

Intrinsic Constraint of “Intrinsic Value”

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to clarify two problems of intrinsic value, namely, to reconsider what it is like to evaluate an object as carrying intrinsic value and to explore the possibility of discourses creating different approaches to such evaluation.

The concept of intrinsic value was developed by J. Ruskin, who studied the political economy of art in 19th century Britain. His concept of intrinsic value is derived from the following observation: on the ceiling of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice, Tintoretto’s pictures, which he regarded as one of the most precious among the riches in Europe, were left cracked and unrepaired, while the shops of the Rue Rivoli in Paris showed an increasing supply of lithographs representing modern cancan dances (Ruskin 1969: xvii–xviii). From this observation, he developed the belief that the value inherent in objects is the value of things that cannot be altered by man’s opinion of them. Therefore, he contended that good and beautiful things could have positive effects on people, and bad and ugly ones adverse effects. At the same time, he emphasized the need to foster a capacity for acceptance in human beings because the values of objects would fail to create any effect unless they were appreciated. From this perspective, he delivered a criticism on the theory of economics of the time, which asserted that the purchase of things immediately increased their utility in accordance with the principle of exchange value.

Ruskin’s theory of intrinsic value is closely related to today’s cultural economics, which has chiefly been advanced by Professor Ikegami and plays an important role in discussions of the local promotion and conservation of traditional culture. To give a brief outline of cultural economics in the context of present society with widespread mass production and consumption ‘consumers’ need for a *raison d’être* and cultivation of their individuality manifests itself as the desire for culture and art, while the demand for humanization of labor is increasing, allowing valuation instead of alienation of the laborer. The key concept in these two kinds of need is intrinsic value of goods and of producers; when consumers seek goods that have intrinsic value for the purpose of fulfilling their individual desires, producers create goods with intrinsic value through utilizing their know-how, which itself has intrinsic value in its own right. As a result, creative living and humanization of labor are realized, which contribute to social development.

Thus the concept of intrinsic value plays a crucial role both in Ruskin’s theory and in cultural economics. However, although it provides the possibilities of a paradigm shift in economics (Ikegami

2003: 37–39) and the grounds for admitting value in items that have thus far been unappreciated, it also involves two problems. First, it can create a mechanism for a different kind of exclusion unless it clarifies which properties are valued as intrinsic and how they are recognized as such. Secondly, the concept of intrinsic value is inevitably lacking in substance when Ikegami bases the grounds for introducing intrinsic value on diversification of the individual desires of consumers and producers. We are to clarify these two problems, starting with the definition of intrinsic value, followed by a case study of the commercialization of a traditional citrus fruit.

2. Definition of Intrinsic Value in Goods

Ruskin states that “value signifies the strength, or ‘availing’ of anything towards the sustaining of life, and is always twofold; that is to say, primarily INTRINSIC, and secondarily EFFECTUAL.” That is, intrinsic value is “the absolute power of anything to support life.” In order for this value to become effectual, human beings’ perceptive abilities are necessary. Thus, dividing value into intrinsic value and human capacity to utilize it, Ruskin criticizes traditional economics for regarding the mere act of purchasing goods as satisfying human needs (Ruskin 1969: 11–13).

Ruskin gives an example of wheat as having intrinsic value; a sheaf of wheat of given quality and weight has in it a measurable power of sustaining the human body. This illustration, however, fails to comprehend the uniqueness of intrinsic value, since it obscures the substantial difference between intrinsic and use value. Ikegami, trying to resolve this flaw, applies the term intrinsic value to the value that satisfies the needs of those who seek their purpose for being.

Ikegami relates the desires of both consumers and producers for their unique and diverse self-purposes to intrinsic value, which, as a remarkable property of goods, meets their needs. Consumers decide to purchase goods on the grounds that the thing provides them with a unique property or service to meet their unique desires and thus is indispensable to them (Ikegami 2003:12). That is to say, the goods they decide are far from ordinary, helping to develop their individuality and self-purpose. In order to satisfy the individual desires of consumers, producers who succeed in producing goods indispensable to consumers’ desires should be unique and creative with adept skills and superior craftsmanship. The encounter between consumers and producers enables the former to satisfy their desires and the latter to humanize labor. Ikegami thus defines the goods embodying indispensable value by means of the uniqueness of the material and of the producers’ mastery as “those to which intrinsic value is projected” (Ikegami 2003: 12–13, 47, 225–232).

