

OBITUARY

Andrew Skinner (1935–2011) and the Role of the Imagination: Memories of His Studies on Adam Smith

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A conference to mark the bicentenary of the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was held at the University of Glasgow in April 1976. Twelve members of the Japanese Society for the History of Economic Thought were sitting at a dinner table on the eve of the conference. They had come to participate in the conference through a tour planned by a Japanese travel agency. A gentleman with a fine beard was kind enough to serve them sherry. I was one of the participants and a member of the learned society, and when the bearded gentleman came to fill my glass, I recognized the nametag on his chest. "Are you Mr. Skinner?" I asked. "Yes" That was my first interaction with Professor Skinner.

Four months later, in August, a conference to commemorate the bicentenary of David Hume's death was held at the University of Edinburgh. After attending the conference, Professor Toshihiro Tanaka, advised by Professor Hiroshi Mizuta, decided to invite Professor Skinner to Japan as a short-term visiting scholar, sponsored by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Two

years after the Glasgow conference, it was decided that Professor Skinner would visit Japan in April 1978 for three weeks, reading papers at several universities, learned societies, and study groups.

These papers were part of his first monograph, *A System of Social Science: Papers Relating to Adam Smith* (Oxford University Press, 1979). Of the nine chapters of the book, the first chapter, "Science and the Role of the Imagination," stressed the importance of Smith's early writings about the history of science, especially astronomy, and it seemed original and provocative to the Japanese scholars of Adam Smith's works. Accordingly, the paper delivered at Chuo University, Tokyo—"Adam Smith: An Aspect of Modern Economics"—and the one read at the second annual meeting of the Japanese Society for British Philosophy held at Bukkyo (Buddhist) University, Kyoto—"Adam Smith: Science and the Role of the Imagination"—were promptly translated into Japanese. The former was translated by Professor Toshihiro Tanaka and Associate Professor Hisashi Shinohara in the Japanese journal

Economic Review in August 1978, and the latter by Professor Yoshiaki Sudo in the *Bulletin of the Japan Society of British Philosophy* (No. 2, April 1979). Both papers discussed “the principles which lead and direct Philosophical Enquiries.” I remember discussing the subject of Smith’s “History of Astronomy” with Professor Skinner after the meeting of the Japanese Society for British Philosophy in Kyoto.

Professor Skinner’s first monograph, *A System of Social Science* was translated into Japanese by Toshihiro Tanaka, Hitoshi Hashimoto, Hisashi Shinohara, and Takutoshi Inoue, who were scholars of Mandeville, Malthus, Adam Smith, and Jevons, respectively. They added summaries written by Professor Skinner at the beginning of each chapter. The “Introduction” that prefaced *The Wealth of Nations* Book 1–3 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) was already translated into Japanese under the title, *Introduction to Adam Smith’s System of Social Science* by Nobuyoshi Kawashima, Kimihiro Koyanagi, and Gentaro Seki (scholars of James Steuart, Adam Smith, and Scottish Economic History, respectively) in 1977. I remember using it as a textbook in my first undergraduate class at Kwansai Gakuin University, approximately forty years ago.

In 1982, Professor Skinner and Professor R. H. Campbell worked together and published two works: *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* as co-editors and *Adam Smith* as joint researchers. Young Japanese scholars of the Scottish Enlightenment were given a precious stimulus by the former, and Adam Smith scholars were provided a fresh approach by chapter 7 of the latter, “Lectures on Rhetoric and the Consid-

eration Concerning the First Formation of Languages.” The revised and expanded version of this essay was to become the first chapter of the second edition of Professor Skinner’s monograph, *A System of Social Science* (Clarendon Press, 1996), as “Language, Rhetoric and the Communication of Ideas,” followed by the second chapter, “Early Writings: Science and the Role of the Imagination.” These two chapters, dealing with Smith’s Glasgow lectures (*LRBL*) and his posthumous essays on philosophical subjects (*EPS*), were to become Part I of the second edition of his monograph. This kind of approach to Smith, which regards *LRBL* and *EPS* as the source of his system of thought, has given Japanese scholars a key to understanding him in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment. Professor Skinner’s biography, *Adam Smith* was translated into Japanese by Professor Yoshikazu Kubo (a scholar of the History of American Economic Thought) in 1984. Professor Kubo passed away at the age of 94 in August 2013. I remember him saying that he had a very pleasant time in Professor Skinner’s house in the suburbs of Glasgow (in a sylvan glen in Cardross).

Professor Skinner’s paper that was presented to Section F of the British Association for the Advancement of Science was published as chapter 2, “Adam Smith: Then and Now” in *Ideas in Economics*, edited by R. D. Collison Black (Macmillan, 1986) and translated into Japanese by Professor Keiichi Watanabe (a scholar of Adam Smith) in 1986.

Professor Skinner was kind enough to arrange and offer a flat for my family in Park Circus Place, on a small hill near the Univer-

sity of Glasgow, when I studied in Scotland in 1989. His seminars and lectures began in October and were held on Wednesday morning (9:15 a. m.) and afternoon (2 p. m.), wherein he utilized the essays from his monograph, *A System of Social Science*. His first

lecture was on Smith's "Historical Theory" and "Science and the Role of the Imagination."

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