國立中正大學

哲學系學術演講

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講題：「概念膨脹？：談有政治爭議的用語」（Conceptual Inflation and Politically Controversial Terms）

時間：2020.11.25 (Wed.) 15:10-17:00

地點：文學院 412 研討室

摘要：Critics on both sides of the political spectrum have worried that ordinary uses of words like ‘racist’, ‘sexist’, and ‘homophobic’ are becoming conceptually inflated, meaning that these expressions have been used too broadly such that they lose their nuance and, thereby, their moral force. Some of those who raise the charge of conceptual inflation have also proposed that, for example, many uses of ‘racist’ should be replaced by an alternative vocabulary for race-talk. However, the charge of conceptual inflation, and indeed also the responses to it, are standardly made without any systematic investigation of how ‘racist’ and other expressions condemning oppression are actually used in ordinary language. Once we examine large linguistic corpora to see how speakers actually use these expressions, we find that English speakers have a rich linguistic repertoire for qualifying the degree to which and dimensions along which something is racist, sexist, homophobic, and so on. These facts about ordinary usage undermine the argument that ‘racist’, ‘sexist’, and ‘homophobic’ have lost their nuance through overextension, because ordinary speakers regularly qualify and make precise to what extent and in what respects they consider particular instances to be racist, sexist, or homophobic. Without awareness of the facts concerning the ordinary uses of these expressions, theorists risk making proposals for linguistic change that are unnecessary, or counterproductive, given the resources already present in ordinary language.