



# Between Hiroshima and Sapporo: Success in research despite the pandemic

Uku Tooming

Research Fellow in Theoretical Philosophy  
Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics  
University of Tartu

May 2023

- Born in 1986.
- Grew up in Tartu, Estonia.
- PhD in Philosophy from the University of Tartu in 2014.







## My academic path (after PhD)

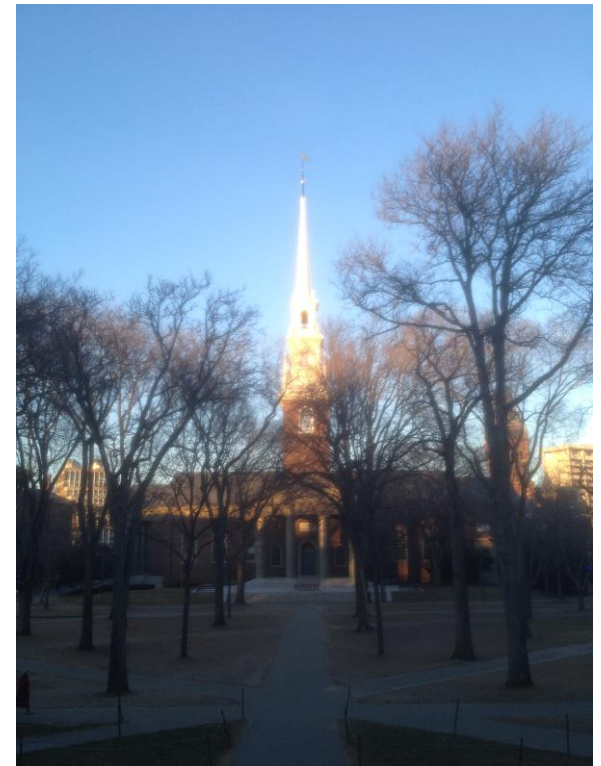
- Harvard University (2017-2019)
- Hiroshima University (2019-2020)
- Hokkaido University (2020-2021)
- Back in Tartu (2021-...)





# Before Japan

- Late 2018, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4 years since PhD.
- The idea to apply for JSPS fellowship came from a Japanese colleague at Harvard, Katsunori Miyahara.
- The future host: Kengo Miyazono.



# Application

- Project title: “Using Imagination to Learn What to Want”
- Simple application process.
- Research interests closely aligned with the host’s profile.
- Research plan included joint publications.

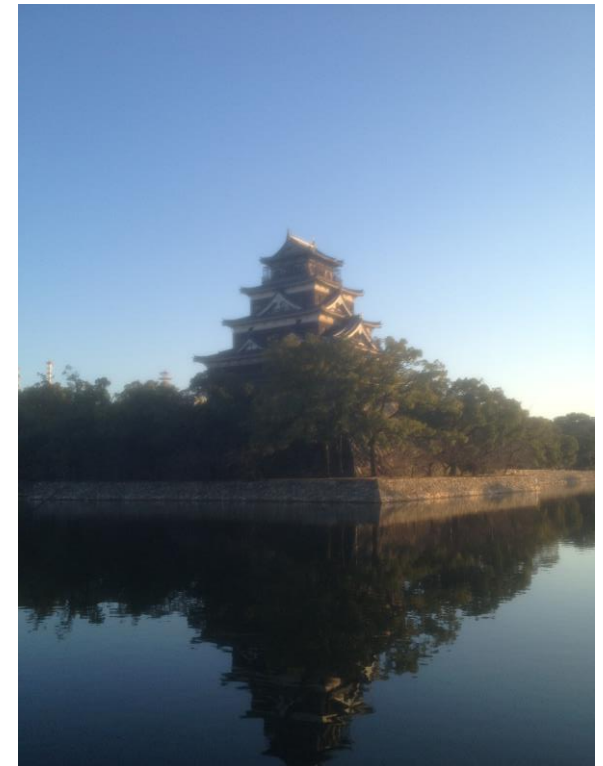
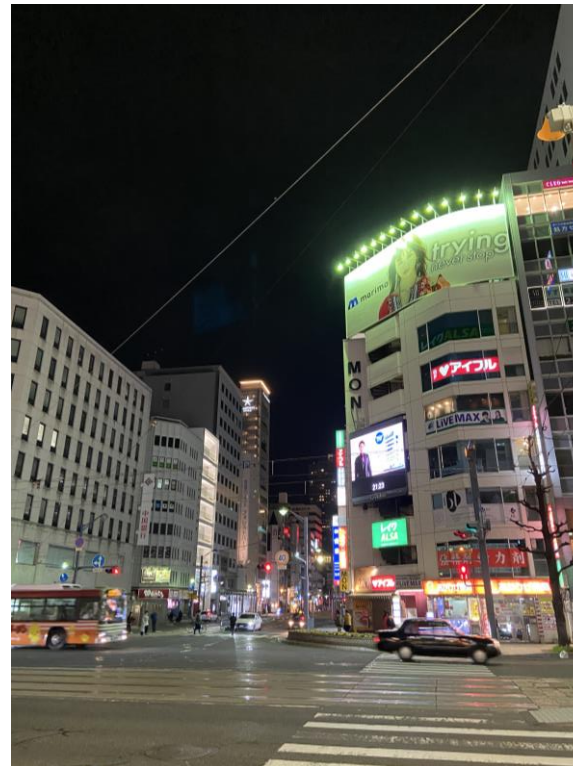


