Matthew Boyle, *Transparency and reflection.*
A study of self-knowledge and the nature of mind
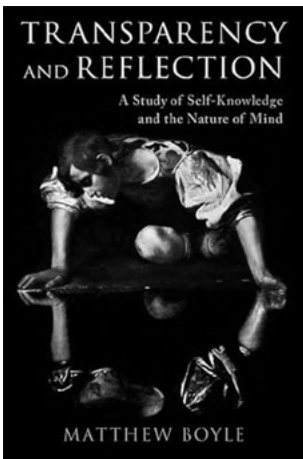
Matthew Boyle's book *Transparency and reflection: A study of self-knowledge and the nature of mind* is a profound philosophical treatise on issues related to the legitimacy of self-cognition. His book grew out of a conviction that modern philosophical works on self-knowledge have not yet been sufficiently examined (p. 3). According to Boyle, contemporary philosophical analysis of self-knowledge focuses on how we can know our own minds directly and reliably. In this way, self-knowledge is separated from metaphysical claims about the nature of the human mind and formulated as a specific epistemological problem. For the author, this tendency forces philosophers to espouse scepticism, as in his citation of Eric Schwitzgebel:

> Self-knowledge? Of general features of our stream of conscious experience, of our morally most important attitudes, of our real values and our moral character, of our intelligence, of what really makes us happy and unhappy [...] — about such matters I doubt we have much knowledge at all. We live in cocoons of ignorance, especially where our self-conception is at stake (Schwitzgebel, 2012: 197, as cited on p. 4).

The author nevertheless aims for a more metaphysical consideration of how "our mentality gives us a special perspective on our own lives" (p. 22). To develop his goal, Boyle turns to the relationship between reason and transparency and

enters into dialogue with numerous representatives of the Anglo-American tradition of philosophy such as George Moore, Sidney Shoemaker, Gareth Evans, Alex Byrne, Richard Moran and others. Boyle debates with them using the optics of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy, as a critical counter-interpretation of their ideas:

> In coming to see the importance of pre-reflective self-awareness, I have been helped — much to my own surprise — by the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre [...] insisted on a distinction between what he called "pre-reflective" or "nonpositional" self-consciousness and "reflective" or "positional" self-knowledge" (pp. 19–20).

From the standpoint of Sartrean thought, Boyle attempts to address the problem of transparency and, ultimately, to justify the main conditions for self-knowledge and reflection that should follow philosophical reasoning. This attempt is surprising because it confirms the possibility of indirectly applying phenomenological interpretations to the philosophical debate. When reading Boyl's book, one comes across many phenomenological ideas and concepts that are implicit in his philosophy.

Positional consciousness, for example, refers to perceptual consciousness of the object of experience in the field of attention. By contrast, non-positional consciousness implies a corresponding awareness of the aforementioned state of consciousness; the faculty to make self-reports coherent with one's experience. The ability to achieve "positional" self-awareness depends on non-positional awareness. He calls the process of moving from non-positional self-awareness to positional self-awareness "reflection".

When Boyle quotes Sartre's phrase "to exist is always to a s s u m e one is being" as a motto for his argument, he is suggesting that the prospect of human reality as being is manifested by human being itself (p. 1). This Sartrean consideration of the existential roots of self-consciousness concludes that the primary form of self-consciousness is not merely awareness of one's own mental state, but the way in which subjectivity unfolds in the world. Precisely for this reason, primary self-awareness must be transparent: it must not focus on ourselves but on aspects of the non-psychic world that are presented in a way that is based on implicit self-awareness. This highlights the need to clarify consciousness from a first-person perspective. The book offers a broad presentation of discussion on reflection, so we will narrow our focus to certain key axes of its reasoning to be able to see how well the main purpose is achieved in these particular areas.

TRANSPARENCY

Boyle seeks to define the relationship between mental states and what fundamentally can be said about them. Since this relationship determines self-knowledge, we should focus on the origins of self-knowledge. The author

chooses three perspectives to discuss the transparency of self-knowledge. The first case the author considers is Moore's paradox. Here we have an argument about a proposition, MP: "p, but I don't believe that p" (p. 34).

