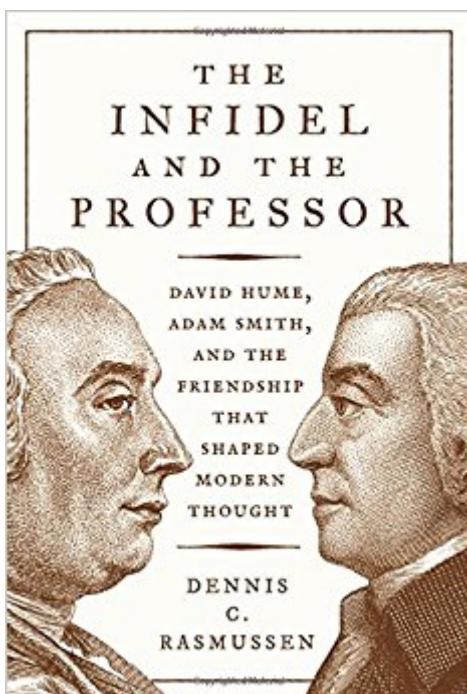


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# The Infidel And The Professor: David Hume, Adam Smith, And The Friendship That Shaped Modern Thought



## Synopsis

The story of the greatest of all philosophical friendships—*and how it influenced modern thought*David Hume is widely regarded as the most important philosopher ever to write in English, but during his lifetime he was attacked as “the Great Infidel” for his skeptical religious views and deemed unfit to teach the young. In contrast, Adam Smith was a revered professor of moral philosophy, and is now often hailed as the founding father of capitalism. Remarkably, the two were best friends for most of their adult lives, sharing what Dennis Rasmussen calls the greatest of all philosophical friendships. *The Infidel and the Professor* is the first book to tell the fascinating story of the friendship of these towering Enlightenment thinkers—and how it influenced their world-changing ideas. The book follows Hume and Smith’s relationship from their first meeting in 1749 until Hume’s death in 1776. It describes how they commented on each other’s writings, supported each other’s careers and literary ambitions, and advised each other on personal matters, most notably after Hume’s quarrel with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Members of a vibrant intellectual scene in Enlightenment Scotland, Hume and Smith made many of the same friends (and enemies), joined the same clubs, and were interested in many of the same subjects well beyond philosophy and economics—from psychology and history to politics and Britain’s conflict with the American colonies. The book reveals that Smith’s private religious views were considerably closer to Hume’s public ones than is usually believed. It also shows that Hume contributed more to economics—and Smith contributed more to philosophy—than is generally recognized. Vividly written, *The Infidel and the Professor* is a compelling account of a great friendship that had great consequences for modern thought.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Princeton University Press (September 12, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0691177015

ISBN-13: 978-0691177014

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1.4 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #32,319 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in Books > Biographies &

## Customer Reviews

"Lively and accessible--of broad interest to readers in philosophy, economics, political science, and other disciplines."--Kirkus"Masterly. . . . Easy to digest and smart. Recommended."--Mark Spencer, *Library Journal*"In *The Infidel and the Professor: David Hume, Adam Smith, and the Friendship that Shaped Modern Thought*, Dennis Rasmussen . . . tells the story of their friendship well. Fourteen nicely-judged chapters take the reader through the overlapping lives of the two men, including such incidents as Hume's notorious falling-out with Rousseau, through to the natural climax of their friendship at Hume's death, and Smith's own demise 14 years later. . . . A short and lively book that sustains the interest not merely of the general reader but the specialist to the end. That is a considerable achievement."--Jesse Norman, *Prospect*"[Rasmussen] deftly examines not only Hume and Smith's personal relationship, but also the indispensable part that they played in shaping the Scottish Enlightenment. The result is a valuable study of the rise of the liberal tradition."--Jacob Heilbrunn, *National Interest*

"This engagingly written book tells the story of a remarkable friendship between two giants of eighteenth-century thought and heroes of the Scottish Enlightenment. Rasmussen is a historically and philosophically astute guide to the lives and ideas of Hume and Smith--as well as those of a large cast of supporting characters. His highly readable narrative offers great insights into an influential intellectual and social world."--Steven Nadler, author of *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age*"After Hobbes, David Hume and Adam Smith are the two most important philosophers and social scientists in the English-speaking world. This cleverly constructed, learned yet eminently readable account uses their friendship to illuminate the ways in which their ideas converged and diverged. An appealing introduction for the novice, with plenty of added value for the well versed."--Jerry Z. Muller, author of *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours: Designing the Decent Society*"In this impressive account of the close relationship between the two giants of the Scottish Enlightenment, Dennis Rasmussen brings out the full significance of the warm lifelong friendship and intellectual dialogue between David Hume and Adam Smith."--Leo Damrosch, author of *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius*"The Infidel and the Professor is the first book on the fascinating subject of the friendship between David

Hume and Adam Smith. Masterfully weaving together the historical evidence, Dennis Rasmussen does justice to both the ideas of these two men and their larger social and intellectual context. The resulting account is erudite, absorbing, witty, and smoothly narrated."--Andrew Sabl, author of *Hume's Politics*"This account of the friendship between two of the most important and famous thinkers of the eighteenth century—David Hume and Adam Smith—also provides an accessible introduction to their thought and writings."--John T. Scott, coauthor of *The Philosophers' Quarrel*

A superior introduction to the lives and thinking of two great men and two dear friends, David Hume and Adam Smith. Hume was the unusual happy philosopher, while Smith was the unusual economist not beholden to dense, obtuse mathematical calculations. Professor Rasmussen writes clearly, knowledgeably, and with grace. He has produced a lively book that should be of interest to any reader desiring to learn about Hume and Adam and the motivations, impulses, and struggles over basic questions of life that are common to us all and to the societies in which we live. Is free trade by a nation an unalloyed good? Is faith in God necessary for a good life? As an aside, I recommend "Adam Smith: His Life, Thought, and Legacy" (2016) edited by Ryan Patrick Hanley for those seeking more about Adam Smith.

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