

## Joseph Priestley's two arguments against slavery : humanitarian and economic perspectives

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<Summary>

This paper aims to consider Joseph Priestley's arguments against slavery in comparison with Erasmus Darwin's and Adam Smith's. Slavery is one of the most controversial issues argued by a number of thinkers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England.

Priestley, known as a prolific writer, published a remarkable book on anti-slavery entitled *A Sermon of the Slave Trade* (hereinafter *SST*) in 1788. Despite that *SST* provides detail discussion and consideration on slavery, little attention has been paid to this great book. Priestley's arguments are also found in his *Lectures on History and General Policy* (hereinafter *LH*) published in 1788 which is based on lectures on history, language and grammar, law and politics given in Warrington Academy from 1761 through 1767. *LH* briefly offers Priestley's view on slavery from humanitarian and economic perspectives.

Darwin deals with a slavery issue from humanitarian point of view, appealing benevolence implanted in human nature. Although Priestley does not directly refer to Darwin, his arguments are quite similar to those of Darwin. Priestley is also greatly influenced by Adam Smith, learning great many things from his *Wealth of Nations* published in 1776. Priestley's arguments against slavery from economic perspective basically stems from Smith's view.

Priestley enthusiastically tackles this delicate issue from humanitarian and economic perspectives, whereas Darwin deals with the slavery issue only from the former point of view and Smith only from the latter viewpoint.

### Introduction

This paper aims to consider Joseph Priestley's arguments against slavery including the slave

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trade. Priestley, well known as a finder of oxygen, made great contributions to progress in natural science and his methods of experimental science gave a lot of influence on later scientists<sup>1</sup>. However, his achievements in natural science are not limited to the scientific world. He also wrote many essays and pamphlets concerning social science and inspired many thinkers with his thought<sup>2</sup>.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, many thinkers including Priestley argued against slavery<sup>3</sup>. Priestley's arguments against slavery, however, have never been examined<sup>4</sup> probably because Priestley is regarded as a chameleon. Leslie Stephen noted that Priestley "was a quick reflector of the current opinions of his time and class, and able to run up hasty theories of sufficient apparent stability to afford a temporary refuge amidst the storm of conflicting elements," summarizing that "[i]t would be vain, ....., to anticipate any great force or originality in Priestley's speculations." (Stephen 1876, vol. 1, 431) Were Stephen's interpretations really true? The answer is "No." Priestley should not be regarded as a mere "reflector." He consistently argued against slavery.

Priestley's arguments against slavery have two perspectives: 1) a humanitarian perspective forming the mainstream for his contemporaries and 2) an economic perspective emerging from a series of Smith's books including *Wealth of Nations*. In the latter perspective in particular, Priestley noted in his *Lectures on History, and General Policy* that he learned a lot and was inspired from Smith's *Wealth of Nations*<sup>5</sup>. In researching Smith's influence in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century England, the relationship between Priestley and Smith appears to be an interesting subject in the history of economic thought.

Section 1 deals with historical contexts concerning slavery from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, referring to the actual condition of slavery and the slave trade and many anti-slavery campaigns. Section 2 introduces two perspectives from which the arguments against slavery are made, i.e. humanitarian and economic approaches and examines respective standpoints. In this section, we will take a look at Darwin as an exponent of the former and Smith as an exponent of the latter. Section 3 to Section 5 scrutinize Priestley's argument against

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<sup>1</sup> see Brocke (2008) and Johnson (2009) which are useful books as handbooks about Priestley's ideas on natural science

<sup>2</sup> Especially, after he removed to America in 1791, Thomas Belsham who was one of Ricard's teachers was regarded as most famous Priestley's successor in England, according to Cremaschi (2004).

<sup>3</sup> In the same age, French Marquis de Condorcet (1743-94) and American Benjamin Rush (1745-1813) are also known as opponents toward slavery.

<sup>4</sup> In earlier studies about Priestley, there is no paper treating his anti-slavery argument. Robbins (1959), Kraminick (1990) and Schofield (2004) do not refer to it.

