



Spinoza Seminar
Prof. Sally Haslanger
Spring 2015

Possible Paper Topics

Students should write a ~2500 word paper on a topic of their choosing, relating to topics discussed in class or in the readings.

- Final paper proposal (~200 words) due May 13, 3pm – at the latest!
- Draft of paper due May 20, 3pm (by email).
- Final paper due May 29, 3pm (by email).

1. What is a social practice? Give an example of a social practice and show how Sewell would analyze it in terms of schemas and resources. Do you think Sewell's analysis is adequate? Why or why not? What changes do you think would be required to offer a better account?
2. What is a practice rule, and what is the difference between a summary rule and a practice rule (see Rawls "Two Concepts of Rules"). How do practice rules provide reasons for action? [Does Searle's analysis of rules give a good account?]
3. What does it mean to say that social facts or social entities are "mind dependent"? Is the entire social world mind-dependent? If so, in what sense? If not, provide an example of a non-mind-dependent social entity and explain how it is social.
4. What is ideology? Give an example of one account of ideology and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.
5. How does one legitimately critique ideology? Give an example of one account of ideology critique and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.
6. What is an "autonomy gap"? What is problematic about autonomy gaps? How should we avoid them? (See Joel Anderson's paper, circulated for the workshop.)
7. What does Lessig mean by "social meaning"? Can social meanings contribute to injustice? How?
8. Is moral progress possible? How can we tell if we have made moral progress, as a culture/society?
9. On Anderson's view, a priori moral theory is not helpful and is not an epistemically reliable way to gain moral knowledge (or knowledge of justice). Why not? Do you think we can avoid doing a priori moral theory? Why or why not?