

Workshop on Hume's concept of sympathy at Antwerp University, June 2-3 2011.

Organised by: *Centre for Ethics*, Department of Philosophy

Scientific committee: Willem Lemmens, Bence Nanay, Maarten Van Dyck (Ghent University)

Organising committee: Willem Lemmens, Petra Van Brabandt, Katie Paxman, Rudmer Bijlsma, Livia Verbrugge

Invited speakers : Jacqueline Taylor, Stephen Darwall, Julien A. Deonna, Bence Nanay, Eric Schliesser

### **From Sympathy to Empathy: Hume and Beyond**

This two day conference will be devoted to Hume's concept of sympathy and to contemporary accounts of empathy. The aim of the conference is threefold: a) to address various issues related to Hume's conception of sympathy as brought forward in his *Treatise of Human Nature*; b) to confront Hume's account of sympathy with contemporary research on empathy and the emotions (esp. in philosophy of mind and moral psychology); c) to evaluate how Hume's conception of *extensive sympathy* could add to actual debates on the constitution of moral emotions and moral values.

The wide conceptual scope of Humean sympathy confronts both Hume scholars and contemporary philosophers of mind with challenging and fascinating questions. Should we identify, as some have done, Humean sympathy with what not only in common parlance, but also in contemporary philosophy of mind is called *empathy*? Or is Hume rather referring to something more basic, namely mere *emotional contagion*, whereby the self experiences the emotions (passions) of the other in a quasi-instinctive way, without necessarily sharing the perspective of the other? But if so, how may we reconcile this interpretation of sympathy with an account of sympathy as *imaginative identification* with the other *qua* other? How, moreover, is this capacity for identification related to the *extensive sympathy* constitutive of morality, the analysis of which Hume develops in Book 3 of the *Treatise*? What is the role of the indirect passions (of pride and humility, love and hate) in this constitutive process? This brings also forward the question of how these passions are related to the moral sentiments which Hume identifies as specific emotions of praise and blame towards character traits. And *last but not least*, there is the question what the role of sympathy could be in the sphere of the so-called artificial virtues of justice, chastity and allegiance to government. How can sympathy, which is in nature always particularistic, be not only constitutive for justice, but also a major force in the establishment of the conventions of property and political institutions?

These and related question brought forward by Hume's account of sympathy we want to adress in this colloquium. Though the focus of this conference lies mainly on Hume's concept of sympathy, we also welcome contributions on related 18th century accounts of sympathy, notably of Adam Smith, or later contributions within 19th and 20th century philosophy or psychology on issues related to the phenomenon of empathy (for ex. the account of 'Sympathie' by Max Scheler).

We invite Hume scholars, but also philosophers working on contemporary philosophy of mind (esp. on empathy and the emotions) or scholars with related interests, both from a historical or more contemporary approach, to submit paper proposals of 800 to 1000 words max. to the conference organisers. Deadline of the proposals: February 28, 2011. Acceptance of papers will be announced by March 18, 2011.

For more information: [willem.lemmens@ua.ac.be](mailto:willem.lemmens@ua.ac.be) or [petra.vanbrabandt@ua.ac.be](mailto:petra.vanbrabandt@ua.ac.be)