Then, what are the intentions and grounds for their introduction of the concept of intrinsic value? In the next section, this question will be examined to clarify the basis of the theory of intrinsic value.

3. Point of Departure of the Theory of Intrinsic Value

Let us examine the question of why Ruskin introduced the concept of intrinsic value at all, which is neither verifiable nor refutable as a postulate. To take the example of intrinsic value in artworks, it is meaningless to introduce intrinsic value to those who are ready to accept the value just as Ruskin does, since they have already experienced it. Then, who is it that he introduced the concept for? It is highly likely that he introduced it for those who have failed to accept this value, since he advocated intrinsic value as a criticism of vulgar economists of the time, who dealt only with exchange value (Ruskin 1969: xx–xxii). However, introducing this concept to this type of economist is no less fruitless than asserting the existence of ghosts to unbelievers.

Ikegami adds a supplementary explanation. Giving an example of plates with pictures appearing on the market, he insists that the intrinsic value of the original pictures should be practically realized as a given, even though the value of the originals may not be fully appreciated, since the goods on the market are reproductions (Ikegami 2003: 42–46). That is, those who find more value in plates with artistic pictures than those without will be moved to see the original ones, giving them an intrinsic value. This also entails the idea that those who are unimpressed by the original will find no difference between the plates with a picture on them and those without, quite like those who do not believe in ghosts not caring how many books about ghosts are on the market. In short, Ikegami's supplement thus fails to explain who the concept of intrinsic value is trying to persuade.

From a certain perspective, the introduction of intrinsic value is insignificant. The concept is unnecessary for those who appreciate it already, and unconvincing for its opponents. However, the starting point of the concept needs to be clarified because the concept, once introduced, does guide our daily life.

The introduction of intrinsic value can be grounded nowhere but in Ruskin's personal ideals inspired by an object, since the concept is neither verifiable nor falsifiable and it assumes that it is almost impossible to persuade opponents. On the other hand, Ikegami draws a line between his own theory of intrinsic value and Ruskin's. The former regards the phrase "the goods to which intrinsic value is projected" as more accurate than that of "intrinsic value" because the latter presupposes people's agreement (Ikegami 1991: 18–20). Ikegami seems to interpret that Ruskin considered intrinsic value to be immanent in an object. However, the argument above shows that Ikegami's interpretation is wrong; Ruskin's grounds rest not on the inherent property found in an object but on his personal ideals, that is, on the property he found in an object.

Two different points of departure are now set for the discussion on intrinsic value. The first one deals with the concept based on personal ideals like Ruskin's, and the other on an agreement among a homogeneous group like Ikegami's. The reason why the group should be homogeneous is that those who find a different value in the same object should, from the start, be exempt from involvement.

4. The First Problem of Intrinsic Value

The concept of intrinsic value involves a problem; those who are opposed to a certain value or find a different value are not allowed to be present, whether the concept is derived from personal ideals or from an agreement among a homogeneous group. The assumptions of personal ideals and homogeneous groups disregard qualitative differences in intrinsic value in objects and the perceiving functions of human beings, dealing exclusively with quantity, which leaves little room for the recognition of different values. In other words, even though discussing the existence of intrinsic value and functions of perception is meaningless, the quantitative quality, which already presupposes their existence, is unreasonably adopted as “producing goods with intrinsic value” and “cultivating receptive functions.” This disregards the diversity of intrinsic value and the faculty for perception. The exclusion of opponents, those with half-approved valuations, or those who find value that differs from an approved value is flawed because another mechanism of exclusion will arise when alternative valuations are asserted without regarding the way a certain value for an object is fixed, including the process of evaluating value and the interactions among individuals of conflicting interests in that process.

Then, the possibility of inquiring into the quality of intrinsic value and of receptive capacity should be considered if the approval of others with different valuations is to be required. That is to say, we should clarify which property among various ones is approved and what sort of perceiving function is regarded as receptive capacity. In Ikegami’s terms, we should examine how individuals approve certain properties as “those to which intrinsic value is projected.” Tentatively, let us call this “the process of projection.”

