Adam Smith Discovered Comparative Advantage

De-Xing Guan (官德星, 國立台北大學經濟學系)

December 2010

這篇短文是對經濟成長期中考第四題的補充說明。¹ 在一般教科書中通常都是說 Adam Smith 提出的絕對利益 (absolute advantage) 是一個有問題甚至是錯誤的理論,而 David Ricardo 後來提出的比較利益 (comparative advantage) 原則才是正確的版本。 這個敘述其實不太正確,因為如果各位同學看了以下的說明,你會發現 Smith 已經有比較利益的概念,而且他也認為貿易會根據比較利益來進行,並未主張絕對利益,Ricardo 只是把比較利益的概念說得更清楚而已。²

在國富論中有關貿易會帶來利益的討論有多處,但和本文相關的有兩處,一處是在第四卷第二章,另一處則在第四卷第七章,而 Smith 發現比較利益的證據就出現在這兩個地方,可惜一般教科書誤以為 Smith 是主張絕對利益,這也是本文打算澄清的部份。3 以下是第四卷第二章的一段敘述:

The natural advantages which one country has over another in producing particular commodities are sometimes so great that it is acknowledged by all the world to be in vain to struggle with them. By means of glasses, hotbeds, and hot walls, very good grapes can be raised in Scotland, and very good wine too can be made of them at about thirty times the expence for which at least equally good can be brought from foreign countries. Would it be a reasonable law to prohibit the importation of all foreign wines merely to encourage the making of claret and burgundy in Scotland? But if there would be a manifest absurdity in turning towards any employment thirty times more of the capital and industry of the country than would be necessary to purchase from foreign countries an equal quantity of the commodities wanted, there must be an absurdity, though not altogether so glaring, yet exactly

² 那為什麼會有這個誤解呢? 老實說我也不清楚, 但我個人的猜測是因為在<u>國富論</u>中 Smith 一 共提到四種不同的 "利益 (advantage)": *natural*, *acquired*, *absolute*, *relative*, 可能後來的經濟學家在引述時誤以為 Smith 是主張絕對利益, 而忽略了其它三者。

¹ 請參考: http://web.ntpu.edu.tw/~guan/courses/growth/GWMid10.pdf.

³ 我不希望同學們讀完本文後產生一個教科書都是錯誤的印象,事實上教科書多半的內容還是正確的,但不是全對,而有些還錯了很久很離譜。 已故的偉大經濟學家 Paul Samuelson 曾說過學生的目的就是要去證明他的老師是錯的,誠哉斯言!去發現老師或是課本的錯誤,而不要盲目接受書上寫的東西,這件事本身就是一個發現真相的過程,知識也因此才能進步!但重點是要能獨立思考,不要人云亦云,要仔細求證,而不是全盤否定!同學們應該以開放的心情看待老師和教科書(包括我和本文在內)也會有錯這個事實,而不要因此陷入混亂,開始想:那我要聽誰的?有錯代表有改進的空間,這就是我們可以發揮之處,若是一門學問從老師到教科書都正確無誤,那麼學生就只不過是鸚鵡學舌,又有何求知的樂趣呢?如此完美無暇的學問也太沉悶虛偽了吧!

of the same kind, in turning towards any such employment a thirtieth, or even a three-hundredth part more of either. Whether the advantages which one country has over another be natural or acquired is in this respect of no consequence. As long as the one country has those advantages, and the other wants them, it will always be more advantageous for the latter rather to buy of the former than to make. It is an acquired advantage only, which one artificer has over his neighbour, who exercises another trade; and yet they both find it more advantageous to buy of one another than to make what does not belong to their particular trades. (Bk. IV, Ch. II)

在這段話中 Smith 認為蘇格蘭要花其它國家三十倍的成本,才能釀出同樣品質的紅酒,所以蘇格蘭沒有釀造紅酒的自然利益 (natural advantage),4 此時如果限制國外紅酒進口,改由自己生產,必然會造成極大的損失,因此互相交換彼此擅長生產的商品對兩國都有利。以上或許就是一般教科書認為 Smith 主張國際貿易應採絕對利益原則的來源,但這個證據似乎有點薄弱。 因為在文中他特別強調工匠的優勢是一種後天的利益 (acquired advantage),這表示不管一個國家先天的優勢是什麼 (譬如氣候良好,土壤肥沃等),只要有貿易的可能,兩國的勞工或工匠就會去學習適合自己國家生產商品的技能。 教科書上的絕對利益原則,相當於國家和勞工都是根據先天優勢來決定生產什麼商品,而 Smith 認為勞工會透過選擇工作而產生後天優勢,顯然已經有了後來 Ricardo 比較利益的概念,譬如他在上述引文之前曾對後天利益或優勢做了清楚的說明:

