

OBITUARY

Ian Simpson Ross (1930–2015)

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In his email dated November 1, 2013, Ian-san (Professor Ross) wrote. “We will certainly advise our circle of friends that Adam Smith’s Letter No. 116, addressed to Lord Hailes, 5 March 1769, is no longer in the hands of Professor Kenji Takeuchi. It is useful to know that information concerning this letter can be obtained from Hannan University, Matsubara, Osaka, Japan.” Professor Ross added. “My period of ill-health at the end of 2010 fortunately was short, when I suffered a minor stroke but recovered quickly. Since then, however, I have not done much writing, only completed a couple of articles for the *Adam Smith Review*.” A week later Ingrid-san (Mrs. Ross) provided me with “a better picture of Ian-san’s situation.” Ian-san’s stroke, according to her, “has slowed him down a lot. . . . Ian-san is very sore and stiff, walking with a cane. . . . Ian-san and I are still planning to visit Hokkaido one day, if Ian-san is well enough. . . . If not, we will visit in our mind.” A year and a half later, “just a brief note” from Ingrid-san on May 25, 2015 informed us that “Ian passed away last Thursday (21 May). He had been suffering from the results of various falls and was hospitalized for several months. He died peacefully at home. . . . He loved life and loved friends and scholars all over the Globe . . . a true son of the Enlightenment.”

Professor Ross’s magnum opuses concern the two Enlightenment figures of eighteenth-century Scotland: Lord Kames and his protégé, Adam Smith. In *Lord Kames and the Scotland of His Day* (Oxford University Press, 1972), Henry Home (Lord Kames) is represented, “in his role of animator of intellectual projects” (p. 29), as the founder of “the Scottish historical school” (Chapter 11: *Historical Law Tracts*) and “the Scottish school of philosophical criticism” or “the Scottish rhetorical school” (Chapter 14: *Elements of Criticism*). In *The Life of Adam Smith* (Oxford University Press, 1995), Professor Ross stressed the importance of Smith’s “Edinburgh Lectures” as “intellectual achievements of a high calibre by a young man still in 20s” (p. 105). He suggested that Smith, in

“the history of philosophy course at Edinburgh,” set out to account for “successive scientific systems” exemplified by the “History of Astronomy” (p. 98). The second edition of *The Life of Adam Smith* (2010), contains new letters (investigated by Neven Leddy, Magdalen College, Oxford) from Dr Théodore Tronchin, “a member of the Genevan elite,” to his son François Louis and from the son to his sister. These letters offer information about the last years of Smith’s professorship at Glasgow (pp. 129–33, 459. note 1). Letters, reviews, and criticisms concerning one of Smith’s great works are included in *On the Wealth of Nations: Contemporary Responses to Adam Smith*, edited by Professor Ross (Thoemmes Press, 1998). Smith’s own letters and those addressed to him are, of course, compiled in *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, co-edited with Ernest Mossner (Oxford University Press, 1977, 2nd edition, 1987).

I first corresponded with Professor Ross during the autumn of 1984 concerning the “incomplete” text of Adam Smith’s Letter 78 addressed to David Hume on December 12, 1763, and also regarding the “probable” translator of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS*) under d’Holbach’s “Eye” referred to in Letter 77 from Hume on October 28, 1763. Ian-san’s kind response was found in the second edition of the *Correspondence of Adam Smith* (1987) in the notes to the “complete” text of Letter 78 in Appendix E (New Letters), along with a few thoughts on the possible translator of the *TMS*.

In their commentary on a transcription: ‘A Forgotten Letter of Adam Smith to David Hume, 12th December, 1763,’ *The Journal of Economics of Kwansei Gakuin Univ.* xxxix (1985), 124–27, Professor Yoshiaki Sudo and Hisashi Shinohara pointed out that the translation referred to here (and in Letter 77) cannot be by M. A. Eidous, since his work received its ‘Approbation’ on 7 Sept. 1763 (*Metaphysique de l’Ame*, 1764, ii. 370), and it was based on *TMS* ed. 1. They suggest the Abbé Blavet as the translator under d’Holbach’s ‘Eye’ (Letter 77), but he is not known to have been a member of the latter’s coterie and his translation did not appear until 1774. A close associate of d’Holbach noted for his translations from English was J.-B.-A. Suard but nothing seems to be known about him working on *TMS*.
(pp. 413–14)