5. The Second Problem of Intrinsic Value

To avoid Ruskin’s problem of the existence of intrinsic value, Ikegami introduces “the process of projection,” which in turn brings two more problems.

At first glance, Ikegami’s “process of projection” seems to justify the process of people’s acknowledging of intrinsic value, which cannot be derived from Ruskin’s statement, since the former notices the properties of goods to which intrinsic value is projected rather than the value itself. It may be true that Ikegami’s employment of the term “intrinsic value being projected” avoids the focus on intrinsic value itself, which he knows leads to a fruitless discussion (Ikegami 2003: 41). His “process of projection,” however, still ends up failing for the following reason.

First, it is necessary to examine how he removes intrinsic value from a point at issue. For the purpose of eliminating the difficulty, he suggests two devices: the reference to a replica of the original and the viewpoint of unique desires of respective individuals (Ikegami 2003: 42–46, 1991: 18–20).

As to the first device, the reference to a replica of the original fails to divert the existence of

intrinsic value itself from the discussion. Although replicas do appear on the market and are evaluated as such, the value of the original should already be approved first as the condition for the replica to be endowed with intrinsic value. Therefore, the significance of Ikegami's "projection of intrinsic value" should be questioned. That is, the term "projection" is suspected to be applied to sharing the value of the independently existent original that holds intrinsic value, not to the process of acknowledging a good as an original on the basis of people's agreement.

As to the second device regarding the viewpoint of unique desires of respective individuals, the introduction of this viewpoint makes the concept of intrinsic value unnecessary. When Ikegami defines what provides people with their purpose of existence as the original object (Ikegami 1993: 54), the latter is regarded as the cause of their purpose. It is, however, impossible to identify the goods as the cause of their purpose of existence even though the goods have surely aroused this purpose. That is to say, unique desires can be ascertained as satisfactory only by the very individual or a homogeneous group. In this case, what matters is the fact that the users of the goods have inferred the cause of satisfaction of their needs. Then, outsiders and opponents seem to be unable to join the discussion on intrinsic value, which renders the concept redundant. If they are truly unable to, we need to clarify what the concept of intrinsic value expresses. If they possibly can, we need to explain how it is possible for them to join the discussion.

6. A Case Study: Producing a Citrus Fruit in X City in X Prefecture

This case is about the movement and/or project to utilize a crop landrace, which is one level of agricultural biodiversity, in a new context. The case illustrates the two flaws extracted from the above investigation: 1) where intrinsic value is supposed to be approved, the outsiders who find different value are already excluded from the issue of intrinsic value; 2) where it is not, and if the approval is derived from unique desires of individuals, the concept is rendered unnecessary.

When a crop landrace is to be utilized in a new context, a significant distinction from the previous use needs to be attached for the resurgence. The approaches for creating a discourse adopted here are divided into two. The first approach regards the landrace as a resource of a highly valued, locally based brand, where the main issues are how to discover a variety acceptable as a brand, how to register intellectual property rights of the variety, such as a trademark, and how to manage brand value (Murayama 2007). The second one regards it as a resource that is symbolic of the importance of its properties that have been disregarded in pursuit of economy and efficiency, including attributes of amenity and ecology, as pointed out by Elands & Wiersum (2001). In this way, when a new narrative or a discourse is necessary to establish value, two distinct approaches are available concerning how and what kind of value should be attached to a landrace by those concerned.

The dual characteristic of a crop landrace, as mentioned above, overlaps with the twofold intrinsic value of land described by Ruskin (Ruskin 1958: 42). One is a means to produce food and physical

energy, and the other a means to enjoy its beauty and to produce human fulfillment and intellectual power. In other words, the first one is a means of production, and the second one an aspect left out when goods are only perceived to be a means of production. He adds that, when these two aspects oppose each other, examining a way of adjusting them is one of the most significant areas of academic research. Therefore, it is particularly appropriate to take up two kinds of approach in utilizing a crop landrace in a new context.

