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Filosofisk supplements artikler er alle behandlet gjennom en
dobbel blind vurderingsprosess.

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HUME

(#2/2025)

Selv århundrer etter sin tid fortsetter David Hume (1711–1776) å utfordre våre holdninger til hva vi kan vite, hva vi bør tro, og hvordan vi bør leve. Med et skarpt blikk analyserte han menneskets tilstand, både som observatør og som deltaker. Hume var ikke redd for å kritisere rammeverket som filosofi “skulle” operere innenfor. Dette gjør ikke bare hans ideer til et forfriskende pust i filosofihistorien – det er også en viktig påminnelse til dagens filosofer om å ikke blindt akseptere feltets grunnantakelser. I dette nummeret av *Filosofisk supplement* utforsker vi Hume sine bidrag til filosofien – alt fra hans epistemologi og metafysikk til hans syn på moralens natur. Ved en slik bred gjennomgang av hans ideer, håper vi at leseren sitter igjen med et nytt inntrykk av en gammel filosof. Hume er nemlig langt mer enn Immanuel Kants vekkerklokke.

Kanskje er Hume aller mest kjent for sin radikale empirisme, hvor han hevder at all menneskelig kunnskap har sitt utspring i sansene. I sitt hovedverk, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740), utforsker han hvordan vi konstruerer ideer basert på erfaringer. Han fremmer en dyp skepsis til våre vante oppfatninger, særlig ideen om årsak og virkning. I vår første artikkel «Brief on Regularity and Counterfactual Theories of Causation» utforsker Martin Elias Bergh Hanssen Humes todelte kausalbegrep, der den ene delen beror på regularitet, og den andre på kontrafaktisk analyse. Forfatteren trekker inn David Lewis’ kausalbegrep for å argumentere for at den kontrafaktiske analysen er å foretrekke, hvis og bare hvis mulige verdener finnes.

Hanssen har også skrevet om Humes epistemologi og metafysikk, i artikkelen «The Bat, the Eel, and the Maxim of Conceivability». Her blir Humes “tenkbarhetsmaksime” – ideen om at alt vi kan se for oss er metafysisk mulig – diskutert. Hanssen utforsker hvordan vi skal tolke metafysisk mulighet med hensyn til Humes erkjennelsesteori, samt to problemer som oppstår dersom vi ønsker å vedlikeholde maksimet gitt denne tolkningen.

Innen moralfilosofi hevdet Hume at etikken har sin opprinnelse i følelsene, ikke fornuften. Hans sentimentalisme stiller seg i sterk kontrast til datidens rasjonalistiske moralfilosofier, som hevdet at moralske prinsipper kan oppdages gjennom fornuft alene. Denne tematikken drøfter sjefredak-

tørene Lisa Bye Heen og Julie Noorda i et intervju med professor Michael Gill ved universitetet i Edinburgh. Her snakker vi om forholdet mellom normativ etikk og metaetikk, moralpsykologiens utvikling fra Humes tid til i dag, og om Humes liv og virke i Edinburgh. Vi retter også oppmerksomheten mot en beryktet fotnote i essayet «Of National Characters» der Hume ytrer rasistiske holdninger. Vi stiller spørsmålet: kan man skille filosofien fra filosofen?

Videre, i bokessayet «The Reaping of David Hume», har Marcus Holst-Pedersen gjort en humeansk lesning av Susanne Collins' nyeste bok i Hunger Games-serien: *Sunrise on the Reaping*. I tråd med tittelen, reflekterer romanen både Humes skeptisisme og hans syn på politisk underkastelse. Hume tenker nemlig at forventningen vår om at sola vil stå opp hver morgen stammer fra vane – noe vi ikke kan dra sikre slutninger fra. På samme måte som vi tar soloppganger for gitt, og dermed former livene våre etter solas bane, tenker folket i Hunger Games-universet at det brutale regimet de lever under nødvendigvis må vedvare. Holst-Pedersen utforsker hvordan denne oppfatningen om uunngåelighet holder folket i dette universet i lenker, og hvorvidt dette kan være en metafor for vår egen politiske virkelighet. Humes politiske innsikter ser ut til å være vel så relevante for oss i dag som de var på hans tid.

I sann Hume-stil har sjefredaktørene også tilbrakt et helt semester i hans hjemby, Edinburgh. I vårt reisebrev reflekterer vi over våre opplevelser i denne historiske byen. Det er en lokal overtro at det bringer lykke å berøre den berømte Hume-statuen sin gulltå, noe vi gjorde ved flere anledninger. Kan dette ha påvirket vårt semester? Vi tar leseren med på en reise gjennom akademiske utfordringer og det skotske høylandet. Utover dette følger det en rekke bokspalter fra redaksjonsmedlemmene, samt klassikere som leksikryptisk og quiz.

God lesning!

Sjefredaktørene Lisa Bye Heen
Julie Noorda

HUME

(#2/2025)

Even centuries after his time, David Hume (1711–1776) continues to challenge our attitudes toward what we can know, what we ought to believe, and how we should live. With a sharp eye, he analyzed the human condition – both as observer and participant. Hume was not afraid to criticize the framework that philosophy was “supposed” to operate within. This not only makes his ideas a refreshing breeze in the history of philosophy – it also serves as an important reminder to today’s philosophers not to blindly accept the field’s foundational assumptions. In this issue of *Filosofisk Supplement*, we explore Hume’s contributions to philosophy – from his epistemology and metaphysics to his views on the nature of morality. Through this broad review of his ideas, we hope the reader will come away with a new impression of an old philosopher. Hume is, after all, far more than just Immanuel Kant’s wake-up call.

Hume is perhaps best known for his radical empiricism, in which he claims that all human knowledge originates in the senses. In his main work, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740), he explores how we construct ideas based on experiences. He presents a deep skepticism toward our common perceptions, especially the idea of cause and effect. In this issue’s first article, “Brief on Regularity and Counterfactual Theories of Causation,” Martin Elias Bergh Hanssen explores Hume’s twofold concept of causation, in which one part is based on regularity, while the other is based on a counterfactual analysis. The author brings in David Lewis’s concept of causation to argue that the counterfactual analysis is preferable, if and only if possible worlds exist.

Hanssen has also written about Hume’s epistemology and metaphysics in the article “The Bat, the Eel, and the Maxim of Conceivability.” Here, Hume’s “maxim of conceivability” – the idea that anything we can conceive of is metaphysically possible – is discussed. Hanssen explores how to interpret metaphysical possibility in light of Hume’s theory of knowledge, as well as two problems that arise if we wish to uphold the maxim under this interpretation.

In moral philosophy, Hume claimed that ethics originates in sentiment, not reason. His sentimentalism stands in stark contrast to the rationalist

moral philosophies of his time, which claimed that moral principles could be discovered through reason alone. This theme is discussed by editors-in-chief Lisa Bye Heen and Julie Noorda in an interview with Professor Michael Gill at the University of Edinburgh. We discuss the relationship between normative ethics and metaethics, the development of moral psychology from Hume's time to today, and Hume's life and work in Edinburgh. We also turn our attention to a notorious footnote in the essay "Of National Characters," where Hume expresses racist views. We ask: Can one separate the philosophy from the philosopher?

Further, Marcus Holst-Pedersen offers a Humean reading of Suzanne Collins's latest book in the *Hunger Games* series: *Sunrise on the Reaping*. In the book essay "The Reaping of David Hume," he writes about Hume's influence on this fictional universe, and particularly on this book. In line with its title, the novel reflects Hume's skepticism about our ability to know that the sun will rise tomorrow. Hume believed that our expectation that the sun will continue to rise stems from habit – from which we cannot draw certain conclusions. Just as we take sunrises for granted and shape our lives around the sun's path, the people in the *Hunger Games* universe assume that the regime they live under must necessarily endure. Holst-Pedersen explores how this perception of inevitability can keep the people of this universe in chains, and asks whether it is a metaphor for our own political reality. Hume's political insights seem to be just as relevant today as they were in his time.

In true Hume style, the chief editors also spent an entire semester in his hometown, Edinburgh. In our travel letter, we reflect on our experiences in this historic city. There is a local superstition that it brings good luck to touch the golden toe of the famous Hume statue – something we did on multiple occasions. Could this have influenced our semester? We take the reader on a journey through academic challenges and the Scottish Highlands. In addition, the issue includes several book columns from editorial members, as well as classics like Leksikryptisk and a quiz.

Happy reading!

Chief editors Lisa Bye Heen
Julie Noorda





ARTIKKEL

BRIEF ON REGULARITY AND COUNTERFACTUAL THEORIES OF CAUSATION

By Martin Elias Bergh Hanssen

Hume says that “we may define a cause to be: an object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second. Or in other words: where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed” (EHU 7.29, SBN 76-7). It is by these two definitions, that is, the definition before and after the “or in other words”, that Hume summarizes a theory of causation that has developed into what is now commonly referred to as the regularity view of causation (henceforth *RVC*) (Psillos 2010, 131; cf. Holger & Guenther 2021, §1.1). David Lewis, on the other hand, argues that these two definitions provide differing accounts: the one before the “other words” describing *RVC*, while the one after lays the groundwork for what will become Lewis’ counterfactual theory of causation (henceforth *CTC*) (Lewis 1973a, 556). In this paper, I will firstly give a short description of *RVC*, then present some issues this theory faces. Here we will see some advantages of *CTC*. However, my final thesis will be that since Lewis’ theory is dependent on Modal Realism (see Lewis 1986), it is preferable to *RVC* if and only if possible worlds exist.

Hume’s empiricist theory maintains that our knowledge of the world is dictated by our sense impressions and subsequent mental processing of these impressions (EHU 1.29, SBN 76-7). Assume for instance, that you drop a pen and as it hits the floor it makes a pen-hitting-the-floor sound. All you have sensed of this scenario is the feeling of letting the pen go at time t_1 , the visual input of seeing the pen fall at t_2 , and the auditory input of hearing a sound at t_3 , as you saw the pen hit the floor—seemingly also

at t_3 . According to Hume we have never sensed causation. Rather, we have inferred by our mental processing that something more has occurred than simply the events observed at the differing times. Causation, then, is inferential, and therefore we cannot confidently claim that there is a necessary connection between events (EHU 7.2, SBN 60-1).

Following this analysis, we might construct a theory of causation. Firstly, we have perceived certain events occurring in spatiotemporal contiguity, namely the feeling of letting go with the observation of the pen falling, and the pen hitting the ground with a sound being heard. Secondly, we have perceived that certain events happen at a time prior to other events; again, letting go before the pen fell, etc. And lastly, we have perceived that certain events happen in accordance with the first and second point with *regularity*. That is to say that it would happen with regularity that after we have perceived that a pen was let go of, we would then perceive that it falls, and then, as we see it hit the floor, a sound would be heard. We can formalize this as such (Psillos 2010, 131):

Regularity view of causation. c causes e if and only if:

1. c is spatiotemporally contiguous to e .
2. e succeeds c in time.
3. All events of type C , meaning similar to c , are regularly followed by events of type E , meaning similar to e .