It is the maxim of every prudent master of a family never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy. The taylor does not attempt to make his own shoes, but buys them of the shoemaker. The shoemaker does not attempt to make his own clothes, but employs a taylor. The farmer attempts to make neither the one nor the other, but employs those different artificers. All of them find it for their interest to employ their whole industry in a way in which they have some advantage over their neighbours, and to purchase with a part of its produce, or what is the same thing, with the price of a part of it, whatever else they have occasion for. What is prudence in the conduct of every private family can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom. If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry employed in a way in which we have some advantage. (Bk. IV, Ch. II)

從這段敘述中我們發現他說裁縫不會自己做鞋子,他會向鞋匠買,而鞋匠也不會自己做衣服,他會向裁縫訂做;農夫則兩樣都得靠別人供應,他自己要專心

2

⁴ 或許譯成"先天的利益"會更恰當。 <u>我們現在所謂的絕對利益其實相當於 Smith 的自然利益</u>, <u>而不是他所謂的絕對利益</u>, 他的絕對利益是指因航海法 (參見註 6) 使英國獨占其殖民地市場而 產生的好處, 和一般教科書的絕對利益完全不同, 不知道是誰先搞錯, 誤導了許多莘莘學子。

種田,以生產食物和裁縫以及鞋匠交換。 個人適用的情況對一個國家而言亦復如此,所以各國也是要各自生產自己有優勢的商品,然後透過市場互相交換。以上這個各自分工然後經由市場合作交換的模式,顯然是基於比較利益進行的 (儘管 Smith 並沒有清楚說明是哪一種利益或優勢)。 此話怎說?假設現在社會上有三個人,他們都會做種田,織布和製鞋這三件事,我們要問的是: 在教科書的絕對利益和比較利益假設下,何者會產生 Smith 所描述的交易狀況?答案很明顯是後者,因為除非三個人恰好各自在一個不同領域中的本領最強,才有可能透過絕對利益原則來交易,但這種巧合在人數和職業都非常多的實際社會是不可能發生的,何況人數通常是多於職業種類的,這更增加絕對利益原則在實際運作上的困難。 此外,在前述兩段引文中 Smith 都強調職業選擇是選取相對週遭的人有優勢的工作,這也表示他不認為一個人做一件事的能力必須比所有人強才能互相交易。5 如果同學們認為以上的證據不夠充分,我們還可以經由他在第四卷第七章的一段敘述,看出他的確有比較利益的想法:

The tobacco of Maryland and Virginia, for example, by means of the monopoly which England enjoys of it, certainly comes cheaper to England than it can do to France, to whom England commonly sells a considerable part of it. But had France, and all other European countries been, at all times, allowed a free trade to Maryland and Virginia, the tobacco of those colonies might, by this time, have come cheaper than it actually does, not only to all those other countries, but likewise to England. The produce of tobacco, in consequence of a market so much more extensive than any which it has hitherto enjoyed, might, and probably would, by this time, have been so much increased as to reduce the profits of a tobacco plantation to their natural level with those of a corn plantation, which, it is supposed, they are still somewhat above. The price of tobacco might, and probably would, by this time, have fallen somewhat lower than it is at present. An equal quantity of the commodities either of England or of those other countries might have purchased in Maryland and Virginia a greater