The crop landrace at issue here is a native citrus fruit variety, a fragrant citron, (hereafter, native citrus) in X City in X Prefecture in Japan. The variety had been in disregard in the 1960s because of a declining frequency of its use, introduction of *Citrus unshu* (mikan), residential land developments and urbanization. It was rediscovered in 2001, was found to be a new variety in 2004, and was registered with a trademark and also registered in the Ark of Taste, maintained by the Slow Food Foundation (for Biodiversity), in 2008. In X City, it is cultivated mainly in three regions (I, II, III), where the Native Citrus Promotion Association in each region depicts the native citrus and the role of the association differently.

Members of the Native Citrus Promotion Association in region I say, “We are determined to resolve the problems of decreasing seeds of landraces and impoverished farming villages through selling traditional vegetables with high added-value (note: the citrus is classified as a traditional vegetable in X City, although it is ordinarily classified as a fruit). For that purpose, we, as fruit tree specialists, need to manage nursery trees and produce citrus fruit in great quantity and excellent quality.” In other words, to the members of this group, the native citrus is considered to be a traditional vegetable and their role lies in managing the production as specialists. In addition, they emphasize the difference between this native citrus and other citrus fruits such as *Citrus junos* (Yuzu), *Citrus natsudaidai* (Amanatsu, lit. summer tangerine), and *Citrus tamurana*.

In contrast, members of the Native Citrus Promotion Association in region II say, “We should definitely preserve and cultivate the native citrus by fostering young plants, because they are an endangered treasure that our predecessors left for us.” In other words, to them the native citrus is a treasure their predecessors left them and they and their region are the very keepers who should assume the role of preserving and fostering this native citrus by any means necessary.

In contrast to these two regions, the Native Citrus Promotion Association in region III has failed to advocate a collective view such as “a traditional vegetable with high added-value” as in region I and “the treasure our predecessors left for us” as in region II. It has also only partially grasped the issue and could not take a specific position. This is a stark contrast to “the need to increase the number of specialists in fruit trees” (region I) and “saving an endangered species” (region II). Thus, let us examine the way the native citrus is considered in region III.

In region III, at first glance, two distinct discourses, namely, productivism (production-centered concept) and post-productivism, seemed either to co-exist at the same time or to be reorganized under the key phrase “for the whole community,” creating yet another discourse distinct from the original

two. This process will be analyzed through the remarks of Mr. A and Mr. B living in region III.

Mr. A made two different remarks. In his first interview, he criticized the ideas behind the production-centered concept, whereas in his second interview, he suggested the possibility of compartmentalization of different policies with his position unchanged.

In his first interview, on the basis of the idea of preserving it as it is and spreading its use to as many people as possible, he claimed that the native citrus should be grown naturally or organically and be used by anyone because, if it became a specialty product, it would be more difficult for the present users to access to it. From the view of preserving the native citrus in a natural state and diffusing its use, he thus criticized the production-centered idea.

In contrast, in his second interview, although admitting that his idea made it impossible for farmers to be economically independent and considering the effects of the administration's intention to make the native citrus a specialty product, he contended that, drawing a line between his position and theirs, each of them should approach the issue in their own way. In addition, he supported the idea that two positions could co-exist at the same time, using the analogy that several shops can make more profit than one shop. In this way, his statements revealed the definition of what the native citrus should be, that these ideas would not necessarily be united, and that the two approaches could coexist through compartmentalization.

Mr. B indicated three points contrary to Mr. A's remarks. First, he maintained that seeming compartmentalization of approaches would be practically impossible, as those who are skillful at grafting can easily obtain as many grafted native citrus trees as they want. Second, he pointed out the danger of disruption of community III if they promoted the native citrus using different approaches, noting the example of Y Village in Y Prefecture that he had previously visited, where solidarity had been created among villagers. Third, he suggested that the best way to brand the native citrus would be promotion by the whole community, mentioning the possibility of combining different approaches and quoting the case of Haraguchi Citrus in their neighboring city. The citrus was successfully branded even without holding a patent. In this way, with the keyword "the whole community," combining the objective of regional industry promotion like in region I and the approach of spreading the native citrus throughout the region for wide use like in region II, Mr. B developed a discourse in which two distinct approaches were united.

7. Analysis of the Case and Conclusion

Region III offers the biggest contribution among the above three cases in clarifying the difficulties in the theory of intrinsic value in that the region, using two distinct discourses of region I's production-centered idea and region II's post-production-centered idea, has compounded intrinsic value of the native citrus and the way the residents appreciate its value.