The plague of this theory is the problem of induction (see Henderson 2024). We can, according to RVC, claim that c is the cause of e if we have satisfied the conditions above; however, if we were to observe a contradiction, this would negate our entire claim. As a result of this, RVC does not have a satisfactory answer to scenarios where effects have common causes. Suppose that you have dropped your pen again, but this time in addition to hearing the sound, it also breaks. Then we might say that the pen falling is a common cause of it breaking and making a sound. But this formulation of RVC does not give a restriction such that we cannot argue that it was the pen breaking that caused the sound, or conversely that the sound caused the pen to break. Therefore, we are left with a situation where we cannot

determine whether the pen hitting the floor caused a sound that in turn caused the pen to break, or that the pen hitting the floor caused the pen to break and this caused the sound.

David Lewis solves some of RVC's problems by developing an account following Hume's latter definition (Lewis 1973a, 556). By this analysis it is counterfactual dependence in conjunction with a transitive chain from e to c that constitutes causation (Lewis 1973a, 557). The foundation of CTC is Modal Realism, the position that our world is only one of many possible worlds, and that the differentiator of these worlds is the actualization of possibilities (Lewis 1986, 2). For example, one world, w_1 , might only differ from our world, w , in that a leaf that could have fallen actually did fall, whereas another world, w_2 , could have so many possibilities actualized that it no longer resembles w at all.

The account of CTC begins by claiming that counterfactual dependence is causal dependence (Lewis 1973a, 559). Assume the example of the pen falling and making a sound. We can formalize this as: if a pen is falling then it would make a sound as it hits the floor; alternatively: $c \Box \rightarrow e$. The counterfactual of this statement would be that: if a pen is not falling then, it would not make a sound as it hits the floor; alternatively: $\neg c \Box \rightarrow \neg e$ (Lewis 1973b, 1-3). CTC would then be concerned with determining whether all worlds in which c occurs, e also occurs. Therefore, if there exists a world such that c is true but e is not, then the analysis has failed because we cannot claim that $c \Box \rightarrow e$ counterfactually depends on $\neg c \Box \rightarrow \neg e$ (Lewis 1973a, 563). Lewis also considers alterations of e and c (Lewis 1973a, 562). Consider that for a set: $(e_1, e_2, \dots e_n)$ each step is a deviation from the actual world, and this set counterfactually depends on a similar set: $(c_1, c_2, \dots c_n)$ now the theory allows for alterations of the antecedent and consequent and will capture possible worlds where, for example, the pen your counterpart dropped was of a different material, and that a different noise occurred as the pen hit the floor: $c_1 \Box \rightarrow e_1$ (Lewis 1973a, 562).

The analysis above is sufficient for the counterfactual dependence of propositions (i.e., "if a pen is falling, then it would make a sound as it hits the floor"), but for a counterfactual analysis of events further stipulation is necessary (Lewis 1973a, 562). To capture events, Lewis uses the function $O(e)$ to express that all and only those worlds where e occurs falls within

its extension. Then, causal dependance among events is the counterfactual dependence of the set $O(e)$, $\neg O(e)$ on the set $O(c)$, $\neg O(c)$; meaning that event e is causally dependent on event c if and only if it is true that in the set of worlds where event c occurs (i.e., “C-worlds”) event e also occurs (i.e., “E-worlds”), or the negative; alternatively: $O(c) \Box \rightarrow O(e)$, or $\neg O(c) \Box \rightarrow \neg O(e)$. Alterations are expressed accordingly: $O(c_1) \Box \rightarrow O(e_1)$, or $\neg O(c_1) \Box \rightarrow \neg O(e_1)$ (Lewis 1973a, 562-563).

This completes the analysis of causal dependance but not causation, because if we merely analyze the counterfactuals there would exist possible worlds where both event c and event e occur but c is not the cause of e . Assume that you were to drop a cotton ball and as it hits the ground a sound is heard, but in reality, this was caused by a construction site outside. The account of CTC thus far would allow that the cotton ball is the cause of the sound from the construction site. This is clearly a problem, and to solve it Lewis introduces a principle of transitivity to his causal theory. He argues that causation is transitive chains of events that depend counterfactually on each other such that: in a chain $(c, d, e, \dots n)$, d depends counterfactually on c , and e depends counterfactually on d , etc. (Lewis 1973a, 563). An event e is thus caused by c if there exists a causal chain that leads from c to e (Lewis 1973a, 563). We may then formalize CTC as:

Counterfactual theory of causation. c causes e if and only if:

1. It is true that for all possible worlds where the event c occurs, the event e also occurs or vice versa. Viz. $O(c) \Box \rightarrow O(e)$,
or $\neg O(c) \Box \rightarrow \neg O(e)$.
2. There is a transitive causal chain that leads from e to c .

CTC directly combats the problem of regulatory induction that RVC relies on. Where RVC is reliant on empiric enquiry to gather data on what has occurred in a given situation, CTC employs logical enquiry into possible worlds. CTC is then a stricter theory that restrains what causation can be in accordance with the conditions above, whereas RVC remains more inclusive of what may count as causation. CTC is then cured of the problem of induction as it is not an inductive theory at all.

With respect to common causes CTC has a solution because of the inclusion of causal ancestry. In the same example as above, we are able to determine that the sound did not cause the pen to break, nor did the pen breaking cause the sound, but these are rather effects of a common cause as we can—by counterfactual analysis—find that the sound and break are both dependent on the pen hitting the floor. By tracing this causal ancestry we find that the sound and the break are not linked to each other, but rather, related through the pen hitting the floor. Therefore, the sound and the break are thus effects of a common cause.

The point above highlights the problem of *backwards causation* (see Faye 2024). When we trace ancestry in such a way one will see that e stems from c , and from this one might say that if c had not happened, then that must have been because e did not happen. However, seemingly paradoxically, one might equally say that if e had not happened, then that must have been because c did not happen (Faye 2024, §3). We have here a sort of circularity of cause and effect. If this criticism were to hold then CTC would be turned on its head as now e counterfactually depends on c and likewise does c depend on e .

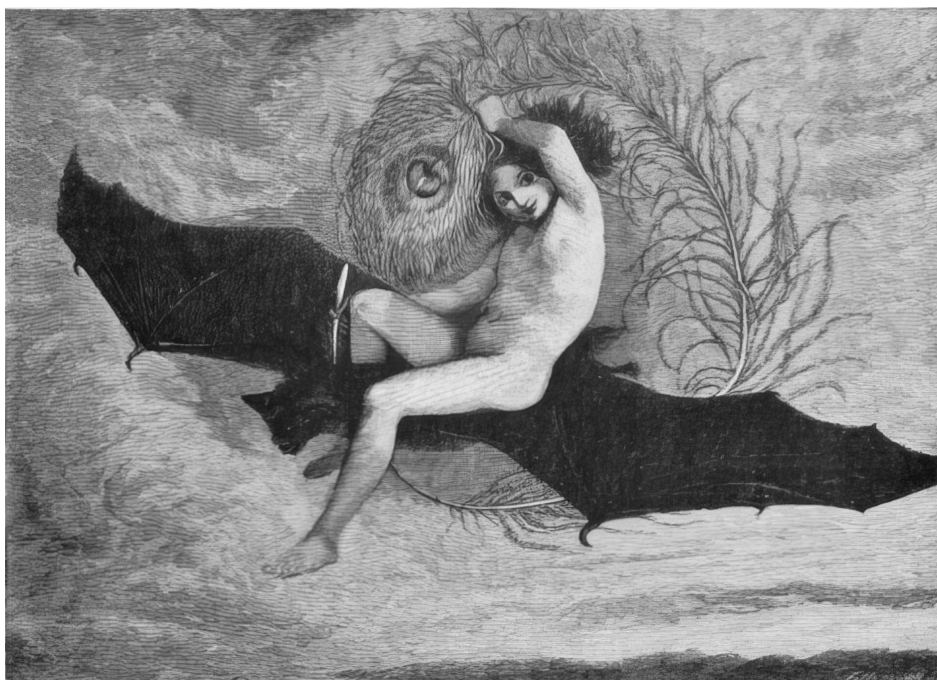
Lewis averts this issue by denying the proposition altogether because it is possible for c to occur without being able to give cause to e , assuming that there exists some d that prevents c (Lewis 1973a, 566). Imagine if you were to dampen the fall of the pen with your foot, then event c (pen falling) would occur, but c would be prevented to cause e (pen-sound) because of d (dampening with foot) interfering. Importantly, worlds in which d prevent c would not fall under the scope of “C-worlds” that are analyzed for co-occurring with “E-worlds”. Rather, a world where d prevents c would be considered a “D-world” and escape the scope of the counterfactual, thus retaining the coherency of CTC (Lewis 1973a, 567). We have then avoided the problem of backwards causation breaking the transitive chain of causation, as well as saving the counterfactual analysis since worlds in which c and d occur would not fall within the scope of consideration.

This paper has thus far been a defense of CTC, showing that neither the problem of induction, common causes, nor the problem of backwards causation are plagues of the theory. However as mentioned, because counterfactual dependence hinges on Modal Realism, possible worlds not existing

would mean the demise of CTC. Furthermore, as all possible worlds are categorically independent of each other, there is no way to verify their existence aside from the very analysis that requires these worlds in the first place. As such, CTC is met with a metaphysical problem that RVC does not face, namely: how can we argue for Modal Realism? Lewis himself did not seem to have a good answer to this. Instead, he maintained that, mirroring the fruitfulness of set theory in mathematics, possible worlds ought to be assumed to exist by virtue of its fruitfulness in the field of philosophy (Lewis 1986, 3–5).

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ARTIKKEL

THE BAT, THE EEL, AND THE MAXIM OF CONCEIVABILITY

By Martin Elias Bergh Hanssen

The electric eel is endowed with a specialized organ called the electric organ. By virtue of the electric organ the eel is capable of emitting an electric field, which is potent enough to stun prey in the surrounding water (von der Emde 1999, 1205; de Santana et al 2019, 8). The elephantnose fish is endowed with a similar organ, only it is not as strong as that of the electric eel. Because of this, the elephantnose fish cannot stun prey with its electric field. Rather it uses this field as a sensory modality (see von der Emde 1999). Any movement in the water through which this electrical field is emitted will cause a disturbance in said field. By virtue of its electroreceptors, the elephantnose fish is capable of sensing these disturbances. As such, the electric eel and the elephantnose fish share the same kind of organ (de Santana et al 2019; cf. von der Emde 1999).

Thomas Nagel's seminal paper asks us what it is like to be a bat. Nagel discusses, similar to the above, that because bats have sensory organs that differ from that of humans, we are safe to assume that this is a sufficient condition by which we cannot claim to know what it is like to be a bat (Nagel 1974, 439). However, Nagel's eventual conclusion is more nuanced. He says that we cannot know what it is like to be a bat, not merely because of a lack of sufficient organs, but because the 'what-it-is-like-ness' of being a bat is an experience that we are bereft of by virtue of not being bats (Nagel 1974, 442).

This appeal to what-it-is-like-ness is a different kind of argument to that of an appeal to a lack of sufficient organs. This is because the latter allows for the possibility that by gaining the sufficient organs one may gain the sensory impressions of the type relating to said organ. However, it is not possible to gain someone else's experience, because to gain this experience it would

be necessary to be the experiencer that had this experience in the first place (Nagel 1974, 439). Thus, we cannot gain what-it-is-like-ness in the same way that we might gain sufficient organs.