<sup>5</sup> In this book, Priestley refers to not only Smith but also James Stuart. But I don't treat because of having nothing to do with this paper. Priestley, debating about money, makes reference to Stuart's *Principles of Political Oeconomy*.

slavery comparing those of Darwin and Smith. Conclusions are given in Section 6.

## 1. Historical contexts concerning slavery<sup>6</sup>

The slave trade in Britain suddenly increased in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is said that England was engaged in the slave trade more actively than any other countries. Royal African Company founded in 1672 virtually monopolized the slave trade in Africa and West India. But in 1698 the company liberalized the slave trade, permitting the whole English people to purchase or buy ownership of slaves on the coast of Africa from Cabo Branco through the Cape of Good Hope. The liberalization of the slave trade increased the number of exporting and importing slaves<sup>7</sup>; although the number of the slave trade was some 5,250 in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, it rose up to some 25,000 in 1740's, some 36,000 in 1760's and some 47,000 in 1770's, with the number amounting to some 45,000 in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1767 Britain accounted for 54% of the world slave exports. The increase in the number of slave export, however, was caused not only by the liberalization of the slave trade but also by the expansion of commodity trade (especially sugar, rum and cigarettes).

In particular, of all the commodities sugar held the most important position. Its import rapidly increased 3.4 times between 1713 and 1775 in Britain. The production was provided by the slaves in the colonies. The consumption and import of sugar raised the colonists' purchasing power so that they could easily import slaves, whereas the increase in the amount of slave-export boosted the export of factory products from England to Africa. In other words, the rise of sugar consumption in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England resulted in stimulating the production of industrial products. Here the triangular trade--Slave, sugar and industrial products-- was completed.

Slavery, however, was gradually accused of being anti-humanitarian throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the movement toward anti-slavery was growing and expanding in the 1780s. Three persons were actively engaged in and led the movement: an Evangelicalist, Granville Sharp (1735-1813) and two reformers, Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) and William Wilberforce (1759-1833). In 1787, Society for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded in London, with Clarkson playing the most important role. They didn't have a radical idea of immediately abolishing the slavery and slave trade but opted for a realistic and moderate idea of gradually getting rid of slavery after abolishing the slave trade. They were mainly engaged in two activities: the movement outside Parliament and the enactment of an anti-slavery

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<sup>6</sup> In this chapter, see Williams (1944), Ryden (2009), Ichihashi (1989), Ikemoto and so on (1995), Kawakita (1996).

<sup>7</sup> After Royal Africa Company dissolved in 1713, the slave trade was made by merchants more actively.

law inside Parliament. Not only the Society but also citizens were engaged in the anti-slave movement. Prior to 1788 when the committee of the Private Council was set up to investigate the slavery problem, more than 100 petitions were submitted to Parliament. The investigation, however, virtually made little progress because the members of Parliament in favor of slavery protested against the investigation. Although the motion to abolish slavery was first proposed in April, 1791, it turned out in vain.

The abolishment of slavery was finally enforced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “The Act of Parliament to abolish the British Slave Trade” was approved in 1807 and the slave trade was abolished. Later in 1834 slavery was abolished.

## 2. Darwin and Smith

In this section, Darwin’s and Smith’s arguments will be discussed as two different perspectives against slavery. The former argument is made from humanitarian perspectives, whereas the latter argument from economic perspectives. Priestley has good contact with Darwin through Lunar Society, while, as noted in the introduction, he learns a lot from Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. Priestley’s arguments against slavery, therefore, are more or less influenced by both Darwin and Smith.

### a) Darwin’s humanitarian perspectives

Lunar Society was established at Birmingham, England, in 1766, with Matthew Bolton (1728-1809), Darwin and William Small (1734-1775) playing the most important roles in the Society. At first, they held a meeting on the nearest Monday to the full moon. The Society was composed of middle-class scholars and enterprisers including James Watt (1736-1819), William Withering (1741-1799), Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817) and Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795). The participants exchange ideas leading to accelerating Industrial Revolution<sup>8</sup>.

