Abstract:
The question whether it is possible to be both a Humean and a contractarian arises from the interpretation of Hume as a theorist of spontaneous order, a theory that is usually taken to be incompatible with contractarianism. I argue that this interpretation is unconvincing and anachronistic. The real reason why it is problematic to view Hume as a contractarian is not because he is proponent of spontaneous order, but because he is a virtue-ethicist. I argue that Hume adopted and elaborated on the natural law account of the origins of property as conventional, but provided a different and separate account of the obligation to respect property rights.

Keywords: Hume, convention, spontaneous order, contractarianism, natural law, property.