The problem of organs and the problem of what-it-is-like-ness poses significant problems for the *Maxim of Conceivability*. Hume says that “tis an establish’d maxim in metaphysics, that whatever the mind clearly conceives includes the idea of possible existence, or in other words, that nothing we imagine is absolutely impossible” (T 1.2.2.8, SBN 32). This passage is typically cited as the origin of the modern maxim of conceivability, that is, the conjunction of the *Principle of Conceivability* and the *Principle of Inconceivability*. We may formalize the maxim as follows (Casullo, 1979, 212):

Maxim of Conceivability

1. The Principle of Conceivability: What is conceivable is possible.
2. The Principle of Inconceivability: What is inconceivable is impossible.

In conjunction with each other these two principles form a strong claim. The Principle of Conceivability allows that whatever the mind conceives implies the metaphysical possibility of that which has been conceived. This is a purely positive principle in the sense that it does not place any restriction on metaphysical possibility. The Principle of Inconceivability, on the other hand, does impose such a restriction. It is a negative principle in the sense that whatever the mind cannot conceive implies that this is not a metaphysical possibility. With this positive and negative principle, the Maxim of Conceivability would followingly yield the full scope of metaphysical possibility by making it identical to the scope of conceivability. Let us call this the identity thesis:

Identity thesis

If the Maxim of Conceivability is true, then the scope of metaphysical possibility is identical to the scope of conceivability.

Nagel’s bat, the eel, and the elephantnose fish threaten this thesis by suggesting that there are experiences, and thus metaphysical possibilities, that we cannot conceive of—not because these are metaphysical impossibilities, but rather because we are somehow limited from conceiving of these possi-

bilities. In the first instance, there is the lack of access to the sufficient organs by which we might conceive of the experience of there being a disturbance in one's electrical field. In the second instance we are limited from knowing what it is like to be an experiencer that one is not.

In this paper I discuss two problems that arise for the Humean who maintains that the scope of metaphysics is identical to the scope of conceivability. Firstly, in line with the first instance above, there is what I will call access limitation, and secondly, in line with the second instance above, epistemic limitation. In order to properly discuss these limitations, we first need a working definition of 'metaphysical possibility', and a sufficient account of Hume's theory of mind. An attempt to provide such is what we turn to next.

Metaphysical possibility and Hume's theory of mind

Directly following the above quote, Hume claims that "we can form the idea of a golden mountain, and from thence conclude that such a mountain may actually exist. We can form no idea of a mountain without a valley, and therefore regard it as impossible" (T 1.2.2.8, SBN 32). From this passage, what is meant by 'metaphysical possibility' becomes evident. It is the actual possibility of something existing or coming into existence. Now the problem is how we should treat the notions of 'existing' and 'coming into existence'.

Interpreting the quote literally, when Hume says that a golden mountain may actually exist, we could say that it means that: it may be the case that somewhere in the universe, on some planet, there is a golden mountain; or, alternatively, in the future it may occur that a golden mountain is formed somewhere, on some planet. We may formalize this literal interpretation of metaphysical possibility as follows:

Metaphysical possibility (literal interpretation)

It is possible that that which we conceive can exist in reality.

However, here we run the risk of putting the cart before the horse. As has been extensively discussed, the passage of the golden mountain is explicit in referring to visual representation (see, for instance, Berto and Schoonen 2018, 2699). Followingly, any attempt at defining 'metaphysical possibility' must in this context make careful reference to Hume's understanding of visual representation. The reason for this is that a literal interpretation, such as

the one above, may be mistaken given Hume's theory of mind. What I am alluding to here is Hume's well-known Copy Principle, which he formulates succinctly as (T 1.1.3.4, SBN 10):

Copy Principle

All our ideas are copy'd from our impressions.

As such, instead of external existence, somewhere in the universe, it seems that Hume's theory only requires that that which is conceivable (i.e., an idea), is a possible percept (i.e., an impression that can be copied) (cf. EHU ii, SBN 14). In this case, if we can conceive of a golden mountain, metaphysical possibility would not necessarily imply that this mountain exists, or that it might exist somewhere at some point in time. Rather, what is implied is that we may have a perception such that this perception would form an impression by which the idea of golden mountain may be derived (cf. EHU ii, SBN 19).

'Metaphysical possibility' would then not be concerned with existence per se. Rather it would be concerned with what the sufficient grounds for gaining an impression is. This is a significant diversion from the literal interpretation because this perceptual interpretation allows that *artifacts may serve as grounds for impressions*. What I mean is this: an actual golden mountain, existing somewhere in the universe, may serve as the perceptual grounds for gaining an impression of a golden mountain. However, a realistic image of such a mountain—that is, an artifact—might be equally sufficient for gaining a visual impression. In this case, the golden mountain that we conceive of may be realized as a metaphysical possibility either as an actual golden mountain, or as a picture that is merely sufficient for gaining an impression that would correspond to the idea.

To illustrate the perceptual interpretation of metaphysical possibility further, consider the claim that it has a significant advantage when we consider seemingly incoherent ideas. These are normatively ridiculous ideas that do not seem to have any bearing on reality. Here is an extreme example: the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)* states that some delusions have bizarre content. Such a delusion may be that an individual believes "that a stranger has removed his or her internal organs and replaced them with someone else's organs without leaving any wounds or scars" (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 91).

Following the literal interpretation, if an individual conceives that their organs have been replaced without leaving a trace, then it must be actually possible for someone's organs to be replaced in this way. However, on the perceptual interpretation it is only required that one might have an impression of such a case. Considering only visual impression for the moment, what is to say that such a visual impression cannot be gained through portrayal in film, or some other kind of creative media? In a fiction it is not farfetched that someone's organs could be replaced without leaving a trace, and I see no reason why a hyper-realistic depiction of such would not serve as an impression that grounds the idea.

I take the perceptual interpretation of metaphysical possibility to be plausible, and consistent with Hume's theory of mind. As such, we may define metaphysical possibility on the perceptual interpretation to be that:

Metaphysical possibility (perceptual interpretation)

It is possible that that which we conceive can be realized as an impression.

In the introduction I stated that the Maxim of Conceivability yields the full scope of metaphysics by making it identical to the scope of conceivability. Following this definition of metaphysical possibility, what was then meant by 'scope of metaphysics' becomes clear. Because possibility is merely concerned with possible impression, the scope of metaphysics would then be the full set of possible impressions. However, as we have already seen with Nagel's bat, the eel, and the elephantnose fish, is it not evident that there are impressions from which we are limited? Would this not show that the maxim of conceivability is obviously false? This is the problem we now turn to.

What is it like to be an electric eel?

Humans do not have electrical organs. Therefore, we cannot emit electrical fields in surrounding water the same way that the electrical eel or elephantnose fish can. Furthermore, by virtue of our lack of electroreceptors, even if we could emit an electrical field, we would not be able to detect disturbances in such a field the way that the elephantnose fish can. This constitutes the first problem for the Maxim of Conceivability. By virtue of not having these organs, there are certain sensory modalities that we do not have—and

therefore, we are limited from obtaining impressions relating to said sensory modalities. Followingly, there would be certain impressions that we simply could not have, and consequently, in line with Hume's theory of mind, we cannot conceive of ideas relating to these sensory modalities. We may formalize this limitation as follows:

Access Limitation

Ideas relating to sensory modalities one does not have access to cannot be formed.

At this point we can articulate the paramount difference between the literal and the perceptual interpretation of metaphysical possibility. For the literal interpretation, access limitation would necessitate that the Principle of Inconceivability is false. To reiterate, this principle maintains that that which is inconceivable is impossible. However, Access Limitation maintains that the reason we cannot conceive of the experience of electroreception is that we lack access to the sufficient organs, not that the experience of electroreception is a metaphysical impossibility. As such, although the experience of electroreception is inaccessible to humans, it is not inaccessible to the electrical eel or the elephantnose fish. Thus, it is clearly not a metaphysical impossibility. Therefore, the Maxim of Conceivability must be false, and consequently the Identity Thesis must also be false, given the conjunction of the literal interpretation and Access Limitation.

On the contrary, for the perceptual interpretation of metaphysical possibility access limitation would not conflict with the Principle of Inconceivability—followingly, we can maintain the Identity Thesis as well. This is because metaphysical possibility is here restricted to that which can be realized as an impression. Thus, by virtue of lacking the electrical organ, we cannot conceive of the experience of electroreception; however, by virtue of this same fact, neither is it a possibility that we can have an impression of this kind. That is, it is not a possibility that we can have an impression of electroreception. Followingly, the Principle of Inconceivability is true. We cannot conceive of the experience of electroreception, and that is because it is not possible for us to have such an impression.

What we observe here is a theoretical problem regarding the bounds of possible impressions. In the above, the reason that we can maintain the Identity Thesis in light of the perceptual interpretation is that we iden-

tify metaphysical possibility with possible impressions and restrict possible impressions to those impressions that relate to the sensory modalities that one has access to. Thus, we can maintain the Principle of Inconceivability because Access Limitation does not conflict with our definition of metaphysical possibility.

However, one might object that restricting possible impressions to those sensory modalities that one has access to is a mistake, and in this case, the Principle of Inconceivability would be false under the perceptual interpretation as well. This shows that we may delineate between a restricted and unrestricted version of the Scope of Impressions. Consider the following:

Scope of Impression (restricted)

Possible impressions are restricted to impressions that relate to those sensory modalities one has access to.

The above in conjunction with the perceptual interpretation is the model by which the Principle of Inconceivability remains true. It expresses that the scope of possible impressions is restricted to those sensory modalities that one has, and thus it is true that that which we cannot conceive of is impossible. The below, again in conjunction with the perceptual interpretation, does not contain the same restriction. Rather, it holds that regardless of which sensory modalities one has, all phenomenal experience falls within the scope of possible impressions:

Scope of Impression (unrestricted)

Possible impressions include impressions relating to all sensory organs.

The central significance of this is that it is possible to maintain the Maxim of Conceivability given the restricted Scope of Impression. But it is also noteworthy to consider that the unrestricted scope does not necessarily rule out the Maxim of Conceivability, rather it necessitates that for the Maxim to be true a being must have access to all possible sensory modalities.

However, it is at this point that we turn to a new kind of limitation. If it is the case that the Maxim of Conceivability may be true given the unrestricted scope—only if a being has access to all sensory modalities—how

can we know that a being has access to such? Indeed, the only reason I discuss Access Limitation in the first place is that we have discovered an animal (the eel or elephantnose fish) that has an organ unfamiliar to humans. In that case we are met with an empirical problem. In order to determine which sensory organs a being would require to maintain the Maxim of Conceivability in light of the unrestricted Scope of Impression we would first need to discover every kind of sensory modality. But how can we know that we have discovered everything?

What is it like to be Thomas Nagel?