Although he knew the Society and its members before, He came to attend the Society after moving to Birmingham in 1780. He recalled that he was stimulated and influenced intellectually by the Society<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Concerning Lunar Society, see Schofield(1963) (2004 ,147-168), Bolton(1888), concerning Darwin, see King-Hele(1977), concerning the relationship of Watt, Darwin and Small and Bolton, see Crowther(1962), concerning R. L. Edgeworth, see Uemiya (2008).

<sup>9</sup> In his autobiography, Priestley (1831, 338-9) wrote as follows. “I had the convenience of good workmen of every kind, and the society of person eminent for their knowledge of chemistry, particular Mr. Watt, Mr. Keir, and Dr. Withering. These, with Mr. Bolton, and Dr. Darwin, (who soon left us, by removing from Lichfield to Derby,) Mr. Galton, and afterwards Mr. Johnson, of Kenilworth, and myself, dined together every month, calling ourselves the Lunar

The members of the Society argued against slavery in various ways. Some wrote poems or sermons, others wrote essays. It seems that slavery was repeatedly talked about by the members. Darwin was particularly interested in slavery and made with Wedgewood a famous medal, one of the most impressive symbols of anti-slavery movement.

His assertions are made from humanitarian perspectives, calling for the immediate abolishment of slavery unlike Priestley. Darwin criticizes that slavery and the slave trade could be identified as an unnatural system. Using rhetoric, he states that the self-purification of the Earth can neither abolish slavery nor help slaves. Thus he directly appeals to the Queen and people.

“Hear, Oh BRITANNIA! potent Queen of isles,  
On whom fair Art, and meek Religion smiles,  
Now AFRIC’S coasts thy craftier sons invade,  
And Theft and Murder take the garb of Trade!  
---The slave, in chains, on supplicating knee,  
Spreads his wide arms, and lifts his eyes to Thee;  
With hunger pale, with wounds and toil oppress’d  
‘Are we not Brethren?’ sorrow choaks the rest;  
---Air! Bear to heaven upon the azure flood  
Their innocent cries!--Earth! Cover not their blood!”(Darwin 1798,Part I , 59)

Darwin also appeals directly to politicians to abolish slavery and the slave trade in *Loves of the Plants*. He fiercely attacks politicians admitting the very crucial system and demands its immediate withdrawal again.

“Even now in Afric’s groves with hideous yell  
Fierce Slavery stalks, and slips the dog of hell;  
From vale to vale the gathering cries rebound,  
And sable nations tremble at the sound...  
Who right the injured, and reward the brave,  
Stretch your strong arm, for ye have power to save!...  
Hear Mm, ye Senates! hear this truth sublime,  
‘He, who allows oppression, shares the crime.’” (Darwin 1798, Part II , 89-90)

In this way Darwin accuses slavery and the slave trade of its cruelty, and appeals to

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Society, because the time of our meeting was near the full moon.”

slave-holder's or slave-trader's benevolence. As shown above, the number of slaves, however, didn't decline in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The fact indicates there is a limit to argument against slavery from humanitarian perspectives.

#### B) Smith's economic/rational perspectives

In his argument against slavery, Smith points out economic disadvantages without referring to humanitarian perspectives. Smith appears to be aware that there is a limit to humanitarian perspective<sup>10</sup>.

Why was slavery created to begin with? In *Wealth of Nations*, Smith considers slavery stems from "the pride of man."

"The pride of man makes him love to domineer, and nothing mortifies him so much as to be obliged to condescend to persuade his inferiors. Wherever the law allows it, and the nature of the work can afford it, therefore, he will generally prefer the service of slaves to that of freeman." (Smith 1776, 388-389)

Smith, however, believes the work done by freeman is cheaper than the work done slaves. Smith criticizes slavery with main emphasis on this point.

In *Lectures on Jurisprudence (A)*, Smith writes that it is "unhappy" not only for slaves but also for slave-holders and it is especially unproductive for slave-holders to maintain slavery.

