Comment on Matt Boyle's Transparency and Reflection: A Study of Self-Knowledge and the Nature of Mind

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Transparency and Reflection is an impressive and original contribution to the topic of self-knowledge—and much else besides. This brief comment raises some questions about Boyle's theory of self-knowledge, and inevitably passes over swathes of fascinating material in this subtle and thought-provoking book.

1: Transparency

Let's begin with some inspirational quotations from Evans, both of which appear in *Transparency and Reflection*:

> A subject can gain knowledge of his [perceptual] states in a very simple way: by re-using precisely those skills of conceptualization that he uses to make judgements about the world. Here is how he can do it. He goes through exactly the same procedure as he would go through if he were trying to make a judgement about how it is at this place now, but excluding any knowledge he has *of an extraneous kind* … he may prefix this result with the operator 'It seems to me as though …' (Evans 1982: 227-8)

> In making a self-ascription of belief, one's eyes are, so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward—upon the world. If someone asks me "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?" (225)

But how could I know that I believe that there won't be a third world war by attending to phenomena that have nothing to do with me or my psychology? As Boyle points out, this problem extends as far as transparency does:

> This difficulty will arise, not just for our transparent knowledge of our own beliefs, but for any purportedly transparent knowledge of mental states of any kind. For our knowledge of our own mental states is said to be "transparent"

> inasmuch as we can knowledgeably answer questions about these states by attending in the right way, not to anything "inner" or psychological, but to the objects or states of affairs toward which our mental states are directed. But how can a consideration of non-mental things, whether they are present or absent, real or imaginary, be a way of gaining knowledge about our own mental states? (Boyle 2024: 43)

2: Nonpositional consciousness and reflection

Boyle does not conceive of the problem of self-knowledge as primarily epistemological. He rejects "epistemic approaches," which take

> the problem of self-knowledge to be that of explaining how the proper alignment is achieved between a first-order mental state and a second-order belief about that state. (14)

On Boyle's alternative, the "*metaphysical approach* to self-knowledge,"

> *the basic form of self-awareness* does not consist in a relation between a first-order mental state and a second-order belief, but rather belongs intrinsically to certain of our first-order mental states themselves. (14, emphasis added)

Although Boyle thinks this contrast important, perhaps not much weight should be placed on it, since he certainly does offer an account of how we *know* about our mental lives.

Boyle is struck by Evans's remarks about perception as well as belief, and conjectures that they generalize widely:

> This program for explaining our knowledge of how things perceptually appear to us can be generalized to other kinds of representational states … To give some rough examples: desire represents its object as attractive or appealing in some describable way; fear represents its object as terrifying; imagination represents its object as in a distinctive way present *in absentia*. (41)

Crucial to his account is a distinction he takes from Sartre, between *positional* and *nonpositional* consciousness. Positional consciousness is a capacious category that includes any intentional mental state: believing that it's snowing, feeling afraid of heights, imagining a dragon, wanting a beer, intending to go to the airport, and so on.

Nonpositional consciousness is "the basic form of self-awareness," an "implicit self-awareness" (5) that one is in a positionally conscious state—that one believes that it's snowing, or that one is imagining a dragon, for example. Positional consciousness, Boyle argues, is always accompanied by nonpositional consciousness,[1] and self-knowledge is acquired by making this implicit awareness explicit, through a process of "reflection." His account thus has "two main elements":

> First, the idea that any consciousness of the world (in the broad Sartrean sense of "consciousness": any form of contentful awareness, whether occurrent or stative) involves *nonpositional consciousness* of itself; second, the idea that this nonpositional consciousness can be transformed, through an act of *reflection*, into explicit knowledge of one's own representational state. It is our ability to bring our nonpositional consciousness to reflective articulacy … that explains our capacity for transparent self-knowledge. (74)

In short, where M is a mental state:

$$\textit{Nonpositional consciousness}\ [\text{I am in M}] \rightarrow^{\textbf{reflection}} \rightarrow \text{knowledge that I am in M}$$

As Boyle emphasizes, we need "a sharper and more rigorous account of what nonpositional consciousness is" and more clarity of "the role of reflection in transforming our nonpositional self-awareness into positional self-knowledge" (76). He attempts to supply both in the second and third parts of the book.

