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Running head: TWO THEORIES: A COMPARISON OF BIOLOGICAL REALISM AND THE  
SELF-MODEL THEORY OF SUBJECTIVITY

**Two Theories: A comparison of Antti Revonsuo's Biological Realism and Thomas  
Metzinger's Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity**

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## Abstract

In the thesis at hand, a comparison is made of the two theories of mind found in Thomas Metzinger's *Being No One* and Antti Revonsuo's *Inner Presence*. The comparison focuses on the theoretical foundations of the theories and examines in what way they differ. Further analysis is devoted to an examination of which of the two approaches that can be said to be more plausible. Support from certain philosophical theories aid in the conclusion that Revonsuo has a more plausible foundation for his theory. The thesis ends with a short sketch of the theoretical consequences of this conclusion.

Keywords: Mind, Consciousness, Intentionality, Phenomenology

## Introduction and Purpose

The subject of the thesis at hand is a comparison of the two theories of mind that are to be found in Thomas Metzinger's "Being No One" and Antti Revonsuo's "Inner Presence". The theories in question are Metzinger's *Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity* and Revonsuo's *Biological Realism*.

Both of these theories are comprehensive and meant to cover a wide range of theoretical features about how the mind works. However, my intention is not to do a full-range comparison of the two as I have chosen to focus on their ontological foundations. In effect, this boils down to the question of the relation between the features of intentionality and phenomenology. Which of these features are suitable as a foundation of a theory of mind and consciousness, and how are they related to each other? As we shall see, Metzinger and Revonsuo's take on this particular question turn out to be a bit different, and I shall try to determine which of the viewpoints that is more plausible. Before I conduct this analysis however, I shall begin with a short resumé of the theories at hand.

## Two Theories

### *Biological Realism*

#### *Overview.*

Biological realism, as described by Revonsuo (2006), is a theory of consciousness that takes a somewhat different stance from traditional ones. According to Revonsuo, contemporary philosophical theories tend to be representationalistic in their focus on the representational or *intentional* features of the mind, features which in these theories are viewed as being *fundamental* for an explanation of consciousness. His opinion is that this view stems from the phenomenological school in philosophy which traditionally claimed that: "there is a conceptual or necessary relationship between consciousness and intentionality" (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 144). Revonsuo's Biological realism, on the other hand, focuses on the *phenomenological* features of the mind, and states that: "*phenomenality is the fundamental form of mentality*" (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 144).

A key feature of Revonsuo's Biological realism is that phenomenal experiences should be viewed as simulations of the external world. The environment is not perceived directly, instead we should view the world that we experiences as a kind of 'virtual reality' created by the brain. This virtual world is of course affected and modulated by incoming signals from our sensory organs, but our phenomenal experiences should not be viewed as a direct depiction of incoming data. Naturally, this discrepancy is not something that we are aware of. To us, it seems like we are immersed in an external surrounding with all the properties that we experience. Important to understand is also that, according to Biological realism, incoming signals are not *required* for us to have phenomenal experiences. The dreaming brain and hallucinatory states are both examples of phenomenal states which are not directly caused by sensory input (Revonsuo, 2006).

*Traditional mistakes.*

The philosophy behind Biological realism, what Revonsuo calls *Philosophy of presence*, is founded on an analysis of the process of perception. His view is that traditional accounts views perception as a *relational* act between an object and a perceiving subject, due to their view of consciousness as based on the feature of intentionality:

According to those who take intentionality instead of phenomenality as the basic mark of the mental, every experience is an *awareness of* some object (whether real or purely intentional); consciousness is necessarily *directed at* or is *about* that object. (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 126)

That is, a subject's conscious thoughts is *about* some object or other, and this aboutness is what intentionality is all about. Thus, according to this line of thought, a theory of mind and consciousness should be based on this feature of intentionality. Such a theory is called *representationalistic* by Revonsuo (2006). Furthermore, because of their focus on intentionality, their view of phenomenal features is that of a mere derivative of the more fundamental intentional nature of the mind. This, according to Revonsuo (2006), leads to the apprehension of phenomenal states as "inherently bipolar or essentially *relational*" (p. 144) since they are seen as special variants of intentional states.