Kengo Miyazono

Associate Professor  
in Hokkaido  
University,  
formerly in  
Hiroshima university

# Hiroshima (early days)

- Finishing some earlier papers, Kengo's feedback.
- Joint projects on:
  - vividness of mental imagery;
  - drink titles.
- Conferences in Akita and Tokyo.
- Japanese classes.
- Submissions to international conferences.





# Pandemic

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## Spring 2020

- No more in-person meetings or conferences.
- No more Japanese classes.
- No more international conferences.
- No more toilet paper.
  
- The project on drink titles was also postponed indefinitely.



## Summer 2020

- Regular Zoom meetings with Kengo.
- Online reading groups.
- New joint projects:
  - epistemology of memory and imagination;
  - self-knowledge of emotion.





# Moving to Sapporo (autumn 2020)



- Work-in-progress seminar with other philosophers at Hokudai (online).
- Connections with CHAIN (Hokkaido University Center for Human Nature, Artificial Intelligence, and Neuroscience).





# Winter/spring in Sapporo

- Continuing to work on joint papers.
- Submissions to online international conferences.
- Science Dialogue lecture, “What Is Philosopher’s Work,” in Sapporo Asahigaoka Senior High School, March 19.
- Teaching with Kengo an online seminar on the role of imagination in science to Hokudai graduate students.
- Soup curry and ジンギスカン