-

⁵ 在第一段引文中他說: "It is an acquired advantage only, which one artificer has over his neighbour, who exercises another trade;" 而在第二段引文中說: "All of them find it for their interest to employ their whole industry in a way in which they have some advantage over their neighbours," 雨者都顯示勞工的利益或優勢是相對他鄰近或週遭的人而言,而且是後天經由工作取得,不是天生就有的。譬如在三個人的例子中,若裁縫和鞋匠的鄰居都只有農夫,但裁縫和鞋匠隔得較遠,彼此不相往來(可以想像三人住同一條路,農夫住中間,另二人分住兩頭),此時身為農夫的人不一定要是三者中最會種田的人,但因為另兩人無法交易(因路途遙遠),又必須吃飯,住中間的人勢必要擔負起種田的工作,於是他會選擇務農,這樣三個人就可以互相交易,因為裁縫和鞋匠可以透過農夫和對方交換鞋子和衣服,農夫雖不是最擅長種田的人,但因地理位置而產生的比較利益,使他可以從收取手續費或是鞋子和衣服打折的方式,彌補他務農的相對損失,而同樣裁縫和鞋匠只要分別相對農夫有做衣服和鞋子的優勢,那麼也可以透過農夫這個中間人,獲得本來無法買到的鞋子和衣服。 所以每個人只需要相對鄰近的人有一些優勢,就可以透過市場直接或間接交換需要的商品,在這個過程中,每個人會根據他的相對優勢去選取職業,進行勞動和資本的分工。 整個過程顯然不是根據絕對利益進行,就如同例子中這三個人最後選擇的工作都不見得是他們最擅長的,但經由多個雙邊市場的交易,就可以把每個人的相對優勢串聯起來,達到分工合作的目的。

quantity of tobacco than it can do at present, and consequently have been sold there for so much a better price. So far as that weed, therefore, can, by its cheapness and abundance, increase the enjoyments or augment the industry either of England or of any other country, it would, probably, in the case of a free trade, have produced both these effects in somewhat a greater degree than it can do at present. England, indeed, would not in this case have had any advantage over other countries. She might have bought the tobacco of her colonies somewhat cheaper, and consequently have sold some of her own commodities somewhat dearer than she actually does. But she could neither have bought the one cheaper nor sold the other dearer than any other country might have done. She might, perhaps have gained an absolute, but she would certainly have lost a relative advantage. In order, however, to obtain this relative advantage in the colony trade, in order to execute the invidious and malignant project of excluding as much as possible other nations from any share in it, England, there are very probable reasons for believing, has not only sacrificed a part of the absolute advantage which she, as well as every other nation, might have derived from that trade, but has subjected herself both to an absolute and to a relative disadvantage in almost every other branch of trade... But whatever raises in any country the ordinary rate of profit higher than it otherwise would be, necessarily subjects that country both to an absolute and to a relative disadvantage in every branch of trade of which she has not the monopoly. (Bk. IV, Ch. VII)

這段敘述出現了絕對和相對利益這兩個名詞,教科書中絕對利益一詞應該是由此而出。當時英國擁有北美殖民地菸草的獨占權,於是可以從馬里蘭和維吉尼亞進口便宜的菸草,並向殖民地出口相對昂貴的商品,在獨占市場之下享有許多優勢,所以 Smith 所謂的絕對利益其實是一種因獨占殖民地貿易而產生的地租! 而其它國家因為被排拒在外,無法和北美殖民地直接貿易,因此英國相對這些國家還額外享有所謂的相對利益 (relative advantage)。6 所以 Smith 的絕對利益和教科書的定義是截然不同的,而在國富論中不管絕對或是相對利益,都和獨

_

⁶ 英國十七世紀時和荷蘭在歐洲及北美殖民地有許多利益衝突,兩國也因此交戰三次。 在 1651 年當時英國的護國公 Oliver Cromwell 通過了一個影響深遠的法律: 航海法 (Act of Navigation),規定英國的貿易只能使用英國的船隻,即 "國貨國運" 政策。在 1660 年 Charles II 復辟後,又對航海法做了修正,限定英國船隻至少要有四分之三的船員是英國人,而且列舉殖民地一些經濟價值較高的農作物,譬如菸草,棉花,蔗糖等,規定只能運往英國或是其它英國的殖民地,這便是英國獨占其殖民地貿易的起源。 有些學者認為 Smith 贊成航海法,這是錯誤的,因為這個法律妨礙了自由貿易,使英國的整體利益下降,Smith 當然是反對的。 有人會這樣想,應該是因為國富論第四卷第二章提到航海法對國防帶來的好處;由於當時歐洲船運幾乎被荷蘭壟斷,英國可藉此重新建立海上國防力量。然而在第四卷第七章 Smith 卻用大篇幅討論獨占殖民地貿易的壞處,因此航海法除了國防好處之外(而這個好處的代價卻是三次戰爭!),其它方面對英國而言都是弊多於利,所以他說: "As defence, however, is of much more importance than opulence, the act of navigation is, perhaps, the wisest of all the commercial regulations of England." (Bk. IV, Ch. II),亦即在國防安全的重要性遠大於經濟繁榮的前提下,我們才有可能從貿易管制中找到少數正面效果。大多數情況下,Smith 認為即使和敵對的法國也應該自由貿易,國防安全不一定要依賴貿易管制來維持,須視情況而定,而自由貿易反而能降低彼此敵意,提供更多安全保障(第四卷第三章)。