This appears to be the basis for the contemporary reluctance to explain consciousness in terms of phenomenal features. However, according to Revonsuo (2006), some of this reluctance also stems from the problems regarding what phenomenal objects are supposed to be, how they are to be perceived, and who the supposed perceiver is. In the view of the proponents of intentional theories, a perceived phenomenal experience must be perceived by a subject. However, this seems to entail that there must be *another* phenomenal experience inside the mind of *this* new perceiver, and this new phenomenal experience must be perceived by yet another perceiver and so on, ad infinitum, which is the basis for the famous homunculus-argument (Revonsuo, 2006).

*Philosophy of presence.*

The standpoint of Revonsuo's Biological realism is that the line of reasoning discussed above stems from an inaccurate presumption on the act of perception, a view that is based on a mistaken application of the notions *perception* and *object*, in the opinion of Revonsuo (2006). According to his Biological realism, there are no repetitions of the subject-object relation inside the mind. Instead, the mind, or rather the phenomenal level inside the mind should be viewed as the last link in the perception chain and the place where phenomenal experiences are generated through organized patterns of neural activity. These phenomenal experiences are never perceived themselves and there are no subject inside the mind that perceives them. Revonsuo's view is rather that the experiences themselves *constitute* the subject. They are *self-presenting* (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 129-131).

Thus, his view is that the understanding of consciousness as 'awareness of' is misconstrued. Instead, his Biological realism defines consciousness as *having a sense of presence in the world*, a view that Revonsuo calls the *Philosophy of presence*. According to him, to have content of consciousness is nothing more than having patterns of phenomenal experience present. This in sharp contrast to the previously discussed theories: If one views intentionality as the fundament for an explanation of mind and consciousness, every experience is by necessity an 'awareness of', a feature that requires a corresponding external object which acts as *conscious content*. (Revonsuo, 2006, pp. 126-127) However, the shift of focus from intentionality to phenomenology, the view of phenomenology as the fundamental feature of mind, makes this 'awareness of'-perspective redundant: "Phenomenality as bare presence is non-relational and self-contained, rather than relational and object-directed" (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 126).

### *Independent phenomenology.*

However, Revonsuo's rejection of intentionality as the fundamental feature of the mind does not entail a belief that the brain is totally devoid of intentional structures. For example, he acknowledges the existence of context-dependent, representational features of the brain in the form of so-called *cortical sensory maps* which can be seen as representational structures. However, his view is that these representations has no *necessary* relationship with phenomenal consciousness: "'Representation' and 'awareness of' are matters concerning the *relationship* between a mental phenomenon and something *else*; thus phenomenal consciousness per se is not dependent on them and should not be confused with them." (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 53)

### *Content.*

What about the content of the mind? How can Biological realism explain the environmental-dependent aspects of mind's content that philosophers such as Putnam (1975) and others rightfully has pointed out? After all, does it not seem to be any merit in these theories' assertion of the environment's role in the determination of mind's content? For a clarification of this discussion, Revonsuo (2006) make use of a distinction between *representational content* and *phenomenal content*. In his view, phenomenal content (the content of consciousness) is to be regarded as "(a)ny pattern of phenomenal experience that is included in the phenomenal level." (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 37). That is, phenomenal content is equated with the variety of experiences that are literally contained "within the sphere of subjective experience" in the container that is the physical brain: "The total content of consciousness constitute the phenomenal level as a whole, and a single specified content of consciousness is a proper part of what is contained within the phenomenal level as a whole." (Revonsuo, 2006, p. 38). This is a quite different view of content, compared to the traditional, representationalistic meaning of the term in which the

contents of the mind are to be found in the environment since our thoughts are seen as symbols that represent external features, owing to the 'aboutness'-*nature* of thoughts. This kind of contents are called *representational content* by Revonsuo (2006).

