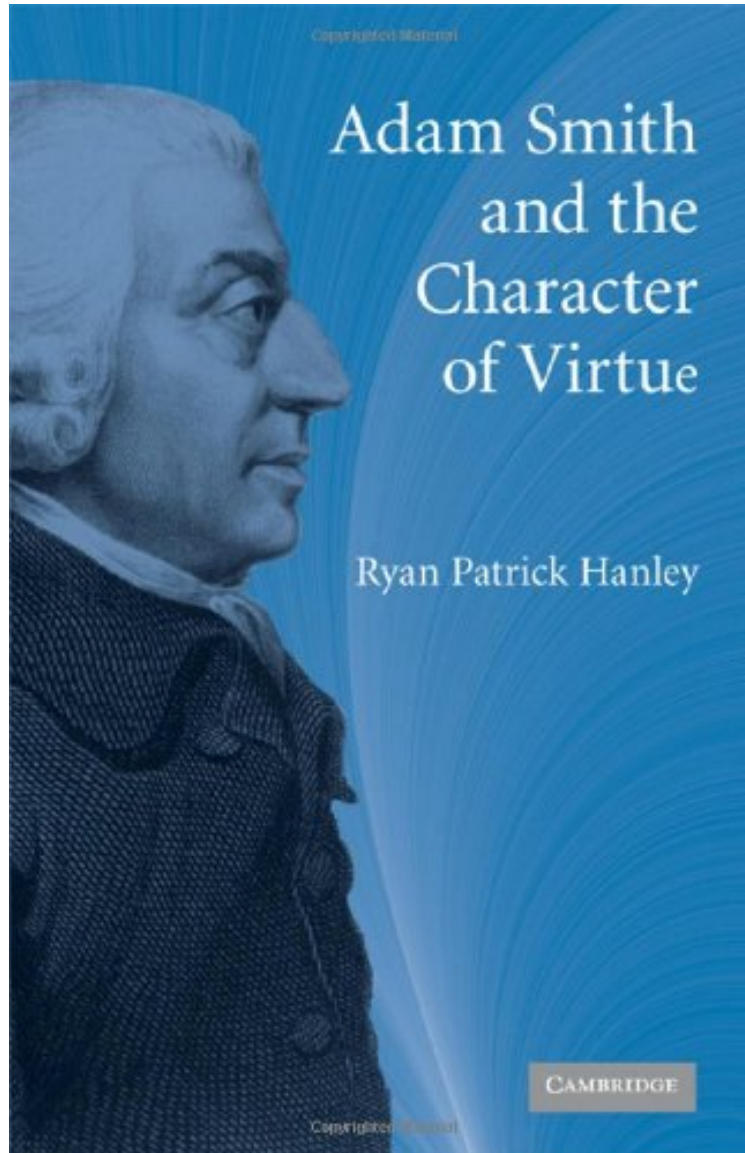


## Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue

Ryan Patrick Hanley

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**Ryan Patrick Hanley : Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Excellent discussion of the importance of Smith's final revision of Part VI of TMSBy Michael Emmett BradyThe author makes a very strong case for his major conclusion concerning the great relevance and importance of Smith's final revision of his the Theory of Moral Sentiments(TMS) in 1790.Smith recognized the fact that a large majority of individual decision maker's actual conduct ignored the virtue ethics approach to morality and was based on self interested behavior alone .A majority of decision makers ignored the

other interested behavior emphasized in the teachings of Jesus Christ, Socrates, and others. Their conduct was directed toward egoism and short run, short sighted self interested behavior. Virtue ethics played no role in their economic, political, and social decisions. The final revision to Part VI of TMS in 1790 lays out a series of guidelines which can be used to counter the deleterious impacts of egoism and self interested behavior on the economy. I highly recommend this book.

Recent years have witnessed a renewed debate over the costs at which the benefits of free markets have been bought. This book revisits the moral and political philosophy of Adam Smith, capitalism's founding father, to recover his understanding of the morals of the market age. In so doing it illuminates a crucial albeit overlooked side of Smith's project: his diagnosis of the ethical ills of commercial societies and the remedy he advanced to cure them. Focusing on Smith's analysis of the psychological and social ills endemic to commercial society - anxiety and restlessness, inauthenticity and mediocrity, alienation and individualism - it argues that Smith sought to combat corruption by cultivating the virtues of prudence, magnanimity and beneficence. The result constitutes a new morality for modernity, at once a synthesis of commercial, classical and Christian virtues and a normative response to one of the most pressing political problems of Smith's day and ours.

"Ryan Patrick Hanley's excellent *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue* succeeds in bringing a fresh perspective to the study of Smith's works. It offers a brilliant reinterpretation of Smith's moral philosophy that not only unifies Smith's work but offers larger lessons for us today. In an increasingly crowded field, *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue* distinguishes itself as one of the most important books on Smith in more than a decade." - James Otteson, Yeshiva University "An original view of Adam Smith, arguing that he goes beyond self-interest and sympathy to the nobility of classical virtue. Ryan Hanley shows calm intelligence, fairness, and accuracy in this impressive new interpretation." - Harvey Mansfield, Professor of Government, Harvard University "The great originality of Ryan Hanley's book is twofold: first it exhibits Smith's pervasive, surprising, and previously ignored focus on 'nobility.' Even more surprising is that Hanley is persuasive in explaining how in deploying this concept, Smith attempts to merge Christian and Pagan virtues appropriate to commercial times. Second it shows that Smith offers his readers a program of self-actualization that can transform their various manifestations of self-love into socially beneficial activities. In the process, Hanley puts to rest the idea that Smith was sanguine in relying on market forces or the invisible hand alone. Moreover, Hanley shows how Smith capitalized on humanity's religious longings. Hanley wisely avoids the question about Smith's religious views and focuses on Smith's treatment of the role(s) of religion in commercial society. By letting Smith regularly engage with Aristotle, Rousseau, and Tocqueville, Hanley makes Smith seem like a helpful and instructive companion in a world where the victory of Liberalism and Enlightenment are not to be taken for granted. Along the way, Hanley articulates a detailed account of Smith's intellectual development over time." - Eric Schliesser, Leiden University, editor of *New Voices on Adam Smith* "Hanley's explanation of the importance of the heavily revised sixth edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to Smith's thought is provocative, and his analysis of the way Smith melded a defense of the virtues of prudence, benevolence, and magnanimity is compelling." - CHOICE, E. J. Harpham, University of Texas at Dallas  
About the Author Ryan Patrick Hanley is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Marquette University. His research in the history of political philosophy has appeared in the *American Political Science*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, *History of Political Thought*, the *European Journal of Political Theory* and other academic journals and edited volumes. He is also the editor of the forthcoming Penguin Classics edition of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, featuring an introduction by Amartya Sen, and a co-editor, with Darrin McMahon, of *The Enlightenment: Critical Concepts in History*.