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978-0-521-62127-4 - Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment

Charles L. Griswold

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ADAM SMITH AND THE VIRTUES OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Charles Griswold has written the first comprehensive philosophical study of Smith's moral and political thought. Griswold sets Smith's work in the context of the continuing debate about the nature and survival of the Enlightenment, and also relates it to current discussions in moral philosophy.

Although Smith is often thought of today as an economist, he was in fact (as his great contemporaries Hume, Burke, Kant, and Hegel recognized) a seminal and insightful thinker whose work covers an immense territory including moral philosophy, political economy, rhetorical theory, aesthetics, and jurisprudence. Griswold explores such themes as the virtues, the emotions, ethical reasoning, impartiality, sympathy, the imagination, moral education, the rhetoric and methods of ethics, and skepticism. He demonstrates the relation between moral theory and political economy, and thus between the virtues and modern liberal and commercial institutions. Religious freedom, alienation, and political utopianism are also discussed.

Griswold argues that Smith is simultaneously a resourceful defender of the standpoint of ordinary life, a critic of the excesses of reformist theories, and an advocate of philosophy's reflective amelioration of human life. Throughout the book the author pays close attention to Smith's appropriation as well as criticism of classical philosophy, and to Smith's carefully balanced defense of a humane, enlightened, and decisively modern moral and political outlook.

This is a major historical and philosophical reassessment of a key figure in the Enlightenment that will be of particular interest to philosophers and political and legal theorists, as well as historians of ideas, economics, and political economy.

Charles L. Griswold, Jr., is Professor of Philosophy at Boston University. He has published in a variety of fields, including ancient philosophy, the Scottish Enlightenment, and German Idealism.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521621274

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First published 1999

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Griswold, Charles L., Jr. 1951–
 Adam Smith and the virtues of enlightenment / Charles L. Griswold, Jr.
 p. cm. – (Modern European Philosophy)
 Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0–521–62127–5. – ISBN 0–521–62891–1 (pbk.)
 1. Smith, Adam, 1723–1790 – Ethics. 2. Ethics, Modern – 18th
 century. I. Title. II. Series.
 B1545.Z7G74 1998
 192 – dc21 98–12845
 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-62127-4 hardback
 ISBN 978-0-521-62891-4 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2007

Cambridge University Press

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To the Memory of my Father,
Charles L. Griswold, Sr.

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The whole race is a poet that writes down
The eccentric propositions of its fate.

Wallace Stevens

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TEXTS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My references to Smith advert to the Glasgow edition of the given work. The texts and their abbreviations are as follows:

- CAS* *Correspondence of Adam Smith*. Ed. E. C. Mossner and I. S. Ross. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987.
- EPS* *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*. Ed. W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1982.
- LJ* *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. Ed. R. L. Meek and D. D. Raphael. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1982. (2 sets, designated A or B)
- LRBL* *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Ed. J. C. Bryce. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1985.
- TMS* *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Ed. A. L. Macfie and D. D. Raphael. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1982.
- WN* *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. 2 vols. Ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1976.

When citing pagination of Smith's work I refer, unless otherwise noted, to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. For the sake of brevity I frequently omit "TMS" and simply supply the relevant citation.

The quotation from Wallace Stevens on the epigraph page to this volume is from "Men Made out of Words," in *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Knopf, 1989), p. 356. I have frequently supplied

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epigraphs at the beginning of chapters and sections. These are not necessarily meant to encapsulate the main point of the discussion in question. At times they offer a useful counterpoint or question to what I have to say, and in this and other ways are meant to enrich the discussion. Note that I have handled the familiar problem of gender and pronouns by using “he” and cognates for the most part, but I have occasionally reminded the reader, through the use of “she” and cognates, that the pronoun is generally to be heard in a gender-neutral sense. The alternatives are simply too distracting for the reader.