"It is evident that the state of slavery must be very unhappy to the slave himself. This I need hardly prove...it will not be difficult to shew that it is so to the masters. That is, that the cultivation of land by slaves is not so disadvantageous as by free tenants; that the advantage gained by the labours [slaves] of the slaves, if we deduce their original cost and expence of their maintenance<e>, will not be as great as that which is gained from free tenants." (Smith 1978a, 185)

More detailed argument is given in *Lectures on Jurisprudence (B)*. Smith explains slave's work costs more than that of freeman whether in manufacture or agriculture. "When land is divided in great portions among the powerfull, it is cultivated by slaves, which is a very unprofitable method of cultivation." Smith goes on to argue that slave's work is disadvantageous for slaves as well as employees because his motivation for labour is "the dread of punishment," which

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<sup>10</sup> Remind Smith's criticism to Hutcheson. As showed, Humanitarian perspectives were apt to stress benevolence. Concerning Smith's criticism to Hutcheson, see Raphael (2007 especially ch.5).

deprives slaves of their wills to work and prevents them from improving on their own.

“The labour of a slave proceeds from no other motive but the dread of punishment, and if he could escape this he would work none at all. Should he exert himself in the most extraordinary manner, he cannot have the least expectations of any reward, and as all the produce of his labour goes to his master, he has no encouragement to industry. A young slave may perhaps exert himself a little first, in order to attain his masters favour, but he soon finds that it is all in vain, and that, be his behavior what it will, he will always meet with the same severe treatment. When lands, therefore, are cultivated by slaves, they cannot be greatly improven, as they have no motive to industry.” (523)

In the case of manufacture, virtually the same argument is repeatedly given. Smith writes,

“In all places where slavery took place the manufactures were carried on by slaves. It is impossible that they can be so well carried on by slaves as by freemen, because they can have no motive to labour but the dread of punishment, and can never invent any machine for facilitating their business. Freeman who have a stock of their own can get any thing accomplished which they think may be expedient for carrying on labour. If a carpenter think that a plane will serve his purpose better than a knife, he may go to a smith and get it made; but if a slave make any such proposal he is called a lazy rascal, and no experiments are made to give him ease.”(526)

Smith finally notes in ‘Early Draft of Part of *The Wealth of Nations*’ that “the work which is done by slaves always coming dearer than that which is done by freemen.” (Smith 1978b, 579)

According to Smith, therefore, employees could cut down on the expenses by giving slaves their freedom and employing as free workers.

“The experience of all ages and nations, I believe, demonstrates that the work done by slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is in the end the dearest of any.” (Smith 1776 , 387)

Smith notes the affair in the east coast of America as a typical example. (Priestley quotes Smith’s example in *Lectures on History and General Policy*.)

“It appears, accordingly, from the experience of all ages and nations, I believe, that the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves. It is found to do so even at Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, where the wages of common labour are so very

high.”(99)

Smith also includes how to control slaves (586-588). Smith mentions French control slaves better than English. As in the case of France, if sovereignty in a colony were given to the masters of slaves, it would be impossible for the mother-country to control to the masters. They would tend to use violence on the slaves. In a tyrannical country, on the other hand, slaves are liable to be protected from violence because the state would intervene.

“The protection of the magistrate renders the slave less contemptible in the eyes of his master, who is thereby induced to consider him with more regard, and treat him with more gentleness. Gentle usage renders the slave not only more faithful, but more intelligent, and therefore, upon a double account, more useful. He approaches more to the condition of a free servant, and may possess some degree of integrity and attachment to his master’s interest.”(587)

French colonies, therefore, grew up and expanded. Smith, however, doesn’t think England should establish a system like the one establish by France because it is important for him not to regulate by law but to maintain liberty<sup>11</sup>. He insists that it is necessary to give up employing slaves and create free workers, and thus he is consistently and continuously opposed to slavery.

Smith only focuses on economic perspectives: work done by freeman is cheaper than work done by slave. There are no humanitarian perspectives in Smith’s argument. Priestley’s arguments are characterized in that they include both humanitarian and economic perspectives.