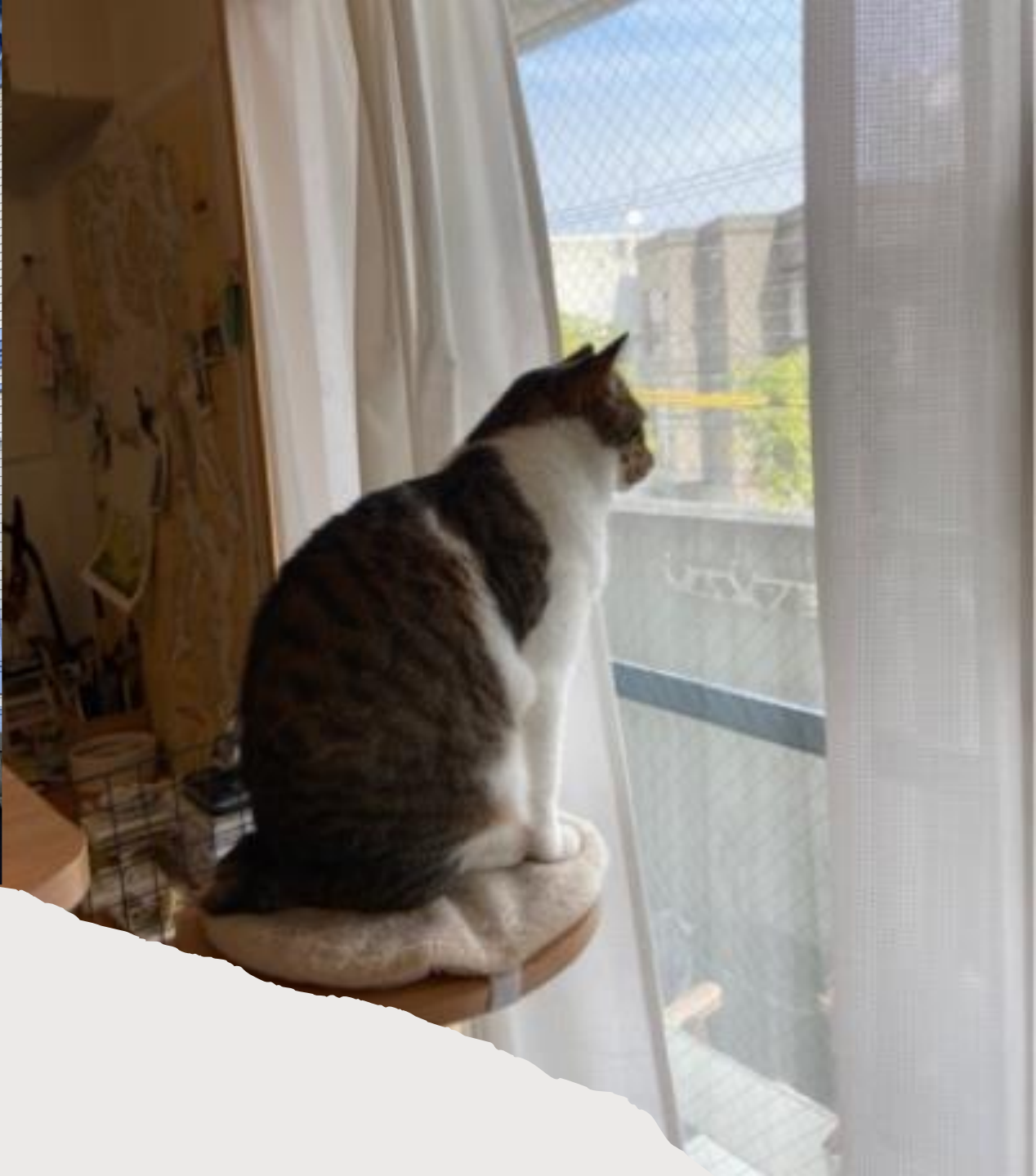


# Summer in Sapporo

- Beginning to work on a paper on epistemology of imagination (later published in *Noûs*, one of the top 3 journals on philosophy).
- Finishing a manuscript on aesthetic reasons (later published in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*).
- Online international conferences:
  - 28th Conference of the European Society for Philosophy and Psychology, The Aristotelian Society 95<sup>th</sup> Joint Session, 28th Conference of the European Society for Philosophy and Psychology, The European Society for Aesthetics 2021 Conference.







Departure





# Results



# BEING FAMILIAR WITH WHAT ONE WANTS

BY  
UKU TOOMING

**Abstract:** Self-ascriptions of desire seem to differ in their epistemic security. There are easy cases in which a sincere self-ascription immediately counts as knowledgeable, and there are hard cases in which it is an open question whether an agent actually knows that they have the desire that they take themselves to have. In this paper, I suggest an explanation according to which whether a self-ascription of desire is easy or hard depends on whether one is familiar with the content of the self-ascribed desire.

AUSTRALASIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2022.2055584>



## Knowing When to Stop

Uku Tooming

University of Tartu

### ABSTRACT

What are the conditions under which an agent has an aesthetic reason to stop appreciating something? In this paper, I argue that such a reason is dependent not only on the aesthetic properties of the object of appreciation but also on the hedonic state of the agent. Virtuous aesthetic agents who are responsive to aesthetic reasons need to be sensitive to hedonic changes in relation to the object and to recognise when these changes make it appropriate to sever one's appreciative focus. The resulting view has implications for how to understand aesthetic fittingness, aesthetic obligation, and the difference between aesthetic and moral reasons.

**ARTICLE HISTORY** Received 11 August 2021; Revised 28 February 2022

**KEYWORDS** aesthetic reasons; pleasure; appreciation; aesthetic virtue; aesthetic normativity

Journal of the American Philosophical Association (2022), 1–19. © The Author(s), 2022. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Philosophical Association  
DOI:10.1017/apa.2021.20

## Desire's Own Reasons

**ABSTRACT:** *In this essay I ask if there are reasons that count in favor of having a desire in virtue of its attitudinal nature. I call those considerations desire's own reasons. I argue that desire's own reasons are considerations that explain why a desire meets its constitutive standard of correctness and that it meets this standard when its satisfaction would also be satisfactory to the subject who has it. Reasons that bear on subjective satisfaction are fit to regulate desires through experience and imagination because desires are naturally sensitive to them. I also analyze the limits of application that such reasons have and how desire's own reasons relate to other kinds of reasons.*