But why is this a *transparent* account of self-knowledge? According to Boyle,

> the approach allows us to reconcile what is attractive in Byrne's idea that transparent self-knowledge is grounded simply in a consideration of the world, on the one hand, and Peacocke's thought that such knowledge must draw on some sort of awareness of our own psychological state, on the other. *Sartre's idea of nonpositional consciousness is the key to this reconciliation*: it shows how a look outward can itself presuppose awareness of one's own psychological state without foregrounding this awareness in a way that severs the link between the subject's

[1] In "rational animals": see 191-2.

> awareness of her own mental state and her first-order perspective on the world. (77, emphasis added)[2]

On Byrne's view, psychological states are like perfectly transparent panes of glass, through which I am aware of, and act on, the world. Naturally this raises the "problem of transparency" that Boyle outlines: if the pane is invisible, how do I know it's there? Boyle's solution is to deny that the psychological glass panes are *completely* invisible. They are more like real windows: when I look through a window I *am* aware of the pane, and moreover this implicit awareness is vital if I am to use the window correctly. But by taking a short cognitive step, my "nonpositional consciousness" of the transparent pane can be transformed into explicit knowledge of it.

3: Intention, belief, perception

What could intending to ϕ to be "transparent" to? Byrne 2018 defends the (seemingly crazy) answer, "I will ϕ." On the view in that book, I can know that I intend to ϕ by inferring (2) from (1):

(1) I will ϕ
(2) I intend to ϕ.

Boyle grants that there is something to this idea:

> I think Byrne is right that if a person judges (1), on a certain sort of basis, this also warrants her in judging (2). This would constitute a vindication for Byrne's approach, however, only if her grounds for so judging were neutral, in the sense that their availability did not presuppose an awareness of her own intentions. Now, (1) is superficially neutral: it does not refer explicitly to the subject's present mental state. But if we think carefully about the kinds of circumstances in which someone might, on the basis of thinking (1), be warranted in thinking (2), we will see that there is reason to doubt this apparent neutrality.
>
> Let us stipulatively define a special "intention-based" sense of "will," "will$_I$," whose use in joining a subject with an action-verb expresses a present intention so to act. We can distinguish "will$_I$" from a "will" of blank futurity

[2] Byrne and Peacocke: Byrne 2018, Peacocke 1998.

> ("will$_{BF}$"), which merely asserts that the subject will at some future time do something, leaving it open what makes this the case. In the "will$_{I}$"-sense, it might be *true* that I will walk to work tomorrow (as I now intend), but *false* that I will trip and break my leg tomorrow, even if these propositions are *both true* when "will" is read in the "will$_{BF}$"-sense. Now we can ask: In cases where one can move transparently from (1) to (2), is the "will" in (1) "will$_{I}$" or "will$_{BF}$"? *Certainly the step is warranted* if the "will" is "will$_{I}$": in this case, (2) just unpacks what the subject is already committed to, in accepting that she will ϕ. But the step looks much harder to understand if her basis is simply a conviction that she will$_{BF}$ ϕ. (54, emphasis added)[3]

This passage suggests that, although (1) does not entail (2) if "will" is read in the "will$_{BF}$"-sense, it does if it is read in the other sense. Thus (2) is entailed by:

(1a) I will$_{I}$ ϕ

But not by:

(1b) I will$_{BF}$ ϕ

Another passage with the same suggestion occurs later, in chapter 8, when Boyle says that someone could acquire the concept of an "intentional action,"

> simply by reflecting on what she already understands. She could begin this process of reflection by making the following stipulation: my doing ϕ is an *intentional action* just if, in doing it, I *make true* a corresponding thought that
>
> (1a) I will$_{I}$ ϕ
>
> (203, second emphasis added, sentence changed, ϕ-ing instead of A-ing)[4,5]

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[3] Also: "the English verb 'will' is ambiguous between will$_{I}$ and will$_{BF}$" (fn. 10), which implies that "I will$_{I}$ ϕ" and "I will$_{BF}$ ϕ" express different propositions.