### *Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity*

#### *Overview.*

One key point of Metzinger's "Being No One" (Metzinger, 2003) is to argue for the eliminative conclusion that: "no such thing as selves exists in the world" and that: "nobody ever had or was a self" (hence the title of the book). In his view, the experience we have of being someone is an illusion created by a representational state of a certain type, what he calls a *Phenomenal self model*. Such a self model is to be seen as a special case of emulation in which the emulating system and the target system are one and the same. To possess an active Phenomenal self model is to be aware of one's own perspective of the world (i.e., the first-person perspective). Another key point is that we are never in any direct epistemic contact with the surrounding world. The reality that we experience from moment to moment is a mere simulation, according to Metzinger (2003).

#### *Mental representations.*

Metzinger's goal is not to develop a full-blown theory of mental representations, but rather to make general considerations of how the world is internally represented by mental states, considerations that are to be seen as a part of a framework of a naturalist theory of mental representations (Metzinger, 2003, p. 13). In his view, "(m)ental representation is a process by which some biosystems generate an internal depiction of parts of reality." (Metzinger, 2003, p .15).

This 'internality' is a property that can be described in different ways. The levels of description mentioned by Metzinger(2003) includes:

*Phenomenal level of description.*

Internality is a highly dominant feature of conscious content. This content is continuously accompanied by the phenomenal quality of internality. In Metzinger's view, this is the most fundamental level of description: "phenomenal content is what stays the same irrespective of whether something is a representation or a misrepresentation." (Metzinger, 2003, p. 16).

*Physical level of description.*

According to Metzinger (2003), mental representations can be viewed as internal system states in a simple, physical-spatial sense. On this level of description, he identifies the objects of study with the physical vehicles of representational content themselves. The representations on this level of description have their content determined by external facts that lie outside the system, and this *real* content of these representations (their content in a *strong sense*, as Metzinger puts it) depends on facts in the environment in his view (Metzinger, 2003, pp. 15-16).

Furthermore, Metzinger's view is that the mind's representations of the world has traditionally been seen as mental states if they possess the property of possible contents of consciousness. That is, if they possess the ability to be turned into subjective experiences. His view is, however, that the majority of the cases in which properties of the environment are represented by the generation of specific internal states takes place without any instantiation of phenomenal qualities or subjective awareness. As an example of such representations, Metzinger talks about representations related to the information processing necessary for regulation of heart rate or activity of the immune system. The internal states generated by this kind of information processing never generates subjective experiences, but should nevertheless be viewed as representations, according to him. In his view, these representations are examples of states that are *purely intentional on a*

*physical level*, and he therefore makes a distinction between intentional states forming internal representations on one hand and conscious internal states forming mental representations on the other (Metzinger, 2003, pp. 16-17).

So, as Metzinger sees it, some internal representations has intentional content as well as the ability to be turned into a subjective experience. However, his opinion is that the concept of representation is a bit vague, and he therefore calls for a clarification of it. In order to achieve this, he initiates a closer look at the logical structure of the representational relation:

His opinion is that the mind can be viewed as an information-processing system in which representational processes occurs. The objects of representation (those that are being represented) are often constituted by external facts of the world, and these facts are to be seen as the starting point for higher cognitive operations. Metzinger finds it tempting to assume that these objects that are being represented are a part of the actual state of the world, but points out that this cannot be the case. He sees talk about actual states as problematic because of the fact that physically realized information-processing takes a certain amount of time. Therefore, the information available for us can never be actual in Metzinger's view. Instead our brain creates what he likes to call a *window of simultaneity*, a so-called *phenomenal now* which we *experience* as actual, but in reality is detached from the actual state of the world by a time-gap of a certain size. A consequence of this view of his is that the representational process is a depiction of a possibility as a reality, which implies an experienced reality of phenomenal experiences that in reality only is virtual: "Mental Representation is a process, whose function for the system consists in representing actual physical reality within a certain, narrowly defined temporal framework and with a sufficient degree of functionally adequate precision." (Metzinger, 2003, p. 26).

