Social ontology

Social ontology is a rapidly growing field within analytic philosophy. Early contributions in the late 1980s and early 1990s tended to focus mainly on either collective action theory or the nature of social facts, often with an emphasis on collective intentionality as a key phenomenon. But in more recent years, the field has broadened, bringing in new perspectives from metaphysics, philosophy of science, and political theory, with important work being done on how to understand social kinds, social norms, and social structures, as well as how these can enable or constrain people's agency and thought. While social norms can be, and often are, immensely helpful in coordinating our actions and thereby contributing to collective benefits, they can also have a dark side, serving as the basis of oppression and domination.

This course offers a critical discussion of new perspectives in social ontology on the notions of norms, power, and social normativity. More specifically, it looks into recent nonideal approaches to social norms and social normativity. While more traditional forms of social ontology often model social phenomena by introducing simplifying assumptions which abstract from many of the differences that exist between members of any actual society, nonideal social ontology eschews such simplifications, working with more complex and realistic examples in order to facilitate theorizing that can be helpful in addressing existing social injustices and oppressive social norms, especially ones pertaining to social categories like gender, race, and class. At the end of the course, students will be familiar with the current philosophical debate on these matters, and able to engage reflectively with key points in it.

Teachers: Åsa Burman and Johan Brännmark

Readings

Burman, Åsa: *Nonideal Social Ontology: The Power View* (OUP 2023)
Jenkins, Katharine, *Ontology and Oppression: Race, Gender, and Social Reality* (OUP 2023)
A selection of recent papers.