### **3. Priestley’s first ideas in *Lectures on History, and General Policy***

Priestley lectured on history at Warrington academy from 1761 through 1767. After adding and modifying the lecture’s note, he published *Lectures on History and General Policy* (first published in 1788). He clearly declares against slavery and the slave trade in the book.

First of all, Priestley treats the origin of slavery. According to him, human beings “naturally” tend to avoid working. Most of the products are produced by slaves in ancient Greek and Rome. In modern times, slaves are purchased in Africa in order to secure labour-forces in colonies, especially in America, resulting in establishment of the slave trade.

Priestley condemns such slavery as an “injustice and ill- policy.” (Priestley 1803, 319) According to Priestley, “[s]ervitude is the most wretched condition on human nature” because it

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<sup>11</sup> In England, Edmund Burke (1729/30-1797) who suggested controlling slaves by law aimed to abolish slavery by reforming gradually. In his plan of gradual reformation, he proposed to prohibit the slave trade by enacting law and after that abolish slavery itself. Concerning Burke’s argument against slavery, see Burke(1780)

is impossible for slaves to enjoy liberty and self-command. They are “more miserable in a state of servitude than other animals.”(319) Priestley, therefore, thinks that slavery should be abolished and “human nature” of those who are forced into servitude should be improved.

Priestley also indicates that “no methods can make slaves work with the same spirit and effect as freeman.”(319) and goes on to quote Smith from *Wealth of Nations*.

“[F]rom the experience of all ages and nations, I believe, that the work done by freemen comes chapter in the end than that performed by slaves. It is found to do so even at Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, where the wages of common labour are so very high.”(Smith 1776, 99)

Priestley demands slave-purchasers should give up the slave trade. Even if they temporarily lose profit, they should employ slaves “in another way as soon as possible.” He thinks that it is necessary to turn slaves into labourers whose liberty is mentally and physically guaranteed.

The abolishment of the slave trade also leads to peace in the world, according to Priestley. He regards sound and just commerce as a vital requirement for world peace. If a state purchased slaves, it easily could enter into war because it is possible for the state to increase the number of slave-soldiers. Thus if slavery and the slave trade were abolished, war would not break out easily. Without war, Slaves could marry freely and result in increasing population. It means the increase in the number of free workers and the increase in production. The increase of the number of free workers may temporarily lessen their wage. But production is boosted by division of labour and consequently general opulence could be achieved. Priestley --somewhat optimistically-- thinks the abolishment of slavery and the slave trade can lead to the increase of wealth<sup>12</sup>.

Priestley brings up America as an ideal model and praises American Quakers against slavery (402-404)<sup>13</sup>. Here is the essence of Priestley’s idea which regards liberty as the highest value<sup>14</sup>.

Thus, He argues against slavery from both humanitarian and economic perspectives in *Lectures on History, and General Policy*. But, his explanations don’t go into details. It is in *A Sermon on the Subject of the Slave Trade*<sup>15</sup> (hereinafter *Sermon*) that Priestley discusses on the subject in more detail.

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<sup>12</sup> With Mill criticizing Smith, Mill argues slavery is not necessarily expensive in a fertile place. See Mill (1848), Book2 chapter5.

<sup>13</sup> See Sugiyama (1984).

<sup>14</sup> Priestley writes in *First Principles of Government*, “It is an universal maxim, that the more liberty is given to every thing which is in a state of growth, the more perfect it will become.”(Priestley 1768, 123)

<sup>15</sup> In publishing this sermon, Priestley publishes as a “discourse.”(363)

#### 4. Priestley's humanitarian perspectives in *Sermon*

Priestley preached a sermon against slavery at Birmingham and published *Sermon* in 1788. He divides his arguments against slavery into humanitarian and economic perspectives in *Sermon* like *Lectures on History*.

Slavery is “the greatest and most crying evil under the sun.” (Priestley 1788, 381) If a person has humanity, he/she must object to slavery. It is a universal action and has nothing to do with race, nationality and religion.