1974's "What is it like to be a bat?" is a seminal paper in the philosophy of mind because it points out what seems to be the only properly descriptive factor of consciousness, namely the subjective character of what it is like to be something. The core feature of Nagel's argument is epistemic limitation. Not only do we not know what it is like to be a bat because we do not have access to the same sensory modalities as that of the bat; neither can we know whether or not our proposed idea of what it is like coheres with the actual subjective character of what it is like to be a bat—for *the bat* (Nagel 1974, 442). We may formalize epistemic limitation as follows:

Epistemic Limitation

The correspondence of any idea and reality is not knowable.

There are many kinds of limitation, but it seems as if there are only two kinds of limit. The first is of the kind where after having travelled a long way, you get to the end of the road. We can call this a soft limit. The second is of the kind where there is no road to travel in the first place. Let us call this a hard limit. Access Limitation, as discussed in the previous section, seems to be a soft limit. What limits us from having access to certain kinds of impressions is the lack of sufficient sensory modalities. However, if we were to gain these sensory modalities, then we would gain access to the related impressions and break the soft limit. In this case, the proverbial road to travel is the gaining of sufficient sensory modalities.

Epistemic Limitation, on the other hand, is a hard limit because there is no road to travel at all. This is the second problem that the Identity Thesis faces. To reiterate, the thesis is intended to make the scope of metaphysical

possibility identical to the scope of conceivability. But in light of Epistemic Limitation, how can we claim to know that that which we conceive is a metaphysical possibility? This issue seems to be equally problematic for both the literal and perceptual interpretation of metaphysical possibility. In the first case, Epistemic Limitation has it that it is unknowable whether or not that which we conceive actually exists. And in the second case, Epistemic Limitation makes it unknowable whether or not that which we conceive of can be realized as an impression.

I take it that the first case above is uncontroversial, but the second case requires elaboration. Indeed, if it is the case that our theory of mind makes that which we conceive derivative of impressions, is it not implied that it must be possible for all of that which we conceive to be realized as an impression? It seems as if the dependency relation of impressions and conceptions allows us to evade Epistemic Limitation. That is to say, because we have established that that which we conceive is dependent on impressions, we have a justification of our claim to know that conceptions can be realized as impressions.

We must again take care to not put the cart before the horse. That is, what we observe here is not a proof of the origin of ideas as much as it is an appeal to epistemic foundationalism. What I mean is this: all we have done in the above line of reasoning is establish a fundamental axiom that is that “impressions are the origin of ideas”, and we use this axiom to justify the claim that “we can know that that which we conceive can be realized as an impression”. The problem is that this axiom is no less a belief than the claim that we base in this axiom. Indeed, both the axiom and the claim are mere propositions, and followingly, it seems arbitrary to claim that the axiom is foundational while the claim is derivative of said axiom. We can formalize epistemic foundationalism as follows (Hasan and Fumerton 2022, §0):

Epistemic Foundationalism

1. There are some beliefs that are foundational and have a positive epistemic status in and of themselves.
2. Any other beliefs with a positive epistemic status must depend, ultimately, on foundational beliefs for this status.

Again we have reached a point of delineation. Either we accept Epistemic Foundationalism, in line with the above, at which point one may argue that the perceptual interpretation of metaphysical possibility evades Epistemic Limitation, or we reject Epistemic Foundationalism by accepting some kind of epistemic anti-foundationalism, which we can briefly summarize as follows:

Epistemic Anti-foundationalism

1. There are no foundational beliefs with positive epistemic status in and of themselves.
2. Therefore, no belief can serve as an axiom that justifies other beliefs.

Conclusion

To summarize our discussion: in the first section we found two options as to how we define metaphysical possibility, that is the literal and perceptual interpretation of Hume's passage. Further, in the second section, and in light of Access Limitation, we found that the Principle of Inconceivability must be false for the literal interpretation and followingly, the Identity Thesis cannot be maintained. In addition, we found that there are two possible scopes of impression that affect the perceptual interpretation. These are the restricted and unrestricted scopes. Further, in light of Epistemic Limitation we are met with two options as to which epistemic model we may go by, that is, either Epistemic Foundationalism or an Epistemic Anti-foundationalism. With all of this we may schematize our possible approaches to the Identity Thesis as:

Schema of possible theories

1. Perceptual interpretation, restricted scope, Epistemic Foundationalism.
2. Perceptual interpretation, restricted scope, Epistemic Anti-foundationalism.
3. Perceptual interpretation, unrestricted scope, Epistemic Foundationalism.
4. Perceptual interpretation, unrestricted scope, Epistemic Anti-foundationalism.

We are met with four options. For those that maintain Epistemic Foundationalism it is possible to evade Epistemic Limitation. In that case, as discussed in the previous section, option 1. above would hold that the

Maxim of Conceivability is true by virtue of the combination of perceptual interpretation and restricted scope, while for option 3. above the Maxim would be contingent by virtue of the unrestricted scope. For options 2. and 4., that is, those that hold Epistemic Anti-foundationalism, it is not possible to evade Epistemic Limitation because it is not possible to appeal to a fundamental axiom with special epistemic status. Thus, on these combinations, we cannot claim to know whether the Maxim of Conceivability is true, and thus, the same goes for the Identity Thesis. We have then established that if we are to maintain the Identity Thesis, the options 1. and 3. in the above schema are our only options.

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INTERVJU

BEYOND THE ARMCHAIR

HUMEAN ETHICS AND THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE

An interview with Michael Gill by Lisa Bye Heen and Julie Noorda

Most philosophy students are first introduced to David Hume (1711–1776) in their obligatory introduction to philosophy courses. First, they learn of his skepticism of causality, famously exemplified by a game of billiards. Then they may see a powerpoint slide showing a black swan. It is a fallacy, they learn, to conclude that black swans do not exist, merely based on the fact that they have not witnessed them (before the picture on the powerpoint slide). Because of these bold ideas, many students often remember Hume primarily as an epistemologist. However, he has a lot to say about morality as well. In many ways, he approaches ethics in a similar way to metaphysics – he starts and ends with what we can observe. We interview Michael Gill, the head of philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, which just so happens to be Hume’s hometown. Gill has written extensively on Humean ethics, moral psychology and moral sentimentalism. Through our conversation, we aim to get a better understanding of Hume’s main ideas within ethics and meta-ethics, as well as what it means to be a Humean today.



What was your first encounter with Hume?

My first encounter with Hume was in an undergraduate class that I took with a very outstanding teacher and scholar named Saul Traiger. The class was entirely on Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. We just started on page one and made our way through it. Traiger was a passionate lover of Hume, and so I was introduced to it by someone who cared a lot about it, was enthusiastic about it, and of course that made a big difference. Understanding Hume, especially the beginning of *Treatise*, is hard. It is hard to see what is going on. I think if I had just picked it up on my own, and tried to read it, I probably would have bounced off it. Luckily, I had a very good teacher who

brought me into it. Soon enough, before I understood the ideas very well, I got really captivated by the style of writing. Even when I could not understand what was going on, his turns of phrase and just the way he put things was so enjoyable. The combination of this really great undergraduate teacher who was passionate about it and the style carried me past through book one of the *Treatise*.

I do think virtually everything that I ended up being interested in can be traced to really good teachers. My path is just determined by the teachers that I found really engaging, and Hume is no exception to that.

How does your work on the history of philosophy, specifically on the sentimentalists, influence your own philosophical views? In other words, to what extent are you Humean versus Hume-inspired?

I think I am very largely Humean. I believe he was right about a lot of things in general, although wrong about a lot of things in particular. So starting with his methodology, I very much follow him in wanting to explain what it is people actually do. That means observing what the world and people are actually like, as opposed to sitting in an armchair by yourself in a philosophy department and just thinking and believing that by investigating your own thoughts, you can figure out what the world is like. I believe that kind of method is still common and was incredibly common at the time. I am very Humean and I follow Hume in, as he says, doing a cautious observation of human life, actually looking at the way the world is. That empirical, observational, methodological approach to studying morality is something that I think I take directly from Hume. And then there are certain substantive views that I also see myself as very much Humean, not just Hume-inspired, most centrally his skepticism about our ability to use reason to make moral decisions. The role of reason in moral thinking, according to Hume, is crucial but limited. Sentiment, emotion, passion are all going to play a massive role in your moral decision-making. I think he was right about that. Certainly in my own work I follow that line.

Where does he go wrong? I think the details of his moral psychology are incorrect. I think he revolutionizes – pioneers – moral

psychology. It is amazing what he did, but I do not think he was right, and I think contemporary moral psychology is much better than him. That is not so surprising. I mean, if you were to do science, you might think a scientist from the 1730s is brilliant, but I doubt we are going to say all of his scientific explanations are right. I think that is true of Hume. I think the details of his psychology are not correct. I sometimes get a little frustrated with other commentators, people who do the kind of thing I do, where they try to show that everything Hume said is correct, or else they see themselves as criticizing Hume. You would never think that about a scientist. You would never think that showing that a scientists' explanation in 1730 was on the right track, but we have refined it, is somehow saying he is not worth anything. I think we have much better science of psychology now than he had. We have much better techniques for studying the mind, much better empirical techniques. I think he is not as good as we are on lots of things like the cultural transmission of values, as well as empathy and sympathy. So in my studies and writing about moral psychology, there I would say Hume inspired, but not Humean.

What is Hume's aim within his practical philosophy?

I believe that in his major philosophical works, his main aim is explanation. In the *Treatise*, for instance, he is trying to explain the observable phenomena. In that sense, it is not really a practical philosophy – if what we mean by practical philosophy is giving us prescriptions about what to do. I do not think he is doing that in the *Treatise*. I think he is gathering data. He is trying to figure out what it is people do, and then he is trying to give the best possible psychological, cultural explanation of that. At the beginning of the *Treatise* Hume says that the other sciences have developed a lot. So when you are talking about the 1730s, science has been around for about 100 years. We are just beginning to see these amazing advances in physics and botany and astronomy and all these other sciences. He says that we need to do that with human nature as well. We need to do that with the moral sciences. His ambition is to be a Newton. Just what Newton did for physics, he wants to do for moral psychology.

I think in his essays, Hume was more normative. He was more making suggestions about what to do, and he thought there were certain mistakes people made. One thing was that he wanted to puncture the ambitions of reason. He is often thought of as an enlightenment thinker. I think that is kind of perverse because his main aim was to say that reason does not enlighten us. Reason is very, very limited. Hume believed that those who think they are using reason to discover moral reality are actually wrong. Then I think the other massive goal of a tremendous amount of his writing was to expose what he saw as the mistakes of religion. While there is controversy about what his own religious beliefs were, there is no doubt that he thought a massive amount of popular religion was leading to superstition, enthusiasm and bigotry.

Where do we draw the line between normative ethics and metaethics and Hume's practical philosophy?

