



BOOK REVIEW

“The Elephant and the Blind. The Experience of Pure Consciousness: Philosophy, Science, and 500+ Experiential Reports”

by Thomas Metzinger

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Abstract

In this book, Metzinger develops a theory of pure consciousness, while presenting empirical findings from more than 500 experiential reports from practitioners of meditation. Pure consciousness is what we experience when we attend to awareness itself – when attention is refocused to the normally unnoticed medium through which we experience the world. The practice of meditation is likely to facilitate this kind of refocusing of attention from the world to awareness itself. Metzinger’s book is very rich both in descriptions of experiences reported by practitioners of meditation and in thought-provoking theoretical analyses and hypotheses about the nature of conscious experience. In this review, I also raise some critical points regarding aspects of Metzinger’s model and suggest some alternative and complementary perspectives.

Keywords: consciousness, conscious experience, meditation, felt being, embodiment, wakefulness, epistemicity, phenomenological practices, the person

Thomas Metzinger, professor emeritus of theoretical philosophy at the University of Mainz in Germany, has written extensively on consciousness, self and mind, and has practiced meditation regularly for over forty years. In 2019, he initiated the *Minimal Phenomenal Experience Network* to study consciousness, with the aim of finding out what is the simplest kind of conscious experience we know. This simplest possible kind of conscious experience is referred to by Metzinger variously as *minimal phenomenal experience* (MPE), “pure awareness,” and “pure consciousness”.

In his book *The elephant and the blind. The experience of pure consciousness*, with the subtitle *Philosophy, science, and 500+ experiential reports*, Metzinger (2024) develops a theory of pure consciousness, while presenting empirical findings from more than 500 meditators. His notion of pure consciousness is likely to strike some readers as surprising. For example, he claims that consciousness is *not* a subjective phenomenon, and that it does *not* essentially involve a first-person perspective, nor an experience of time or a spatially localized body-experience. But although he argues that pure consciousness does not involve self-awareness as ordinarily understood, he claims that it involves “consciousness

knowing itself”. Here are some quotes from the book:

on the deepest level, consciousness is not a *subjective* phenomenon in any philosophically interesting sense, but it apparently knows itself, nonegoically. Paradoxical as it sounds, selfless forms of self-awareness do exist, and they are the key to understanding all the other kinds. (Metzinger, 2024, p. xv)

my working hypothesis is that temporal experience (even the very idea of a “now”), spatially localized body-experience, and the subjective center of experience created by egoic self-awareness are all nonnecessary features of consciousness. If there is an essence, they are not part of it. (Metzinger, 2024, p. xviii)

consciousness can exist without an experiential first-person perspective... in this sense, consciousness may not be a *subjective* phenomenon at all. This claim, if true, may change the stakes of the entire consciousness debate (Metzinger, 2024, p. 457)

It should be noted that Metzinger describes these claims as *working hypotheses*, and he regularly inserts phrases such as “This claim, if true...” Yet, my first impression was that

most of these claims felt difficult to understand, and I wondered how he would be able to argue for these claims in a way that could possibly convince me. At first sight, I could not connect any of these claims to experiences of my own, and yet meditation has played a central role in my life since the 1970s. But my curiosity was awakened by Metzinger's book, and I thought I should give it a chance by delving deeper into its more than 600 pages. Maybe I could learn something new and important from it?

These were the considerations that set the stage for my reading of this book. In this review I will first discuss some aspects of Metzinger's general notion of pure consciousness. Then I will turn to specific aspects of this notion: absence of content, wakefulness, epistemic openness, and epistemicity. Finally, I will turn to some questions in relation to Metzinger's discussion of theory contamination and various logical fallacies in our reasoning about consciousness.

What is Pure Consciousness?

Metzinger's project is to isolate and describe *conscious experience* as such. As conscious beings, conscious experience is familiar to all of us. But we seldom focus on it. Typically, awareness is the medium through which we experience the world, and this medium is seldom attended to. It is here that the practice of meditation has an important role: it can help us become aware of conscious experience as such:

Conscious experience is a medium. It is a medium through which we can know the world and ourselves... Whenever the medium is "transparent," we are unaware of it and perceive just the world and ourselves in it, in a seemingly direct and immediate way... However, meditation practice can make the medium "opaque," so we sometimes become aware of the medium while still perceiving the world. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 367)

When Metzinger speaks about *pure* consciousness, what he intends is not some esoteric experience that is only accessible during meditation, but ordinary conscious experience as consciously attended to. To ask what pure consciousness is, is merely to ask about the nature of conscious experience *as experienced when we attend to it*. Accordingly, he also refers to it as "the awareness of awareness".

How can pure consciousness then be more precisely characterized? Metzinger lists five possible answers in chapter 8, and again five possible answers in chapter 34, which partly overlap with those in chapter 8. Here is a list of the seven different alternative interpretations of "pure consciousness" that these add up to (in the following, I will refer to them as alternative "accounts" by numbering them from 1 to 7):

- (1) *No content*: "Consciousness is pure whenever there is no other experiential content whatsoever, when the quality of consciousness itself is the only kind of phenomenal character that can later be remembered and reported." (p. 71);
- (2) *Restful alertness*. Pure consciousness means to experience a state of "restful alertness" with "phenomenal qualities like 'peace' and 'deep, unbounded silence,'" and "the absence of all mental conflict, noise, and perturbation" (p. 72);

