semantically distinctive category of symbol which corresponds to no distinctive category of being” (p. 135, cf. pp. 149–50). Laycock points to an alleged expressive gap in our quantificational logic when it comes to talk of stuff (pp. 166–7). He views universals instantiable by kinds as more resistant to nominalism than universals instantiable by individuals (pp. 167–70).

I think that Laycock’s crucial contention that mass terms are not singular is insufficiently defended in his book. It seems that Laycock has not really closed off the option of rejecting his view that, since they are not CNs, mass nouns cannot be semantically singular. We do not take the non-count status of proper nouns to preclude their semantic singularity so why should CN status be considered a necessary condition (necessarily unmet, as it happens) on the singularity of mass nouns? I have not found an answer to this question in Laycock’s book. Even if the argument from non-count descriptions works in establishing the local result that mass terms in non-count descriptions are non-singular (which is dubious) it does not, as already mentioned, establish Laycock’s view that NCNs are globally non-singular. Discussion of mass terms in other syntactic contexts (and especially in non-quantificational contexts), meanwhile, is relatively sparse. Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly recommend this useful, stimulating and worthwhile book to anyone who wants to think about the topics it addresses.

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PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Self-Consciousness
By sebastian Rödl
Harvard University Press, 2007. 220 pp. £23.95

There is something special in the relation between a person’s actions and her beliefs about them. An agent’s beliefs about her own actions seem not to be based on evidence and yet, when true, seem to constitute knowledge. Moreover, those beliefs seem to be constitutive of the actions themselves. Anscombe once complained that these views are obscured by an “incorrigibly contemplative” conception of belief, though she did little to flesh out an alternative. Sebastian Rödl, in this spirited, highly original and very impressive book, looks for one in the German Idealist tradition.

Contemporary discussions of self-consciousness—at least within the ‘analytic’ philosophical tradition—have tended to view it as a matter of self-identification grounded in the mechanisms of linguistic reference. Rödl boldly rejects the first part of this view: he argues that self-consciousness is more a matter of self-creation, and uses the Kantian language of ‘spontaneity’ and ‘autonomy’ to make the point. He develops a nuanced and stirring identity thesis: “my knowing first-personally that I am doing such-and-such is the same reality as my doing it, and my knowing first personally that I believe that such-and-such is the case is the same reality as my believing it” (p. ix). Somewhat surprisingly, Rödl accepts without much question the standard
view that self-consciousness is grounded in linguistic reference, and develops, in Chapter 1, a relatively conventional Fregean view of first-person senses.

Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to developing and defending the identity thesis, first in the case of action and then in the case of belief. Rödl ties both to reasoning—about what it is good to do or true to believe—and locates self-consciousness in the “nexus” among reasoning, action and belief. We can reason about our own actions and beliefs or about those of another, but when we know that someone is doing or believing something just from the fact that we judge that it is right for someone to do or believe it, then, Rödl argues, this knowledge constitutes self-consciousness. When I know that I believe that \( p \) based solely on my judgement that it is right to believe it, then my knowledge manifests self-consciousness.

Chapter 4, in which German Idealist themes emerge most strongly, explores the nature of the reasoning at the heart of self-consciousness, and links it with autonomy and even materialism. Rödl develops the Kantian theme that while reasoning about what it is right to do or believe requires being subject to laws of reason, in so doing “I am subject to nothing other than myself in the sense that these laws spring from, and constitute, the nature of that to which I refer first personally” (p. 121, italics in original). Rödl’s discussion of the relation of self-consciousness to materialism, which is focused on the causal nature of reasons, is less well developed.

Chapter 5 considers the role of self-consciousness in observation through an interesting discussion of whether one can know that one knows (answer: one can, and this knowledge is spontaneous) and through a consideration of fallibilism. Chapter 6 contains an intriguing and original exploration of the parallels between first-person and second-person knowledge. Rödl argues (persuasively) that self-consciousness is essentially involved in our coming to know another’s acts and beliefs. As Rödl admits, my knowledge of another’s acts is not constitutive of them in the way that my knowledge of my own acts is. Still, he argues, second-person reference and thought do manifest self-consciousness: “(w)hen the order of reason through which I explain someone else’s acts is my own, then I know this order, and thus her acts, from spontaneity” (p. 181). Thoughts about other agents manifest self-consciousness in a way that thoughts about inanimate beings do not. Stirring stuff.

Rödl’s book is full of exciting, original ideas and it is sure to influence the current debate, if in no other way than by forcing a reconsideration of what we might learn from Hegel and Marx. But as with many discussions of self-consciousness, Rödl’s account over-intellectualizes the phenomena, in part by grounding it in the mechanisms of reference and in part by conflating belief and judgement. Dogs and cats seem to know what they are doing, even though they make no judgements about their acts. And though this knowledge is not a product of reasoning, it may nonetheless play the same constitutive role as ours in making their actions what they are. Reasoning, and indeed autonomy itself, seem to belong at a more advanced stage than self-consciousness. All the same, Rödl’s leading idea, that understanding human autonomy, belief and action is impossible in the absence of an account of human
self-consciousness, finds eloquent and persuasive support in this intelligent
and original work.

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*Ignorance and Imagination: The Epistemic Origin of the Problem of Consciousness*

By Daniel Stoljar

Oxford University Press, 2006. xii + 250 pp. £90.00 cloth, £29.99 paper

I have come to believe that there really is not anything new to say in the
philosophy of mind about consciousness. All the positions have been clearly
staked out. All the arguments have been made, dissected, analyzed, and put
back together again. Even the underlying ideologies, a place where philosophers
generally prefer not to go, have been examined and catalogued. There is not
much left for a new book on consciousness to do.

In his book *Ignorance and Imagination: The Epistemic Origin of the Problem of
Consciousness*, Daniel Stoljar does not bring anything really original to the
consciousness debates. He admits as much in his introduction. He puts forth
a difference of emphasis, perhaps, and new nuances to details. But the broad
strokes of his arguments can also be found elsewhere.

My measure of a book such as this one, where everything has already been
over-discussed, is how well it would convince those on the other side of the
ideological divide. If one is to contribute anything to a well-worn debate it
must be that one is able to bring to the two opposing sides closer together.
One must speak across the divide, not sing platitudes to the choir. In the end
I have to conclude that Stoljar does not understand his opponents deeply
enough and so cannot speak convincingly to their concerns.

Stoljar argues that we have not been able to solve the problem of understand-
ning consciousness because we simply are ignorant of some important
truths about the way our world is. Without knowing these facts, we cannot
understand how it is that conscious experience is generated from non-
conscious interactions. Further, because we cannot understand such things,
we end up making arguments in support of dualism and engaging in other
extreme activities. The ignorance Stoljar is suggesting is analogous to the
ignorance we saw connected to explanations of language in the seventeenth
century and explanations of chemistry in the nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries.

How well does Stoljar handle objections to his point of view? Let us look
at two cases he discusses. One objection to his position comes from David
Chalmers, whom Stoljar quotes as noting that “from truths about structure and
dynamics, one can only deduce further truths about structure and dynamics”
(p. 151). Chalmers’s claim is that experiences have intrinsic features that we
cannot derive from non-experiential facts. If Chalmers is correct, then regardless
of how much we do or do not know about our world, we will never be able
to explain consciousness using non-experiential data.

Stoljar counters by trying to illustrate that one can indeed derive intrinsic
facts from relational ones. For example, he says, while being a husband is a