The consequence of this line of reasoning is that we never seem to be in any direct epistemic contact with the external world, according to Metzinger. Along with this

uncertainty of the current state of affairs, there are also many cases in which mental representations are not correlated with the external world at all. For example, Metzinger views hallucinations and dreams as wholly generated by the brain, and the mental representations involved have no correlates in the external world as he sees it. In these cases, Metzinger likes to view the brain as a generator of phenomenal models of possible worlds. The representational process involved in this is what he calls a *virtual representational process* and the result is so-called *mental simulations*, generated inside the brain: "They generate subjective experiences which only partially reflect the actual state of the world, typically by emulating aspects of real-life perceptual processing or motor behavior." (Metzinger, 2003, p. 43).

#### *Philosophical commitments.*

Metzinger bases his theories on certain background assumptions, and makes a point of clarifying these, but states at the same time that he is not going to argue for them explicitly because of lack of space. He states:

Like many other philosophers today, I assume that a representationalist analysis of conscious experience is promising because phenomenal states are a special subset of intentional states [...] Phenomenal content is a special aspect or special form of intentional content. (Metzinger, 2003, p. 111)

Thus, his view is that phenomenality is a derivative of intentionality. However, he also seems to assume that phenomenal content supervenes on spatially and temporally internal system properties in that phenomenal representation is that variant of intentional representation in which the content properties are completely determined by spatially internal properties:

If all properties of my central nervous system are fixed, the contents of my subjective experience are fixed as well. What in many cases, of course, is not fixed is the intentional content of these subjective states. (Metzinger, 2003, p. 112)

Also, his view is that a presupposition of local supervenience for phenomenal content does not entail knowledge of the nature of that content, whether it is to be regarded as "complex hallucinations or epistemic states, ones which actually constitute knowledge about the world" (Metzinger, 2003, p. 112). He does not have a detailed account of the logical relation between phenomenal and intentional content and admits that an elaboration of such an account is indeed one of "the most important theoretical problems today" (Metzinger, 2003, p. 112). Nevertheless, he does not address this question directly in the book at hand, but leans towards the view that it would be a mistake to introduce a distinction between these different kinds of contents. He is guessing that a solution "may consist in carefully describing a continuum between conscious and nonconscious intentional content" (Metzinger, 2003, p. 112).

### **Different Points of View: Analysis**

#### *What is a Derivative of What?*

Although Metzinger (2003) views his phenomenal level of description as fundamental, and despite his view that mental representations do not need any external correlates, his Self-model theory of subjectivity seems to be based on an intentional footing. This partly because of his description of representational states as the basis of higher cognitive operations, and partly because of his theory's seemed dependence of incoming signals from the sense-organs for generation of phenomenal experiences. But above all, because of his statements that: "phenomenal states are a special subset of intentional states" and

that: "phenomenal content is a special aspect or special form of intentional content" (Metzinger, 2003, p. 111).

This in contrast to Revonsuo's account of representational states (Revonsuo, 2006) i.e., the cognitive representations which have no necessary connection with phenomenal consciousness (that is, phenomenal consciousness is affected by them, but not dependent on them for the instantiation of phenomenal experiences). Thus, in effect, it seems to be a difference in opinion of which feature that would be most suitable as a basis of a theory of consciousness. The bottom line is, what feature is more fundamental, intentionality or phenomenology? *What is a derivative of what?* This question requires further investigation.

### *Different Kinds of Intentionality*

Before I proceed with this investigation, I will first say a few words about different understandings of the notion of intentionality. Fairly uncontroversial to say is that intentionality are to be viewed as aboutness. Mental states have intentionality since they are *about* something, they *represent* something. This is a view that seems to be common for all accounts of intentionality. However, further analysis shows that different writers takes different approaches to the notion of intentionality. In general, one could distinguish between two main type of writers, those who approaches intentionality from a third-person perspective, and those who sees it as a first-person phenomenon. The analysis of this thesis is based on the latter, first-person point of view, but for the record I shall briefly explain the former, third-person approach in an attempt to explain why it differs from the other.