[4] In place of (1a) Boyle has "I shall do A," where "'shall' is used to mark the special mode of futurity we noted earlier, the mode that represents a claim about the subject's own future as a response to the deliberative question what to do" (203). That "special mode" was earlier marked with "will$_{I}$."

[5] A little later this becomes an account of the acquisition of the concept of "intended action," which is different: "A subject who is able to deliberate about what to do, and thereby to settle what she will$_{I}$ do, might introduce the concept *intended action* as a concept applicable to just those actions that figure, for some subject at some time, as things she will$_{I}$ do in the relevant sense" (213).

Here the implication is that (1a) and (1b) differ in truth conditions: the truth of the former guarantees that I am acting intentionally while the truth of the latter does not.

On this view, I could come to know that I intend to ϕ by deduction from the known premise that I will$_{I}$ ϕ. But then "reflection" would be deduction and anyway this account would patently be *un*transparent.[6] Clearly this is not what Boyle has in mind. Despite these quotations, the will$_{I/BF}$ distinction isn't between two senses of "will" and so there aren't *two* propositions (that I will$_{BF}$ ϕ, and that I will$_{I}$ ϕ). There's only one, that I will ϕ, which we may stipulate is true iff I ϕ at some future time.[7]

As Boyle puts it, the will$_{I/BF}$ distinction contrasts two "*way[s] of thinking* that it will be the case that I ϕ," with the will$_{I}$-way of thinking being "one that (as we theorists may put it) presents the relevant future action as settled by my present intention to ϕ" (69, emphasis added). "Thus, when I think (1a), I do not explicitly ascribe an intention to myself; rather, I think that I will ϕ *in a manner* that implicitly presupposes such an intention" (69, emphasis added).[8] And thinking that I will ϕ in this manner *just is* to be "nonpositionally conscious" of "the fact that I intend to ϕ" (69).

That the will$_{I/BF}$ distinction concerns two *ways* or *manners* or *modes of presentation* of thinking the *same* content is confirmed by Boyle's discussion of belief. Suppose I believe:

(3) There will be a third world war

Boyle writes:

> (3) is clearly a proposition about the non-mental world, but *my manner of representing this proposition* differs from the way I would represent it if I were merely supposing (5) for the sake of argument, imagining a possible world in which it holds true, etc.
>
> …The point here is not merely that the subject's answer to the question whether p expresses a belief she holds, but that she herself already implicitly distinguishes between *this mode of presentation* and a contrasting non-committal mode … We

[6] Further, the obvious next question is how one knows the premise that one will$_{I}$ ϕ, to which there is no obvious answer.

[7] Tricky issues about the semantics of "will," and the fact that English has no future tense, aren't relevant for present purposes.

[8] Note the unsubscripted "will" in the first and third quotations. See also 201.

> might therefore say that, in concluding that there will be a third world war, she expresses a *nonpositional* consciousness of her own belief: an awareness that figures, not as the object of her thought, but as the necessary background of her thinking rationally about the question of whether there will be a third world war. (72-3, first two emphases added, sentences in this and subsequent quotations renumbered)

Finally, let's look at Boyle's treatment of perception. Consider someone who sees a cat and thinks:

(4) This cat is purring

The cat, Boyle says,

> is presented in a distinctive manner, which we express with a "this" … Philosophers commonly call such a "this" a "perceptual demonstrative" precisely because it expresses a mode of presentation of an object that is available just when the relevant object is perceived.
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> … a subject who thinks (4) on the basis of perceptual consciousness does not think *that she perceives* the relevant cat: the only object she thinks about is the cat … a subject who thinks (4) thinks *de re* about a particular cat, but in a manner which presupposes that she perceives it. We might therefore say that her perceptual relation to the cat is expressed "nonpositionally" in her thought: it is not posited, but it is a presupposition of the soundness of what is posited. (71)

