

although I myself think that they are problematic in other ways, Mackie should include them in her discussion to strengthen her negative arguments for ME.

The final worry I want to mention is epistemological. Mackie convincingly shows that the essentialist theories she considers do not succeed in proving the existence of essential properties. A modal agnostic might take this as supporting the claim that we might not be able to know *whether there are* essential properties. Mackie's reaction is not as moderate. She concludes, incompatibly with modal agnosticism, that *there are not* substantial essential properties. One might well suppose that here Mackie is reading too much into the failure of the theories she considers.

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Sonia Roca-Royes

University of Stirling

Logos—Logic, Language, and Cognition Research Group

Philosophical Review, Vol. 118, No. 2, 2009

DOI 10.1215/00318108-2008-052

Daniel Stoljar, *Ignorance and Imagination: The Epistemic Origin of the Problem of Consciousness*.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. ix + 249 pp.

Stoljar's book has three parts. In the first part, he discusses the "problem of experience": though we have experiences, it isn't clear that the experiential fits into the actual world, given that the actual world is fundamentally non-experiential. Stoljar focuses on what he views as one facet of the problem of

I would like to thank Timmy Fuller, Joe Levine, and Ellen Woodall for helpful comments.

experience, the “logical problem,” which consists of three jointly inconsistent claims: (T1) there are experiential truths; (T2) if there are experiential truths, every experiential truth is entailed by some nonexperiential truth; and (T3) if there are experiential truths, not every experiential truth is entailed by some nonexperiential truth. The logical problem is a problem, according to Stoljar, because each of T1–T3 is *prima facie* plausible. In the second part, Stoljar sets out his solution to the logical problem, the “epistemic view,” and defends it against various objections. According to the epistemic view, (i) we’re ignorant of a special type of empirical experience-relevant nonexperiential truth; (ii) were we to come to understand truths of this type, we would see that the modal arguments against physicalism (that is, the zombie and knowledge arguments) fail; and (iii) given (i) and (ii), we should reject T3 in order to resolve the logical problem. In the third part Stoljar argues that alternative solutions to the logical problem either fail or collapse into the epistemic view.

While this is certainly the most careful and extended defense of the epistemic view to date (a view, by the way, in various forms, with which many seem to find sympathy), the epistemic view as Stoljar develops it faces a formidable problem. The central problem concerns the so-called “explanatory gap.”¹ The explanatory gap reveals a special feature of our epistemic situation with respect to the experiential. An adequacy condition, I claim, for a resolution of the logical problem like Stoljar’s—one according to which we accept T1 and T2 and reject T3—is that it explain this feature. My charge is that Stoljar’s proposal fails to explain this feature. First I’ll say what this feature is and show why Stoljar’s proposal fails to explain it; then I’ll show why having an explanation of this feature is necessary to resolve the logical problem in the manner Stoljar suggests. Along the way we will learn more about the details of Stoljar’s view.

Consider one of the two hypothetical scenarios that figures prominently in Stoljar’s development of the epistemic view. Here’s the scenario put in my own words:

Slugs and tiles: Imagine that a group of intelligent slugs live on a surface of tiles, all of which are either triangles or pie pieces. Combinations of these tiles make up further shapes including circles. The slugs perceptually detect various shapes including triangles and circles but fail to detect pie piece shapes, and they believe that triangles are fundamental while circles are nonfundamental. As a consequence, they don’t see how there is room for circles in their world, a world that is fundamentally noncircular.

1. See Joseph Levine, *Purple Haze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) for an extended discussion of the explanatory gap.

The slugs, we are to suppose, are ignorant of certain truths about the fundamental constituents of reality, a special type of empirical circle-relevant noncircular truth—truths concerning pie pieces. (I won't discuss the other hypothetical scenario that concerns ignorance of certain nonfundamental truths, in particular, principles whereby various lights combine to create different colored beams. The distinction between ignorance of fundamental and nonfundamental truths is irrelevant to what follows.) Stoljar claims that the epistemic situation of the slugs with respect to circles is analogous to our epistemic situation with respect to the experiential in its essential respects (on the assumption that the special type of empirical experience-relevant nonexperiential truth we're ignorant of concerns fundamental truths). He points out that, were the slugs to come to detect the pie pieces and come to understand relevant truths about them, their problem concerning circles would disappear; they would come to see that the noncircular truths entail the circular truths. If the analogy is apt, we have a response to the logical problem concerning experience: there is a type of truth such that, were we to come to understand truths of that type, we would see that the nonexperiential truths entail the experiential ones.

The problem is that the analogy isn't apt, at least in one key respect. This is where the explanatory gap comes into play. There is an explanatory gap between the facts about the instantiation of phenomenal properties and the nonphenomenal facts, while there is no such gap between, say, the water facts and the nonwater physical facts. How is this so? One way to put the point is as follows. Even if we knew little, if anything, about H_2O and general chemical laws, we would nonetheless have some grip on how the nonwater physical truths are the sorts of truths that could render the water truths intelligible. This demonstratively isn't the case, however, regarding the experiential; we simply have no clue how nonphenomenal truths even in principle could render the phenomenal truths intelligible.