A typical proponent for a third-person view of intentionality is Dennett who thinks that: "a particular thing is an Intentional system only in relation to the strategies of someone who is trying to explain and predict its behavior" (Dennett, 1971, p. 87). A central notion for him in his analysis of intentionality is his so-called *intentional stance*. A person that takes an

intentional stance towards a system views this system as an intentional system, according to Dennett:

One predicts behavior in such a case by ascribing to the system *the possession of certain information* and by supposing it to be *directed by certain goals*, and then by working out the most reasonable or appropriate action on the basis of these ascriptions and suppositions. (Dennett, 1971, p. 90).

For him, this is closely linked to the notions of beliefs and desires. His view is that: "to be a true believer is to be an *intentional system*, a system whose behavior is reliably and voluminously predictable via the intentional strategy." (Dennett, 1981/1997, p. 59). This lies at the very heart of his definition of an intentional system as "a system whose behavior can be (at least sometimes) explained and predicted by relying on ascriptions to the system of belief and desires (and hopes, fears, intentions, hunches, ...)" (Dennett, 1971, p. 87).

However, this does not necessarily entail that such a system really possesses beliefs and desires. In Dennett's view, such a question is misplaced: "the definition of Intentional systems I have given does not say that Intentional systems *really* have beliefs and desires, but that one can explain and predict their behavior by ascribing beliefs and desires to them..." (Dennett, 1971, p. 91).

This is a rather different view from the one adopted by writers who sees intentionality as an intrinsic property of the mind. An illustration of this view of intentionality is given by Searle (1984/2002) who conducts an analysis of the notion by identifying several distinct applications of the term. One of these distinctions can be illustrated by the two sentences "Robert believes that Ronald Reagan is president" and "'Es regnet' means that it is raining" (Searle, 1984/2002). The former sentence is an example of what Searle calls *intrinsic intentionality*, i.e., a case in which intentionality is *intrinsic* to the sentence in question (this because of his view that beliefs are constituted of intrinsic intentional phenomena in the mind of an agent). This in contrast to the latter sentence which,

according to Searle (1984/2002), describes a case of *derived* intentionality. His view is that this sentence in reality is a way of describing what German speakers believe when they utter this sentence. Therefore, the intentionality of the sentence can be viewed as *secondhand*, or *derived* in Searle's terminology (Searle, 1984/2002).

Another distinction of Searle's is illustrated by the difference between what he calls *literal* intentionality and *metaphorical* intentionality. Searle's sentences mentioned hitherto have all been examples of literal intentionality, in that they can be said to really *be* about intentional properties. In contrast, Searle puts forward the sentence "My car thermostat perceives changes in the engine temperature" which he classifies as a case of *metaphorical* intentionality (Searle, 1984/2002).

In later work, Searle develops this analysis to a distinction between *intrinsic* and *observer-relative* features (Searle, 1993/2002). In this line of reasoning, intrinsic features are defined as features described by natural science which exists independently of any observers (examples given by Searle includes gravitational attraction and photosynthesis). In contrast to such intrinsic features are what he calls observer-relative features. These are imposed by reality by observers and lack any corresponding "real" properties. Examples given by Searle are "the feature of being a bathtub" and "the feature of being a five-dollar bill" (Searle, 1993/2002). These are features that exist only relative to observers and users, i.e., features which have no independent existence. This line of reasoning can also be applied to the notion of symbols:

... the notion of a 'symbol' is not a notion of physics or chemistry. Something is a symbol only if it is used, treated or regarded as a symbol. [...] There are no purely physical properties that zeros and ones or symbols in general have that determine that they are symbols. Something is a symbol only relative to some observer, user or agent who assigns a symbolic interpretation to it. (Searle, 1993/2002, p. 17)

Thus, an interpretation of a symbol is an assignment without any correspondence in physical reality, according to Searle. There are no *actual physical connections* between the symbols of a formal system and the external objects to which they are attached by an interpretation.

