
Hunting-gathering Society And Modern Consumer Society

The term “affluence” plays a important role in interpreting the both hunting and gathering societies and modern consumer societies. With the common notion, a society which all the people’s material wants are easily satisfied is affluent. However, the notion is not acceptable for both societies. There are two possible way to be affluent according to Shalins. Firstly, wants may be easily satisfied either by producing much or desiring little, which is familiar with the Galbraithian way. In this way, people’s wants are great, while their means are limited, and industrial productivity can narrow the gap between means and ends. Secondly, there is a Zen road to affluence, which is that wants are few, and technical means are fixed. The hunter’s economic behavior seems to be prodigality since hunter consumes everything that hunter have at once. From this perspective, hunter’s economic tendencies may be more affluent that modern market economy. However, there are some arguments that deny that hunter are affluent since hunter have no time for leisure, and hunter have to explore for food, seeming hunter to be poor. As for modern consumer societies, people, conversely, take advantage of these scarcity or inadequacy of the societies. The other term “scarcity” is also important to understand both societies. In modern consumer societies, people do economic activity to improve societies of scarcity with technological advances. The notion of scarcity means not an intrinsic property of technical means but a relation between means and ends. In other words, the perspective of scarcity is different depending on a relation between means and ends within the societies. In addition to these terms of “affluence” and “scarcity”, the terms “wants” and “needs” are also helpful in order to look at goods from both points of view of two societies. “Wants” means things that you do not have but would like to have, whereas “needs” implies thing that you have to have to survive. Accordingly, this paper is intended to examine how goods are differently perceived in hunting-gathering societies and modern consumer societies paying attention to the notion of affluence and scarcity. First, I will outline goods in both hunting-gathering and modern consumer societies. Then, I will examine the goods differently perceived focusing on values of goods. Finally, I will conclude the difference of both societies.

Outline of hunting -gathering societies

Since hunters are themselves engaged in quest for food, they do not much demand material goods. As for them, a movement of quest for food is significant, so the possession of enough goods are oppressive for their mobility . Although few hunters belong to canoes and dog sleds, almost all hunters only possess what they can comfortably carry themselves. Or hunters have no sense of possession, and they do not know how to take care of their possessions. Therefore, decisive value is portability and small goods are generally better than big ones. Further, they do not place value on goods that they possess and the goods are often lost but just as easily replaced. According to Gusinde’s study, hunters took care of expensive things that were given to them for a few hours, after that they put them away in the mud. Their wants are few. Therefore, what is important for hunters is not how goods are valuable but what makes them survive. They can replace what is broken down. In other words, hunter’s wants against goods are scarce and their means are abundant. That hunter possess less is to allow them to travel more comfortably. Hunter is free of material pressure except for food and water which are so-called needs, although it is seemed that they can have what they need and want. In addition to acquisition of food and water, needs of clothing and shelter are essential to survive in hunting

and gathering societies. Adaptation of the tools allows hunter and gathers to live in material abundance. Hunters and gathers may work less than people in modern consumer societies and the food search is not continuously, therefore they have plenty of time that can be used for leisure and rest. More precisely, the average length of time to acquire and prepare food was four and five hours per person each day. The subsistence quest is greatly intermittent. Moreover, despite such intermittent work, one person's labor will support four or five people. Some research shows that hunters and gathers have varied and abundant food resources like nuts in spite of harsh climate condition including a low rainfall. The variety of their diet depend on the seasons and environment that they live. These findings suggest that hunters and gathers' food collecting are efficient. Therefore, acquisition of food is indifferent for them since it is readily procured.