An example is the sentence: "It is raining outside, but I do not think it is raining". The example is intended to show the heterogeneous states of the subject: even though the situation is contradictory, the proposition can be considered valid. It reveals a dual state of mind, with both the act of believing and the act of knowing. Not believing in the rain, suggests the paradox, does not contradict knowing it. This confirms the multiple nature of subjectivity in asserting itself. Boyle finds the problem in Moore's paradox a fascinating insight. However, the mere assertion of states for different mind-world orientations ultimately does not allow one to understand mental states — it only declares the presence of certain acts of consciousness. Considerations of transparency should come closer to transparency *per se*.

This concern with transparency leads the author to consider Sydney Shoemaker's self-blindness. He defines the self-blind person as one who has a concept of mental states but can only learn about them "from a third person". To this end, he recalls "the case of Ernst Mach. Mach saw a figure in a mirror that was himself and thought: This man looks like a shabby old schoolmaster" (p. 27). This case problematises the postulate of transparency, for what can we talk about when we are faced with situations of direct unawareness? The problem could easily be solved by the following consideration: when there is no awareness, there is a potential for reflective consideration. This considers a specific feature of the image of a teacher, part of the natural attitude, that focuses on the subject having partial self-perception or positional awareness. This can only later become the subject of reflection or non-positional awareness. Shoemaker's example only problematises the issue but does not provide a clear definitional analysis for the study of mental states. So Boyle considers that Shoemaker's example requires a step forward to be satisfactory as an analysis.

Boyle next focusses on what has come to be known as the "transparency" of Gareth Evans' self-descriptions of mental states. Evans noted that people attribute beliefs to themselves without looking for evidence of their own mental states. He wrote:

> If someone asks, "Do you think there is going to be a third world war?", I must attend, in answering him, to precisely the same outward phenomena as I would attend to if I were answering the question: "Will there be a third world war?" I get myself in a position to answer the question of whether I believe that p? (Evans, 1982: 225, as cited on p. 37).

These self-descriptions can demonstrate transparency by asking how a person who expects a WW3 should behave. Self-descriptions should be consistent

with a person's intentions and state of mind. For example, if you are convinced that WWIII is coming, you should not only express this but also behave in a certain way, e.g. prepare for a possible clash, build a bunker, etc., so that transparency can be verified. This is why Evans' ideas are most interesting in this area. Acts of subjective experience and transparency can illuminate subjectivity as enacted self-description. Transparent self-recognition of a mental state is available as an intentional object. The point of view that a person attributes to themselves is the one they consciously hold, making Boyle's approach both phenomenological and expressive:

> Suppose I determine that there is a gray cat here lying on a mat. This surely might be so — a gray cat might be here on a mat — even if I were not perceiving this situation. Hence the fact that this is so seems by itself to be no evidence whatsoever that I perceive it to be so (p. 43).

Although Evans' process of self-attribution is close to this point, it still needs improvement to distinguish between levels of consciousness. For the perspective of transparency, Boyle therefore appeals to a Sartrean structure in which the needs of describing self-knowledge are properly satisfied. He distinguishes between two types of self-representation: explicit self-knowledge, which employs a first-person representation; and specific implicit self-knowledge, which employs a representation "from within". This representation of non-positional consciousness is more in line with the goals of describing transparency. For there is a difference between someone who merely expects WWIII and someone who is aware of their own beliefs on the point. The tension here leads to the key point of his research, which is to show that there is no proper transition from positional consciousness as a specific mental act or habit to non-positional consciousness as a natural capacity for reflection.

Considering other common approaches to transparency, he refers here to Moran's "doxastic transparency": transparent self-awareness should follow the following consideration.

> What right have I to think that my reflection on the reasons in favor of p has anything to do with the question of what my actual belief about p is? Without a reply to this challenge, I do not have any right to answer the question that asks what my belief [about, e.g., whether it will rain] (Moran, 2003: 405, as cited on p. 46).

This provides us with a good starting point based on compelling observations about the nature of transparent self-knowledge. For example, we can consider an analysand who has internalised his psychoanalyst's perspective so perfectly that he immediately knows which beliefs his analyst would attribute to him. He attributes these beliefs to himself but does not consciously hold them. This knowledge is based on conscious living and contrasts with

the understanding of the witness. Who can claim to know that one believes p without being sure if p is true or if it is based on "doxastic transparency", belief-wise awareness?

