



THE ANNUAL HARTNACK LECTURE

How does structural oppression undermine autonomy? by Natalie Stoljar

About the Hartnack Lecture

On the occasion of his 90th birthday, the Annual Justus Hartnack Lecture was inaugurated in gratitude to his service, and to help preserve the international outlook that Hartnack gave to the Aarhus Philosophy Department from its beginning. The honour of giving the Annual Hartnack Lecture is given to an internationally recognized and distinguished researcher, who has made outstanding contributions in philosophy.

Abstract - How does structural oppression undermine autonomy?

It is agreed that individual autonomy can be undermined by psychological or "pathological" conditions, e.g. addiction or compulsion, and by coercion or overt interference. There is less attention given to how structural oppression—oppression that does not correspond to actual interference or coercion—might interfere with autonomy. This lecture addresses this question. It first explains different conceptions of structural oppression, drawing on work in feminist philosophy of Frye, Cudd, Young and Haslanger. A common claim is that oppression is "internalized" by the oppressed which in turn creates inauthentic (and therefore nonautonomous) agency. I argue that this claim is misguided: it is questionable whether internalized oppression is inauthentic, but even if it is, authentic agency is neither necessary nor sufficient for autonomy. More importantly, the emphasis on internalized oppression overlooks how autonomy can be undermined by others' beliefs in the oppressive scripts endorsed by systems of structural oppression. I identify two phenomena of structural oppression—those of 'silencing' and 'objectification'—that have been widely discussed by feminist philosophers. I argue that these phenomena interfere with autonomy due to the beliefs of others in oppressive scripts. Oppressed people can be rendered non-autonomous by structural oppression not only because they themselves internalize oppression but also because others' beliefs in oppressive scripts undermine the reception of their agency.



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Time: Friday, November 4, 2022 at 13.00 - 16.00

Venue: Auditorium 1, Tåsingevej 3, Building 1441-012

The lecture is followed by a reception.



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