



Self Knowledge and its Relationship with Rationality; Defending Richard Moran's Transparency Theory

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Abstract

We all have the intuition that self-knowledge is a special kind of knowledge that is distinct from the rest of our knowledge. The motivation of philosophers for addressing this issue as a philosophical issue is often the mentioned distinction. They have tried to explain the nature of this particular knowledge. Among their self-knowledge theories, rationalist theories have explained this particular knowledge based on its relation with rationality. According to them, rationality has an important relation to self-knowledge and to its distinctive nature. In this paper, after the general introduction of the rationalist theories in the debate of self-knowledge, we will analyze Moran's Transparency Theory as one of the most successful rationalist theories. After that, we will mention one of the most important challenges that this theory always faces, and then we will introduce and analyze an interesting solution that Boyle has suggested to solve this challenge and, in fact, to complete the Transparency Theory. Finally, we will mention some of the weaknesses of this solution and, ultimately, we will suggest two proposals to improve this solution and for the progress of the Transparency Theory.



Keywords

Fundamental self-knowledge, rationality, transparency, reflectivism

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Introduction

The discussion of “self-knowledge” as a philosophical issue begins with an intuition. This intuition is based on the fact that our knowledge of our mental states or our knowledge in relation to statements like: “I know that I am happy,” is a particular knowledge that is distinct from the rest of our knowledge. It seems that in order to gain knowledge of ourselves, we do not need to go through those processes that we go through in order to gain knowledge about the external world or knowledge of other minds. We feel that we directly know our own mental states. The role of self-knowledge philosophers is to explain this type of particular knowledge. Theories such as the Inner Sense Theory, the Acquaintance Theory, inferentialism, or theories with a rationalist approach are presented in response to this issue. Considering theories such as the Inner Sense Theory and the Acquaintance Theory, we will find that a common aspect of these theories is that self-knowledge has been defined as a product of an internal observation of our mental states. Such an approach is a kind of Empiricism in self-knowledge. The Rationalist approach has been raised against this approach. This approach, by linking self-knowledge with rationality, has opened a new chapter in the discussion of self-knowledge. The foundation of this approach is based on the principle that our situation as a rational agent plays a fundamental role in self-knowledge. Rationalists believed that this ignorance of the fundamental role of rationality in self-knowledge has caused Empiricists to ignore the most important kind of self-knowledge that is associated with rationality. Tyler Burge, Richard Moran, and Matthew Boyle are some of the important philosophers who theorize about this kind of self-knowledge.

Goal

In this paper, we will first introduce the main components of Rationalist approaches because we want to review the theoretical literature of this approach. Then, we will bring up a summary of the Tyler Burge view, a famous and important philosopher of the rationalist approach. This is an introduction to introduce Moran's Theory of Transparency which is the focal point of our discussion. We will then refer to one of the most important challenges facing the Transparency Theory and bring up a significant solution that is presented by Matthew Boyle. We will also show that despite the advantages of this solution, there are ambiguities and other challenges. Finally, we will try to set up two proposals as a way to advance Boyle's solution.

Conclusion

The perspective of rationalist philosophers about the existence of a kind of self-knowledge in rational creatures seems to be a powerful idea that is difficult to oppose. Tyler Burge presented interesting arguments about this issue. But it is not easy replying to the question of how this kind of self-knowledge occurs. The theory of Transparency and Reflectivism were proposed to respond to this question. Although they have been considered as efficient theories; however, the mentioned problem still remains ambiguous and complex. Transparency denied the introspective self-knowledge, but couldn't explain how transparent self-knowledge occurs and therefore, it does not provide a complete explanation for self-knowledge. Some vagueness and some important challenges still continue to exist in this theory.

Finally, we propose two proposals as a complement to Boyle's theory. Maybe they could advance this theory. We suggest that we can use the concept of non-conceptual belief and dispositional belief. These debates have the potential for solving some of the challenges of Transparency and Reflectivism. These are profound topics and need great reflection. We know that our proposals are very elementary and crude ideas. But perhaps they can be a way toward developing the Transparency and Reflectivism theories.