Outline of modern consumer societies

In modern consumer societies, needs are more social and political to sustain lifestyle. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are 5 different levels of importance of needs. This hierarchy are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The modern consumer societies' needs are diversified and developed in terms of not only physiological needs but the others. These varied needs lead to growing of wants, which leads to perform consumption. In the light of consumption, goods are commodities that are placed on value due to price tag, and commodities have not only functional values and cultural. Due to consumption of goods as commodities, mass production and mass consumption is emerged with the market geographically and socially spread and organization of production diversified. These economic movements on societies spread purchasing power and diminish traditional restraint over consumption. The societies promotes further production to become affluent. Demand for buying goods come after their introduction which is a advertisement. therefore, needs are created by advertising and people feel satisfaction thorough purchase of goods and fulfillment of their needs. Thus, the marketing and advertising dealing in consumerism itself. According to the process of advertisement, people are made to think that they need to purchase things that they do not need, reshaping consumer's conception of truth and culture and in doing so people can make profits. According to Warde, there are five practices in consumption. These practices are expression of self-identity, marking attachment to social groups, accumulation of resources, exhibition of social distinction and participation in social activities. The idea of self is formed through individual choices, and it affect their lifestyles.

Main difference of two societies

In hunting and gathering societies, they do not collect food in subsistence, although the work is primary activity. The food that is acquired by some individuals is shared among their family and kinship, which is called reciprocity that is one of the economic behavior. The reciprocity appears in non-market economies and it leads family and kinship to help each other for safeguard protection and sustenance. Solidarity among hunters and gathers allow them to share goods and assist their life altruistically. According to gene-culture co-evolutionary models' proposal, a process of cultural learning and the approval of norm violators maintain prosocial behavior, which cooperative groups are apt to sustain and expand rather than less cooperative groups. Therefore, hunters and gathers see goods for not individual's ones but groups as shared things and assortment brings different resources, abilities and skills, and they see value as goods to

cooperate each other. In modern consumer societies, reciprocity seems to be conducted among family and friends in various ways, from donating kidneys to sharing food. People also help and cooperate with unknown person in large groups by donating money and blood. The common economic behavior in modern consumer societies is “exchange”. According to Polanyi, exchange means vice-versa movements happening under a market system and bargaining behavior is a essence of exchange, which makes price of goods. “Exchange is the transmission of wealth from one transactors to another, whereas reciprocity refers to the specific quality of the relationship between the transactors. In the course of exchange, money is used as a medium for promoting exchange. In modern consumer societies, people exchange or trade commodities to make profit, which causes destruction of the house hold’s bonds. People pursue gaining money and affluence of individual is up to amount of money that they have. Market exchange makes disparity between community’s members through benefit within internal and external societies and remove the broad solidarity and bonds of dependence between communities. Moreover, These notions of money lead to relationship between the producer and the product since workers are just paid labour and they are aliened from what they produce. For example, in Ghana many farmer make cocoa which is a ingredient of chocolate, but they have never tasted chocolate. Money itself seems like one of commodity which is physical properties rather than labour of production but the perception of money is different depending on societies. In modern consumer societies, there are many commodities that hunters and gathers do not place values. One of the goods that are differently perceived in hunting and gathering societies and modern consumer societies is land. For nomadic hunters and gathers, they do not have perception that they belongs to land. They move the land to quest food with a changing season. Conversely, in modern consumer societies, people perceive the land as a commodity for the production and living. A value of the land varies depending on the productive capacity, location and so on. Thus, how societies are affluent or scarcity depend on amount of property, especially money and land. In the societies, the land is commodified globally since, for instance, some western organizations hold farm land in Ghana to make cocoa. In doing so, Law plays indispensable role in making things commodify.

The function of money leads to trade globally with the advance of technology. Technological innovations change the world globally. One of the most essential technology is Internet. In terms of consumption, people use Internet as a advertisement of commodities in which promotes people’s interest. Consumers have choices of their want and needs. Therefore, they fulfil their scarcity and become affluent through the consumption, which the process of satisfaction, however, increases their wants. Moreover, production drives more wants and needs for more production.

Needs: food, water, clothing, shelter

Needs are fundamental things to survive for both hunting and gathering societies and modern consumer societies. Specifically, needs are assumed to be food, water, clothing and shelter. In hunting and gathering societies, needs are easily acquired. They have little preference against needs.

Wants: leisure

As I have stated above, hunters and gathers have plenty of time to use leisure.

In modern consumer societies, leisure itself is commodified. Even though technological advance

brings about a availability of many kinds of leisure, the amount of leisure decreases since the amount of work increases.

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