

Social Epistemology and Ontology

The Structure of Society: Beliefs, Norms and Values in Social Contexts

Frank Hindriks (University of Groningen)

<https://www.rug.nl/staff/f.a.hindriks/>

University of Hamburg, 7th, 14th, 21th, 21th, 28th May and 4th June 2021.

A society consists of social structures, such as conventions, social norms and organizations. Think, for instance, of the rules of the road, monogamy & marriage, and the United Nations. Such social structures provide the contexts within individuals interact. In each of the five sessions, we discuss the state of the art concerning a central topic in social ontology. Together they address the following three questions:

1. *What are social structures?*
2. *What role do knowledge and belief play in them?*
3. *Can collectives bear responsibilities and can individuals be free within a society?*

Participants prepare assignments and presentations.

Five meetings on Fridays:

- May 7, 14, 21, 28 and June 4.
- 9.00-11.00 and 14.00-16.00

Please reserve 11.00 – 14.00 for assignments.

Schedule & Literature

- Please read the papers in the order presented.
- The lemma's in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (**SEP**) provide useful background material, but they are not mandatory reading.
- To prepare for the course, I recommend reading the SEP lemma on social ontology.

Friday 7th May

Conventions and Social Norms

- Lewis, D. K. *Convention: A Philosophical Study*. (Harvard University Press, 1969). 1-51
- Guala, F. & Hindriks, F. A Unified Social Ontology. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 65, 177–201 (2015).
- Rasmussen, K. B. & Yaouzis, N. O. #MeToo, Social Norms, and Sanctions. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 28, 273–295 (2020).

SEP lemma's: social norms, institutions

Friday 14th May

Social Construction: Money and Gender

- Searle, J. R. What Is an Institution? *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, 1–22 (2005).

- Haslanger, S. What Are We Talking about? The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds. *Hypatia* 20, 10–26 (2005).
- Barnes, E. Gender and Gender Terms. *Noûs* 54, 704–730 (2020).

SEP lemma's: naturalistic approaches to social construction, feminist metaphysics, feminist perspectives on sex and gender

Friday 21st May

Organizations and Collective Decision-Making

- Bratman, M. E. The Intentions of a Group. in *The Moral Responsibility of Firms* (eds. Orts, E. W. & Smith, N. C.) 37–53 (Oxford University Press, 2017).
- Puranam, P., Alexy, O. & Reitzig, M. What's "New" About New Forms of Organizing? *Academy of Management Review* 39, 162–180 (2014).
- Pettit, P. Groups with Minds of Their Own. in (ed. Schmitt, F.) 167–194 (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003).

SEP lemma's: collective intentionality, group agency, social epistemology (§§1-3)

Friday 28th May

Corporate Moral Agency and Responsibility

- French, P. A. The Corporation as a Moral Person. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, 207–215 (1979).
- Hess, K. M. Does the Machine Need a Ghost? Corporate Agents as Nonconscious Kantian Moral Agents. *J Am Philosophical Assoc* 4, 67–86 (2018).
- Herzog, L. (2018). *Reclaiming the System: Moral Responsibility, Divided Labour, and the Role of Organizations in Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Chapter 7: The Responsibility for an Organizational Culture).

SEP lemma: collective responsibility

Friday 4th June

Echo Chambers, Polarization and the Open Society

- Barberá, P., Jost, J. T., Nagler, J., Tucker, J. A. & Bonneau, R. Tweeting From Left to Right. *Psychol Sci* 26, 1531–1542 (2015).
- Iyengar, S. & Krupenkin, M. Partisanship as Social Identity; Implications for the Study of Party Polarization. *Forum* 16, 23–45 (2018).
- Pierik, R. Conceptualizing Cultural Groups and Cultural Difference: The Social Mechanism Approach. *Ethnicities* 4, 523–544 (2004).
- Popper, K. (1945) 'The Open Society and Its Enemies', Chapter 10 (pp.161-89) in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

SEP lemma: social epistemology (§5)