- (3) *Clear wakefulness*. In pure consciousness, there is an experience of "clarity", "clear wakefulness," and "a clear and unobstructed space of knowing", "a lucid, open space in which experience can occur" (p. 72);
- (4) *"Abstract embodiment"*. Pure consciousness could hypothetically involve "the activity of a specific, as yet unknown part of the neural body" which is "not being mediated by any sensory system", and "would be the most abstract experience of embodiment that human beings are capable of" (p. 72);
- (5) *No identification*. Pure consciousness may involve various experiences such as "spontaneously arising thoughts, visual perception, bird song, bodily sensations, etc.", but there is no identification with these experiential contents (p. 73-74).
- (6) *No conceptual overlay*. In pure consciousness, "the conscious experience is of perceptual content spontaneously arising, but with a complete lack of conceptual overlay, including time experience and implicit judgments as to the 'existence' or 'nonexistence' of what is perceived. It is this lack that really makes perceptual awareness pure." (p. 460)
- (7) *No subject/object structure*: "One way of defining 'purity' is as conscious experience lacking subject/object structure. In this sense, pure awareness is a nondual mode of experience that lacks an epistemic agent model... and any sort of egoic first-person perspective." (p. 460-461)

In the final chapter of the book, Metzinger mentions five positive characteristics of what he refers to as the *prototypical core* of pure consciousness: simplicity, silence, wakefulness, clarity, and epistemicity. Apart from clear wakefulness (which is here differentiated into wakefulness and clarity) and absence of other experiential contents and mental unrest (which is here referred to positively as "silence"), this list includes two additional characteristics: simplicity and epistemicity. Of these, epistemicity, defined as "subjective confidence" or "insight", represents a substantial addition to the list. In the following, I will focus my discussion on three of these themes: first "no content", then wakefulness, and finally epistemicity.

No Content?

Among Metzinger's alternative accounts of pure consciousness, he describes the first ("No content") as the most radical one, because it requires that "there is no other experiential content" present except "the quality of consciousness itself". In an overly simplistic interpretation, this might mean that if all other contents were removed, we would have a case of pure consciousness. This, however, would be to equate pure consciousness with so-called *mind blanking*, which has been defined as the complete absence of conscious experiences, or an absence of thoughts (e.g., Fell, 2022). Metzinger's comparison of pure consciousness with mind blanking is illustrative, as it shows how pure consciousness cannot be reduced merely to "silence" or "no thoughts". In fact, it also involves something more positive, which he refers to as *clarity* and *lucidity*:

In humankind’s contemplative traditions, it has long been known that it is perfectly possible to be conscious and have no thoughts at all while lacking clarity and lucidity. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 51)

These qualities of clarity and lucidity are important and can serve as a first approximation to what it can mean to experience the “quality of consciousness itself”. In other words, the term “no content” is misleading, if it is not specified (as in Metzinger’s account 1) that what is at stake here is no *other* content than *the quality of consciousness itself*.

This can also help to explain why *pure* consciousness may be unfamiliar to many of us, even though *conscious experience* is ever present in our everyday life. We seldom *attend* to conscious experience as such. As Metzinger says, it is the medium *through which* we experience the world and ourselves, and we seldom focus on the medium itself. Pure consciousness is the experience that occurs when we *shift focus* and attend to conscious experience as such. And this is more likely to occur during meditation than in our dealings with various practical matters in everyday life.

Two questions

I find two kinds of questions to be of special interest to discuss in this context. The first is if it is possible to eliminate *all* other mental contents. And if so, would conscious experience remain? Even if meditation can serve to *reduce* mental activity, it can be questioned whether there are states of consciousness that are *entirely* devoid of mental activity. Maybe an *elimination* of mental activity would amount to *losing* the experience of consciousness? If so, the notion of “no contents” would need to be refined in some way (e.g., to a notion of an optimal level of mental activity, or something similar)

The second question is to what extent pure consciousness can *co-occur* with other experiences, and if it is more compatible with some experiential content than with others. Metzinger clearly recognizes that the experience of pure consciousness during meditation can be accompanied by various kinds of positive emotions:

although minimal phenomenal experience (MPE) as such is not an emotional state, it can certainly trigger a whole spectrum of mostly positive affective reactions like joy, existential relief, gratitude, nonpersonal love, awe, and wonder. In particular, the experience of pure awareness or MPE can sometimes coexist with a mostly subtle but clearly noticeable form of bliss. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 4)

These emotional experiences, however, are not *essential* to pure consciousness. This, according to Metzinger, is seen in evidence of a “double dissociation” between such feelings and the experience of pure consciousness:

As to the general conceptual question of whether more pronounced positive affective states are intrinsic to the pure-consciousness experience, we now have a clear interim result. The new phenomenological data presented here show a double dissociation: In meditators, the experience of pure consciousness can definitely occur *without* automatically

triggering joy, awe, bliss, or gratitude; and all human beings—meditators and nonmeditators alike—know the conscious experience of joy, awe, bliss, or gratitude in situations where the phenomenal character of awareness itself is entirely absent. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 154)

Experiential qualities such as clear wakefulness and restful alertness, which belong to the *core* of pure consciousness, obviously can occur without the positive experiences of joy, bliss, gratitude, etc. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that pure consciousness also can occur *together* with these kinds of positive experiences. This side of the coin shows that pure consciousness, after all, need not be so “pure”. Importantly, it also raises the question of which other experiential content *can* co-occur with pure consciousness, and which *cannot*. For surely, it can hardly be the case that all mental contents are equivalent in this regard?

Although I can find no detailed discussion of this question in Metzinger’s book, he is very clear about the fact that pure consciousness can occur either (1) as a stand-alone feature, or (2) in combination with other experiential content:

The specific phenomenology of pure awareness can occur as a stand-alone feature or in combination with other forms of experiential content. For example, it can emerge in deep and clear states of sitting meditation... In these cases, it is a single, stand-alone feature—the only feature that can later be reported... But as the reports provided by our meditators show, pure awareness can also appear with open eyes (e.g., during walking meditation) as an all-pervading quality of effortless mindfulness. It also sometimes occurs spontaneously, outside of any formal contemplative practice (Metzinger, 2024, p. xxi).

Perhaps most important, this also raises the question whether some experiential contents may *interfere* with the experience of pure consciousness, whereas other contents may on the contrary *facilitate* the experience of it. Could it, for example, be the case that *empirical* contents of consciousness (which by definition are characterized by some degree of uncertainty) may have an interfering effect, whereas experiences of *felt embodiment* (which are an expression of felt *being*) can have a facilitating effect?