Dennett and Searle's approaches clearly illustrates the difference between a third-person and a first-person view of the concept of intentionality. Basically, this difference boils down to a question of whether one regards a first-person perspective valid as a basis for analysis or not. As implied, the analysis in this thesis is based on the presumption that such a first-person perspective is indeed valid, and the analysis at hand is therefore founded on Searle's first-person view of intentionality.

What consequences are entailed in Searle's analysis? It should be rather uncontroversial to draw the conclusion that since interpreted connections between symbols and objects *cannot* be regarded as something that exist independently of any interpreting observers (because they do not reflect intrinsic features of physical reality) they have to be a *phenomenological* features. Thus, symbols cannot be said to represent something without phenomenological interpretations taken into account. To summarize this line of reasoning:

Intentionality is based on the notion of representation. A mental state that is *about* something *represents* something, and can therefore be defined in terms of interpreted symbols.

Interpretation is not an intrinsic feature of physical reality, it is observer-relative and observer-dependent. It must therefore be a phenomenological feature.

Consequently, intentionality is a phenomenological feature without any correspondence in physical reality. Which is equivalent of saying that *phenomenology is required for intentionality*.

### *Different Kinds of Contents*

Searle's distinction between intrinsic and observer-relative features is used by him in explanation of his famous *Chinese room-argument* (Searle, 1993/2002), an argument which is intended to show that syntactically defined theories of mind (so-called *computational* theories of mind) are not sufficient for an explanation of such things as understanding, and thus cannot be used for a full-range explanation of mind and consciousness. But what about contemporary representationalistic theories of mind, like the ones rejected by Revonsuo (2006)? Can they be compared to such syntactical models of the mind as the ones that Searle criticizes? Fact is that contemporary representationalists do *not* endorse such symbol-manipulating analyses of mind since they do not deny the significance of phenomenal experiences. They *do* think, however, that these phenomenal experiences can be explained in terms of representationalistic (intentional) features. According to this point of view, phenomenal experiences are determined by intentional content, i.e., represented properties of represented objects. Hence, this approach leads to a view where phenomenality is reduced to intentionality.

As showed above, this representationalistic assumption is simply wrong.

Phenomenology is required for intentionality, not the other way around. With that said, a valid question is what this mistake of theirs is based on? It seems like the heart of the matter is a confusion of different kind of contents. Representationalists seem to think that the contents of phenomenal experiences should be equated with corresponding intentional contents, a view which acts as a basis for their assignment of intentionality as the basis for an explanation of the mind. However, the preceding discussion clearly shows the need for a distinction between two different kind of contents, a distinction that ought to be made along the lines of the philosophical distinction between *wide* and *narrow* content. In detail, such a view could very well look something like Chalmers theory of *subjunctive* and *epistemic* content (Chalmers, 2002). According to this view, content can be decomposed

into two components, subjunctive and epistemic in Chalmers's terminology. The subjunctive kind could then be viewed as the representationalistic external variant of content (i.e., *intentional* or *wide* content) while the former, epistemic kind is (among other things) determined by the internal state of the cognitive system (which makes it *phenomenal* or *narrow*). His opinion is that the epistemic (narrow) content can be defined as content that depends solely on the intrinsic state of the subject and, correspondingly, the subjunctive (wide) content can be defined as such content that do *not* depend exclusively on the intrinsic state of the subject. In connection to this discussion, Chalmers writes:

In recent times, the 'content' of a thought has usually been identified with something like its subjunctive content; but the epistemic content seems to be an equally good candidate. As before, there is no need to decide which is *the* content. (Chalmers, 2002, p. 618)

Consequently, there seem to be both a wide and a narrow aspect of content. It seems plausible to classify the kind of content that representationalists talk about as a wide kind. They make a mistake, however, when equating this kind of content with the content of phenomenal experiences. This kind of content should instead be regarded as a separate, narrow kind. Following Revonsuo (2006), it seems reasonable to call this *phenomenal content* and distinguish it from the wide kind (which Revonsuo refers to as *representational content*).

