

As if and Adam Smith

by G. Murphy Donovan (December 2015)

“... every man must be supposed a knave.” – David Hume



Adam Smith (1723-90) is memorable for things he was not. He wasn't an economist; he was a moral philosopher. He wasn't a decadent capitalist; he was primarily an underpaid pedagogue. He was not a *bon vivant* either, as if such things were possible in Protestant Scotland. He was a discrete Edinburgh bachelor who lived happily with his mum. He was a Christian too, a choice that no doubt informed his Presbyterian world view. "Productivity" was one of his favorite words, a noun that might well be associated today with independence, clean living, and hard work.

In Smith's day, only the French recognized a discipline called economics, and the French take on national wealth, then as now, had more to do with appetites, agriculture, and food comas than industry. No accident that the four day work week found Paris first. The French, however, were always on the cutting edge of social science. The *menage a trois*, soft cheese, and truffles all survived *La Revolution*. Appetite fusion is culture *in la belle France*