

Borders Enlightenment Conference and Dinner

Emotions and Reason

What does it mean to be human in a post-truth world?

Chirnside Community Centre, Chirnside TD1 3XR

Saturday 29 April 2017 from 14.00 to 17.15



Truth springs from argument amongst friends.

(David Hume)

www.facebook.com/ChirnsideFriendsofDavidHume

www.facebook.com/BordersEnlightenment



Borders Enlightenment Conference 2017

Introduction

Enlightenment – A term so familiar in Scotland and across Europe, describing the progress and change from the dark days of accepted dogmas of irrationality to the clear light of reasoned thinking.

The Enlightenment was the transformational, intellectual, philosophical and cultural movement that brought reason, logic and freedom of thought to the fore with the encouragement of individuals to think for themselves and think the unacceptable, well ‘outside the box’, instead of being led blindly in shackles of superstition, dogma and unwarranted acceptance of the statements of traditional schools of thought and religion. It brought new philosophies of morality and virtue based on foundations of human and humanitarian values, a belief in equality and tolerance creating a new cosmopolitanism believing that people are united not by their nationality but in a brotherhood bonded by shared rationality, toleration and social conviviality. Enlightenment thinking was about both moral and economic improvement. One of the greatest philosophers of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, said that enlightenment is the ‘*emergence of man from his self-imposed infancy.*’ The Enlightenment was not only a philosophy or even a philosophical discourse but a cultural revolution.

Its dynamic was, in some measure, its contagion, the up-thrust of the thinking and debates both private and public of those who were prepared to question the status quo, think and speak their thoughts, argue their case, break the mould, realise and share their realisations. For them it was an unavoidable imperative.

So is that it? Is enlightenment confined to periods of history that much needed it or is there as much imperative in today’s world for continual questioning, finding fresh insights, knowledge and ways of thinking and being, understanding matters better, living more fruitfully, freely, fully and with greater social cohesion in these differently challenging times? For all our apparent ‘light’ and sophistication we still seem to struggle with emotions, reason and false truths or what today is dubbed ‘fake news’. This year’s conference is designed to address this and ask the question ‘What does it mean to be human in a post-truth world?’

So if enlightenment is anything it's surely a dynamic though intangible element of life but one which has to be sought out, considered, shared and debated to test it out, to refine questions into considered thought of realistic possibilities. One of Hume's many insights was that '*Truth springs from argument amongst friends.*' Of course in the past there appears to have been that golden element called time. Today, considered thought, space to reflect, opportunity to discuss and debate, think through issues of whatever nature, so easily get pushed into recesses of semi or permanent abeyance by the bombardment and immediacy of ever pressing demands on our time. Living at a faster pace with highly complex lives in a seemingly fast fragmenting social world, perhaps our need to stop and stare as W.H. Davies encouraged us to do, to reflect, think and consider, is needed more than ever.

This first Borders Enlightenment Conference has grown out of the events held over the last seven years to celebrate our great, world renowned philosophers from Chirnside and Duns, David Hume and John Duns Scotus. Very different men in so many ways yet both developed moral philosophies bringing us enlightenment of different sorts that has lasted the test of time.

Our David Hume and John Duns Scotus groups plan to come together to hold an enlightenment conference each year with subjects to challenge us alternating the venue between Chirnside and Duns. We hope these events will provide a focus for people across our Borders and beyond in every sense for stimulating and pleasurable discussions, debate and thinking.

We invite you to share your thoughts on how we might progress our events and their subject matter. Who would you like to hear speak? What discussions would you like us to have? What enlightenment events should we stage? This is about all of us so please stay in touch and let us know what you'd like to happen and if you're free, come and help us to make it happen.

Please either email Carol at jeffersondavies@gmail.com or Derek at derek.jane1@btinternet.com or go to our Facebook sites.

We hope you enjoy the conference and dinner.

Please give us your feedback and please come again.

Carol Jefferson-Davies (Chair Chirnside David Hume Group) and

Derek Janes (Chair John Duns Scotus Festival)

Programme

13.15 Doors open. Tea and Coffee

14.00 Welcome and introduction: Carol Jefferson-Davies & Derek Janes

Session 1. Chair: Ken Gemes

14.10-14.45 Jane O'Grady, *What does it mean to be human?*

14.45–14.55 Audience questions to Jane O'Grady

Session 2. Chair: Jane O'Grady

14.55–15.30 Laura Candiotta. *Feeling reasons. The social dimension of positive and negative emotions*

15.30-15.40 Audience questions to Laura Candiotta

15.40–16.00 Tea and Coffee

Session 3. Chair: Jane O'Grady

16.00–16.45 Ken Gemes, *On the Value of Truth and the Need for Meaning*

16.35–16.45 Audience questions to Ken Gemes

Session 4 Chair: Michael Bavidge

16.45 – 17.05 Conference Discussion with all the speakers. We welcome audience participation.

17.05 – 17.10 Summing up by Michael Bavidge

17.10 Closing remarks by Carol Jefferson-Davies

Chairs, Speakers and Abstracts

Jane O'Grady, London School of Philosophy

What does it mean to be human?



