

Being ourselves and knowing ourselves: An adverbial account of mental representations

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Abstract

This paper takes an evolutionary approach to what we are, namely autopoietic systems with a first person perspective on our surroundings and ourselves. This in contrast with Thomas Metzinger's views in his Being No One. Though perception does involve internal processing and representations, it is argued that perception is direct. We track real features of the world, but fallibly, in a certain way. Moreover, it is claimed that mental representations are quite different from internal neural representations. They are best construed in an adverbial way. What we perceive, the object of perception, is the real world. Internal neural representations are the means by which we perceive the world. And mental representations are the way in which we experience the world, the adverbial content of perception. Finally, what goes for the world goes for ourselves as well: in self-consciousness we track real features of ourselves, but fallibly, in a certain way.

Keywords: autopoiesis; evolution; phenomenal experience; first person perspective; internal representations; mental representations; perception; self

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