**KEYWORDS:** desire, reasons, imagination, satisfaction

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2022.2108101>



## Self-Knowledge of Desire: When Inference Is Not Enough

Uku Tooming

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### ABSTRACT

According to inferentialism about self-knowledge of desire, the basic way in which we come to know what we want is through inference. In this paper, I argue that in a wide range of cases of knowing one's desire, inference is insufficient. In particular, I look at two inferentialist models, one proposed by Krista Lawlor and the other by Alex Byrne and look at the challenges that they face in securing safe self-ascriptions. In response to these difficulties, I argue that we can explain how inferentially based self-ascriptions can be safe when we consider the agent's role in sustaining their desires through attending and elaborating on the content of desire through imagination.

**KEYWORDS** Self-knowledge; desire; epistemic safety; imagination; inference; cognitive achievement

Received: 16 May 2019 | Revised: 30 November 2020 | Accepted: 23 August 2021  
DOI: 10.1111/ejop.12722

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

European Journal of Philosophy WILEY

## How to keep up good appearances: Desire, imagination, and the good

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### Abstract

It is not uncommon to think that having a desire involves taking its object to be good in some sense. This idea has been developed in two directions: either toward a view that understands the positive evaluation in terms of a judgment or belief or a view according to which the relevant evaluation is perception-like. In this article, I defend a novel proposal that takes the positive evaluation of the object of desire to be a kind of imagining.

Synthese (2021) 199:3023–3043  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02920-9>

IMAGINATION AND ITS LIMITS



## Vividness as a natural kind

Uku Tooming<sup>1</sup> · Kengo Miyazono<sup>1</sup>

Received: 12 July 2020 / Accepted: 15 October 2020 / Published online: 31 October 2020  
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### Abstract

Imaginations are often characterized in terms of vividness. However, there is little agreement in the philosophical literature as to what it amounts to and how to even investigate it. In this paper, we propose a natural kind methodology to study vividness and suggest treating it as a homeostatic property cluster with an underlying nature that explains the correlation of properties in that cluster. This approach relies on the empirical research on the vividness of mental imagery and contrasts with those accounts that treat vividness as an explanatory primitive and with those that attempt to provide a definition. We apply the natural kind methodology to make several substantive (but also provisional) claims about the vividness of mental imagery. First, we will argue that it forms a homeostatic property cluster, in that it is reliably correlated with, but not defined by, some properties, such as the level of detail, clarity, perception-likeness and intensity. In arguing for this claim, we also show how the cluster can be modified in the light of empirical research by complementing it with a correlation between vividness and familiarity. Second, we will argue that these correlations can be explained by an underlying property at the architectural level; i.e., the availability of stored sensory information for the elaboration of a mental image.

**Keywords** Imagination · Mental imagery · Vividness · Natural kinds

Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-022-09884-w>



## What does pleasure want?

Uku Tooming<sup>1</sup>

Accepted: 24 November 2022  
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### Abstract

Some philosophers and psychologists share an assumption that pleasure is by nature such that when an experience is pleasurable, an agent is motivated to continue having that experience. In this paper, I dispute this assumption. First, I point out how it does not make sense of the wanting-like distinction in motivational neuroscience. Second, I present a counterexample what I call 'dynamic pleasure' which does not motivate retaining one's focus on the object of original experience but motivates an exploration of other options instead. Third, as another counterexample, I bring out pleasures of relief which are bound to pass when one's discomfort is removed and in which case it is reasonable to assume that there is no motivation to maintain them. Fourth, I appeal to phenomenology of pleasure and argue that many experiences have a temporal shape which is in conflict with the self-maintenance assumption. As an example, I use the pleasure in listening to a song. The conclusion of the paper is that we should reject the self-maintenance assumption and consider seriously pluralism about the motivational structure of pleasure.