Abstract

Are emotions a distortion of our true (rational) nature, as many philosophical and religious thinkers have thought? Or is it rather, as Hume began to make us believe, that reason can be an encumbrance to our instinctive perceptions of the world, and our natural sympathy? Does reason, in fact, speciously gloss over the emotional animal selves that we really are? We now live in a disenchanted world. Have the revelations of Darwin, Schopenhauer and Freud enlightened or diminished us?

Dr Jane O'Grady teaches at the London School of Philosophy and was one of its seven founders. She runs courses at the Freud Museum, and for the 'How To' Academy. Jane has been a visiting lecturer in Philosophy of Psychology at City University, London. She began her professional career teaching English at Inner City London secondary schools, then taught extramural philosophy at Birkbeck. Jane co-edited *A Dictionary of Philosophical Quotations* (Blackwell 1992) with A. J. Ayer, wrote several entries for the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford 1995), and introductions to Mill's *On Liberty and The Subjection of Women* (Wordsworth 1996), Plato's *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, and Symposium* (Wordsworth 1997).

Jane writes philosophers' obituaries for the *Guardian* newspaper, and reviews books and writes articles for various papers, magazines and web-sites including the *Times Literary Supplement, Times Higher Educational Supplement, Financial Times, Prospect, Observer, Daily Telegraph, and Open Democracy*. She had her own column (O'Grady Says) in *The Literary Review* (1986 - 1990) and has broadcast on Radio 4 and BBC World Service. Recently, Jane has been researching and writing a book about romantic love – philosophical but also bringing in literature, anthropology, sociology, neuroscience and evolutionary biology.

**Dr. Laura Candiotta. Marie Curie Research Fellow,
School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language
Sciences, University of Edinburgh.**

**Feeling reasons. The social dimension of positive and
negative emotions.**



Abstract

What happens to our judgements when they are affected by emotions? Is their role in knowledge beneficial or detrimental? Why should we take care of them? In this talk Laura Candiotta will provide some answers to these questions, moved by the hypothesis that emotions are the ultimate guide to the good of the agents, but that they need to be nurtured within the horizon of virtue and responsibility. In the first part of her talk, she will address the topic in relation to the social dimension of knowledge, asking, for example, what ‘group knowledge’ means, and what kind of cognition is produced. Then, she will examine the impact of positive and negative emotions in group knowledge, showing that positive emotions are facilitating conditions for cooperation. Finally, she will discuss the value of cooperation, in relation to the ethics of care, sketching some of the social and political consequences that are embedded in my approach.

Laura Candiotta, PhD in Philosophy (Venice-Paris, 2011), works as Marie Curie Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh, where she is leading the project *Emotions First. Feeling reasons: the role of emotions in reasoning* (www.emotionsfirst.org), funded by the EU, and hosted by the Eidyn Centre, University of Edinburgh. Her area of specialization is philosophy of emotions, in relationship with social epistemology, ethics, education, and the history of philosophy.

Her publications include: ‘Extended affectivity as the cognition of the primary intersubjectivity’, *Phenomenology and Mind* 11 (2016), 232–41); (with S. De Vido) ‘The Persuasive Force of Ancient and Contemporary Preambles. From Plato to International Law’, *Journal of Legal Studies* 1(2016), 127–50; ‘Plato’s cosmological medicine in the discourse of Eryximachus in the *Symposium*. The responsibility of a harmonic *techné*’, *Plato Journal* 5 (2015), 81–93; ‘Aporetic State and Extended Emotions: The Shameful Recognition of Contradictions in the Socratic Elenchus’, *Ethics & Politics* 17/2 (2015), 219–34.



Professor Ken Gemes, Birkbeck, University of London

On the Value of Truth and the Need for Meaning

Abstract

Nietzsche diagnosed the central problem of modernity as a clash between our will for truth and our need for meaning. For Nietzsche, the rise of scientism championed by enlightenment thinkers inevitably leads to a disenchanted world stripped of all those myths capable of providing existential meaning. Nietzsche foresaw that the death of God as dogma (belief in an almighty God, and immortal souls) would be followed by a death of God as morality (the belief in the redemptive value of both compassion and truth). In a post-truth world narratives can flourish unfettered by the restraint of a demand for factual grounding. This allows for such a proliferation of narrative, however, that we are challenged to find common narratives capable of sustaining social coherence and shared meaning.

Professor Ken Gemes published on the intersection of logic and philosophy of science for over a decade and then, after a cataclysmic personal tragedy, turned his attention to topics more relevant to ‘flesh and blood humans’ (cf. [_www.3ammagazine.com/3am/on-the-tragedy-of-life/](http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/on-the-tragedy-of-life/)). This partially coincided with his move from Yale University where he had taught for over ten years, to Birkbeck College University of London. He now mainly writes on the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.



Michael Bavidge, Chair

Michael Bavidge was a lecturer in philosophy at the Centre for Lifelong Learning, Newcastle University. For ten years before he retired, he ran the Adult Education Programme at the university. He has written on psychopathy and the law, pain and suffering, and animal minds. He is the President of the Philosophical Society of England which brings together academic and non-academic philosophers who believe in the importance of exploring philosophical ideas and their relevance to our social and personal lives.