In the following, I will briefly discuss these two questions. First, does consciousness remain if all other mental contents are removed; or, in other words, is consciousness possible without mental activity? And second: Is the experience of pure consciousness more compatible with some experiential content than with others? And can some experiential contents have an interfering effect, whereas others have a facilitating effect?

Is consciousness possible without mental activity?

As Metzinger points out, meditation may involve a practice of the ability to *relax into* “the awareness of awareness”, thus dissolving mental unrest:

to judge from the phenomenological material that we have gathered, it seems clear that the nonconceptual awareness of

awareness itself is something one can relax *into* (or *onto* the surface of) by gradually letting go, gently dissolving all residual tensions in body and mind. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 1)

As he notes, this can result in

a feeling of complete ease, well-being, and presence with waves of bliss, effortless and with almost no thoughts (p. 1).

As already noted above, the feelings of ease, wellbeing, bliss, etc. are not essential to pure consciousness – they can be lost without a loss of consciousness. But what about the elimination of thoughts? Here it should be noted that Metzinger is less distinct, as he writes “with almost no thoughts”. Would it be possible to let go of *all* thoughts, and all mental activity? Would conscious experience remain if *all* mental contents were eliminated?

A fear of *losing* consciousness is sometimes reported by practitioners of meditation. For example, one practitioner described an experience during deep meditation of “being on the brink of losing my consciousness”, although *not* like falling asleep but as “something much more radical and frightening than that”. What this practitioner described was an impending threat of losing *the experience of conscious being*. This experience was clearly different from falling asleep and from fainting. What probably made it extra frightening was the associated thought “would there be a way back to consciousness again?” In other words, what was experienced was an impending threat of a kind of “mental death”.

There is very little in Metzinger’s book about such *negative* experiences in connection with meditation. Among the many items in Metzinger’s questionnaire, I can find only one negatively valenced item: pain. There are no items asking about experiences of anxiety or depression. The term “adverse effects” is not mentioned by Metzinger, despite research that has documented a variety of adverse effects experienced during meditation. An advanced understanding of meditative practices would seem to require an improved understanding of *all* kinds of experiences during meditation. Moreover, the evidence that adverse effects tend to increase with meditation experience, and that they are more common among those who attend meditation retreats, suggest that Schlosser et al. (2019) have a point when they argue that

understanding when these experiences are constitutive elements of meditative practice rather than merely negative effects could advance the field (Schlosser et al., 2019, p. 1).

Interestingly, Metzinger suggests that minimal phenomenal experience (MPE) may represent a critical boundary between conscious experience and its cessation:

One may speculate that MPE could be the baseline of all experience, as well as the critical boundary between conscious experience and its cessation. If so, it would be quite plausible that MPE could sometimes alternate with states of actual unconsciousness. (Metzinger, 2024, p.159)

This resonates well with the possibility of negative experiences in connection with a felt threat of losing consciousness. However, I am less convinced by Metzinger’s claim that

MPE is characterized by total “mental inaction”, as he argues in the following passage:

Prototypical minimal phenomenal experience (MPE) is not only nonconceptual; it is also characterized by a principle of mental inaction. It never reacts, it never makes a choice, and it never initiates an action. (p. 23)

We may well *intend* to reach a state of complete mental inaction, where we “never react”, “never make a choice”, and “never initiate an action”. But this intention, when it is at work, itself represents a form of mental activity. Although it seems clear that meditation may serve to *reduce* the degree of mental activity, it seems doubtful that it could eliminate all mental activity *without also eliminating the experience of consciousness*. Maybe there is an *optimal* level of mental activity for conscious experience to flourish – just as there is an optimal span of physical temperature for life to proceed.

Empirical contents versus felt embodiment

An interesting possibility is that the experience of pure consciousness may depend not only on the *level* of mental activity but also on the *nature* of the other experiential contents that are present. I think it can be argued that whereas some experiential contents (“empirical contents”) *interfere* with pure consciousness, other experiential contents (experiences of felt embodiment) may serve rather to *facilitate* the development of pure consciousness.

In my experience, meditation primarily means to change focus from thinking and doing to mindfully felt *being*. This typically means to shift focus to the body, but not to the body as an *object*, but to the *felt* body – which also includes sensory experiences of the environment and the various feeling qualities that are enabled by our specific human kind of embodiment (e.g., Lundh & Foster, 2024, 2025).

Thus, it was difficult for me to follow Metzinger when he argues that pure consciousness is devoid not only of conceptual content, thoughts and ideas, *but also of sensory and bodily experiences*. This seemed to me rather like a kind of striving for an experience of *disembodiment*. On page 30, for example, he quotes Jonathan Shear as saying that

The defining characteristic of this experience is the *complete absence* of all sounds, tastes, thoughts, feelings, images, and anything else that one can ever imagine. Techniques for achieving this experience differ. [...] But they have in common the idea that it is possible for all empirical content to disappear, while one nevertheless remains awake (Shear, 2007, as quoted by Metzinger, 2024, p. 30)

This formulation leaves me with ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, the notion of emptying the mind of “all empirical content” and everything “that one can ever imagine” strikes a familiar chord in me. On the other hand, the striving to eliminate all *sensations and feelings* feels odd. I think it is important to differentiate between *experiences of felt being* (such as sensations and feelings) and *empirical contents* of consciousness (which always involve some degree of uncertainty), as it may be argued that the former is *not* a

subcategory of the latter.

Here I come to think of Wittgenstein’s (1953) discussion of the (im)possibility of a private language, where he argues against our tendency to see words for sensations and feelings as referring to a kind of *objects*. As a response to the criticism that his arguments would imply that a sensation was “nothing”, he responded:

Not at all. It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! (Wittgenstein, 1953, § 304).