占貿易市場有關,這也和教科書用完全競爭或獨占性競爭市場來討論絕對或是 比較利益有很大的差別。 有趣的是, Smith 考慮了自由貿易對絕對和相對利益的 影響,這使我們有機會了解他對比較利益原則的看法。

Smith 設想如下情況: 如果各國都可以直接和北美殖民地自由貿易, 那會對 英國產生什麼影響?或許有同學認為英國的優勢從此不再,這對英國而言不是 一件好事, 畢竟英國的優勢是由獨占貿易市場而來。 然而在教科書的絕對利益 模型中,一般是假設完全競爭,這表示英國如果有絕對利益的優勢,便不會因為 由獨占到開放自由貿易而有所改變, 所以如果英國的優勢因開放而改變, 這表示 此優勢必然是由比較利益而來 (根據教科書只有絕對和比較兩種利益)。 Smith 認為英國在開放北美和其它國家自由貿易後,會同時喪失菸草的絕對和相對利 益 (因為菸草市場會被其它國家瓜分), 但卻會在其它商品的生產和貿易上得到 更多的補償, 兩相權衡之下, 還是應該選擇自由貿易才對。 如果 Smith 是主張 教科書所說的絕對利益, 那麼在開放菸草市場後, 其它市場也應該同樣受到連累 才對。 舉例來說, 假設北美殖民地除了菸草外, 還生產棉花, 而英美雨地都只生 產這兩種作物。 如果北美在這兩種農作物的生產上都有教科書所謂的絕對利益, 那麼殖民地應該兩種都要生產,然後銷往英國。 現在若如 Smith 所假設,英國 開放北美和包括法國在內的其它歐洲國家自由貿易,於是棉花和煙草都可以出 口到這些國家, 那麼英國會同時喪失原來獨享的便宜菸草和棉花, 而必須和其它 國家競爭, 此時由於英國沒有其它商品可以生產, 於是開放自由貿易後反而使得 英國所得下降, 生產低落, 這個結果和一向主張自由貿易的 Smith 顯然是背道 而馳的。 所以自由貿易如果能為英國帶來任何好處, 必然是因為菸草利益的減 少會由棉花利益的增加而彌補過來,用教科書的說法就是北美殖民地必然是有 生產菸草的比較利益, 而英國則有生產棉花的比較利益, 由於北美本來在棉花生 產上就沒有比較利益,因此即使開放和其它歐洲國家自由貿易,也不至於會使英 國連棉花都無法生產。 所以 Smith 認為英國應該開放殖民地自由貿易, 正好印 證了他是根據比較利益原則在做推論的,而不是一般教科書所說的絕對利益。

以上的推論並不會抹煞 Ricardo 對國際貿易和比較利益原則的貢獻,若不是他利用 1703 年英國和葡萄牙簽訂的貿易協定 (即所謂的 Methuen Treaty) 想出"英國的衣服和葡萄牙的紅酒"這個著名的例子,重新闡釋 Smith 在國富論中的真知灼見,我們可能也不會發現這個非常重要的經濟理論。 儘管在一般教科書中, Smith 有點揹了黑鍋,被誤認為提出了錯誤的絕對利益原則,但聰明如各位同學,應該可以理解在絕對利益原則下,貿易不一定會發生,也不一定會帶來好處。自由貿易之所以可以擴大市場,提高生產效率,正是基於比較利益這個隱藏在國富論中的重要原則,主張自由貿易的 Smith 不可能不了解這個道理啊!