Let's grant that the perceiver thinks that this cat is purring "in a manner which presupposes that she perceives it." Put another way, the cat is presented in a distinctive perceptual (visual) "mode." So, as Boyle says,

> if the subject goes on to think the reflective thought:
>
> (5) I perceive a purring cat
>
> she will be making explicit a psychological state whose presence was already presupposed in her world-directed representation of the cat. (71-2)

And, on Boyle's view, this transition yields self-knowledge: it allows the subject to come to know that she perceives a purring cat:

> Provided that she grasps the first-person application-conditions for the concept *perceives*, [the] subject will thus be in a position to know her own perceptual state through mere reflection: she will not need to draw on any further information about her present psychological state beyond what is already contained in (4). What justifies her reflective step, however, is not the sheer fact that a certain cat is purring, but her *nonpositional* consciousness of her own manner of apprehending this fact, which is expressed in her manner of thinking of the cat. (72)

Here's the story so far. Imagine Matt is at a party and another guest convinces him that a third world war is imminent, what with Trump and all that. Despondent, Matt decides to go home. Even the sight of a purring cat on the way out does not detain him. Matt believes that there will be a third world war, he intends to go home, and he perceives (sees) a purring cat. An introspective fellow, he realizes that he is in these mental states. On Matt's view, he acquires this self-knowledge by means of the following "transitions"[9]:

> There will be a third world war
> I believe there will be a third world war
>
> I am going to go home[10]
> I intend to go home
>
> This cat is purring
> I perceive a purring cat

These transitions yield knowledge because the initial worldly content (the premise) is presented under a certain "mode," which expresses Matt's nonpositional consciousness of the fact about himself that he knows as a result of the transition:

> What justifies our reflective self-ascription is a preexisting awareness of the relevant mental state that is expressed, *not explicitly in the content of our first-order representation*, but *implicitly in what we may call the "mode of presentation" of this content*. Moreover … grasp of the relevant mental state concepts will involve an understanding of the connection between such modes of

[9] The transitions are not supposed to be inferences: see 167.
[10] Example from 201.

> presentation and the applicability of corresponding mental state concepts, and hence that a subject who grasps concepts such as intention, perception, and belief will be in a position to make a corresponding self-ascriptive judgment simply by reflecting on the objects of her intentions, perceptions, and beliefs. (74, emphasis added)[11]

Having said all that, I should note that some passages suggest that Boyle would not accept without qualification the claim that these transitions "yield knowledge," because knowledge was already present, albeit in a latent form. For instance:

> The step to such reflective awareness turns out to be, *not a mysterious step from ignorance to knowledge*, but merely a redeployment of the very same understanding in an explicit, conceptual form. (185-6, emphasis added)

And:

> When a subject moves from perceptual consciousness of some object O, a consciousness she could express simply by thinking about
>
> this thing
>
> to reflective awareness that
>
> I perceive this thing

[11] A small correction:

> Where this is the case—where a subject's manner of thinking of the world is such that she requires only general competence with a certain psychological concept in order to know, on this basis, that she is in a certain psychological state—I will say that the subject is in a position to know her own psychological state by *reflection*. *A reflective transition is not an inference from premises that are "neutral" in Byrne's sense*: accepting the relevant premises presupposes a kind of awareness of one's own psychological state, but this is a *nonpositional* awareness, which does not involve the application of a psychological concept. Nevertheless, such awareness can warrant a psychological self- ascription, for the application of the relevant concept just makes explicit a consciousness that was already implicit in the corresponding way of thinking of the world. (70, middle emphasis added)

But (if I am understanding Boyle's position correctly) the premises *are* neutral in my sense (Byrne 2018: 102)—that there will be a third world war has nothing to do with my psychology.