Another perspective on this problem can be sketched with the example of Alex Byrne who points out that transparent knowledge can be gained by simply looking "outwards" rather than "inwards" at our mental states — that we can acquire transparent self-knowledge by making an "inference from world to mind" (Byrne, 2011: 203, as cited on p. 50). The problem of transparency can be illustrated through the inferential scheme of a doxastic diagram:

BEL: p
——————
I believe that p (p. 51).

Byrne's idea here is to identify logical sequences that correspond to the kinds of mental states that we can know transparently. For Byrne, transparent knowledge proceeds from the world to the mind. For him, the referential relation to the world is determined by the critical verification of p. The transition is the acceptance of a certain set of propositions. Thus he creates the logic of inference for p, which, after verification, allows the postulation of belief in p. Then we can consider a mental state that changes the subject's certainty about belief. In the practical example, this is a transition between propositions:

INT: I will φ
——————
I intend to φ (p. 52).

As the subject tries to implement something real, but in a different correlation system, this allows for the choice of an aspect of the future and one's own commitment. This step updates the perspective of transparency. At the same time, however, Byrne's approach is limited to this inherent transition from the world to the mind. Byrne does not reveal the intrinsic reasons for a particular statement, the phenomenal preconditions for thinking, and so he disregards and simplifies the autonomy and decision-making complexity of the subject. So, his approach can only be said to be partially successful in solving the problem of transparency.

Another attempt to account for transparency can be found in Christopher Peacock's account. He sees it as the ability of a subject to determine whether he believes that p, while at the same time evaluating whether or not p is true, an act based on being aware of one's act of judgment. Which, in this case, is a phenomenally conscious act situated on the edge of non-positional consciousness. So, when a subject judges, she is aware not only of the fact that p,

but also of her own act of judging that p. This awareness, in turn, guarantees her the right to attribute the belief that p to herself since the act of judging p usually expresses the belief that p. However, one cannot know exactly p, which in turn makes the connection between judgment and belief uncertain. This makes of reflection something simple and automatic. For this visible almightiness of mind, Boyle rejects the possibility of Byrne's uncompromising insistence as a universal concept and instead suggests that the subject's self-attribution of a mental state is based on a more complicated configuration of subjectivity (p. 56).

Finally, the author criticises both Byrne and Peacock for the one-sidedness of their respective approaches, showing the connection between the subject's representation of the world and its consciousness, rather than the connection between these representations. This self-consciousness calls into question either Byrne's idea that the subject's transparent self-knowledge is based on pure propositions about the world or Peacock's idea of a conscious event that merely indicates one's mental state. Boyle agrees:

> Byrne is right in his resolute insistence that transparent self-knowledge must look outward, while Peacocke is right to think that the basis of this knowledge must not be a sheer awareness of the world, but some sort of awareness that implies something about the subject's own state of mind. Nevertheless, can a kind of person be aware of both of these demands? (p. 64)

As their numerous shortcomings are exposed, the approaches have to be revised in order to satisfy the author. They all conceive of the subject as a spectator. Nevertheless, it should be considered: "not an inference from one item of awareness to another, but a reflective transition from a form of self-awareness that is present but merely implicit to one that is explicitly self-assigned" (p. 63). To this end, the author finds an opportunity to re-examine transparency through Sartre's idea of non-positional consciousness and to make it the key to this reconciliation: it shows how looking outward can itself imply an awareness of one's own mental state, without foregrounding this awareness in such a way as to break the link between the subject's awareness of its mental state and its primary view of the world. Again, non-positional awareness or "tacit knowledge" plays a key role.

Reflective consciousness places the subject in the realm of self-development and implicit self-understanding. Therefore, positional and non-positional consciousness are characterised as complementary features of the transparent mind. The concepts and reasoning that arise from phenomenological intentionality express a vast potential for the reasoning dimensions of the subjective. When reflection occurs, this non-positional awareness is more essential, it is engaged to become explicit, is fundamentally different from positional self-knowledge.