“You will consider all mankind as brethren, and neighbours...As men, and as Christians...we should interest ourselves not only our relations, and particular friends; not only for our countryman; not only for Europeans, but for the distressed inhabitants of Asia, Africa, or America; and not only for Christians, but for Jews, Mahometans, and Infidels. And as we ought to feel for our fellow-men, we ought, to the utmost extent of our influence, to exert ourselves to relieve their distresses. ” (368)

Priestley informs to the audiences in order to impeach the cruelty of slavery and the slave trade. For example, he hears from a Jamaican and accuses not only slave-purchasers but also English of participating in such actions.

“I have been informed by a person who resided in Jamaica, that it is usual for the slaves, after they are purchased, to shudder at the sight of a fire, or kitchen utensils, imagining that they are to be killed and eaten, till older slaves convince them that nothing of that kind is intended. What the poor creatures must suffer with this idea on their minds all the voyage, and the terror it must impress on the country in general, in which thousands who are never taken know they are liable to it, is not to be estimated, and for which no good treatment of slaves can compensate.”(368)

Priestley takes up fatalities of slaves as an example of cruelties. Many slaves are killed in transport as well as in colonies. He especially condemns “seasoning” which extracts strong slaves on board. The example is very effective in disclosing the cruelty of slavery to the audiences.

“[I]n order to raise our sugar, and other West- India commodities, perhaps half a million of persons are annually destroyed, and in manner peculiarly shocking to humanity. To die by an earthquake, by pestilence, or even by famine, would be merciful, compared with the manner in

which many of these poor wretches often perish. All the European plantations taken together are said to require an annual supply of sixty thousand fresh slaves; but these are those that remain after so many have died in what is called the seasoning, before they can be brought to bear the labour to which they made to submit; and after so many more have been lost during the voyage, owing to the mode of their confinement and ill usage on board, that it is said not less than a hundred thousand are annually exported from Africa. And, some say, that before this, ten are destroyed for one that is secured, and safety lodged on board the ship.”(370)

Rightly, Priestley cannot consider the condition of slaves to be happy. If slaves arrive at a colony alive, they are force to obey “the caprice of” masters. A person free from the master’s wills enjoys the happiest condition, according to him. Priestley asserts the government establishes a law in order to remove such wretched conditions from slaves and weak the master’s arbitrary wills. In this way, slaves could diminish their risks of being threatened by the master’s arbitrary power. However, slaves would remain as slaves unless slavery was abolished.

“Under humane masters, slaves may, no doubt, enjoy a certain degree of happiness; but still they are slaves, subject to the wills, and, consequently, the caprices of others; and there is no proper security from the greatest outrages, but in the protection of law.”(367)

Priestley also criticizes masters for abusing their power under slavery. If slaves revolted against a master, they would be suppressed by every conceivable means and their life would be endangered. They look as if they lived in Hell all the time.

“In general , it is said, that in our plantations slaves are employed so many hours every day, excepting Sundays, in the service of their masters, that they have only one for themselves, and but little for sleep. For remissness in labour they are severely beaten, and for rebellion, (as any attempt to recover their liberty is called,) they are generally gibbeted alive.”(371)

Masters’ cruelty and power abuse are very severe in English colonies, according to Priestley. His views concerning the management of French slaves are very similar to those of Smith.

“[N]o Europeans whatever use their slaves with so much cruelty as the English. The Spaniards have made excellent regulations in their favour, in consequence of which the slaves can work out their own freedom; and the French Government has also interposed by a code of laws enacted for this very purpose. But the slaves belonging to the English are almost wholly left to the mercy of their masters; and the annual consumption of them is itself a proof of the most

cruel usage.”(372)

Priestley makes a point of woman’s role in a family<sup>16</sup>. Since women are not humanly treated under slavery, they are morally corrupted and the family is destroyed. It is difficult for normal persons to accept such a system.

“The shocking indecencies to which the females are subjected during the voyage, and afterwards, and the cruel separation of the nearest relations and friends, husbands and wives, parents and children, both when they are put on board the ships, at the place of sale, would be heard with horror by all but those who are habituated to this traffic.”(371-372)

Masters’ power exercise also results in their moral corruptions. These corruptions are disadvantages to the whole society as well as masters.

