



New Essays on Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy

Wade L. Robison, David B. Suits

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Adam Smith (1723 to 1790) was a Scottish philosopher who, with his good friend David Hume, can be ranked as the most famous of the 18th century Scottish Enlightenment philosophers. He is most well-known for his 1776 book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, perhaps the first modern work of economics; it was an instant success. Less successful, but just as important, was Smith's earlier book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, first published in 1759; it underwent five revisions, the last appearing in 1790. A key idea of Smith's moral philosophy was the notion of sympathy (or what we today would call empathy), which allows us to understand another's point of view our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever when we imaginatively put ourselves into the shoes of another. The essays in this volume give us a better understanding of the complexities and subtleties of Smith's thought about matters of morality and about his relations with his friend David Hume, from whom he drew much of his moral theory. The essays discuss the historical context of Smith's life in 18th century Scotland; investigate the Adam Smith Problem concerning the issue of consistency or lack of consistency between *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*; elaborate on the moral issues in commercial society and the role of resentment (one of the unsocial passions) in Smith's account of morality; and discuss how Hume's death may have affected Smith's philosophy. Earlier versions of the papers in this volume were presented at a three day conference, *Adam Smith's The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, at Rochester Institute of Technology in May 2006.

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