This cognition is defined as a trope of reflexive consciousness and is character-ised as c o n s c i o u s n e s s - a s - s u b j e c t, as exemplified by Zeno Vendler:

> We are looking down upon the ocean from a cliff. The water is rough and cold, yet there are some swimmers riding the waves. "Just imagine swimming in that water" says my friend, and I know what to do. "Brr!" I say as I imagine the cold, the salty taste, the tug of the current, and so forth. Had he said, "Just imagine yourself swimming in that water," I could comply in another way too: by picturing myself being tossed about, a scrawny body bobbing up and down in the foamy waste (Vendler, 1979: 161, as cited on p. 84).

GENEALOGY OF THE SUBJECT

The book then moves on in its exploration of self-knowledge to a considera-tion of the orienting structures of reflection, to elaborate on the subjectivity unfolding between two possible imaginative dimensions: representation-as-subject and consciousness-as-subject:

> In an objective act of imagining, I might imagine m y s e l f   s w i m m i n g   i n   t h e o c e a n, as seen from a vantage point high above on the cliff; but when I perform the subjective act of imagining s w i m m i n g   i n   t h e   o c e a n, what I imagine is not m y s e l f but certain things I might experience: the chill of the water, the salty taste, the tug of the current, etc. (p. 85).

This coincides with the earlier distinction between positional and non-posi-tional knowledge. Here, the observation of the subject within objective relations makes it part of a narrative, as in the examples of being engaged in preparing for WW3 or being observed swimming in the ocean. Self-knowledge here is manifested as representation-as-subject. By contrast, when we consider being in the water or being aware of one's belief in WW3, we change the focus to the subjective, to non-positional — having the subject possess the situation rather than vice versa. So, while Boyle clarifies the initial reflective orientation and its effect on self-knowledge, he also shows how it affects the constitution of the first-person perspective. Here the argument, as usual, adheres to views close to Sartre's when it brings him to the well-known debate which he calls the egoist/anti-egoist controversy, to ask whether it is possible to obtain more distinct information about the subject of self-knowledge, smooth traits of the reflective ego. This refers to a long-standing discussion between the Cartesian *Cogito* and Hume's well-known critical claims about its unsubstantiated nature and the idea of the associationism of the mind.

Referring to Descartes, the author writes: "My indubitable awareness of thinking not only assures me that I exist, but also gives me an understanding of what kind of thing I am, namely a mind" (p. 102). Descartes argued that

this awareness of thinking provides him with incontrovertible proof of his own existence through his reflection: "I think, therefore I exist". In contrast to this, and in support of Hume's point, the author uses Lichtenberg's criticism which claims that subjective content is correctly conveyed not as "I think" but as "There is thinking", e.g. "There is lightning". Boyle claimed that this: "remark is somewhat gnomic, but his point seems to be that the awareness we conventionally express with 'I think' is really only an awareness of t h i n k i n g, not an awareness of a particular s u b j e c t who thinks" (p. 105).

Boyle explains that self-consciousness is not just the ability to think about oneself but is linked to a broader picture that creates the first-person perspective. His point is that even under conditions of ego uncertainty, to engage in reflective thought one must necessarily possess some form of implicit self-consciousness as a condition of primary constitutions. This makes the reflective function a part of the living organism. Boyle wants to identify a consciousness whose primary, implicit form is not our representing ourselves as such, but merely our representing the non-mental world in modes that reflect our own relations to it.

For the author, the transparent attribution of beliefs requires investigating the relationship between the consciousness-as-subject of various representational states and explicit self-consciousness — i.e. the awareness of oneself as the subject of these states. This importance of the self allows, in the context of the struggle between egoism and anti-egoism, granting the subject its property right and transitioning to the Sartrean principle of Being-for-Itself (p. 103). What remains is how to realise these registers of self-consciousness and their implications for the first-person perspective:

> Some worldly object that "I" designates, for its fundamental role is not to designate something of which we are aware, but to posit a certain unity among our states of awareness themselves: it serves to represent these states as diverse modifications of one consciousness, one subjectivity (p. 124).

To further clarify the registers of self-awareness, Boyle considers an interesting example of John Perry, who has a torn bag of sugar in his cart, awareness of which should lead him to action: "John Perry has a torn bag of sugar in his cart" or "I have a torn bag of sugar in my cart" (p. 139).