“Such a power as that which a master exercises over a slave, necessarily tends to make him haughty, cruel, and capricious, unfit for the society of his equals, which is the happiest state of man.” (380)

Although Priestley uses the word, “equals,” it does not mean equality of fortune. He insists every person equally has right.

“[M]an has the power of reflection in an eminent degree,”(379) according to Priestley. Such a “reflection” makes people “miserable in a state of servitude.”(Ibid) The most of African slaves “[t]hrough agony of mind,...put an end to their own lives.” This circumstance is unusual. Releasing from “agony of mind,” slaves can enjoy a peace of mind (=true happiness). Priestley rightly considers Africans not to be inferior to Europeans. Africans, therefore, must be treated as equally as European. Priestley cannot agree only Africans cruelly are treated and their advance of intelligence is hindered because he thinks every person equally must be treated. It seems that such his ideas are highly similar to that of Darwin.

##### **5. Priestley’s economic perspectives in *Sermon***

Concerning economic advantages caused by abolishing slavery, Priestley shows two different opinions. (1) “Some say that if we abandon the Slave-Trade, we give up a valuable source of national profit, and yield it to our rivals.” (2) “Some will say, how shall we get sugar, and the

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<sup>16</sup> See Priestley(1772-1774).

other products of the West-India islands, now raised by slaves, if slavery be abolished?"(382)

(1) Priestley says the slave trade itself is "wicked and unlawful" from the beginning and advantages derived from the trade cannot justify. Slaves are liberated and they should produce some product in their country. On the other hand, English manufacture in England. Priestley thinks if they trade their products each other, division of labour is prompted and wealth is accumulated by reciprocal intercourses. He finally concludes "the manufacturers of this country in general would find a great benefit from a change of the system, and not one of them would be a loser."(382)

(2) Priestley writes "our first care should be to do justice and shew mercy,"(382-383) and declares the priority of humanitarian perspectives to economic ones. In other words, he repeats the argument in which slaves should be liberated and treated equally as men. But he thinks even if these humanitarian perspectives are repeated, they would be inadequate as realistic measures to abolish slavery and the slave trade. Priestley, therefore, aims to abolish the system, with Smith's arguments, economic perspectives, borrowing.

Priestley also refers to the price of products. Although luxury goods (Priestley especially assumes sugar) produced by slaves is relatively cheap, if slavery and the slave trade are abolished, the price of luxury goods would boost. The rich can purchase the goods, but the poor cannot. However, if slavery and the slave trade are abolished, the African can labour as a freeman. In the case, because the African produce luxury goods and a supply of them increases through trades, the price of them would result in being lower price. Priestley brings the liberation of slaves in Pennsylvania, America as a good example. This example is also written by Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*.

From these remarks two points become clear. (1) Because slavery and the slave trade are very unjust and not accepted, slaves should be liberated. (2) Even if slaves are liberated, changes in the market are hardly caused and, in fact, the increase of wealth is caused. Smith says division of labour is provided the scale of market. The more market expands, the more division of labor enlarges. Priestley positively accepts Smith's thesis and, in addition, he share Smith's idea that the progress of social division of labour directly brings international division of labour<sup>17</sup>. Priestley learns a lot and is inspired from Smith's *Wealth of Nations*<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Concerning to the relationship Smith and Priestley, also see Mudroch (2001) and Claeys (1999).

<sup>18</sup> As for their perception of human nature, Priestley, however, differs from Smith. On the one hand, Smith considers human nature selfish and his political economy is also based on self-interest. On the other hands, Priestley's theory is founded on benevolence. For Priestley self-interest is not the fundamental principle of human nature but "holds a kind of middle rank between the vices and the virtues; and that its principal use is to be a means of raising us above all the lower and vicious pursuits, to those that are higher, and properly speaking virtuous and praise worthy." (Priestley 1772-1774, 38-39)

## 6. Conclusions

Priestley regards slavery as an evil, but he is also hesitant about the slaves' immediate withdrawal like Darwin, because "[t]hose who have been long slaves, would not know how to make a proper use of freedom." (383) Suggesting stopping the slave trade before abolishing slavery, Priestley is hopeful of masters treating slaves humanly. His insist is a gradual reform similar to Smith. Priestley thinks the reform results in being beneficial to slaves as well as masters<sup>19</sup>. He also considers the removal of evil to be steps to world peace. People "should be brought to perfection by degrees" by abolishing slavery and the slave trade<sup>20</sup>.