> this is, in one important sense, *not an advance in knowledge*: there is no circumstance of which the subject was formerly unaware and now is aware. (187, emphasis added)[12]

4: Nonpositional consciousness

Boyle needs to argue that when I intend to go shopping (say), I thereby have "implicit self-awareness" of my "own psychological state." At a minimum: the fact that I that intend to go shopping is "not something to which I am oblivious." Let's look at the preliminary motivation Boyle gives for that claim.

Consider the following transition:

> (6) I am going to go shopping
> (7) I intend to go shopping

Assume that my endorsement of (6) is the result of deciding to go shopping. I have not yet made the step of endorsing (7). Why must I have *some* sort of awareness—perhaps primitive—of my intention? Boyle answers:

> My awareness of it will come out in the specific kinds of grounds I consider for propositions like (6), and the specific kinds of consequences I draw from them. My grounds will speak primarily to the desirability of shopping, rather than to the evidential question whether it will be the case that I shop. And I will draw consequences, not about what I am likely to do, but about what else I must do in order to shop and how my shopping should affect my other plans. I will, in short, treat such propositions in ways which indicate *that I understand them to express decisions rather than mere predictions*. But this understanding will be expressed, not in my explicitly thinking I intend to shop, but in my distinctive manner of thinking of my future shopping. (69-70, emphasis added, shopping instead of ϕ-ing)

[12] I take Boyle's official position to be that the process of reflection *does* result in (at least) an "advance in knowledge," in the sense that the subject after reflection knows that (e.g.) she intends to go shopping, which she did not know before. For instance: "our capacity for self-reflection *does not merely supply us* with knowledge" (253, emphasis added). See also Boyle's reservations about "tacit knowledge," 65.

Boyle points out that if I believe that I am going to go shopping because I have decided to do so, then I will, for example, plan to walk to the bus stop to catch the bus to the mall. And I will have arrived at my belief that I am going shopping because shopping struck me as the thing to do, given that I need a new pair of shoes or whatever. In contrast, I may believe that I am going shopping because I know my wife will force me to at gunpoint—an unhappy prediction, not a decision.

This is all fine, but where is the awareness of my intention? All we have is that my belief that I am going shopping will play a distinctive role if it is the result of a decision rather than a prediction. That does not imply I am aware of my intention to shop—or my belief that I will shop, come to that. When Boyle says that "I will, in short, treat such propositions in ways which indicate *that I understand them* to express decisions rather than mere predictions" he has not motivated the part about "understanding." What is correct is that I will treat such propositions in ways which indicate *that they express decisions rather than mere predictions*, but that does not bring awareness of decisions or intentions into the picture.

Here is a related passage, not concerning the transition from (6) to (7)[13], but we can read it that way:

> The reasonableness of this transition is evident. A person who thinks (6) already thinks of her future shopping in a way that implies a present intention to shop: her judging (7) just makes this implication explicit. What she must understand in order justifiably to make the transition from (6) to (7) is simply that *the way of thinking of her future involved in (6) implies a present intention to shop*. But this is to say that she does not need any further information about her present psychological state beyond *what is already contained in (6)*. All she needs is a grasp of the conditions of the first-person application of the concept *intention* itself. (70, emphasis added, shopping instead of ϕ-ing)

True, if I understand that the way of thinking of my future involving in thinking (6) implies that I intend to shop, then I can justifiably conclude that I intend to shop. But (at least given what was said above about the will$_{I/BF}$ distinction) this is not "contained in"

[13] It actually concerns the transition from (1a) to (2).

(6) in the sense that it is entailed by the proposition that I am going to go shopping. Rather, the connection between (6) and my intention is this: I believe (6) because I intend to go shopping. Boyle has not shown that I have access to *this* fact.

