



# New Perspectives on Adam Smith's The Theory of Moral Sentiments

*By Geoff Cockfield, Ann Firth, John Laurent*

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Adam Smith's remarkable book, "The Theory of Moral Sentiments", now deservedly coming to greater prominence, combines classical philosophy, early modern psychology and incisive observations of everyday life into a complex theory of human behaviour. "New Perspectives on Adam Smith's "The Theory of Moral Sentiments"" is a comprehensive study of Smith's ideas, reflecting the explosion of interest in his work. It brings together themes and methodologies from a variety of fields, including politics, sociology, intellectual history, history of science and evolutionary psychology. The contributions revolve around four themes: the ways in which Smith combined both classical and modern sources to create his own account of human economic and social behaviour; the insights gained from taking seriously the centrality of a benevolent deity to Smith's system; Smith's exploration of new forms of civility and self-formation, and the relationship between Smith's moral philosophy and the emerging bodies of knowledge that were formalized in the nineteenth century as sociology and science. Economists and political economists have predominated in Adam Smith scholarship. This book looks at Smith's ideas from a much broader set of disciplinary perspectives and as such will appeal to historians of economic, political and moral thought as well as Adam Smith scholars in particular and economists more generally.

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- Sales Rank: #9026484 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Edward Elgar Pub
- Published on: 2008-01-08
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 6.50" w x .75" l, .85 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 170 pages

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

'While much attention has been given to The Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith's companion book on The Theory of Moral Sentiments is often ignored or dismissed as incompatible with the central message of the more famous work. While a number of economists and other social scientists have criticized such stances, this collection of essays brings together a number of fresh and important perspectives on Smith's relatively neglected volume. Smith's ideas on moral sentiments and human nature are placed in the intellectual context of his time, particularly regarding the Enlightenment and contemporary attitudes to religion. The result is an innovative and highly stimulating collection of essays, which should help to make Smith's ideas much less dismal than some economists have rendered them.' - Geoffrey M. Hodgson, University of Hertfordshire, UK  
'This collection significantly enriches our knowledge of Smith's The Theory of Moral Sentiments, enhances our understanding of how TMS relates to The Wealth of Nations and Lectures on Jurisprudence, and presents new insights into the relation of Smith's ideas to the Enlightenment. As bonuses, it indicates how seemingly contradictory ideas were temporarily and variably freshly combined, and the ideational path formed by such combinations. The book will undoubtedly lead to further interpretive controversy but it should also lead to fresh combinations and new agreements, however temporary, as contemporary views change in similar ways.' - Warren J. Samuels, Michigan State University, US --Warren J. Samuels, Michigan State University, US

#### **About the Author**

Edited by Geoff Cockfield, University of Southern Queensland, Australia, Ann Firth, University of York, UK and John Laurent, University of Southern Queensland, Australia

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