What Wittgenstein objected to was the grammatical mistake of taking sensations and feelings to be a kind of *things* or *objects* for our verbal thinking – or, in other words, a kind of *empirical contents* of consciousness. It may be argued that sensations and feelings are part of our very *being* – not some kind of objects separate from us:

Sensations and feelings are much closer to us than that – which is seen also in the fact that there is no way of being mistaken about feeling pain. We may be wrong about many things, but to feel pain is to be in pain. Feelings pertain to our very being as individual persons. (Lundh, 2025c, p. 117)

The attribution of bodily feelings to special parts of the body can, of course, be mistaken – as illustrated, for example, by experiences of phantom pain – but such attributions pertain to the body as an *object*, not the *felt* body. *Perceptions* (including perceptions of the body, and so-called interoception) are “empirical” in the sense that they can be mistaken and then corrected, but bodily *sensations* are not. There is no way of being mistaken about feeling pain, pleasure, tiredness or alertness. To feel tired is to *be* tired, to feel alert is to *be* alert, etc. If “empirical contents” are defined as contents that can be tested empirically for their validity, then bodily sensations and feelings *do not belong to that category*. These kinds of experiences do not, as Damasio (2018) puts it, have a dual subject-object structure:

feeling is *not* a perception of the body in the conventional sense of the term. Here the duality of subject-object, of perceiver-perceived, breaks down. Relative to this part of the process, there is unity instead. *Feeling is the mental aspect of that unity*. (Damasio, 2018, p. 126).

It may even be argued that bodily feelings – in contrast to objects and events – lie beyond our capacity for imagination. Just try to imagine a pain, or a pleasure, *that you have once felt*, in the way you can imagine the looks of things or people that you have seen. It seems that bodily sensations and feelings cannot be modeled or simulated – they can only be *lived*. In short, they are not cognitive phenomena. (It is probably correct to say that feelings can be re-*lived*, even if they cannot be recalled.)

Susanne Langer (1967) has discussed the experience of “felt life”, and Thomas Fuchs (2026) has written about *the feeling of being alive*. Importantly, the bodily feelings that are at stake here, which may be referred to more precisely as *felt embodiment* (Lundh & Foster, 2025), are not *about* the body as an object but are instances of *lived experience* – that

is, experiences at the very core of being a living organism.

This also seems to be true of conscious experience as such. Pure consciousness is an experience at the very core of our living organism, which involves no cognitive “aboutness”. As Metzinger puts it, it is an experience in which

our own being and existence per se, perhaps the sheer experience of aliveness, are pulled into the foreground. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 5)

It is an experience that involves a simple “awareness of awareness”, and which *cannot be imagined, modeled, or simulated* – it can just be *lived*.

it is a nonconceptual awareness of awareness itself. It *cannot* be imagined (Metzinger, 2024, p. 28)

Like experiences of felt embodiment, pure consciousness is non-empirical. It involves no possibility of “prediction errors”.

Empirical contents are always characterized by some degree of *uncertainty*. They can be said to involve a *predictive model* of what is the case, or what is likely to happen, and these predictions may turn out to be wrong. The experience of this kind of uncertainty stimulates us to think, worry, and ruminate – and all such cognitive processes involve a mental unrest that is likely to interfere with the experience of pure consciousness.

Experiences of felt embodiment, on the other hand, are free of this kind of uncertainty. They do not depend on predictive models – they just *are* – and they are therefore not likely to interfere with pure consciousness. In a way, they are “close relatives” to pure consciousness, and they may be hypothesized to *facilitate* experiences of pure consciousness.

All this may be seen in analogy with processes that interfere with sleep or facilitate sleep. All kinds of thinking, analyzing, worrying, ruminating, etc. – which deal with possible empirical events – represent *sleep-interfering* processes (Lundh & Broman, 2000), as they are directly focused on uncertainty. On the other hand, a focus on felt embodiment (as in the Mindful Embodiment Practice, which has been used to treat insomnia; Lundh, 2025b) may *facilitate* sleep, as it refocuses attention to aspects of *being*, which do not involve uncertainty or predictive processing. Falling asleep, like the experience of pure consciousness, requires cognitive deactivation.

There are probably also several “intermediate” examples of mindfulness applications which, although they are not focused on felt embodiment, are relatively compatible with experiences of pure consciousness. This may, for example, be the case with the mindful driving practice (Lundh, 2020, p. 500–502), which was developed for a patient who suffered from problems with diminished wakefulness while driving. In this phenomenological practice, the patient was trained to attend to four different areas of experience during driving: the road, the traffic flow, the landscape, and the sitting – and to alternate between these in accordance with meta-mindfulness instructions. Although the focus here is on *empirical* perceptual contents, and not on felt embodiment, the purpose

is an increased level of *wakefulness*. And wakefulness as such seems to be a main element of pure consciousness. This suggests that the perceptual experiences during this mindful driving practice may lie relatively close to the experience of pure consciousness and thereby serve to facilitate it. All these hypotheses should in principle be testable by means of experimental-phenomenological designs (Lundh, 2020).

Wakefulness

According to Metzinger, clear wakefulness belongs to the very core of pure consciousness. In contrast, other writers such as Seth (2021) and LeDoux (2023) have described consciousness as clearly distinct from wakefulness, reducing the latter to a pure physiological phenomenon. Seth (2021), for example, defines wakefulness as “physiological arousal” (p. 37), and LeDoux relegates wakefulness to the neurobiological realm as distinct from the conscious realm. In his discussion of wakefulness, however, Metzinger emphasizes the importance of differentiating three levels of description: the *physical*, the *functional*, and the *phenomenological*. He then suggests the following terminology to distinguish between arousal, alertness, and wakefulness:

- “Arousal” is a graded **physical property** of the human brain... it causally depends on the local level of activation in five types of neurotransmitter in the ascending reticular activating system, a complex structure that originates in the brainstem. Just like the frequency of heartbeat, blood glucose level, or core body temperature, arousal is a *vital parameter* that must be successfully controlled. For example, the control of cortical arousal is necessary to generate the sleep/wake cycle.
- “Tonic alertness” refers to a graded **functional property** that determines the capacity for sustained attention... Tonic alertness is a functional property that causally enables important cognitive capacities like orientation in time and space, executive control, attention, and mental agency.
- “Wakefulness” is a graded **phenomenal property** that is sometimes introspectively accessible. You can attend to it, but most people rarely do... It may be the major component of the phenomenal character of minimal phenomenal experience (MPE) (Metzinger, 2024, p. 36-37).