Here's another example where (it seems to me) Boyle has smuggled in the subject's "implicit self-awareness" without proper support. He argues that someone's non-positional consciousness of her own perceptual states equips her to introduce the concept of perception if she doesn't already possess it, by "reflecting on the understanding that is already latent in the structure of her own representing":

> For she could introduce the concept *perceived object* as a classification for things she is in a position to represent *in the distinctive way expressed by a perceptual demonstrative*, and she could then define the concept *perception* as the concept of the relation in which she stands to those objects in virtue of which they are presented to her in this way. (207, second emphasis added)

Let's grant that a perceived object is precisely one the subject is able to refer to in a distinctive way, expressed in language by the use of "this" as a "perceptual demonstrative." As we saw above, Boyle explains such a use by saying "it expresses a mode of presentation of an object that is available just when the relevant object is perceived" (71). If the perceiving subject is aware that she refers to a cat in this distinctive way, then she knows that she perceives the cat. But why can't she *be* in this position without being *aware* in any sense that she is?

5: Reflection

I may be aware of a pig writhing under a blanket and yet not be in a position to know that *this* [the pig] is a pig. If I concluded that this *is* a pig that would be a lucky guess. (The animal is, after all, hidden under a blanket.) Even if Boyle has established that I am in some sense aware of my intention to shop, or my perception of the cat, there still remains a gap between that and my being in a position to know that I intend to shop, or that I perceive the cat. He could close the gap by arguing that my nonpositional consciousness of my intention amounts to my *knowing* that I intend to shop but then reflection would be unnecessary. As he puts the difficulty:

> If reflection is to be, not a kind of groping in the dark, but a form of thinking that is guided by an antecedent awareness, this preexisting awareness must be rich enough to justify what the reflecting subject thinks. But it is hard to see how it could meet this condition without being so rich as to render the act of reflection cognitively superfluous. (167)

Boyle connects the problem with a more general issue:

> I want to suggest that the issue that interests us— the relationship between rationality and our capacity to reflect on our own mental states—is in fact a special case of a more general linkage between rationality and reflection. To bring out this more general connection, it will help to begin with a particular variety of rational activity and then generalize the point. So I will focus in the first instance on the capacity to draw inferences, a capacity commonly regarded as distinctive of rational creatures. (171)

Boyle notes that a person S could reason validly, say from (i) *p v q* and (ii) ~*p* to (iii) *q*, without having the concept of a proposition "following from" (being entailed by) some others. To spell this out: S believes *p v q* and ~*p* and concludes *q*, in a way that counts as inference (see 172); she has no beliefs about propositions themselves, and a fortiori does not believe that proposition (iii) follows from propositions (i) and (ii). Presumably such a person need not speak a language, and it will be simpler to consider such a case.[14] Our languageless reasoner "need not think *that* the relevant relations of implication obtain; she need only think about first-level propositions in a way that is intelligently responsive to such relations. S's understanding is thus exercised in her activity of *relating* first-level propositions to one another, rather than in thinking second-level thoughts *about such relations*" (183).

Inference is a movement of the mind: in the case at hand, our reasoner starts with the belief that p v q and the belief that ~p, and ends up with a new belief, that q. That process is causal, but (as Boyle notes) a "deviant" causal path from the initial belief states to the

[14] Boyle does say that "a child, for instance, could draw rational inferences without yet having formed such sophisticated concepts" (174), although admittedly he is clearly taking the child to have some language. Earlier in the book he says that "young children and nonhuman animals, can have beliefs and act intelligently on the basis of them" (66), which suggests that inference is not confined to those with language. On non-human animals, see 191-5.

final one plausibly is insufficient for inference. Familiarly, adding extra premises won't help.[15] Boyle sums up the problem as he sees it:

> The intuition … was that, in a genuine inference, the subject's coming to believe her conclusion must occur, not just automatically, but in virtue of her having some (purported) insight into the rational connection between her premises and her conclusion. But if we eliminate the doxastic element [i.e. the proposal that an extra premise needs to be added], it is not clear what remains for us to make of this idea. S may presumably be disposed to believe (iii) in the presence of beliefs (i) and (ii) without having any insight into the connection. … the mere operation of such a disposition does not suffice for inference; S's coming to believe (iii) must reflect her having some understanding of the (purported) relationship between (i), (ii), and (ii). But what can this mean if not that she holds some belief about this relation? (174)

