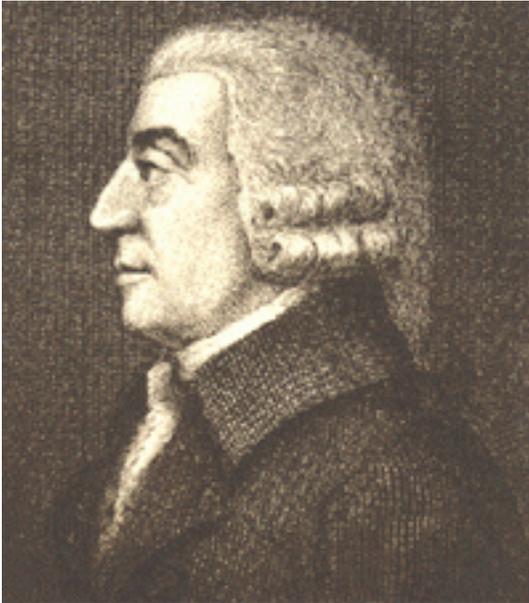


## Adam Smith



(1723-1790)

Adam Smith was an important Scottish political philosopher and economist whose famous work *Wealth of Nations* (1776) set the tone for work on politics and economics for many people even through today. This was, in fact, the first comprehensive effort to study the nature of capital, the development of industry and the effects of large-scale commerce in Europe.

Adam Smith's fundamental argument was that individuals should be allowed to pursue their own private economic interests as much as possible and so long as they do not violate basic principles of justice. In this way, Smith thought, they would do much more to further the public good and public interests than if the same people were to try to help the public deliberately and intentionally.

Smith called this the **invisible hand** of the market - although everyone is acting in their own self-interest, they are led to achieve the good of all as if by an **invisible hand** of economic forces. Therefore, outside interference will inevitably lead to disaster. This became known as **laissez-faire** economic policy.

In 1759 he published the book *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, where he discussed the standards of ethical conduct that hold society together. This book was a compilation of ideas and lectures from his time as a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

### Major Works of Adam Smith

- Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 1748
- *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759. copies (1), (2) , (3)
- Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (delivered 1762-1763; publ. 1958)

- Lectures on Jurisprudence, 1766
- An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations , 1776. Copy (1), (2), (3) , (4) , (5), French transl. - Vol. 1, Vol. 2
- Account of the Life and Writings of David Hume, 1777
- Thoughts on the State of the Contest with America, 1778
- Review of Johnson's Dictionary, 1755, Edinburgh Review
- Letter to the Authors, 1756, Edinburgh Review
- Preface and Dedication to William Hamilton's Poems on Several Occasions, 1748, 1758
- Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith LL.D. by Dugald Stewart, 1793, Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh
- Essays on Philosophical Subjects, 1795 - which include:
  - The Principles which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries illustrated by the History of Astronomy
  - The Principles which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries illustrated by the History of the Ancient Physics
  - The Principles which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries illustrated by the History of the Ancient Logic and Metaphysics
  - Of the External Senses
  - Of the Nature of that Imitation which takes place in what are called the Imitative Arts
  - Of the Affinity between certain English and Italian Verses