Institute for Social Justice Friday Seminar

February 27, 2015, 2-4pm

Jack Isherwood
PhD Candidate
Institute for Social Justice

Title
A Critical Look at Charles Taylor's Hermeneutical Liberalism from the Perspective of Epistemic Injustice

Abstract
One of the central motifs of Charles Taylor's political philosophy is a faith in potential of public dialogues to challenge prejudicial social attitudes and pejorative social categorizations. This faith stems from his belief that continual dialogue provides a means through which our own background interpretive assumptions can be revised more capaiously, thereby allowing people to develop critically self-reflexive social identities whilst also fostering greater understanding between members of different communities and social groups. However, I argue that this ambition is significantly undermined by Taylor's failure to accord appropriate attention to the problem of epistemic kinds of injustice and I explore a number of baleful facets of this phenomenon. I conclude by suggesting a number of methods via which the causes and consequences of epistemic injustices can be remedied from the perspective of structural and institutional changes as well as by the fostering of particular interpretive virtues on the part of individuals.

Bio
I am a final year student at the Institute of Social Justice, ACU. My thesis examines how notions of public reasoning and civil disobedience have been articulated within liberal political philosophy, suggesting that many of these accounts have failed to consider the pernicious and often insidious impacts of epistemic kinds of injustice. This has meant that these accounts have been unable to diagnose some of the central difficulties that marginalized social groups and communities face in the public staking and reception of their political claims. My future research aims to apply the notion of epistemic injustice to different case studies, including social silences regarding factory farming practices, the household debt crisis and climate change refugees.