Interestingly, Metzinger suggests (as seen also in his account 4 above) that the felt quality of wakefulness may represent a form of “abstract embodiment” that is neither grounded in bodily sensations, sensory qualities, and motor capacities, but in systems such as the ascending reticular arousal system (ARAS) in the brainstem:

the raw-feeling aspect of wakefulness could correspond to the physical signal of the ascending reticular formation or a specific aspect of activity in the diffuse thalamocortical relay. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 200)

This suggests that the felt quality of wakefulness involves an experience of activity in the brainstem. I find it somewhat

more difficult to follow Metzinger, however, when he apparently wants to reduce wakefulness to a *predictive model* of the tonic alertness that is based in these parts of the brain:

Wakefulness, as I have defined it, is knowing one’s own tonic alertness by having a predictive model of it, and it is the key primordial feature of consciousness. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 42)

As I understand it, it is relevant to speak about predictive models only where there is room for *prediction errors*. But how could there possibly occur prediction errors in feeling one’s own degree of alertness? Again, to feel alert is to *be* alert. As pointed out by Damasio, here we are dealing with experiences which lack a subject-object structure, and where there is little room for fallibility.

There is a tendency among cognitive scientists to reduce all experiences, and all aspects of consciousness, to cognitive processes. I sense this kind of bias also in Metzinger’s text, and this is only one among several examples. Consider, for example, the following passage, where he argues that wakefulness involves “a continuously self-renewing prediction of epistemic openness”, in the form of a probabilistic belief that “knowing is likely”:

This predictive model would be the belief that knowing is likely, a statistical hypothesis that says “something can be known.” Pure awareness would then be a form of *subcortical* phenomenology, originating deep in the brainstem. What we consciously experience in ever-fresh wakefulness would therefore not be the unconscious mechanism itself, but rather a continuously self-renewing prediction of epistemic openness: By constantly predicting and thereby controlling the level of tonic alertness, the brain’s ARAS model would contribute to creating the specific timeless quality that Tibetan Buddhists many centuries ago appositely called “ever-fresh wakefulness.” Perhaps the evolutionary expansion of the cortex did not implement consciousness per se, but only superimposed it with content? (Metzinger, 2024, p. 230).

It seems quite reasonable to assume that the quality of consciousness is based in subcortical areas of the brain, and that the role of the cortex is merely to “superimpose it with content”. But I find it difficult to see the need to posit the existence of a *predictive model* with the assumed content that “something can be known”. Again, what kind of uncertainty and what kind of prediction error can possibly be involved here?

Epistemic openness

At what level of description do we find the “epistemic openness” that Metzinger speaks about in the quote above? Comparing different passages in the text, Metzinger seems to oscillate between placing epistemic openness at the phenomenal and the functional level. In some passages he clearly speaks about epistemic openness as an *experience*:

the experience of epistemic openness can be described as a space of nonegoic knowing, of pure aliveness and spontaneous presence. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 43)

The experience of epistemic openness and spacious awareness can take place in complete silence (see chapter 3) after all other content has disappeared. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 87)

In other passages he speaks of it otherwise:

Please note that “epistemic openness” is a new third-person concept, applied from the external perspective of science.... Phenomenologically, it creates the experiential quality of wakefulness and silent clarity without content. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 462)

Here it seems as if epistemic openness is an aspect of mental *functioning* which “creates” the *experiential* quality of wakefulness.

To me, it first seemed that “epistemic openness” might perhaps be a good name for experiential qualities such as *curiosity*, *open-mindedness*, and *cognitive flexibility*. Consider, for example, the following quotations from Ellen Langer on openness:

Openness, not only to new information, but to different points of view is also an important feature of mindfulness... Once we become mindfully aware of views other than our own, we start to realize that there are as many different views as there are different observers. Such awareness is potentially liberating. (Langer, 2014, p. 70)

Those who can free themselves of old mindsets..., who can open themselves to new information and surprise, play with perspective and context, and focus on process rather than outcome are likely to be creative, whether they are scientists, artists, or cooks. (2014, p. 113)

Some types of phenomenological practices, such as the mindful embodiment practice which has been used in the treatment of insomnia, also involve a focus on openness in the form of

an explorative attitude characterised by open receptiveness and curiosity to bodily sensations and feelings (Lundh, 2025b, p.118)

If the term “epistemic openness” had covered such examples of openness, it would represent a form of *mindset* (or *attitude*) that may help forming ensuing experiences. This, however, is *not* what Metzinger intends with “epistemic openness”. Metzinger does speak briefly about these kinds of openness in some parts of the book, but then he uses the term *open-mindedness* and not “epistemic openness”. Epistemic openness is clearly something different.

Epistemic openness and epistemic space

Metzinger argues that states of pure consciousness involve an epistemic openness which is there as soon as we wake up from sleep, and which is an openness “to the possibility of acquiring knowledge” (p. 41).

Pure consciousness is knowing *only* this epistemic openness itself, and calmly abiding in this knowing is a core aspect of what many contemplative traditions teach. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 42)

This involves having a *model of epistemic space*, but without there necessarily being any *contents* in this epistemic space. In meditation, we are said to have access to this epistemic space as such, potentially with no contents at all – thereby illustrating a possible meaning of the Buddhist concept of “emptiness”.