All this is, of course, related to the focus on intentionality rather than phenomenology. If one regards intentionality as the basis for an explanation of the mind, an approach that views mental states as mere symbols for external features, it will lead to an exclusive focus on representational (intentional) content (and the other way around: an exclusive focus on representational content will yield a tendency to favor intentionality as the basis for an explanation of the mind). However, if one sees the need for a distinction between different kind of contents, if one acknowledges that narrow content has to be taken into

account as well, the possibility of taking phenomenology as the basis for an explanation of mind and consciousness emerges. It seems like a discussion along these lines could constitute a foundation for an answer to Metzinger's question about the nature of the relation between intentional and phenomenal content (Metzinger, 2003). It is a prospect that seems promising, but will require further analysis.

### *Theoretical Consequences*

Metzinger's discussion of "pure intentionality on a physical level" (Metzinger, 2003) seems a bit misconceived in the light of the preceding discussion. If intentionality is a relation between an interpreting observer and external objects, the talk of pure physical intentionality is simply wrong, since intentionality is an observer-relative feature and not an intrinsic one. Furthermore, Metzinger's "real" content, which is determined by the environment, should be viewed as wide content that are to be distinguished from the narrow, phenomenal content experienced by the subject. This phenomenal kind of content is the one that he seems to have in mind when he talks about the content of mental representations that arises without direct epistemic contact with the environment. Thus, it seems like Metzinger makes the same kind of mistake as the representationalists in confusing the two different kind of contents (Metzinger, 2003).

## Summary and Conclusion

In my comparison of the theories of mind found in Thomas Metzinger's "Being No One" (2003) and Antti Revonsuo's "Inner Presence" (2006), I choose to focus on their respective approach to the ontological foundations of their theories of mind. Which of the features of intentionality and phenomenology would be suitable for such a foundation according to these theories? Another intention was to conduct an analysis of the subject matter in order to determine which of the two features that would be more plausible as a foundation.

A short resumé of the theories at hand showed that while Revonsuo (2006) clearly viewed phenomenology as the preferred foundation for a science of consciousness, Metzinger (2003) tended to lean more at intentionality as a basis. This because of his agreement with contemporary representationalist that phenomenality should be viewed as a special case of intentionality, and because of his view that the starting point for all higher cognitive operations ought to be found in the representational features of the mind.

With support of Searle's distinction between intrinsic and observer-relative features (Searle, 1993/2002), an investigation of the subject matter revealed that, since intentionality is based on symbol interpretation (and interpretation clearly is a phenomenological process) intentionality should be viewed as a derivative of phenomenology and therefore an explanation of mind and consciousness should be based on phenomenology. This led to the suspicion that representationalistic tendencies to favor intentionality over phenomenology were grounded in a misconceived view of content. According to representationalistic theories, the content of the mind is to be found in the environment, but as showed by Chalmers (2002), there exist a need for a distinction between different kind of contents. The traditional, representationalistic kind ought to be

viewed as wide content, but there is also a need for acknowledgement of a phenomenal kind of content that could be regarded as narrow.

The examination of Metzinger and Revonsuo's theories showed that Revonsuo (2006) is very well aware of this (in his terminology, this wide kind of content is called phenomenal content). Metzinger (2003), however, does not make this distinction clear in that he seems to confuse the two different kinds. This seems to be the same kind of mistake as the one made by representationalistic writers. Thus, the conclusion must be that Revonsuo's theory is the one with a more plausible foundation. However, it seems to me that Metzinger's theory *ought to* support the same foundation, but that Metzinger has not given adequate attention to the subject.

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