Returning to the slugs and tiles, my claim is that the slugs' epistemic situation with respect to circles is more like our epistemic situation with respect to the water truths just described (the case in which we're ignorant of the relevant nonwater physical truths) than our epistemic situation with respect to the experiential. Though the slugs aren't in a position to perceptually detect pie piece shapes, as sophisticated cognizers they could see how truths about nondetected nontriangular tiles are the sorts of considerations that could render the circular truths intelligible in a world that is fundamentally noncircular. So, though ignorance is a feature of all three scenarios discussed above, the ignorance at issue with experience is special; our epistemic situation with respect to the experiential has a striking feature—the really-not-having-a-clue feature—that the epistemic situations at issue in the other scenarios lack. As far as I can tell, nothing in Stoljar's version of

the epistemic view speaks to this feature of our epistemic situation with respect to experience.

Now, it may be right to say that in order to resolve the problem of experience tout court we need an explanation of the unique really-not-having-a-clue feature of our epistemic situation with respect to the experiential embodied in the explanatory gap, but why think that an explanation of this feature is necessary to resolve the logical problem in particular? The answer is that, without an explanation of this feature, it's unclear that we're justified in believing T2. Stoljar disagrees, claiming that "the fact that nonexperiential truths fail to render experiential truths intelligible does not by itself give us reason to doubt supervenience; absence of intelligibility does not mean absence of entailment" (98). But entailment and intelligibility or explanation, I maintain, cannot be so clearly separated, even on Stoljar's own view. Stoljar's defense of T2 ultimately appeals to the idea that the actual world is such that the "manifest" truths (among which are the experiential truths) are entailed by the "scientific" truths (all of which are nonexperiential truths), what he calls "manifest supervenience." (He notes that physicalism also supports T2, but, given the familiar worries concerning how to think of the "physical" at issue with physicalism, he is content to cite manifest supervenience as the justification for T2.) But manifest supervenience is plausible only insofar as we think that scientific *explanations* of the manifest world succeed; were we to come to believe that putative scientific truths didn't render the manifest truths intelligible, we would reject manifest supervenience forthwith. Per the explanatory gap, we can't see how the nonexperiential truths could even in principle explain the experiential truths, so, if we're antecedently committed to manifest supervenience, we've found a reason not to include the experiential truths among the manifest truths.

This ad hominem aside, a well-founded prohibition against brute metaphysical necessity ensures that entailment without (in principle) intelligibility is, well, unintelligible.² A metaphysically necessary truth is brute just in case it's true in all possible worlds but is neither a conceptual nor logical truth. Conceptual and logical truths are intelligible, so if all metaphysically necessary truths are either conceptual or logical truths, all such truths themselves are intelligible. (What about true identity statements—aren't they brute metaphysical necessities? I don't think so. While identity is brute in the sense that it's not the case that something is identical to itself in virtue of some further fact obtaining, it isn't *metaphysically* brute given that identity, in my estimation, anyway, is a logical relation.) Hence, if, for the life of us, we can't see how the *A*-truths (for example the nonexperiential truths) could even in

2. See Levine, *Purple Haze*, and J. Levine and K. Trogon, "The Modal Status of Materialism," *Philosophical Studies* (forthcoming) for more on brute necessity and why it's to be avoided.

principle explain the *B*-truths (for example the experiential truths), it seems that we have a fairly good reason to believe that the *A*-truths don't entail the *B*-truths as a matter of metaphysical necessity. So while I agree that intelligibility and entailment are different, not having a diagnosis of the explanatory gap is bad for T2 and good for T3.³ My conclusion, then, is that Stoljar's epistemic view, despite its name, fails to capture our epistemic situation with respect to the experiential, and, as such, fails to resolve the logical problem, at least in the manner Stoljar claims it does.

Kelly Trogdon

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Philosophical Review, Vol. 118, No. 2, 2009

DOI 10.1215/00318108-2008-053

Trenton Merricks, *Truth and Ontology*.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. xviii + 202 pp.

Philosophers often find themselves trying to make their claims about what is true fit their claims about what exists. They argue about whether a correct description of reality provides a grounding for moral truths, mathematical truths, past- and future-tensed truths, counterfactual truths, and so on. Recently, a number of philosophers have tried to articulate a general relationship between truth and existence. On one thesis, for every truth, there exists something that makes it true; this is "Truthmaker." On another, truth supervenes on being; this is "TSB." Proponents of the theses then use them to "catch the cheaters," as Theodore Sider puts it; they use them to reject views that posit truths without saying how the world could be such as to make those truths true.

Trenton Merricks's *Truth and Ontology* is a sustained critique of the "truthmaking" movement. The book argues that there is no interesting general dependence of truth upon existence and that views that violate Truthmaker and TSB are none the worse for doing so.

Merricks has three strategies for undermining Truthmaker and TSB. The first is to show that they are more contentious than they appear. Merricks argues that Truthmaker requires a commitment to states of affairs that have

3. Stoljar (27) claims that the metaphysical supervenience of the phenomenal on the nonphenomenal isn't a matter of logic. If he is right about this and there is no brute metaphysical necessity, the relation must be conceptual.