anymore. If Japan had had individualistic culture, asthma patients could be fine. However it is mainly Cultural Socialism, what they believe "authentic" matters are mostly what the majority do, and asthma patients cannot do under their chronic suffocated physical conditions. After all numbers of asthma patients cannot belong to the culture of their society, and some of them are also mentally struggling.

Commonly one of "authentic" matters for adults in Japan is to be a regular employee. Many asthma patients have intention to work, however it is difficult. Because of their illness suffering asthma characteristics have socially "unauthentic" figures: intangibility and uncertainty. Drastically, work is commercialism, and employers need to survive in the competitive business world. They need to make elaborate plans and schedules, and employees need to follow them for building productiveness. Notwithstanding, numbers of asthma patients cannot follow them by unscheduled absence and work limitation by asthma attacks. Dr. Nabe explained conditions of asthma patients at work. "It is clear that respiratory dysfunctional patients have wills to work but have no job. Most of no work experience is usually refractory level, however, overall the reason of unemployment is unscheduled absence at least more than once in a month. Therefore, unstable conditions of respiratory dysfunctional patients abandon wills to work" (2005, pp.187, 191, 193).

Why do they abandon to work instead of their intention? Considering Cultural Socialism in Japan, their sick conditions are "unauthentic" and hard to belong to the culture of their society. Their often unscheduled absences and work limitation are 1) Not admirable models, 2) Not having approvals and 3) Not to obey their cultural authorities since they cause troubles for the majority of other employees and are against the regulation of their companies. Indeed people with intangible and uncertain illnesses are treated as unsuitable and unusable ones. Although there is special paid

sick leave for obvious heavy diseases in Japan, for other diseases, such as five days of flu, employees need to spend from their paid holidays. Moreover, compared with many Western countries, employees are not given so many holidays. For example, the first year full-time employees can have about eleven paid holidays. It means that if they need to leave for a hospital more than once in a month, their paid holidays are quickly disappeared (Nagoya International Center, 2012) (Heymann et.al., 2009, pp.1, 6-9). After that, their absences affect their income and promotion at work. People might think that they can stay in their workplace if they have wills, however, such attitudes are generally less favorable in Japanese culture.

### 4. Conclusion: More Individuality and More Flexibility

Accordingly, it is one of important matters for people in Japan whether they belong to the culture of their society or not. Their interpretation of Confucian influenced collectivistic culture became Cultural Socialism, and to belong to the culture of their society means the boundary line of the life. When they observe themselves not to be culturally admirable models, not to have cultural approvals or not to obey their cultural authorities, they mostly think about themselves unworthy for the society. And if people are excluded from the majority, in an extreme case, they have no hope and no future. Therefore, a great number of people in Japan commit suicide every year. How can people avoid this devastated life end? It is more individuality and more flexibility, which will allow people to have freedom of their hearts. There are some suggestions for having individuality and flexibility from social and personal sides in order to prevent suicide.

# 1) Social Sides: Preparation Individuality and Flexibility

Some years ago, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in Japan suggested for suicide prevention in their bulletin: "to review how to work, to build a society of a possibility for taking on the challenge again and to prepare support and consulting systems for such as unemployment and multiple debts" (2009, p.3). Since culturally fixed their social systems have been practiced so many years, it is actually difficult to repair immediately. Moreover, as described above retrial is not so admirable in Japanese society. Through Confucian interpretation, people can be "perfect" by training, and people are not "perfect" if they need retrials. Although such ideology currently has a little eased, the society has still less flexibility, which leads people to do and achieve something until some certain ages. Because of expressible and inexpressible cultural standards, if approximately more than thirty-five-years-old people resign from their jobs, it is generally difficult to have a new full-time employment. Notwithstanding, individuality and flexibility are needed: not to follow Cultural Socialism. Then employers will find more competent skilful individual candidates and can discuss flexible employments. It will help not only people, who are treated as non-belonging to the culture of their society, but also employers themselves.

# 2) Personal Sides: Mind Individuality and Flexibility

It hardly denies environmental influences on people, however, it is not always true since people in the same culture and the same circumstances largely do not grow in the same way because of own characteristics in deep insides. If their characteristics belong to the culture of their society, with moral and lawful consideration other people will allow what they to do. However, if their characteristics do not belong to it, because of Cultural Socialism and care about what others think, many people will hesitate to pursue something even morally and lawfully allowable matters. Some people are waiting for their environmental changes, yet, in many cases such fixed collectivistic environment is difficult to change. Indeed, to improve their environments is very important, however simultaneously, people can change some things through mind individuality and flexibility.

When people have difficulties, first they need to examine what it is. If it is physical conditions, they need to understand what they can do and improve. Then, there are possibilities if they do not focus on unnecessary belonging to the culture of their society. In 1965 Dr. Nakamura built up a vocational facility (later named Japan Sun Industries) for disabled people in Beppu city, Japan. In the generation people with handicaps normally stayed in hospitals or homes since it was unusual if they work. They had been sorrowfully treated as "unauthentic" people. Nevertheless, with individuality and flexibility, he introduced social integration, and now more than 1,000 disabled people are working with about 800 non-disabled people at Japan Sun Industries and its related companies (Japan Sun Industries, 2002) (Japan Sun Industries, n.d. pp.3,11). Through individuality and flexibility, they are own "authentic" people who are beyond of unnecessary cultural belonging.

Why are resembled characteristics good? Why do people believe that to have the same ideas can prevent conflicts? Is it possible that everyone has the same ideas in the world? For having real harmonic societies, people need to think critically. Since people have different characteristics including physical conditions, individuality and flexibility are one of essential points for freedom of hearts. Moreover, nothing is stable on the earth. People might be able to belong to some particular cultural society by forcible manners. Nevertheless, when a new cultural group is on the rise, previous ones will decline. If so, previous majority cultures will be minority, and they might be treated as not cultural admirable models, not having cultural approvals and not obeying their culture of their society. What is real "authentic"? Everyone has own characteristic and should have own better ways. Cultural Socialism is unnecessary. People will find own "authentic" matters and ways with individuality and flexibility.

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