The David Hume '*Food for thought*' Dinner

Chirnside Hall Hotel TD11 3LD

Since David Hume's tercentenary in 2011, we have been celebrating the great man and enlightened thinking per se, on the Saturday nearest to Hume's birth date (old calendar). In true Humean style, our key celebration to date has been sharing a feast of the finest cuisine, accompanied by claret (Hume's restorative medicine) and the engagement of ideas through talks, discussions, playlets, readings, locally authored poetry and other ways of creating stimulating, pleasurable and challenging 'enlightened' thought. The annual dinner is open to all (though must be booked) and is held at Chirnside Hall Hotel in the most beautiful and significant of settings overlooking the countryside edged by the Cheviots, the very territory which was so familiar to David Hume especially in his formative years here. Indeed, it was across this land that the young David rode daily for something like 20 miles on doctor's advice, quaffing a pint of claret thereafter as a remedy for his apparent 'breakdown' or what his physician diagnosed as a 'disease of the learned'. — An interesting remedy perhaps for those of us prone to neglect our basic needs due to overwork and over-thinking!



Tonight's speaker is

Dr Vincent Hope, *Hume's moral psychology*



Abstract

Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith developed ethical theory from postulating a sense of the beauty of virtue to postulating a communal sense of shared respect for treating each other fairly, based on sympathy. He is calling this 'nostruism'. His stance will be both appreciative and critical and will suggest that the moral viewpoint (which Hume and Smith describe as that of an impartial spectator) is collective and is in the first-person plural. Modelling a term on the words 'egoism' and 'altruism', he will suggest the term 'nostruism', also based on Latin. In his opinion morality operates at very different levels and through all kinds of collective association, at the level of the family, the neighbourhood, clubs, business, politics, citizenship, etc. where people identify themselves morally as 'we of the family' or 'we of this neighbourhood' or 'we of this rugby team' or 'we of this political party'. At that level, they collectively hold a relevant idea of fairness about how members ought to treat each other or be treated, if they are babies or children or too old to look after themselves.

Dr. Vincent Hope was born and educated in Edinburgh, where he took a degree in philosophy. He joined the University's Philosophy Department in 1959 to teach Hume's moral philosophy and retired in 1999. He has had articles published in *Philosophy*, *Mind*, and *Inquiry*. His book on the moral philosophy of David Hume, Adam Smith and Francis Hutcheson, *Virtue by Consensus*, was published by Oxford University Press. He has been visiting professor at Rochester University New York and Dartmouth College New Hampshire. Dr. Hope's present interest is to argue that philosophy provides a bridge between common sense and science.

Conference at The University of Edinburgh 24 to 26 May 2017.

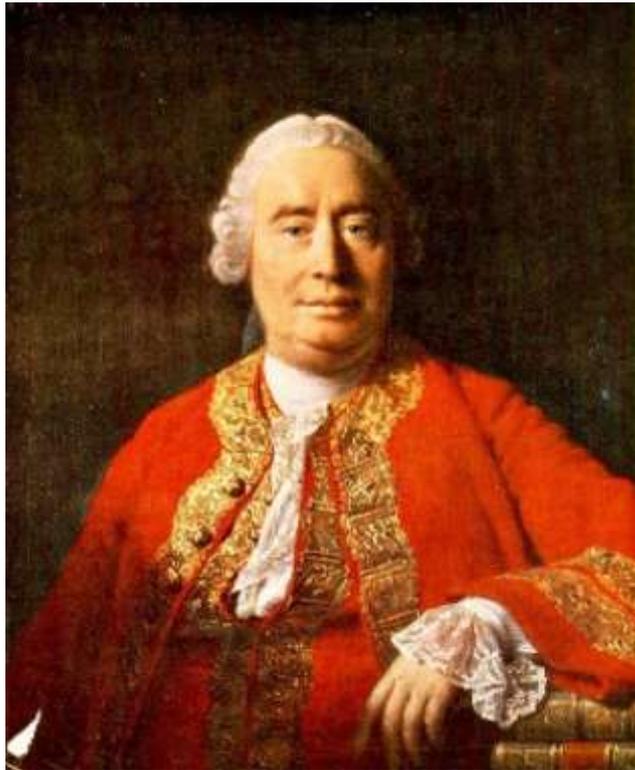
Convenor: Dr Laura Candiotta



On 24 to 26 May 2017, the Eidyn Research Centre of the University of Edinburgh will host an three-day International Conference titled *Feeling Reasons. The Role of Emotions in Reasoning*. Whilst this is a conference primarily for university members, a few places will be available for members of the public. For more information and to register go to <https://emotionsfirst.org/program/>



Founded in 1900 as the [Scots Philosophical Club](#), the Scots Philosophical Association (SPA) is the professional association of philosophers in Scotland. Its primary purpose is to promote the study and teaching of philosophy in Scotland. It sponsors conferences, workshops, and fellowships. We are grateful for the SPA's kind support of our first Borders Enlightenment Conference.



**Be a philosopher, but amid all your philosophy,
still be a man.**