There is a distinction in many places in the *Treatise* and in some places in the *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding of Morals*, where he is doing descriptive analysis, rather than normative theory. He is not trying to exhort us to be better – not trying to say this is a better way of being. If what we mean by metaethics is explanation as opposed to normativity, then that is metaethics. However, sometimes metaethics tends to be used to describe philosophy of language or getting clear on our concepts. I do not believe he is doing that as much as a lot of people think he is doing. I think he is doing something that is a lot more like what a psychologist would do than what a philosopher would do. For instance, in the *Treatise*, he gives an explanation of modesty, justice, and bigotry. He gives explanations of why people obey the government, even when the government is not following their wishes. Some people claim that in explaining all these things, he justifies them. However, I do not think he does. While I believe he found justice, for example, a good thing, it is not clear what he thought of modesty and chastity. Here, it seems more like he was trying to explain the rules women were held to. Bigotry, on the other hand, he certainly does not think is correct, but he does not go out of his way to say this is wrong. He just explains why it is. Pride is

another one. He describes how people find glorious pride in battle. Here, again, he explains why. He does not distinguish between how we should live and how we should not. I think in all of that, there is a line, and he is on the explanatory, or if you want to call it metaethical line, and not on the normative line. That said, as I mentioned before, in some of his essays, I think he does argue normatively. In the enquiry he does a little bit of both.

What happened in the *Treatise*, however, was incredibly unpopular. People did not read it. It is not that they read it and hated it. It just did not make much of a splash. Some of the criticism he got from people who did read it was that it was not warm enough in the cause of virtue, which is to say it did not recommend virtue strongly enough.

So I think in the second *Treatise*, when he reworked it, he did add a little bit more normative stuff. He would not just explain something. He would then say: oh, is it not great that this is there?

How do you see the relationship between the two subfields? Are normative ethics and metaethics completely distinct, or do they depend on each other to some extent?

I think they are a lot more separate than most people think. Clearly if your normative view is completely disengaged from how people actually use concepts, it is not going to work. If your normative view presupposes some totally unrealistic notion of human psychology, it is not going to work. So your normative view has to respect some basic facts about our moral concepts, and then you need to do meta-ethics to figure those out. However, I do not think it is going to get you very much. I think even when you get the concepts and the psychology as clear as you can, that is going to be consistent with a vast range of actual ethical views. It might rule out some extreme positions. Still, you are going to have many ethical decisions that you are going to have to argue for and justify that are equally consistent with the explanations, the meta-ethics you give. I also believe someone can be a morally superb person without having any good ideas about meta-ethics. Someone can understand incredibly well what they ought to do, what makes for a good life. They can be the right person to go

get advice from, a moral paragon. Vice versa, I certainly believe that someone could be incredibly astute at the metaethical conceptualization and the moral psychology, and still be morally atrocious.

Many of my friends find the separation frustrating and defeatist. After all, we have been studying what morality is. Should this not help us? They disagree with this reading. Personally, I believe he started out this way in order to sell books, but then started mashing them together a bit. There is a whole interesting thing to say here about his history because we are talking about his philosophy, but he was known as a historian, not as a philosopher. So there is a question about how normative his history was – to what extent he was just trying to do explanatory history and to what extent he was using history to justify the glorious revolution, for instance.

What is the relationship between aesthetic beauty and moral virtue in Humean philosophy?

There are many deep similarities between the two for Hume. Crucially, they both depend on sentiment or emotion. I think when you say that about aesthetic judgment or beauty judgment in 2024 it does not sound that controversial, but it certainly was in the first part of the 18th century. Then, there were still a lot of people who were objectivists about beauty. With both morals and beauty, he also wanted to explain how it could be based in sentiment, and yet we disagree about it. We think some people are better, some people are worse. We think people can make mistakes. We think we can improve. How do we reconcile all of that with the idea that it is just how we feel? In both cases, he gives the same really sophisticated and beautiful answer, which is that it is not based on how we feel at a particular moment. It is based on how we are disposed to feel under certain conditions. In both cases, he fills in the conditions that have to hold for your feeling to be correct. That structure is all the same.

However, there are differences in the details. There are differences in the perspective that one takes to get a moral judgment right and to get a judgment of beauty right. To get a moral judgment right, the conditions have to be accessible to virtually every normal human being, because morality is something that occurs in every life. His

standards for beauty, aesthetic judgment, are much different. They are more strict and not accessible to everyone. He thinks some people are really good aesthetic judges, but most people are not. You need to not just be viewing something disinterestedly. You need to be an expert. If I do not know anything about modern art and someone else has studied modern art, I am not going to be as good a judge as them because I do not know as much. But in morals, we all should be able to reach a good judgement.

Another big difference is Hume's belief that your moral judgments are necessarily connected to how you act. That is a really crucial premise in his argument against rationalism. It is not clear that there is the same connection to action with beauty. If I think something is beautiful and something else is ugly, you can probably presume that I am going to act to bring that into my life. However this does not have the same bearing on what I do as what I believe is right and wrong. That is probably going to affect my motivation more. So the answer is that there are lots of important ways in which they are similar, but then the details differ.

I think that Hume is doing something really important and right when he bases his theory in sentiment and explains how we can nonetheless agree and disagree and improve. However, his specifics about what we find beautiful just seem wrong to me. He says that we find things beautiful because we believe they promise pleasure. This seems like a mistake. Like with moral psychology, the structure works, but I think the details of the specific mental operations probably are incorrect.

What do you believe is the correct relationship between beauty and morality, then?

I think that beauty has to be integral to a good life, and I think beauty is something that we see as morally important in people in a lot of circumstances. The idea of moral beauty makes a lot of sense to me. Someone who we think is just a wonderful person morally, we have a response to their person that is aptly called a beauty response. There is a kind of attraction that we have to it, that we have to beauty. I think that is an important part of moral life, but I do not think it

is all of it. For instance, justice and fairness are really important parts of moral life, and I do not think it makes a lot of sense to analogize that to beauty. I do not think it is similar at all. If you have this belief that the inequality in our society is unjust, you have this belief that we have this obligation to the poor to improve their lives. These are incredibly strong, powerful moral judgments. I say, good for you. I do too. However, I do not know how we are going to make that look like an aesthetic judgment. It just does not seem similar to beauty. So we admire certain people. We love certain people. We think people are morally superb. There are all sorts of ways I think it does work as a parallel, but I do not think it covers all of it. I think that is refreshing, though, that we do not have to boil everything down to one thing.

Do you know Isaiah Berlin's distinction between the hedgehog and the fox? He has this famous essay called "The Hedgehog and the Fox", where he explains that the fox knows many things, and the hedgehog knows only one thing. However, this thing is really important. What he does then is he takes all thinkers, and he distinguishes between those who are foxes – who have all these different ideas that are really interesting and maybe do not all fit together – versus the kind of thinker who wants to put everything into one big idea. Plato is a typical hedgehog where all his ideas are supposed to fit together. Hegel is that as well. Whereas a foxy thinker might have a whole bunch of insights and not necessarily think it all makes one perfect system. I see Hume as a fox. I do not believe he thinks the world all fits together, but rather that the world is messy. I think he wants to analyze what happens, instead of trying to mush it all into one big system.

Can you tell us more about Hume as a historian?

Hume was one of the greatest historians of his day, and his history sold terrifically. When he died, he was listed in hard catalogs as Hume, the historian, not the philosopher. He lived here in Edinburgh, but he could not get a job at the university here or in Glasgow because they thought he was irreligious. So instead, he got a job as librarian of the National Library. As a librarian, it gave him the opportunity to work on the archives all that time, and so he did.

There are a few things that I find particularly interesting about his historical work. One is that he, in addition to just telling the history, at regular intervals gives these character sketches of various people. These character sketches contain a lot of moral assessment. The other thing that is interesting is the question of whether he is a Whig or a Tory. Whig historians see everything progressing towards something better, whereas Tory historians see what happened in the beginning as good and everything that moves away from our original constitution as bad. There is controversy about whether Hume is one or the other. I think he is neither – that, just as with his *Treatise*, he is just giving us a whole bunch of stuff. Some of the changes he thinks are good. Some of the changes he thinks are bad. He is simply trying to tell their story.

The tower that is now called 43 George Square, which we are currently in, used to be called the David Hume Tower. It was changed in 2020 in response to student protests about Hume's racism. Which aspects of Hume's works are these accusations a response to?

The one place that he is just clearly unabashedly saying really disgusting racist things is in an essay called "Of National Characters", which he first wrote in 1748. Then he revised it several times without changing the offensive parts – in fact, with adding to the offensive parts. The essay in general is describing the differences between national characters. The English seem kind of different from the French, and the Germans seem kind of different from the Swiss, and the Italians seem kind of different from the Swedes. Despite these differences, he says, all humans seem pretty capable of similar advancements. The essay has a footnote, however. In this footnote he says that those who live above the Arctic Circle and close to the equator are actually incapable of certain human advancements. He goes on to say that people from Africa lack the basic capacities to be accomplished human beings and that they are incapable of learning. He does not think that they can have any accomplished civilization. There is one other footnote in the Enquiry where he seems to suggest that Native Americans do not have the same moral capacities that Europeans have. Here, I do not think he is as committed to what he is saying – I think he is just trying to draw a contrast to make a point.

But it is still not good. So that is two footnotes. There are claims that he says other things that are offensive, but I do not think any of them are as clear as those.

How should we approach reading works from a philosopher who holds racist views? Can you separate the philosophy from the philosopher?

These are important questions. The first point is that we should not stop reading these folks. If in fact it turns out that everything they said was shot through with racism and it infected all their views, we need to know that. That is not a reason to stop reading it, but rather a reason to start reading it more closely because, for better or worse, these things have had a massive influence on the history of ideas and our thought. With regard to separating out the racism from some of their other ideas, I think that is very much a case-by-case question. Here, you have to do good history of philosophy and examine the ideas to try to see whether or not they are infected by the racism. John Locke, for example, has this theory of property which on the surface seems race neutral, but when you understand what was going on with the Native Americans and his role in it, you realize that it is not race neutral after all. His theory is infected by his racism. With Hume, I think his sentimentalism is free of racism, while, for instance, his view of national differences is not. You have to evaluate each case on its own.

What do you think is the most misunderstood part of Hume's philosophy?

I will just restrict myself to talking about Hume's moral philosophy, as that is what we have been discussing. In Hume scholarship about Hume's moral philosophy, I think the biggest misunderstanding is thinking that he is trying to justify and give normative reasons when in fact he is simply explaining. I think this leads to a lot of misreadings. It also leads to these really complicated questions and boring articles and books that try to give an account of how Hume is justifying justice while condemning pride, how he is condemning the monkish virtues while justifying chastity. And using just little phrases in Hume and trying to find something that is not there. So I think the biggest misunderstanding is seeing him as a 21st century moral

philosopher as opposed to an 18th century moral psychologist. That reading purely explanatory bits as though they are first order normative ethics. I think that is the thing that is most misunderstood, but you should know that the majority of the people in my field disagree with me. Most of them think Gill is just somehow deaf to all these normative claims. So I am an outlier there.

What are some must-reads by and about Hume?

As I said, I started with *A Treatise Concerning Human Understanding*, but unless you have a really inspired teacher who is willing to give you lots and lots of time, I do not recommend starting there. His essays are more accessible. He has this group of four essays that are called "The Epicurean", "The Stoic", "The Platonist", and "The Skeptic", which are a great place to start. Another outstanding essay is called the "Standards of Taste", which is about beauty. If you want to read one of his major works, starting with *the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and *the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* is the way to go, even though I think the *Treatise* is a better book. The enquiries are much easier to understand, as each chapter is actually an essay in its own right, whereas the *Treatise* just builds and builds and builds, and it can be very confusing.