**Keywords** Pleasure · Motivation · Valence · Experience · Wanting-like distinction · Songs

ARTICLE

NOUS

## Imagination as a generative source of justification

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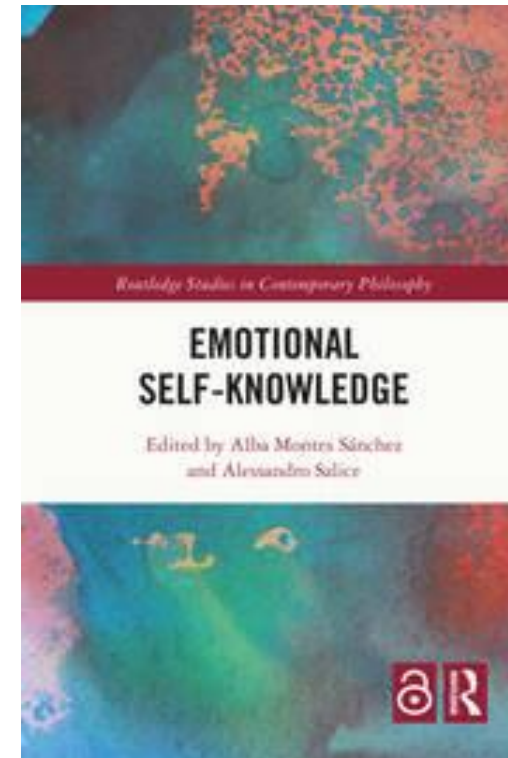
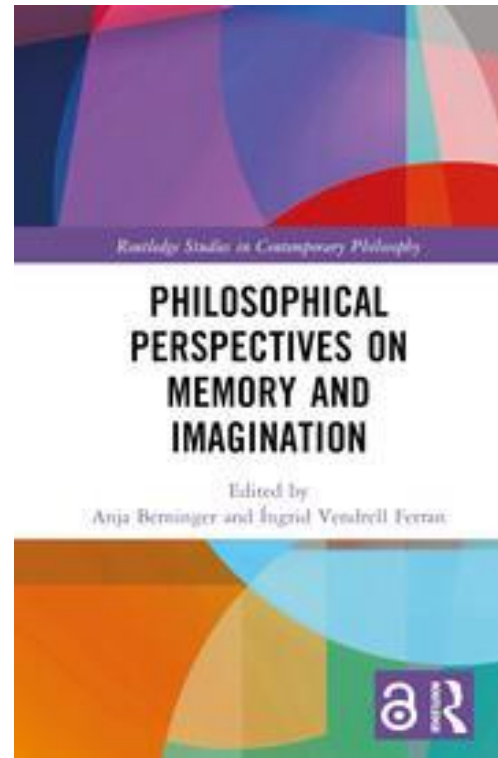
### Abstract

One of the most exciting debates in philosophy of imagination in recent years has been over the epistemic use of imagination where imagination epistemically contributes to justifying beliefs and acquiring knowledge. This paper defends "generationism about imagination" according to which imagination is a generative source, rather than a preservative source, of justification. In other words, imagination generates new justification above and beyond prior justification provided by other sources. After clarifying the generation/preservation distinction (Section 2), we present an argument for generationism about imagination, which can be divided into

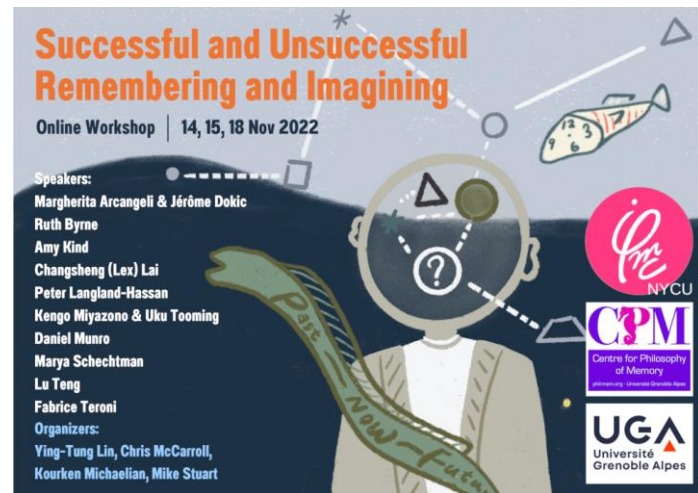


# Book chapters

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Invited talks





# Other outcomes

Connections between Estonian and Japanese philosophers:

- Hokkaido-Tartu philosophy workshop (June 21-22, 2022).

Future research:

- 1) book project on epistemology of imagination and memory (with Kengo);
- 2) work on aesthetic appreciation and pleasure (potential collaborations with other Japanese colleagues);
- 3) joint grant proposal on imagination with colleagues in Tartu.

Thank you for listening!