If the phenomenology of epistemic openness is closely related to an abstract space of epistemic possibilities, then the phenomenology of *emptiness* could be interestingly related to a maximally simple and entirely unstructured inner representation of exactly this space. Phenomenologically, this is not some nihilistic void, nor is it a dead form of cold, empty space. Rather, the experience of epistemic openness can be described as a space of nonegoic knowing, of pure aliveness and spontaneous presence. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 43)

Interestingly, Metzinger here connects the concept of epistemic openness with the experience of *pure aliveness and spontaneous presence*. At the same time, he argues that this represents a highly abstract experience of epistemic *capacity*:

This special kind of openness forms a highly abstract kind of experiential content because it refers to the mere capacity, not to the actually ongoing actualization or exertion of this capacity. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 42)

As Metzinger puts it in other passages, the experience of epistemic openness means to experience “a potentiality plus a sense of confidence” (p. 44) that you *can* orient yourself in space, time, in terms of who you are, and that you *can* “exert executive control, for example by actively controlling the focus of attention” (p. 44). Epistemic openness is said to represent an opening to a vast, unobstructed epistemic space:

Epistemic openness is the openness of an unobstructed epistemic space, and experiencing pure awareness simply means having a *model* of this space, nonconceptually knowing that it exists (Metzinger, 2024, p. 46-47)

Among the felt qualities of this experience, Metzinger mentions not only openness, but also unobstructedness, vastness, and expansiveness:

This openness can be consciously experienced. In addition, a clear and unobstructed space holds a very large number of possibilities, a fact that is perhaps reflected in the abstract phenomenal quality of “vastness” reported by many of our meditators. Along with these two global qualities of unobstructedness and vastness, we may also experience the specific potential for expansion: Awareness is a space of knowledge, and of course it can be expanded. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 48)

The awareness of possibilities

The notion of consciousness as being in contact with *possibilities* is an interesting one. In an evolutionary perspective, the development of more complex organisms may go hand in hand with organismic capacities to perceive increasingly complex *possibilities*. In Gibson’s (1979) ecological approach to perception, for example, what animals perceive is

not primarily colours, shapes, or objects, but what the environment *affords* in terms of *possible* interactions, for good or bad. This includes not only what the organism *can* do in its environment, but also what the environment *can* offer the organism (e.g., in terms of the satisfaction of needs, or threats to life and wellbeing).

Importantly, the concept of affordances transcends the division between subject and object, in the sense that although affordances are real properties of the environment, *they only exist as such in relation to* the characteristics of the organism's body (i.e., they are embodiment-related). What constitutes a surface to walk and stand on, for example, varies from one species to another; water for certain insects, for example, is such a surface. Variations in the size of the individual, even within the same species, are also of importance. An obstacle can, as Gibson (1979, p. 36) says, "be defined as an animal-sized object that affords collision and possible injury."

In this perspective, each animal has a space of affordances that are dependent on their body and its capacities. It is difficult to know if animals (for example, cats) have anything that approaches a capacity to *contemplate* their space of affordances before they act – but, if they had, I guess this might represent a kind of perceptual analogue to Metzinger's epistemic space. (When reading Gibson on affordances I sometimes have a contemplative feeling of viewing a vast space of possibilities.) Maybe this would represent *one among many* possible expressions of our epistemic space? Although I am not sure, Metzinger seems to have something similar in mind:

Our two new concepts of "epistemic openness" and "epistemic space" refer to an open inner space holding a very large number of possibilities for knowing the world and ourselves... Perhaps what today we call "pure awareness" is the shared, primordial data format of all sentient beings, some sort of fundamental constant?... (Metzinger, 2024, p. 50)

Epistemicity

Even if epistemic openness is not to be seen as a felt quality of pure consciousness, Metzinger argues that *epistemicity* is. Epistemicity is defined as a feeling of *subjective confidence*, or "insight":

Clearly, the phenomenology of pure awareness is often accompanied by a strong experience of insight, but in a nonintellectual and nonconceptual form. I have often termed it "epistemicity," the phenomenal character of knowledge-possession itself. (p. 52)

Calling this subjective quality "epistemicity" may at first sound very abstract, but despite being an *unstructured* form of knowing, it is also a very concrete phenomenal experience. It is a nonemotional feeling of knowing that is neither cognitive nor perceptual (Metzinger, 2024, p. 53)

At the same time, Metzinger emphasizes that this *feeling* of knowing, or subjective confidence, does in no way guarantee that there is *real* knowledge involved. Strongly felt insights may occur during a variety of different states, such as

hallucinations, without involving any newly acquired knowledge:

A strong and robust experience of knowing, even of absolute certainty, can occur during hallucinations, in dreams, and during psychiatric diseases or epileptic seizures. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 92)

On the other hand, some insights may probably be less fallible, such as the knowledge that "I *can* orient myself in space and time", and that "I *can* exert executive control", which characterize epistemic openness. This seems to imply that some insights arrived at during meditation may be less fallible.

Meditation as an epistemic practice

Metzinger describes meditation as "an epistemic practice aimed at self-knowledge" (p. 253). Other examples of epistemic practices are science and philosophy:

philosophy and science are "epistemic practices," just as meditation itself is, because they aim to generate knowledge (Metzinger, 2024, p. 7)

At the same time, he makes clear that insights arrived at during meditation, even when they are associated with strong feelings of confidence, are no more reliable indicators of theoretical knowledge than insights during hallucinations.

How, then, is it possible to argue that meditation can provide us with new self-knowledge? Here I would have liked to see some further clarification from Metzinger. For example, it would be possible to differentiate between (1) *theoretical* insights that aspire to provide knowledge about *causal* relationships (e.g., between earlier experiences and present patterns of functioning) and (2) *phenomenological* insights into aspects of one's actual experiences (i.e., *what* is experienced, rather than *why*). As I see it, although meditation *cannot* provide knowledge of the first kind, it *can* provide knowledge of the second kind.