As far as books about Hume, one of the best, if not the best, books that just describes what he was doing and why he was doing it is a book by James Harris called *Hume, an Intellectual Biography*. It is an excellent book that is informed by the historical context as well as a deep philosophical understanding. A shorter book by the same author is *Hume, A Very Short Introduction*. There are also two really fun books about his life and philosophy. *The Infidel and the Philosopher* by Dennis Rasmussen documents Hume's lifelong friendship with Adam Smith. They wrote letters to each other pretty much every week. There are hundreds of letters. And so you get such a rich notion of their lives and characters, as well as a lot of philosophy. The second fun book is called *The Philosopher's Quarrel* by Robert Zaretsky and John T. Scott. It is about one of the most famous quarrels in the history of philosophy – that between Hume and Rousseau. It is an incredibly fascinating story that I would recommend for entertainment value alone.

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BOKESSAY

THE REAPING OF DAVID HUME

SUNRISE ON THE REAPING:
A HUNGER GAMES NOVEL

By Marcus Holst-Pedersen

Susanne Collins recently published her latest novel in the hunger games universe, *Sunrise on the Reaping*, and many have been eager to get their hands on it. However, there is an aspect of this book that Hunger Games fans might overlook: how great of an influence David Hume's philosophy has had on it. Collins herself writes in the Acknowledgements section: "I wish my dad was here to see that our discussions on David Hume inspired *Sunrise on the Reaping*" (Collins 2025, 388). And though Haymitch Abernathy is the one who finds himself reaped for these games, we can also say that Hume has been reaped by Collins, to tell her story through his philosophy.

The World of The Hunger Games

For those who are unfamiliar with the Hunger Games series, here is a brief overview of the premise. The series is set in post-apocalyptic North America, where old borders are forgotten and the country of Panem has risen in its ashes. Panem is divided into The Capitol and thirteen districts which each specialise in certain industries. At one point before all the books take place the districts rebel against The Capitol, and a civil war ensues. This is known as *The Dark Days*. In the end, The Capitol won, and as a punishment The Hunger Games were established. Each year two children, one boy and one girl, from each of the twelve surviving districts are sent into an arena in The Capitol to fight to the death, until only one remains. These children are chosen by lot each year on the 4th of July, and this ceremony is called *The Reaping*.

Sunrise on the Reaping tells the story of Haymitch Abernathy, a sixteen year old boy from District 12. He is reaped, not by lot, but because he steps in to protect his girlfriend from a Peacekeeper, a Capitol police officer. Unfortunately for Haymitch, these are the 50th Hunger Games, meaning there is a twist. He would have to face twice as many tributes in the arena. The president of Panem, Coriolanus Snow, announces that “As a reminder that two rebels died for each Capitol citizen, every district will be required to send twice as many tributes to the Hunger Games. Two female and two male. In this doubling of reparations, we remember that true strength lies not in numbers, but in righteousness.” (Collins 2025, 340). These events take place 24 years prior to the original Hunger Games trilogy, and 40 years after Collins’ previous book *A Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*.

The World of David Hume

For those who are unfamiliar with the philosophy of David Hume, he is probably most famous for his induction problem. This problem which is presented in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, according to one interpretation, criticises the very idea that we can observe cause and effect. We can see that something happens (A), and then something else happens (B), but we cannot observe that A causes B. It is an assumption we make based on inductive reasoning, meaning that we see regularities, such as that B seems to always follow A, and then induce that there is a causal relationship between them. In reality we only assume that what we are used to is more probable than the alternative. Hume famously states “That the sun will not rise to-morrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation, that it will rise” (EHU 4.2, SBN 25-6). This quote is also one of two Hume quotes found on the first pages of *Sunrise on the Reaping*, and is probably the one that inspired the title of the book.

Hume is also known for his work on moral psychology. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, he argues that humans do not construct morality out of reason, but out of *passions*. These passions are what guide people in their actions. He controversially wrote that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions” (T 2.3.3.4, SBN 414-5). This is further developed into a political explanation in his essay *Of the First Principles of Government*.

He opens this essay by stating:

Nothing appears more surprizing to those, who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find, that, as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular. (E-FP 1, Mil 32-3)

This is important because it says something about how power dynamics are maintained according to Hume, but also because it is the second quote of his that adorns the first pages of *Sunrise*. In other words, it is belief, a belief that their passions are aligned with their rulers, that prompts people to submit.

Induction & Normalisation

Sunrise on the Reaping opens on reaping day, which is also Haymitch's sixteenth birthday. He has some errands to make before the reaping ceremony, but it does not take long before Hume is made blatantly relevant. For Haymitch, the reaping has always fallen on his birthday. This means that his birthday is somewhat of a tragic day. In his mind, the reaping will necessarily always happen, and always on his birthday, "Sure as the sun will rise tomorrow" (Collins 2025, 10). It is under this assumption that a conservative Hume gets a radical voice through Haymitch's girlfriend Lenore Dove. "There's no proof that will happen. You can't count on things happening tomorrow just because they happened in the past. It's faulty logic." (Collins 2025, 10). This is just a snippet of a broader conversation, but it echoes Hume, and shows how radical Hume can be in face of the normalising threat of tyranny. Thinking that things happen in the future as they have happened in the past, that they must happen, is the narrative that allows The Capitol to maintain power over the districts. This is also why Hume is

both radical and dangerous in this context, because he challenges the very assumptions that allow power to maintain in the hands of The Capitol. This conversation is a clear nod to Hume's sunrise quote.

Sunrise on the Reaping tells the story of what happens when we start to question these dominating narratives, and gain the ability to imagine a better future. And this is also why Hume is still very relevant today. When we believe that certain aspects of our society are inevitable, we become powerless and dominated by a status quo, unable to liberate ourselves from the very chains that bind our minds.

But is it truly this easy? Is it enough to be able to imagine, as Hume points out, another world? The Capitol is doing a lot more than convincing the districts that their passions align. They are separated by space, and all communication between them is controlled by the Capitol. In other words, the Capitol does not only control the narrative, but also the material means to rebel through divide and rule.



The Many & The Few

This leads us to the main substance of Hume's quote from the *First Principles of Government*, namely that the many allow themselves to be governed by the few. Haymitch comes face to face with this reality in the training room before the games. He is talking to Plutarch, a Capitol film director who

documents the events surrounding the games. Plutarch asks him genuinely why he submits to it all (Collins 2025, 104), especially when the tributes outnumber the peacekeepers four to one. Haymitch responds that he does not want to die, but Plutarch rightly points out that death is a large part of the status quo, with the hangings, shootings, starvation, and The Hunger Games. The many do submit to the few, but why? Why do they adopt the sentiments of The Capitol when they are miserable under their governance?

The answer to Plutarch's question is unclear, but it might come back to normalisation and our ability to imagine. According to Hume we are more or less controlled by our sentiments, or our passions (T 2.3.3.4, SBN 414-5). Plutarch also makes this point later in the book:

Public opinion is driven by emotion. People have an emotional response to something, then they come up with an argument for why it logically makes sense," says Plutarch. "I don't think that's smart," says Wyatt, looking uneasy. (...) "Oh, I didn't say it was smart — I just said it was true. (Collins 2025, 199)

Haymitch, and most of the districts, are convinced that their passions are better aligned with the status quo than with rebellion. In other words, death and misery known is much less frightening than unknown death and misery.

One might object, however, that there are more than mere passions that keep the districts subservient. The Capitol is not only controlling the resources, but also actively prohibiting organisation and cooperation between the different districts. When it is impossible for a dominated people to unify in any meaningful way, or to get their hands on the means to rebel, rebelling becomes impossible. This is the genius of the Capitol rule, that since each district is highly specialised, and the Capitol administers all distribution between them, each district depends on the Capitol to provide them with the necessities they lack. To this point it might be necessary for the districts to realise that their passions do not align with that of the Capitol, and to realise that another world is possible, but it is far from sufficient. The material conditions are not as they need them to be in order to resist in any meaningful way.

A Rebel is Born

During training, Haymitch comes to peace with the fact that he is going to die. Thus, a world of possibilities opens before his eyes. He wants to go out with a boom, to show everyone in Panem that he was never their pawn, and that life in Panem does not need to persist as it does. He embraces the Humean critique, and becomes radical. He is approached by a previous victor—now mentor—who wants to help him blow up the arena. Beetee, as he is called, is being punished by the Capitol for rebelling. His son has been reaped, much like Haymitch, not by accident, but as punishment. However, he still wants to deal as much damage as possible to the Capitol as he can. Haymitch agrees, seeing that crippling the arena during the live-streamed games would be to show the whole of Panem that the Capitol is not invulnerable. A last stand for a condemned boy to show the world that it does not need to be as it is, to shatter the illusion of power and control.

A plan was made to smuggle explosives into the arena. Everything seems to go to plan. The bomb went off and parts of the arena were disabled. However, Haymitch did not die in the explosion. The plan had been a success, to a certain extent. The explosion had not fully damaged the generator, as was the plan.

Haymitch and Beetee had tried to show the world that there was a possibility of the sun not rising, but they had failed. The Capitol managed to manipulate the footage, and turn off the right cameras at the right time, so that most people would not ever know that anything had happened. And so came retribution. All who had conspired to undermine the ruling narrative, the current power dynamic, was punished, and severely so. All tributes in the arena that had done small acts of rebellion against the Capitol had been killed brutally, all except Haymitch. However, this was not mercy, but a much worse punishment. When he arrived back home his house was on fire, and his brother and mother were burned alive. When he went to find his girlfriend, he found her holding the very gumdrops he had given her before the reaping. As he fed them to her romantically in the grass, he slowly realised that these gumdrops indeed weren't the same, and that all of these were poisoned. As she died in his arms, she made him promise to make sure the sun never again would rise on the reaping day.

And that is the point, it seems, of this story. Not to give us a happy ending, but to show what power there is in our imagination. Even though it would take another 25 years before the Capitol was toppled, many of those who rebelled and survived this time would go on to hold central roles in the real revolution. Not because they were smarter or more capable, but because they could imagine a world where the Capitol was not in power, and because they understood that rebelling would always be more aligned with their own beliefs and wants than continuing to submit.

The Lessons of Hume

The Humean themes are strong in *Sunrise on the Reaping*. We are introduced to a young Haymitch who is challenged on multiple fronts with Humean philosophy. In other words, this is the story of a boy who believes so strongly in his own inductive reasoning that he fails to have hope in a different world. After being faced with Hume from different fronts, he eventually becomes able to do that. Meanwhile, in our societies, we are faced with ‘the Capitol’ every day. Not always in the form of autocratic regimes, though they certainly seem to be on the rise. But also for example as multinational corporations, unjust wars, and literal genocides. If we can not, as Haymitch, realise that these things are not necessary, we can not change the world for the better.

Sunrise on the Reaping can teach us many things, but I want to highlight two strong Humean themes: (1) The strongest power to keep a people subjugated is belief, belief that it is in their best interest to submit, and (2) that the alternative is impossible. As Plutarch says to Haymitch at the end of the book: “You were capable of imagining a different future. And maybe it won’t be realized today, maybe not in our lifetime. Maybe it will take generations. We’re all part of a continuum. Does that make it pointless?” (Collins 2025, 399).