This creates space for an unsubstantiated self-consciousness that seeks more certain grounds for self-knowledge. The author then turns to the subject of corporeality, recalling Wittgenstein's thought: "Although I can find my body in the world, I cannot find m y s e l f — the s u b j e c t of these various thoughts and experiences — there" (p. 108). Mere awareness of an object cannot justify the idea of existence since the fact that one's body exists indicates that I exist only as an embodied person. Here he suggests that the primary form of bodily

consciousness is also a kind of inherent, non-positional consciousness and is crucial to understanding what it means for a thing to be "my body". Sartre offers fundamental arguments in favour of this position. His main idea is to prove that the opposite view leads to regression:

> Any awareness of my own body as an object requires understanding it to be a material object located in space; but such understanding presupposes a more basic kind of bodily awareness. If this awareness, too, presented my body as an object, it would again presuppose a more basic kind of bodily awareness. But then, on pain of regress, the epistemically basic mode of bodily awareness must not posit my body as an object. So it must be a nonpositional bodily awareness. Hence any positional bodily awareness presupposes nonpositional bodily awareness, and cannot be coeval with it (p. 139).

This points to the profound difference between positioning oneself as a subject of embodied awareness and identifying oneself as an object of such awareness. The author offers the following considerations to maintain his aim:

> The only action that I am able to know at the same time that it is taking place is the action of Pierre. I see his movement and I determine his goal at the same time: he is drawing a chair up to the table in order to be able to sit near this table and to write the letter that he told me he wanted to write. In this way I am able to grasp all the intermediate positions of the chair, and of the body which moves it, as instrumental organizations: they are means in order to reach a goal that is pursued […] If therefore I conceive of my body in the image of the Other's body, it is an instrument in the world that I am obliged to handle delicately and which is like the key to the handling of other tools (Sartre, 2018: 430–431, as cited on p. 157).

In this way the author argues that bodily experience, despite its objective givenness, cannot be anything other than non-positional awareness. The unity of body and consciousness does not allow for any other configuration. It would therefore be fair to acknowledge, along with Boyle, that experiencing the world from a particular bodily perspective is the basis of being in the world — and not being a witness to it. Since the body is given to us in a way that is not characteristic of other bodies, corporeality under reflection becomes the conceptual centre of experience and knowledge. Sartre's apophantic notion is that if we did not have such a direct certainty of our own bodily properties, we would be unable to realise both explicit self-consciousness and consciousness-as-subject, since objects are revealed to us because they occupy a particular place. This place is not determined by pure spatial coordinates but by a relation that is a practical reference. Here Boyle quotes Sartre:

> The glass is on the tray: that means that we must take care not to knock the glass over if we move the tray. The packet of tobacco is on the mantlepiece; this means you have to cross a distance of three meters if you want to go from the pipe to the

tobacco while avoiding certain obstacles — small tables, armchairs, etc. — which are placed between the mantlepiece and the table. In this sense, there is no distinction at all between perception and the practical organization of existents into a world (Sartre, 2018: 431–432, as cited on p. 152).

Such an understanding creates an alternative perspective, the body can be "transcendent and known". It is accessible to perception; it makes first-person experience possible. For the author, Sartre's thoughts on the fate of corporeality seem quite fair: the presence of consciousness as the body implies particular propositions revealing what it means for a subjective genealogy to feel and think the particular body.

ON SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Finally, we would like to consider the author's point about self-understanding in the context of self-knowledge. In particular, he considers the influence of rationality on self-knowledge. This reveals different forms of self-understanding, just as reflection differs from inference — in which the subject begins by believing in a set of propositions p, then recognises a rational connection between them, and comes to believe in p. These rational connections imply a specific arbitrary form of rationality:

> A lower animal's attention is fixed on the world. Its perceptions are its beliefs, and its desires are its will. It engages in conscious activities but is not conscious of them. That is, they are not the objects of its attention. Nevertheless, we human animals turn our attention to our perceptions and desires themselves, on to our own mental activities, and we are conscious of them. That is why we can think about them (Korsgaard, 1996: 92–93, as cited on p. 165).

