Abstract:
I defend the claim, made in a previous paper, that ‘a Humean can be a contractarian’, against the criticisms of Anthony de Jasay. Jasay makes a categorical distinction between ‘ordered anarchy’ (which he associates with Hume) and ‘social contract theory’. I argue that Hume’s political position was conservative, not anarchist. On Hume’s analysis, a convention is an implicit agreement; the concept of convention is more general than, rather than distinct from, that of agreement by exchange of promises. Hume justifies political obligation by treating established forms of government as conventions in this sense.

Keywords: contractarianism, social contract theory, Hume, ordered anarchy, convention.