If we stick to the case of *valid* inference, Boyle's answer is that S has the *potential* to see that (iii) follows from (i) and (ii). That is why she genuinely infers the conclusion from the two premises. She may not be able to grasp:

(C) If the proposition that p v q and the proposition that ~p are true, the proposition that q must be true[16]

But,

> the *potential* for reflection is essential to this mode of understanding: it is only because the subject can reflect on the rational background of her inference that her cognitive transition is genuinely inferential at all. Hence a rational subject will be able to formulate the principle of her inference in a proposition like (C),

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[15] For the last two points Boyle draws on Boghossian 2014. Boghossian's "deviant" causation example, via Plantinga:

> Suppose I see Aline. This causes me to believe that I see Aline, which causes me to drop the coffee I had been holding, which causes a stain on my shirt, which leads me to believe that my shirt is stained. My belief that I see Aline is part of the causal explanation for why I believe that my shirt is stained. But we wouldn't want to say that I inferred that my shirt is stained from the fact that I see her. (3)

[16] See 179: (C) (taken from Lewis Carroll on Achilles and the tortoise) has been adjusted for clarity. See also Boghossian 2014: 6-8.

> provided that she grasps appropriate concepts (at a minimum, the conditional structure *if—then*—and the concept of truth). (180)

Here we have an interesting proposal for bridging the gap between exercising the brute disposition to believe (iii) when one believes (i) and (ii) and *inferring* (iii) from these two premises. S infers (iii), not because she *knows* (C), but because she has the potential to know it. I have some questions about this proposal, but for the sake of the argument let's assume that Boyle is right.[17]

Knowing (C) is not an example of self-knowledge, but it is supposed to illustrate and demystify the implicit awareness of our mental states on which reflection operates to yield self-knowledge. In the case of inferring (iii) from (i) and (ii), reflection operates on the subject's implicit or "pre-reflective" awareness of (C) to yield knowledge of it:

> To describe this awareness as initially "pre-reflective" is to offer a merely negative characterization of it: it is to describe it in terms of what it is not, viz., a propositional belief about (e.g.) what follows from what. A more positive and less mysterious characterization would be that it is the awareness that governs a certain type of first-level cognition: for instance, the taking-to-follow that enables me to believe a certain conclusion (iii) given preexisting belief in [(i), (ii)]. When I make this taking reflectively explicit, I bring to bear a widely recognized capacity of rational animals, the capacity to frame and apply concepts, but in a special way that makes the rational background of my first-level cognition into a topic for thought in its own right.

However, what I don't see is how Boyle's proposal justifies talk about S's implicit *awareness* of (C), or of her *taking-(iii)-to-follow-from-(i)&(ii)*, or of her pre-reflective "*insight* into the rational connection between her premises and her conclusion," or anything of the sort. One can agree that inference must be "something more than [exercising] a blind disposition to proceed from given premises to rationally related conclusions," but it is unobvious that the missing ingredient "must be some kind of

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[17] For simplicity, we have concentrated on valid inference, but Boyle's proposal is also supposed to cover invalid inferences, including fallacies such as affirming the consequent and so-called "inductive" inference (see Boghossian 2014: 5). Sticking with valid inference, one problem is that I might believe (iii) via a "deviant" causal chain (see fn. 15) starting from my belief in (i) and (ii), despite having the potential to grasp (C). This is not inference, but (on Boyle's proposal) why not?

(purported) *awareness* of a rational relationship, something that contributes to the subject's understanding of her reason for drawing her conclusion" (174, emphasis added). Boyle's candidate for the missing ingredient is the subject's *potential* to have "a kind of awareness that everyone recognizes as genuine" (185), but this potentiality does not imply that the subject is *already* aware in some "pre-reflective" way. A potential recognizably-genuine F is not in general a covert F. An acorn is a potential recognizably-genuine tree; nevertheless, it is in no sense a tree.

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There's much more in *Transparency and Reflection* that bears on the questions I have raised in this note, an indication of the rich ore that remains to be mined.

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