As I argued above (p. 231), there is no way of being mistaken about one's felt qualities of pain, pleasure, tiredness, alertness, etc. This may be of special interest in relation to feelings that we tend to *avoid* experiencing, as they are incompatible with the person we would like to be, such as for example hate and envy. When we sense such feelings in ourselves, it is not likely that we are wrong – there is little room here for "prediction errors". Yet it seems fully reasonable to speak about *insight* in such cases – just because it is not self-evident that we are always aware of these kinds of feelings. For these feelings to be recognized, we need an attitude of *honesty* towards our experiences. Such an attitude of honesty is commonly cultivated during meditation and is seen by Metzinger as a necessary prerequisite for the experience of pure consciousness:

To the extent that meditation is an epistemic practice, it cannot work without radical honesty toward oneself, without a self-critical ethics of belief... Without the will and the courage to really *look*, pure consciousness does not come into existence... you cannot choicelessly observe your own thoughts

as they arise and disappear again if you are not prepared to honestly face what you will now begin to see: the painful restlessness of your very own mind, your violent fantasies, your desire for retaliation, your boredom, your loneliness, your existential despair, or your envy. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 494)

This kind of honesty is expressed in an openness to experience any kind of thoughts and feelings that may arise.

Still, I would not like to reduce meditation to an epistemic practice. To me, meditation has a much wider purpose than merely the acquisition of knowledge – it also involves motives related to well-being, felt embodiment, personal development, and flourishing (Lundh & Foster, 2025). To capture these motives, I would prefer to call meditation a *phenomenological* practice (Lundh 2020, 2022a), rather than merely an epistemic one.

The epistemic agent model

Another related concept introduced by Metzinger is the *epistemic agent model*, defined

as a thinking self that wants to understand something, as an entity that wants to create new knowledge. You have a goal, and you act to reach this goal... While you do it, you feel like you must control your own mind, and—if you’re successful—an inner experience of ownership and agency arises. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 301)

From the perspective of this epistemic agent model, it seems logical to see meditation as an epistemic practice, even if it does not involve any thinking:

If you are not thinking at all, but instead carefully attending to the sensations in your feet as you slowly walk, to the sound of a bell vanishing into silence, or to the self-generated sound-shape of a mantra in your mind doing the same, then you have an epistemic agent model. There is something that you want to perceive and experience as precisely as possible... In the carefulness of your attending, there is a sense of effort, which may be more or less subtle. A goal state has been selected, and the conscious self in the act of attending actively pursues this goal state (Metzinger, 2024, p. 301)

Against this, it can be argued that meditation also involves a training of the ability to *observe* bodily and sensory processes *without* actively trying to control them. In my first theoretical attempts to put words on experiences of meditation, I used a distinction between *spontaneity* and *intentionality* (Lundh, 1981). The meditative state, as I experienced it, involves a willingness to let go of all “intentionality” (defined as voluntary processes) and “to let spontaneity prevail” – for example, to let the breathing and all kinds of physiological and mental processes have their course, with a minimum of control. This involved

a realization that spontaneity is our primary way of functioning and that our intentionality always lies embedded within the spontaneous functioning of our organism. To the extent that we realize this, *we stop identifying only with our ego*, our conscious self. Instead, we identify with *the whole life*

process, including the course of events that we have no voluntary control over... Meditation can be seen as a training in taking this attitude, that is, to learn to attend to the spontaneous functioning of one’s own organism... here the intentionality recedes into the background and our spontaneous way of functioning emerges at the center of consciousness. (Lundh, 1981, p. 46, translated from Swedish)

This seems to me to be the opposite of an “epistemic agent model”. It connects more to concepts such as “pathicity” (Griffero, 2019), defined as the ability to feel the presence of situations and to let them resonate through the felt body, and “resonance” (Rosa, 2019), defined as a mode of relating to the world by being truly touched or moved by that which is encountered – in contrast to an instrumental mode.

As I see it, a working model of phenomenological practices such as meditation must basically include (1) wider goals than merely epistemic ones, and (2) a synthesis of non-intentional processes in the here-and-now with mindful intentionality at a longer-term level. (This would be similar to how directive and non-directive processes may be synthesized in person-centered forms of psychotherapy [Lundh, 2012]).

Metzinger, however, argues that the epistemic agent model automatically tends to serve as our “unit of identification”, and that the reading of his book may strengthen this identification even more:

During ordinary wake states, the epistemic agent model is what most of us identify with most strongly because it automatically functions as the unit of identification. Perhaps unfortunately, reading this book may feed and stabilize your epistemic agent model, and it may deepen your identification with the cognitive self. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 306)

Metzinger does recognize that it is “perfectly possible to be conscious but have no epistemic agent model” (p. 303), but illustrates this with mind wandering, daydreaming and other forms of “involuntary mental behavior”, rather than meditation. On the other hand, he also describes how the epistemic agent model dissolves in experiences of nondual awareness (p. 342).

Theory Contamination and Logical Fallacies

Among the many interesting features of Metzinger’s book are his discussions of *theory contamination* and various logical *fallacies* in research on meditation and consciousness. Theory contamination can be a problem, for example, in how practitioners report their experiences of meditation. This is how Metzinger summarizes this problem from a historical perspective:

What came first was the epistemic practice of silent meditation. Later, human beings tried to make sense of and convey their own experience on a conceptual level... In doing so, they created new words. Ambiguities arose, they had to be settled, and gradually the original project degenerated into theology and philosophical metaphysics, eventually leading to the kinds of philological nitpicking, dogmatism, and

scholastic hair-splitting that are still with us today. This is how the problem of theory contamination arose and why a fresh bottom-up approach is needed. Now it is the phenomenology itself that really counts—and perhaps we even need a new generation of scholar–practitioners not blinded by ideology... The challenge is daunting, but somehow we must try to get as close as possible to the experience itself. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 327)

I agree wholeheartedly with Metzinger here (e.g., Lundh, 2022b). Yet, it seems to me that there is a partly similar problem in Metzinger’s text. When he leaves the phenomenological descriptions and goes into theoretical analyses, he sometimes lands in formulations that I find very hard to assimilate.