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DEBATT

Filosofisk supplement vil gjerne ha debatt rundt tekstene i foreliggende og tidligere numre. Så hvis du har kritiske innvendinger eller motargumenter du mener bør frem i forbindelse med et spesifikt bidrag, er det bare å sende det inn! Vi ønsker debattinnlegg til alle tekstsjangrene i bladet – til alt fra leder til artikler og anmeldelser. Ønsket lengde på disse bidragene er maks 1000 ord.

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BOKSPALTER

Den Lille Prinsen

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

1943

Når jeg tenker på *Den Lille Prinsen* (1943) så tenker jeg på litteraturteori. Da jeg først leste boka var det i mine øyne en steinerskole-aktig bok som kjæresten min og en venninne hadde anbefalt meg. I prosessen med å lese boken ble den til en rekke spørsmål knyttet til spennende opplevelser i teksten. Den ble om å søke mening i det som ble sagt, om å vurdere budskapet. Senere, da jeg lærte at teksten var en unnskyldning og kjærlighetserklæring fra forfatteren til hans kone, betydde boken noe annet igjen. Det var noe med å vite at sentrale metaforer fra boken var født fra forfatterens skyldfølelse for hans utroskap som gjorde bokens budskap mindre uskyldig, barnlig og mulig en smule mindre klokt.

Kan en bok bli frarøvet sitt budskap hvis man lærer ny informasjon om forfatteren? Var det best å lese denne boken uvitende eller vitende? Har bøker engang en mening? Hvorfor skriver man da ikke den meningen bare ned eksplisitt i stedet for implisitt i form av metaforer? Jon Fosse mener det som gjør kunst til kunst er det usagte, det en må tie om. Litteratur gir en stemme til det uten, imens bøker bare sier noe som kunne blitt sagt på et annet vis. I det henseende er jeg usikker på om boken fungerer. Hvem prøver den å snakke til? Er ikke symbolikken så tydelig at den lett kan uttrykkes? Blir symbolikken i boken korrumpert av den kunnskapen jeg som leser muligens ikke skulle ha om forfatteren og om bokens opphav? Alt jeg vet er at boken for meg betyr noe annet nå enn den gjorde da jeg først leste den. Kanskje den beste dommeren av bokens budskap var forfatterens kone. Men hun kom aldri ut med noen uttalelse om hva hun tenkte om boken, og nå er de dessverre begge døde. Det eneste som er tilbake for meg som leser er litteraturteoretiske spørsmål som jeg impotent søker svar på.

Trym Mostad

Every Arc Bends Its Radian

Sergio De La Pava

2024

Sergio de la Pava is a fascinating figure in contemporary American fiction. He has somehow managed to straddle a dual life as a Public Defender in New York City, while rising to literary prominence by self-publishing the thrilling, philosophical, mega-novel *A Naked Singularity*. It is unfortunate how seemingly rare it is for the high-brow world of literary fiction to embrace a self-published work (*A Naked Singularity* was eventually republished by University of Chicago press, where it won and competed for major literary prizes). But de la Pava defies all such expectations, in part because he is *just that good*. Since his self-publishing triumph, De La Pava appears to have been embraced by main-stream publishing; although he continues to work as a public defender in the most populated city in the United States. De La Pava has managed to produce a slim new tome (hopefully we'll still get mammoth sized volumes in the future) called *Every Arc Bends Its Radian*. De La Pava has moved on from the semi-autobiographical, public defender, protagonist from *A Naked Singularity*. Here, we follow Riv del Rio, a private investigator, working in Cali, Colombia. Riv might not share the same vocation as De La Pava, but the philosophical, contemplative disposition is alive and well in every corner of this text.

The first half of this novel is an entertaining ride through investigating the criminal underworld of Colombia. But De La Pava is not to be underestimated. I doubt he could write an uninteresting story if he tried. In the second half of the novel, the setting is mostly confined to a battle of wits between two incredible minds, in an active submarine. The fate of the entire world depends on the outcome of these two opposing ideologies, fiercely being debated and enacted upon in the middle of the Atlantic. De La Pava has produced a fiercely funny, philosophical thriller! If anybody was intimidated by the massive size of his (also brilliant) *A Naked Singularity*, *Every Arc Bends Its Radian* provides readers with the greatest entryway into De La Pava's fictional world.

Kevin Kohn

On the Shortness of Life

Seneca

Original 49 CE, oversatt i 2004 av Costa, C. D. N.

Tidlig i år fant jeg en liten bok av Seneca på nyåpnede Norli. Tittelen, *On the Shortness of Life*, tiltrakk oppmerksomheten min, og jeg dro den med hjem. Jeg utsatte naturligvis å lese den, fram til jeg en dag ved impuls tok en tur til parken; utrustet med verket i lomma. Sola skinte, men allikevel var det kaldt. Etter litt spasing satte jeg meg ned på en ensom og overraskende skrøpelig benk, og begynte å lese. Det tok ikke mange sider før problemstillingen, som egentlig er viktigere enn Senecas svar på den, overtok tankene mine.

Hvor mye av livet kaster vi ikke bort? Ved å forsøke lykken til en usikker framtid, eller la tiden løpe ubegripelig forbi, så mister vi livet, og gjør alle de *vanlige dagene* som konstituerer helheten fattige. Dagene glir unna, og vi fremmedgjør oss selv fra eget liv. Ved å ikke leve slik vi faktisk ønsker så kaster vi bort livets innhold, og følgelig dets opplevde kvalitet, varighet og lykke. Hvor mye av vår eksistens bruker vi faktisk på å leve? Mangt et menneske eksisterer svært mye mer enn de lever. Dette er grunnen til at noen døende savner livet inderlig, og begjærer tilbake all tiden de aldri rakk å bygge på, mens andre møter enden tilfreds og *mett av dage*. De har et stort og langt liv i minnet, et uttrykk av dem selv. De utfoldet seg i verden. Til kontrast møter flertallet døden med ulykkelighet og anger over ubrukte sjanser, og over tilfredsheten, med opphav i dårlig tro, som lammet dem i livet. Enkelte hadde tatt alt tilbake og levd annerledes gitt sjansen. Seneca minner oss om at tiden, ofte kastet bort som noe overflødig, er den mest dyrebare ressursen vi har.

Vi kaster bort vår utfoldelse i verden i møte med distraksjoner og heteronom innflytelse. Vi bruker så mye tid både på ting vi virkelig ikke vil, og ting som ikke gir livet verdi. Mange *forsøker* å bli distraheret, de holder seg opptatt. De jobber, trener, prater, leser, scroller og styrer. Det er ikke noe problem med disse tingene i seg selv, de kan være verdifulle, men beviset for selvbedraget ligger i den engstelige stemningen som oppstår i mangelen på noe som opptar sinnet. Hvor mye bedre liv kan vi leve? Hvordan? For Seneca må vi søke sjelsro så vi kan absorbere livet. Vi må lære det som en hvilken som helst annen kunst. Livet er den minst viktige aktiviteten for det opptatte mennesket. Likevel er det ingenting som er vanskeligere å lære.

Da jeg dro fra parken, med dette gnagende i skallen, så jeg en nylig avdød rotte på veien. Den lå på asfalten med magen åpen opp, fortsatt i livlige farger. Det var ikke noen gammel rotte, men her var den likevel, plutselig livløs.

Stian Laupsa-Schjerva

The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic

Catherine Malabou (with Jacques Derrida)

Original 1996, translated by L. During in 2004

In *The Future of Hegel*, Cathrine Malabou offers a novel reading of Hegel. Novel not only in the literature she chooses to engage with but also in the choice of theme. As the subtitle suggests, Malabou centers her reading around three concepts: *plasticity*, *temporality*, and *dialectic*. Resting most of her weight on the oft-neglected three encyclopedias, Malabou investigates what she takes to be the three forms of anticipation that subjectivity assumes through its development.

In talking us through the Greek, the modern, and absolute form of anticipation, Malabou presents what she terms a *history of temporality*. These each represent a specific regime of *plasticity*; a distinct way for Hegel's substance-subject to both give and receive form. Malabou brings in the third concept from her subtitle by arguing for a *dialectical* relationship between these temporalities; they both succeed each other and bring each other with themselves. By tracing out this movement immanent to time itself, Malabou hopes to show us that the Hegelian system does not come to an end in absolute knowledge as some have taken it to do (perhaps with good help from Hegel's own formulations). If the future is plastic, it is also malleable. Perhaps Malabou's Hegel can help us expand our imaginative horizon for future forms of life.

Severin Gartland

REISEBREV

EN REISE TIL NORDENS ATHEN

Av Lisa Bye Heen og Julie Noorda

Høsten 2024 dro vi, Lisa og Julie, på utveksling til Universitetet i Edinburgh, Skottland. I taxien fra flyplassen speidet Lisa utover de høye tårnene og tenkte at her ville hun bo, mens Julie lurte på hva hun hadde begitt seg ut på. Det var nemlig Lisa som først hadde kjent på kallet til denne regntunge byen. Etter mange år med skuffelse over å ikke få noe brev fra Hogwarts, virket Universitetet i Edinburgh estetisk sett som et lignende alternativ, med sine storslåtte bygninger og gamle bibliotek. For Julie var situasjonen noe annerledes – for henne handlet reisen om en annen barndomsdrøm, nemlig å krysse av så mange destinasjoner som mulig på listen over land hun har bodd i. Etter opphold i både Frankrike og Spania var det på tide å snakke litt engelsk. Det var en hyggelig bonus for oss begge å kunne reise sammen.

Tilbake til taxien. Her var det snakk om en klassisk Hackney Carriage – en sjarmerende sort liten bil, som nesten ikke rommet bagasjen vår engang. Der vi satt inneklemt kunne vi blant annet se den kjente Royal Mile – en lang brosteinlagt gate som skilte den “nye” og den “gamle” delen av byen. Vi lærte fort at disse ordene har en helt annen betydning i Edinburgh, hvor alt som er “nytt” omtaler det fra opplysningstiden og fremover. Fra det andre vinduet kunne vi skimte en fjelltopp som så litt malplassert ut blant bygningene. Denne toppen skulle vi lære at heter Arthur’s Seat. Bare noen dager senere besteg vi denne toppen, noe stresset etter å ha hørt en gammel folketro om at vi ellers kom til å stryke på eksamenene våre. Utsikten derfra var enormt vakker. Man kunne se hele byen og havet i horisonten. Opplevelsen ble gjort mektigere av den sterke vinden som nesten blåste oss bort. Denne vinden skulle vi bli godt kjent med gjennom vårt opphold i Edinburgh.



På Royal Mile finner man en statue av David Hume, med en skinnende gulltå. Den er berømt for å være lykkebringende hvis man tar på den, så det gjorde vi mange ganger. Hume vokste opp og levde i Edinburgh hele sitt liv. Til tross for at han ikke fikk arbeide på Universitetet i Edinburgh har han satt sitt preg på det filosofiske instituttet. Der kan man finne langt flere Hume-forskere enn man finner i Oslo, hvor det er et større historisk fokus på antikken og Kant. Lisa fikk mer innsikt i hans moralfilosofi gjennom emnet «Normative Theory» med professor Michael Gill, som fokuserte på Hume og Kants normative etikk og meta-etikk. Gjennomgående for Hume var en villighet til å utfordre de filosofiske rammene han ble presentert for – et ufiltrert blikk på verden som kanskje kan bli misforstått som naivitet. Tvert imot reflekterte store deler av hans verk en åpenhet til omverdenen (foruten en viss fotnote som du kan lese mer om i vårt intervju med Michael Gill, på side 28).

