

Adam Smith in Immanuel Kant's Moral Philosophy

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2017

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Abstract

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Adam Smith develops a moral philosophy that uses a psychological idiom to describe morality as a social practice. This description of morality goes entirely against the moral metaphysics Immanuel Kant develops in works like his *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, which describe morality as a ‘fact of reason’ and the categorical imperatives of an ahistorical moral will. Despite this stark contrast, in 1771 Kant was recorded praising Smith’s work. This thesis explains Kant’s praise by developing an original interpretation of the relationship between the two thinkers. First, the two thinkers are situated as representing two divergent streams of Western thought to illustrate the scope of their philosophical antagonism. Second, the existing interpretations of the Kant-Smith relationship are critiqued for ignoring or downplaying this antagonism. Third, an original study of Kant’s intellectual development is presented that shows how Smith’s descriptions of morality and politics may have influenced Kant’s moral and political philosophy.

While developing its new interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship this thesis raises some new exegetical questions and problems that are intended be of interest not only for Kant scholars but political philosophers in general. Drawing upon my interpretation of Kant’s transcendental project, John Rawls’ use of Kant’s theory of moral reason to justify his own theory’s claims to universality is critiqued. Similarly, in light of Smith’s possible influence upon Kant, the idea that Kant’s political cosmopolitanism is grounded on rationally justifiable rights is called into question. Finally, this thesis challenges Kant’s traditional classification as a pillar of explicitly normative and prescriptive political and moral philosophy. The thesis seeks to do this by showing how Kant ultimately naturalises morality and politics into historical practices that are describable without reference to first principles.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Date:

Signature:

Note on Sources

All citations to Immanuel Kant's works refer to Guyer P. & Wood. A.W. (eds.), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992-2012, 15 volumes with the exception of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgement*, which due to superior translation refer to Kant I. (Pluhar W.S. (trans.)), *Critique of Pure Reason*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996 and Kant I., (Pluhar W.S. (trans.)), *Critique of Judgement*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.

In keeping with convention, all references to Kant's work refer to the original Academy Edition (AK) pagination with the exception of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which maintains its own pagination system referring to the first (A) and second (B) editions of the work published in 1781 and 1787 respectively.

The following abbreviations are used when citing Kant's works:

Announcement – Announcement of the Programme for the Lectures of the Winter Semester 1765-1766

Anthropology – Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View

Blomberg – Blomberg Logic Lecture Notes

CJ – Critique of Judgement

Collins Morality – Collins II Moral Philosophy Lecture Notes

Conflict– Conflict of the Faculties

Conjectural Beginning – Conjectural Beginning of Human History

Correspondence – Correspondence I, II, II

CPR – Critique of Pure Reason

CPrR – Critique of Practical Reason

Different Races – On the Different Races of Human Beings

Dreams – Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics

Enlightenment – What is Enlightenment?

Friedländer Anthropology – Friedländer IV.iii Anthropology Lecture Notes

Groundwork – Groundwork to a Metaphysics of Morals

Herder Morality – Herder V Moral Philosophy Lecture Notes

Inquiry – Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principle of Natural Theology and Morality

Living Forces – Thoughts of the True Estimation of Living Forces

MM – Metaphysics of Morals

Mrongovius Anthropology – Mrongovius I Anthropology Lecture Notes

Mrongovius Morality – Mrongovius II Morality Lecture Notes

Nachlass – Volumes 14-23 of the Academy Edition

Natural Science – Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science

New Elucidation – New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition

Observations – Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime

Perpetual Peace – Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch

Pillau Anthropology – Pillau I Anthropology Lecture Notes

Prolegomena – Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics That Will be Able to Present Itself as a Science

Religion – Religion with the Boundaries of Mere Reason

Right to Lie – On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives

Rotation of the Earth – Examination of the Question Whether the Rotation of the Earth on its Axis, by Which it Brings About the Alternation of Day and Night, has Undergone any Change Since its Origin, and How One Can be Certain of This, Which was set by the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin as the Prize Question for the Current Year

Theory & Practice - On the Common Saying: ‘This may be true in theory, but it does not apply in practice

Theory of the Heavens – Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens, or Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Entire Universe, treated in accordance with Newtonian Principles

Universal History – Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose

Vigilantius Morality – Vigilantius IV Moral Philosophy Lecture Notes

All citations to Adam Smith's works refer to Raphael D.D. & Macfie A.L. (eds.), *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987, 8 volumes.

The following abbreviations are used when citing Smith's works:

Ancient Logics – The Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Inquiries; as Illustrated by the Ancient Logics and Metaphysics

Astronomy – The Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Inquiries; as Illustrated by the History of Astronomy

Languages – Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages

Letter – Letter to the Edinburgh Review

LRBL – Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres

TMS – The Theory of Moral Sentiments

WN – An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor Professor Christine Beasley for taking me on and continuing to support me even though I have been, to be completely honest, a rather poor student. Without her encouragement and continued exhortations to stop using the first person plural pronoun in every sentence this thesis would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Professor Lisa Hill for providing the initial idea for this thesis (though she can in no way be blamed for the wild direction I ended up taking this thesis) and later providing me with indispensable financial support. I must also gratefully acknowledge the small favours Professor Carol Johnson has afforded me over the years in the form of both financial and moral support.

Second, I would like to acknowledge and thank all my confreres who have supported me, entertained me, and struggled with me in the Napier building. These wonderful people are too numerous to list but you know who you are. I never imagined that I would find such kind and thoughtful friends. I only hope that when you read this acknowledgement you do not take it as a slight that I have not mentioned you specifically. If you do I will find a way to make it up to you. There are however three exceptional people who provided more than companionship and who went above and beyond what can reasonably be expected of any friend in the extent they directly helped me complete this thesis with their criticism of my work and time spent spell checking my convoluted and sometimes obtuse writing. These three people are Jess, Nic, and Mike. I have no way to express my gratitude for everything you have done for me.

Third and finally, I want to acknowledge the immeasurable support of the two most important women in my life; my mum, who has without complaint done innumerable things for me to help me finish this harrowing undertaking and 葉菁菁, 武當來的大眼美女, 自從妳進入我的生活以後, 就再也沒有甚麼事情比妳更重要了。你支持我, 安慰我, 鼓勵我, 讓我感受到難以想像的快樂。沒有妳我就不能完成這個論文。