A discourse based on the production-centered category bears the following implications: 1)

intrinsic value of the native citrus based on the assumption that, because of its features, the native citrus would be approved as a traditional vegetable, creating added-value because it has specific characteristics that other citrus fruits do not possess; and 2) those who accept the value should manage the citrus to produce excellent quality and good quantity. A discourse based on the post-production-centered category bears the following implications: 1) intrinsic value of the native citrus is to be assumed by its feature as a treasure that their predecessors left for them, as well as its status as endangered; and 2) those who accept the value should diffuse it to preserve and foster the treasure.

How a discourse is developed in region III derived from these distinct discourses is considered as follows (Hajor 1995, 2005, Argumentative Discourse Analysis is referred to). The two distinct discourses of the production-centered principle and the post-production-centered principle had a chance to coexist by means of compartmentalization. However, another discourse incorporating the concept of “the whole region” pointing out the possibility of breaking regional solidarity, appeared and asserted the deceptive nature of the concept of compartmentalization. This is an example of how different groups generate different discourses on the same issue.

Here, the two problems of intrinsic value mentioned above will be examined through the case. The concept of the acceptant capacity is opposed because it is revealed that the two discourses in the case, which express what the intrinsic value of the native citrus is and what should be defined as acceptant capacity, share the same deficiency of splitting the region. Therefore, if the state of the acceptant capacity is connected with that of intrinsic value, the concept of intrinsic value is also objected. In other words, groups with different intrinsic values cannot but exclude one another. Similarly, the group in region III, whose top priority lies in the solidarity of the whole region, reveals that seeming compartmentalization, leading to elimination of one another, fails in coexistence, although at first glance, it appears that intrinsic value and the way it is understood within the group may be conserved through seeming compartmentalization among several groups. In the same way, if two aspects of intrinsic value, which Ruskin derived from two elements of value in land, exclude each other, it entails that the theory of intrinsic value collapses from within.

It might be argued whether compartmentalization means exclusion or a plausible solution depends on the extent of the definition of “the whole region.” A smaller group within which very few incompatible approaches can be found need not exclude any members. This argument may seem to supplement the theory of intrinsic value, as it sees two aspects of Ruskin’s intrinsic value as having a well-balanced twofold character. Arbitrary scaling, however, entails that a compartmentalized group regarded as the whole region will be arbitrary as well. Consequently, this is equivalent to an equivocal sphere to be exploited for political competition and a scope of “framing” as termed by Sato (Sato, Jin 2003). It is far from “coexistent competitiveness” according to Ikegami (Ikegami 2003:13) but rather “playing musical chairs” among those with different framings.

Lastly, whether unique desires of individuals can be grounds for a property of goods with intrinsic value will be examined. If intrinsic value were to be fixed as a substance, it would be sufficient to

select goods that satisfy individual needs, which are closely related to their acceptant capacity in that the former is restricted by the latter while the latter changes as the former changes. Intrinsic value, however, remains unfixed and thus equivocal as the case of the native citrus illustrates. Accordingly, intrinsic value of the native citrus would have to be determined by the unique desires and acceptant capacity of each individual.

These examinations lead to the conclusion that intrinsic value is considered as such only when acceptant capacity, along with the unique desires of individuals, selects and eliminates certain value among diverse properties of an object. It is not the case that intrinsic value as a substance corresponds to the ability to appreciate it, with the two existing independently. In addition, intrinsic value here is merely “potential” in a pre-agreement among individuals, which then occurs repeatedly with production and reproduction of unification and differentiation among the different discourses in the sphere of a narrative. Accordingly, their attempt to introduce the notion of a temporarily tangible property of goods and the recipient’s ability to utilize the property, although the words “intrinsic value” and “receptive capability” are used, fails to unexceptionally add value to goods. What matters are the opportunities for repeated differentiation and unification on the way to tangible intrinsic value and the understanding of the causes of the repetition. This drives us to another issue of reconsidering the judgment of value as the opportunities to argue, in which differentiation and unification repeatedly occur, and involving the process of framing with political competition, which needs further consideration.

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