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Ignorance as Epistemic Etiquette

Date : 11 March 2024 (Monday)

Time : 16:30 – 18:00

Venue : LKK302 & Zoom Seminar 

Here is the link to the seminar – <https://lingnan.zoom.us/j/91923328554>

We are ignorant of many things. This ignorance is sometimes permissible, sometimes not. Giving a clear demarcation between permissible and impermissible ignorance has been an ongoing challenge for epistemologists. To address this challenge, I argue that permissible ignorance can follow from the proper functioning of norms of etiquette. To develop this account, I begin with the character of Stevens, from Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day*, and the defense Stevens offers of ignorance as a form of epistemic etiquette. As a devoted butler, Stevens is aware of many things but chooses to overlook certain details to maintain the privacy and dignity of those at Darlington Hall, adhering to a strict code of professional etiquette. In this paper, I pursue the concept of epistemic etiquette, suggesting that such social norms can legitimately shape not only our actions but also our thought processes, thereby sanctioning specific instances of ignorance as a form of respect. However, complications arise, I argue, when etiquette risks reinforcement of oppressive power dynamics. Through exploring these intricacies, this work aims to shed light on the delicate balance between ignorance, respect, and the responsibilities that emerge from our societal roles. By doing so, it lays the groundwork for further philosophical exploration into how epistemic standards and moral duties intersect, offering perspectives on when ignorance is permissible and when it crosses the line into culpability.

All are welcome

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