Following this reflection, Boyle distinguishes two types of rationality that modulate self-knowledge. Since objects are specifically represented, the reality of objects is determined by a person's specific and inherent orientation to the purpose of activity. This approach is based on recognising the interdependence between the perception that enables a particular form of first-level cognition or positional consciousness and the reflexive articulation of that perception in the form of second-level cognition or non-positional consciousness. He draws a distinction between a level of object-oriented reflection or OOR and a level of subject-oriented reflection or SOR. For example, Boyle claims the point that there is no requirement for the subject who feels repelled by that bug to have a change in attitude, declaring instead that bug looks repulsive so I feel repelled by that bug (p. 169). Therefore, a bug can be repulsive in one optic and the subject can be repelled in another. One must be aware of the bug in a particular way. When

the subject reflects on a judgment of this kind, it does not form a new belief, but expresses the same judgment in a different, reflective form. It gives its own place to those aspects of experience that correspond to the subject's heterogeneous reflective enactment. Both rationalities build the possibility of self-acceptance and aim to show how self-knowledge can be practiced through them.

One of the variants of this reflective practice is Boyle's elaboration of psychology, which he calls, following Hilary Kornblit, "armchair psychology". In this argument, by "armchair psychology" the author means a discipline that attempts to understand the nature of our own cognitive abilities through a certain kind of introspective awareness. After all, "to suppose there is such a discipline is to suppose it is possible for us to comprehend the nature of our own cognitive capacities without observing human behavior, performing controlled experiments, scanning our brains, etc." (p. 196). The aim of this discipline is the theoretical study of the subject's conceptual beliefs. These beliefs should be obtained through introspection, as a kind of "inner sense" that allows us to observe our mental life, as in the case with *Cogito*. He creatively calls this approach, based on attention to the phenomenology of our own mental states, "armchair introspective psychology" (pp. 220–224).

As an alternative, he proposes "reflective armchair psychology". This should be defined as a reflection on the psychologically and biographically implicit points in our consciousness, biases that affect our understanding of the non-psychic world. Reflective armchair psychology should complement introspective psychology because it focuses on the empirical subject and has a transformative effect. To prove this thesis, the author considers intentional action and its effect on perception.

Intentional action is when a person has the capacity to act intentionally without necessarily having the concepts of will, intention, intentional action, etc. This is the way human cognitive development usually goes — long before understanding what it means to intend to do something, which requires justification, will emerges as the result of a different kind of decision based on reasons that motivate one to do something. For the author, the prerequisite is not to master the concepts of intention and intentional action, but to become a subject of intention.

In this way we come to understand a person as a purposive agent, someone whose actions and attitudes illustrate these concepts. For these reasons, reflective armchair psychology is free from the charges of its rival (mere armchair psychology); it consists of the reflexive formulation of an understanding that is necessarily linked to the realisation of a change in behaviour. Such reflective armchair psychology can draw on a different source: not from introspective attention to our conscious "imaginary experience", but from the reflective articulation and representation of imaginary objects. For the author, the ability to reflect transparently on one's own mental state is again based on non-positional

self-awareness. The mind thus appears as a laboratory for experimentation — the subject is empowered to identify and deal with himself.

Next, Boyle examines Collingwood's thesis of "historical science" as a rational form of self-understanding that seeks to reconstruct historical fact from a first-person perspective. Every historical fact depends on the author's self-understanding, so every perspective would correspond to his witness' rationality. He believes that an adequate understanding of human affairs must include this "internal" perspective, as he suggests that human events are shaped by it (p. 228). For example, Boyle considers Nisbet and Wilson's experiment in which people were offered almost identical pairs of nylon stockings and asked to comment on which they would choose. As a result, each person chose a pair at random and praised it in terms of quality, price, etc. The rating they gave to the stockings had nothing to do with reality, but was a product of their own beliefs. People arbitrarily gave conflicting opinions that were present in their minds and used them *ad hoc* (pp. 231–232).

In this kind of situation, indeterminate self-descriptive states are formulated out of the confabulation process, one which aims to fit the description of the event to the reason. This leads to the problem of the meaning of the truthfulness of self-attribution since the subject here arbitrarily chooses the ways of talking about himself. And it is also related to claims of a broader thesis and understanding that the subject enters the world not fully conscious of everyday assumptions. But what are these assumptions, and do they involve the threat of scepticism?