Ian-san enjoyed his five visits to Japan (in 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005). I initially met him in Kyoto in his first visit to the country. Professor Hitoshi Hashimoto drove us to witness the remains of a follower of Matsuo Basho, the greatest master of *haiku* in the 17th-century, because Ian-san had been intrigued since the 1960s by “the concentration of images [in *haiku*] that communicated thoughts or moods or feelings or attitudes.” He encouraged his students

in first year English classes “to try out writing what I believed to be *haiku*, as a springboard to learning more about poetry” (Ian Ross, Forward to “44 October Haiku,” mimeo, 2000, privately circulated). A fascination with *haiku* led him to the following epigram for his paper “Adam Smith (1723–90): A Biographical Sketch” (in *Adam Smith: International Perspectives*, edited by Hiroshi Mizuta and Chuhei Sugiyama, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993, originally read at the Nagoya Symposium to Commemorate the Bicentenary of the Death of Adam Smith, April 14, 1990):

Kirkcaldy's wordsmith
Hammered true world mindware / Scattering quenchless sparks

This type of metaphysical or Canadian-style *haiku* was to be refined and transformed into the relatively genuine style because of Ian-san’s month-long stay in Japan. His examples can be found at the end of this obituary.

The long-awaited *The Life of Adam Smith* was published in 1995. At the end of Chapter 12, we find the following passage regarding *TMS*:

TMS was surely accepted into the mainstream of European thought. It made Kant ask the question: ‘where in Germany is the man who can write so well about the moral character?’ In France, where we now follow Smith, he caused Voltaire to exclaim: ‘We have nothing to compare with him, and I am embarrassed for my dear compatriots.’ (p. 194)

Voltaire’s interesting observation was cited from the *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Beaumarchais, XXI. i. 71. As I could not find the passage in the *Oeuvres Complètes* owned by my university’s library, I asked Ian-san to give me the correct location of this passage. I found the answer in the second edition of his *Life of Adam Smith* (2010) in note 10, Chapter 12. I was deeply impressed by the sincerity of his search for the passage:

The Abbé Jean-Louis Blavet presented this quotation in the Preface to the 1800 edition of his translation of *WN* (I: vii), citing as the source ‘Lett. xxi.1.71. Edit. de Beaumarchais.’ In 2006, Professor Hisashi Shinohara . . . alerted me to the fact that he could not find the quotation in the Beaumarchais-Kehl edition . . . of the works and correspondence of Voltaire, and my own search in the Moland and Bestermann editions of the correspondence of Voltaire was equally fruitless. Mr Neven Leddy, Magdalen College, Oxford, also searched without success in the relevant Electronic Enlightenment file (Voltaire Foundation). My UBC [University of British Colum-

bia] colleague, Professor L. L. Bongie, commented in an email dated 10 April 2006 that Voltaire is often assigned sayings people would like to associate with him, but for which there is no supporting evidence. He added that in this case the ‘style’ is right, and Voltaire frequently praised ‘English’ authors at the same time as he denigrated his ‘mediocre’ countrymen, for example, in his correspondence with Mme Du Deffand when praising Hume. Since Blavet’s source for the quotation is a fake, it would appear he (or someone in the book trade) wanted to puff off the *WN* translation, and thought an endorsement of Smith by Voltaire would do the trick.

(pp. 466–67)

On his last two visits to Japan (2000 and 2005), Ian-san was invited to Kwansei Gakuin University as a visiting professor to give lectures for a month on “Hume and Smith in the Scottish Enlightenment.” During his fourth visit in 2000, he tried to absorb the true spirit of *haiku*. In his Foreword to “44 October Haiku,” he made the following observation:

In 1985 I visited Japan for the first time and learned about Matsuo Basho (1644–94), then read his striking travel journal, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1689) and other writings, which taught me the true *haiku* pattern of 5–7–5 syllables and opened up the riches of the form. On further visits to Japan in 1990 and 1995, then most recently in October 2000, I explored the writings of other *haiku* masters. During this last visit when I spent a month teaching at Kwansei Gakuin University. . . . I decided to write at least one *haiku* a day. These attempt to record memorable perceptions that seemed to be attached to significant feelings, arising from experiences in the house I occupied in Nishinomiya, and on visits to Osaka, Nara, Kyoto, Kobe, Yokohama, and Tokyo.

The following five examples represent Ian-san’s refined *haiku* based on his daily life in Japan:

A scared black cockroach
Scuttles away in the bathroom / Fleeing invaders.

Earth quakes, a mast sways
Carpenters stick to their roof / I resume my nap.

The gentle kneeling girl
Teaches us how to savour / Delights of tofu.

Under Kamo's bridges
Cardboard shelters the homeless / And their dogs and cats.

On the Sanjo-dori
Two intense tourists speed walk / Towards nirvana.