An earlier draft of parts of Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 (section 2) originally appeared as “Rhetoric and Ethics: Adam Smith on Theorizing about the Moral Sentiments,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 24 (1991): 213–37. Section 1 of Chapter 4 draws on parts of my and D. Den Uyl’s “Adam Smith on Friendship and Love,” *Review of Metaphysics* 49 (1996): 609–37. As noted in that article, the discussion of love there principally originated with me, whereas the discussion of friendship (largely omitted from this book) originated with Den Uyl. Our collaboration led to many improvements throughout, and I am deeply grateful for it. Section 5 of Chapter 5 draws on my “Happiness, Tranquillity, and Philosophy,” in *In Pursuit of Happiness*, ed. L. Rouner, Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion, no. 16 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995): 13–37, reprinted (with significant emendations) in *Critical Review* 10 (1996): 1–32. A version of Chapter 7 (sec. 2) appeared in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 395–419. Parts of Chapter 8 are drawn from “Nature and Philosophy: Adam Smith on Stoicism, Aesthetic Reconciliation, and Imagination,” *Man and World* 29 (1996): 187–213. My thanks to editors and publishers of these journals and presses for permission to use previously published material.

I gratefully acknowledge grants and fellowships from the Earhart Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars that supported my work on this book. The Wilson Center provided me with a congenial “home” for over a year. The Center’s excellent library staff and research assistants efficiently and cheerfully fulfilled my extensive requests for materials from the Library of Congress. Among the Center’s hard-working research assistants I owe a particular debt of thanks to Benjamin Onu Arah.

Conversations and correspondence with Klaus Brinkmann, Charles Butterworth, Lawrence Cahoon, Harvey Cormier, Joseph Cropsey, Stephen Darwall, Edwin Delattre, Jorge Garcia, Ed Hundert, Drew Hyland,

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Christine Korsgaard, Aryeh Kosman, David Lachterman, David Levy, Glenn Loury, Alasdair MacIntyre, Rudolf Makkreel, Jerry Muller, David F. Norton, Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin, Henry Richardson, Christopher Ricks, Ian Ross, Lee Rouser, Jerry Schneewind, Roger Scruton, Allan Silverman, Wilfried Ver Eecke, and Stuart Warner have been very helpful to me in the course of my preparation of this book. Stanley Rosen patiently listened and skillfully queried on numerous occasions. He and others of these colleagues kindly commented on drafts of parts of the book as well. I am grateful to them all. D. D. Raphael commented critically and helpfully on the essay published in *Philosophy and Rhetoric*. William Galston offered an invaluable set of remarks on a paper that evolved into Chapter 2. Samuel Fleischacker generously commented in detail on various chapters and corresponded with me on things Smithean; I am grateful for his excellent suggestions. Donald Winch's detailed remarks on several chapters were of immense help. Douglas Den Uyl, Knud Haakonssen, and David Roochnik labored through various drafts, as well as queries from me about one topic or another, and I am forever in their debt. I thank the Press's anonymous referees for their useful queries and criticisms. I take full responsibility, of course, for whatever shortcomings this book may possess.

Terry Moore, executive editor at Cambridge University Press, patiently followed my progress on this project, lending encouragement and good counsel. I am much in his debt. I also thank Thornton Lockwood for preparing the Index, and Christie Lerch for her work as copy editor.

A draft of parts of Chapters 1 and 4 was delivered at an Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society conference entitled "Glasgow and the Enlightenment." Drafts of parts of Chapter 2 were presented at a symposium sponsored by the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) and at a meeting of the International Hume Society. Drafts of section 2 of Chapter 7 were delivered as a Stranahan Lecture at Bowling Green State University, as a Bradley Lecture at Boston College, at Bryn Mawr College, at the Institut für die Wissenschaften von Menschen (Vienna), and at a joint annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society. Drafts of parts of Chapter 8 were delivered at Boston University, as part of a symposium (sponsored by the Boston University Center for Philosophy and History of Science in honor of Erazim Kohak) on the "Philosophies of Nature," as a Means Lecture at Trinity College (Hartford), and as an Olmsted Lecture at Yale University. I am grateful to these various audiences for their criticisms and comments.

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A sabbatical leave from Boston University allowed me the time to pull the manuscript together. A semester at Yale University as Olmsted Visiting Professor was also helpful, and I thank Nori Thompson and Charlie Hill for their hospitality and good conversation during my stay in New Haven. I am grateful to the students in my Smith seminars at both Boston University and Yale for their excellent questions.

My greatest debt is to my family. Katie, Lisa, and Caroline Griswold encouraged my musings about Smith and patiently endured my absences at the office while I labored. Steve Griswold has been a constant companion in philosophical conversation and offered invaluable comments on the Introduction and Epilogue. Extended arguments with my father many years ago sparked a lifelong interest in the issues central to this book, and I owe much to his thoughtful provocations. A book is small recompense for such affection and friendship; let it be an expression of my gratitude.