The author solves this problem in a different way. If we look at the choices people made in the experiment above, they may indeed be made to meet the requirements of transparency. However, if we assume that people chose the stockings on the basis of preferences, and only then added an accompanying and positive narrative — our perspective changes. If we allow such acts to be understood as rational reconstructions and affirmative statements based on inherent experience and knowledge, then they are free to make any statement they wish and scepticism is avoided.

The capacity for self-reflection should therefore be judged by the value of the information it gives us about our own mental states. As before, Boyle argues that we are not limited by the impossibility of knowing ourselves, but by the subject's inadequate self-reflection. Self-reflection can enrich life, and not just help us live it more successfully. At this point, Boyle notes that his research helps to clarify "why self-knowledge can be considered, and why the Delphic injunction to 'know thyself' can claim to be not just an arbitrary requirement imposed on us by some deity, but a necessary and proper task in human life" (p. 24). To strengthen his argument, Boyle points out that the difference between self-knowledge that is merely informative and self-knowledge that is transformative is also found in Sigmund Freud's *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*:

Knowledge is not always the same as knowledge: there are different sorts of knowledge, which are far from equivalent psychologically. [...] The doctor's knowledge is not the same as the patient's and cannot produce the same effects. If the doctor transfers his knowledge to the patient as a piece of information, it has no result (Freud, 1989: 347–349, as cited on p. 254).

The subject is in a particular state of a specific order, where awareness of the first-order state is only one reflective aspect. In the example of gambling, Boyle posits a distinct "double demonstration": to stop gambling is a very different thing from deciding to stop gambling (p. 260). As in the familiar example: This cat is grey and I see a grey cat. The change is not a change in what I am aware of, but a change in the kind of understanding applied to that awareness. This concept emphasises the preconditions for reflexive self-understanding, which brings us back to the need for Sartre's theme of non-positional consciousness as a precondition for self-knowledge.

Moving on to the final theses, Boyle emphasises the specificity of historical knowledge and, at the same time, human self-knowledge. The reason for the subject's self-understanding is that it is locked into itself in an embodied cultural and historical singularity. These and other manifestations of the empirical subjective demand that reflection be directed more towards the concrete self. To emphasise this, Boyle distinguishes between Cartesian and Socratic self-knowledge. Whereas the Cartesian point is to explore apperception and pure acts of self-consciousness. Socratic reflection seeks to reveal the essential in the subject's self-understanding. Boyle quotes Xenophon's *Memorabilia*:

Do you think a man knows himself who knows only his name? Or is the case like that of the men who buy horses, who do not think that they know the horse they want to buy until they have examined whether it is tame or wild, strong or weak, swift or slow, and how it is in all the other respects which make a horse useful or useless. Does not a man make this kind of examination as to what is his human use, and in this way come to know his own powers (Xenophon, 2001: IV.2.25, as cited on p. 249).

Socratic self-understanding is about finding the point of conscious self-reflection. Thus, in the end, the author declares the necessity of self-knowledge in order to turn implicit self-knowledge into explicit self-knowledge, echoing Socrates' famous phrase: "The unexamined life is not worth living" (p. 268).

Boyle's book is an exciting example of metaphysical optimism as he seeks to overcome the epistemological limitations of contemporary thought and outline a multidimensional perspective of reflective experience. Drawing on the philosophy of Sartre, Boyle has managed to breathe new life into the problem of transparency. By distinguishing essential self-knowledge or Socratic cognition, the author has outlined numerous reflective practices necessary to complement human existence, in keeping with the famous Socratic motto.

The author does not offer definitive ultimate answers or recommendations, instead guiding the reader through various intuitions of self-reflection. In its last section, the treatise suddenly arrives at the notion of Socratic reflection, pointing to further ways to complement self-reflection. Boyle criticises existing approaches to show that none of them provides an adequate account of reflexivity, and he offers an intuitive hypothesis about the inherent properties of reflective acts and their irreducibility — one which implies the fundamental interdependence of positional and non-positional consciousness. Boyle leaves his final thoughts open, encouraging the reader to further consider his arguments. He remains within the framework of a particular discussion, not presenting his thoughts as an inherently original vision of self-consciousness but as a fundamental elaboration of primary philosophical intuitions. Perhaps philosophy should sometimes only lead to an understanding of such intuitions, since this could radically alter imaginative relations and self-knowledge. Boyle's book is an example of such unfolding thought.

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