Priestley, however, does not dispute how to indemnify slaves' life after liberating them. The removal of evil is most important and primary subject for him. The removal "will make even this world a real paradise, and fit us for a state of greater glory and happiness in another." (387) He, therefore, is not under the necessity of discussing about slaves' social security.

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<sup>19</sup> This view is very similar to that of Thomas Paine (1737-1809). He also argues against slaves' immediate emancipation and suggests after freeing slaves as freeman, masters rent their land to the freeman for "reasonable rent" and see that the freeman can save up money. See Paine (1775).

<sup>20</sup> Concerning Priestley's argument about universal peace, also see Priestley (1789 especially ch.14). In the book, supporting France Revolution, Priestley writes Revolution results in operating reason given by god. He believes if reason dominates over the world, war would disappear and peace could be achieved.

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What was the Transatlantic Slave Trade? Slavery is the idea that a human is someone's property, that he/she can be bought, sold and owned; and forced to work without being paid. This concept has been around for thousands of years and all major civilizations used slaves at some point. In the USA on the other hand, there was great argument over slavery. Many industries in the South were dependant on slaves for production (such as cotton) and if freed, the number of slaves would be almost 50% of the population in some areas. It is ironic that the two countries at the time associated with freedom and equality; USA and France; still permitted slavery. France didn't abolish slavery until 1848, and there were still slaves working in the White House in the same year. British Humanitarian Political Economy and Famine in India, 1838-1842. *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 59, Issue. 2, p. 221. 1 A. Tyrrell, Joseph Sturge and the moral radical party in early Victorian Britain (London, 1987), ch. 7 passim; idem, "The moral radical party" and the Anglo-Jamaican campaign for the abolition of the negro apprenticeship scheme, *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), pp. 481-502; W. A. Green, *British slave emancipation: the sugar colonies and the great experiment 1830-1865* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 151-61. For Evangelicalism and anti-slavery see R. Anstey, *The Atlantic slave trade and British abolition, 1760-1810* (Basingstoke, 1975), ch. B. It was an economic drain on the emerging commercial economic system. C. It was a contradiction to the ideals embodied in the Constitution. D. It was a sin. B. Slavery was sanctioned by the Bible and history. C. Slavery was more consistent with the humanitarian spirit of the age than the northern wage labor system. D. Slavery's opponents could build no persuasive argument against it. D. Slavery's opponents could build no persuasive argument against it. (p.341). 13. Nat Turner A. became a leading advocate of slavery as a "positive good." B. strongly defended humane treatment of slaves as the slave owners' paternalistic obligation. Abolitionists argued against slavery because of its harsh conditions, and through claims that slavery violated Christian principals and the natural rights of all people for equality. Most Northern states moved to end slavery by 1804. Freed slaves often continued to face racial segregation and discrimination. Abolitionists used several arguments against slavery. As early as 1688, Quakers in Germantown, Pennsylvania presented a petition to end slavery based on religious obligation and natural rights to equality. In 1774, a group of enslaved people in Massachusetts petitioned the governor against slavery used similar arguments including the natural rights of all people, the demands of Christian brotherhood, and the harsh conditions of slavery. Joseph Priestley was born in the year 1733 to Jonas Priestley and Mary Swift in the West Riding of Yorkshire. He hailed from a well-established English family who were cloth makers. They were dissenting Christians, which meant they didn't conform to the Church of England. According to the arguments he presented in the essay, education should anticipate the practical needs of young people, but the universities were not doing so, and instead focused on a traditional classical education. According to him, the universities didn't allow the students to learn skills that would be of use in the lives.