Universitetet i Edinburgh er heller ikke redd for å utfordre normene for (vestlig) filosofisk utdanning. Gjennomgående var det et stort fokus på dekolonisering av academia, og emnelista hadde en mer internasjonal palett. Julie hadde gleden av å få innblikk i japansk filosofihistorie gjennom et emne undervist av professor Takeshi Morisato. Her hadde undervisningen en helt annen tilnærming, hvor både studentene og underviseren satt i en sirkel og drøftet hvordan teoriene kan bære relevans for ens egne liv. Universitetet tilbød også mer særegne og tilspissede emner enn vi er vant til i Oslo. Vi tok begge et emne om velværens filosofi, som til vår skuffelse ikke innebar ansiktsmaske og agurk på øynene. Isteden undersøkte vi teorier om velvære som hedonisme, perfeksjonisme og objektivisme. Mest spennende var det å diskutere urettferdighet og funksjonsnedsettelse i lys av tematikken.

Det var heller ikke mangel på ting å gjøre på fritiden. Filosofiprogrammets fagutvalg er i beste velgående. Det ble grunnlagt allerede i 1871, og har nå midler til å fly inn professorer fra hele verden for deres svar på UiOs Sokratiske aften, samt en egen lesesal med bibliotek og utsikt over Arthur's Seat. Når vi en sjelden gang var lei av å tenke, dro som oftest Lisa til klatreveggen og Julie på salsakurs. Overraskende nok er denne skotske byen et "hot spot" for latinamerikansk dans. Kanskje for å unnsnippe den kalde og grå hverdagen, samler et hundretalls studenter seg flere ganger i uka for å lære seg et trinn eller to. Kursene er dessuten åpne for alle aldre, og Julie fant

sin beste dansepartner i en åttiårig storsjarmør. I tillegg gjorde vi et halvhjer-
ta forsøk på å utforske den skotske naturen. Når været tillot det, besøkte vi
både byens strender og høylandets (veldig søte) kuer.

Da tiden omsider kom for å ta taxi tilbake til flyplassen kunne vi se tilba-
ke på tre læringsrike måneder, både på faglig og personlig plan. Imens vi satt
igjen med filosofiske interesser vi kanskje aldri ellers hadde kommet over, så
vi fram til vår etterlengtede gjenforening med de grønne lampene på Georg
Sverdrups hus. Vi hadde kontaktboken full av nye vennskap, men kanskje
aller mest takknemlige var vi for hvor nærme vi to var kommet.

Egentlig er vi ikke så overtroiske, men det virker som om det funket å ta på
tåa til Hume.



UTDRAG AV DEN LEKSIKRYPTISKE ENCYKLOPEDI

Holisme er en teori om at helheten er større enn summen av sine deler. Når vi tenker på en datamaskin, trenger vi ikke å tenke på den som et tastatur og en skjerm. Det som er essensielt, er datamaskinen i seg selv. Denne teorien har blitt videreutviklet av *Willard van Orman Quine*, til meningsholisme. Den sentrale ideen er at individuelle empiriske fakta bør forstås som deler av et større system; de bør ikke forstås som uavhengige av systemet. Denne oppfatningen kan kontrasteres med meningsatomisme, som hevder at vi bør ta empiriske fakta som selvstendig meningsfulle, uten at det er nødvendig å referere til et større system.

Humeansk superveniens er en teori utviklet av *David Lewis*, som baserer seg på ideer utviklet av den skotske filosofen David Hume. Ifølge humeansk superveniens (HS), består verden fundamentalt sett kun av romlig-temporale punkter. Fysiske lover og lovmessigheter supervenierer på disse romlig-temporale punktene. Sentralt i HS er ideen om at en endring i det lille medfører en endring i det store, men ikke motsatt. På denne måten er verden som en mosaikk. HS er en fysikalistisk teori. Alt som finnes er disse punktene i verden, bitene i mosaikken; empiriske fakta om verden, arrangert på en spesifikk måte. Disse punktene kan eksistere over, under eller til siden for hverandre – både i tid og rom. Fysikkens lover kan ikke endres uten at relasjonen mellom disse punktene endres. Hvis en forestiller seg en verden annerledes fra vår verden, men med de samme relasjonene mellom de romlig-temporale punktene, vil ikke denne verden være forskjellig fra vår verden. De vil altså være identiske (jamfør Lewis' modal realisme). **B.B. & K.K.**

Identitetsteori er teorien om at alle individuelle mentale tilstander er reduserbare til fysiske tilstander – typisk vil dette være nevrologisk aktivitet. For eksempel liker filosofer å diskutere smerte som stimulering av C-nervefibre. Denne (litt fantasifulle) formuleringen av nevrologisk aktivitet tas som definisjonen av smerte. Dette er en måte å beskrive mental aktivitet som en fysisk aktivitet. En fysikalistisk teori om sinnet ville være forpliktet til å si at et tilfelle av C-nervefiber-stimulering er identisk med smerte. Det er mange

QUIZ

1. I hvilket år inngikk Skottland og England en personalunion? (10 års slingringsmonn)
2. David Hume hjalp en kjent filosof med å finne overnatting og prøvde å skaffe vedkommende en pensjon fra kong George III. Hvilken?
3. Hvilken annen kjent filosof/økonom var god venn med David Hume?
4. Hva består moderne kavaleri av?
5. Hva heter ingrediensen som gjør lussekattene gule?
6. Hva heter apen med de røde støvlene i Dora the Explorer?
7. Hvilken dato er Europadagen?
8. I hvilken by ble David Hume født?
9. Hva ble motorsagen først brukt til da den ble oppfunnet?
10. Hvor mange hestekrefter kan en hest maksimalt ha?

SVAR

1. 1606
2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau
3. Adam Smith
4. Stridsvogner/kampvogner
5. Safran
6. Boots
7. 9. Mai
8. Edinburgh
9. For å bistå i fødsel
10. 24 (tro det eller ei)

FORRIGE NUMMER

RETTFERDIGHET

(#1/2025)

Rettferdighet er en av de viktigste og mest sentrale konseptene i tenkning rundt politikk og etikk. Det er et stort ord som favner mange idétradisjoner. Den dag i dag lurer vi fortsatt på hva det egentlig er for noe. Noe annet vi kan spørre oss selv er: Hvordan ser det ut i praksis? Fra Platon til John Rawls, fra Karl Marx til Robert Nozick, har vi en rik idétradisjon som fortsatt er relevant i dag. Vi kan kanskje ikke gi et ubestridt svar i denne utgaven, men vi kan med stor sikkerhet si at flere av bidragene vil gi leserne våre ny innsikt i en viktig og urgammel debatt.

Forrige nummer av *Filosofisk supplement* tok for seg temaet "Rettferdighet", via tekster om kjønnsroller, klima og miljø, gammelgresk filosofi, og straff. Dette var også første nummer med et nytt og mindre fysisk format.

Tekstbidrag fra: Bendik Hellem Aaby, Benjamin Berglen, Sindre Brennhagen, Thomas Torgersen Bråttum, Panos Dimas, Severin Gartland, Geir Heivoll, Marcus Holst-Pedersen, Kevin Køhn, Trym Mostad, Sjur Sandvik Strøm, Allan Thommessen, Kasper Vere, og Stian Ødegård.

NESTE NUMMER

KROPPEN

(#3/2025)

Kroppen er noe mer enn bare et instrument for handling. Kroppen kan være et hjem for oss, og den kan oppleves som noe som begrenser oss. Kroppen vår er med oss fra før vi blir født til etter vi dør. Den kan virke som et perfekt stemt instrument eller ikke virke i det hele tatt. Havi Carel skriver om den syke kroppen, der kroppen er noe annet. Litt som et ødelagt redskap som ikke fungerer slik det skal lenger. Kropp kan òg være kjærlighet, som Murdoch skrev i *Den Svarte Prinsen*, “The absolute yearning of one human body for another particular one and its indifference to substitutes is one of life’s major mysteries” (1973). Kropp og kjærlighet er for noen ett og det samme, men for andre vidt forskjellige.

Til neste nummer av *Filosofisk supplement* søker vi tekster som omhandler filosofiske problemstillinger knyttet til kroppen. Vil du bidra med en tekst eller illustrasjon? Send en e-post med idéutkast, skisse eller ferdig tekst til bidrag@filosofisksupplement.no. Vi oppfordrer særlig studenter til å sende inn sine bidrag. Vi tar også inn bidrag fra andre fagdisipliner, så lenge teksten beskjeftiger seg med et filosofisk tema, én eller flere spesifikke filosofer, eller på andre måter kan sies å ha en filosofisk brodd. Alle innsendte bidrag leses anonymt i tråd med «blind review». Det vil si at inntil teksten eventuelt blir godkjent av redaksjonen vil forfatterens identitet holdes skjult for leserne og omvendt. Dersom teksten blir refusert, vil forfatterens identitet forbli hemmelig. Dette er for å kvalitetssikre lesingen og senke terskelen for innsending. Til info bruker vi Chicago 17 forfatter-år som referansestil.

Innsendingsfrist: 1. august

I tillegg ønsker vi at det følgende legges ved utkast:

- Ingress på cirka 100 ord i begynnelsen av teksten
- Forfatterinformasjon (eksempel: «Ernst Spinoza (f. 1998) er masterstudent i filosofi ved UiB.»)
- Adresse (slik at vi vet hvor ditt eksemplar skal sendes dersom teksten din blir godkjent)

BIDRAGSYTERE

Tekst

Benjamin Berglen (f. 2000) tar en mastergrad i filosofi ved UiO.

Severin Gartland (f. 1998) har fagbrev i automasjonsfaget.

Michael Gill (f. 1965) er instituttleder for filosofi ved Universitetet i Edinburgh.

Martin Elias Bergh Hanssen (f. 2002) er masterstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Lisa Bye Heen (f. 2002) er bachelorstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Marcus Holst-Pedersen (f. 1998) har en mastergrad i filosofi fra UiO og tar en mastergrad i statsvitenskap ved UiO.

Kevin Køhn (f. 1999) tar en mastergrad i filosofi ved UiO.

Stian Laupsa-Schjerva (f. 2004) er bachelorstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Trym Mostad (f. 1998) tar en mastergrad i filosofi ved UiO.

Julie Noorda (f. 2001) er bachelorstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Bilder

1. The Swan, No. 1 (1915) – Hilma af Klint

2. Ariel Riding on a Bat (1820) – Joseph Severn

3. Michael Gill

4. Solen (1909) – Edvard Munch

5. & 6. Lisa Bye Heen, Julie Noorda

Filosofisk supplement er et studentdrevet tidsskrift basert på frivillig arbeid.

Takk til alle bidragsytere – bladet hadde ikke blitt til uten dere!

