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The Transport Theory of Alfred Marshall

by Ken-ichi Masui

It cannot be said that Alfred Marshall has ever developed a transport theory deserving of the name. But the reason the writer is particularly interested in his reference to transport, is that through Marshall's treatment, it is possible to understand the general view of the economists of the Orthodox School in Britain regarding the functions and the significance of the transport industry in economic organization.

Marshall in his famous "Principles of Economics" emphasizes the economic significance of the transport industry. It must be remembered however that his definitions are sometimes broad in its meaning and hence his remarks regarding transport industry must be read with care.

He insists on the productivity of the transport industry for the reason that if considered in terms of respective enterprises, it produces external economies for the large scale firms. Besides his description that is connected with his peculiar conception of external economies, Marshall as a whole considers the functions of transport along the line of the Classical School economists. Furthermore, his idea of situation value and his remark on space economy have both some relation to his way of thinking in regard to transport.

Lastly, the writer makes an additional remark on Marshall's explanation of discriminative railway rates. Although a definite solution has not been given, Marshall has nevertheless offered many suggestions that will facilitate further research in this field.