Metzinger speaks about various logical fallacies in reasoning about consciousness, such as the C-fallacy, E-fallacy, M-fallacy, and the fallacy of composition. The C-fallacy is defined as follows:

A logical error consisting in falsely concluding that just because something *feels* like the very essence of consciousness, it is also a reliable indicator of actually *being* in touch with consciousness per se. As such, verbal reports referring to having experienced an “essence” or “pure consciousness in and of itself” do not imply or license any claims as to the actual existence of such an essence because all such claims need an independent epistemic justification. (p. 498)

This is no doubt a very important point. Yet, it seems to me that Metzinger does something similar when he draws conclusions about the nature of *conscious psychological functioning* from *the contents* of conscious experiences. For example, if a conscious experience does not contain any self-reference (i.e., subject-object duality), he seems to conclude that there is no person that is having the experience.

Is consciousness a subpersonal state?

As to Metzinger’s so-called “fallacy of composition” I find it difficult to see this as a fallacy – at least when he applies it to the nature of consciousness and argues that consciousness is a subpersonal state. Here is how he characterizes consciousness in a passage in chapter 3:

It is a subpersonal state. While it occurs, it is not tied to an individual, personal-level perspective. To be sure, there is an epistemic subject in a much weaker, abstract sense—but what undergoes this subpersonal state of knowing is a biological organism, not an ego or a person. (p. 29)

What does it mean to say that consciousness is a subpersonal state that is undergone by a *biological organism* and not by a *person*? It seems clear to me that the sleep-wake cycle with its different stages of sleep and different degrees of wakefulness can be seen in analogy with subpersonal processes such as blood circulation and immunological processes, which run their course at a biological level. It might seem logical to speak of *wakefulness* as a felt quality of certain phases of this subpersonal process. But isn’t it always the *person* – not some subsystem of the person – who is conscious?

Part of Metzinger’s answer seems to be that (1) as a *person*

we are *oriented* in time and space and in terms of “a narrative, an autobiographical self-model” (p. 43), and are also able to “exert executive control, for example by actively controlling the focus of attention” (p. 43); and that (2) all of this is absent in a state of pure consciousness. But why claim that it is a *subpersonal* state just because we are not oriented in time and space, or aware of our self-identity?

When we are absorbed in reading a book we may forget about time and about ourselves, and even where we are. But does that mean that this kind of absorption represents a “subpersonal” state. Doesn’t our reading and understanding still take place *at a holistic level of personal experience*?

Metzinger argues that when we attribute consciousness to ourselves as persons, this is a *misinterpretation* that illustrates “the fallacy of composition” which “arises in natural language when one falsely infers that something is true of the whole from the fact that it is true of some part of the whole” (p. 79):

“Phenomenality” is a subpersonal property, a property of certain functionally integrated brain states. The brains of neurotypical human beings *misrepresent* this objectively given property of phenomenality by contracting it into a transparent conscious self-model, which then forms the origin of a first-person perspective. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 80)

I would rather be inclined to think that Metzinger’s reasoning illustrates the *mereological* fallacy, which has been defined as the mistake of attributing properties of the whole to a part of the whole:

psychological predicates which apply only to human beings (or other animals) as wholes cannot intelligibly be ascribed to their parts, such as the brain (Bennett and Hacker, 2003, p. 29).

Psychological capacities, such as perceiving, thinking, deciding, choosing, feeling, conscious experience, etc., are capacities of individual human beings and should not be ascribed to their *parts*, such as the brain, parts of the brain, or some hypothesized internal component of information processing. Although it is an essential task for neuroscience to *explain* how all these things are enabled, this must be done without losing sight of the fact that it is the individual person, and not its brain, that does all these things.

The nature of conscious experience

Metzinger’s work on a theory of pure consciousness no doubt represents an important contribution to the consciousness debate. It remains to clarify, however, how the experience of pure consciousness fits into a more encompassing theory of conscious psychological functioning. For example, it would be a mistake to *equate* the experience of pure consciousness with the nature of conscious experience.

Conscious experience is familiar to all of us, but we seldom focus on it. It is here that the practice of meditation has an important role: it can help us become aware of conscious experience as such. To reiterate the following quotation from Metzinger:

Conscious experience is a medium. It is a medium through which we can know the world and ourselves... Whenever the medium is “transparent,” we are unaware of it and perceive just the world and ourselves in it, in a seemingly direct and immediate way... However, meditation practice can make the medium “opaque,” so we sometimes become aware of the medium while still perceiving the world. (Metzinger, 2024, p. 367)

Importantly, this implies that *conscious experience is there even before we attend to it*, in the form of an awareness of the world and of ourselves. This means that we need to make a clear distinction between *unreflective* conscious experiences (i.e., conscious experiences that are not attended to) and *reflective* conscious experiences (conscious experiences that are attended to). What Metzinger refers to as *pure* consciousness is a variety of the latter, where what is attended to is not the *contents* of conscious awareness but the *quality* of consciousness itself. *Reflective* conscious experience, as I see it, would be equivalent to what Metzinger speaks of as “awareness that knows itself in a non-egoic way”.

On the other hand, this also points to the importance of clarifying the notion of *unreflective* conscious experience – that is, conscious experiences that we do not attend to. Here it would be important to differentiate further between experiences that we *can* become aware of by a slight turn of attention (typically referred to as “preconscious”) and others that we don’t have conscious access to (and that might be referred to as “subconscious”).

Ginsburg and Jablonka (2019) have argued that consciousness represents the development of *a new functional realm*, in analogy with the development of life. As they describe it, the intrinsic goals of *living* individuals can be defined as survival and reproduction. The evolution of *conscious* beings in addition involves the development of “intrinsic motivating subjective experience” (p. 188) as a new causal force on top of the more basic physical and biological forms of causality. This new form of causality requires an explanatory framework that involves terms such as “values” and “felt needs”. From such a perspective, we should ask not only about *contents*, *qualities*, and *structure* of conscious experience but also about its *dynamics* and its relation to other psychological processes.

The elephant and the blind

The title of Metzinger’s book, “The Elephant and the Blind”, refers to an ancient fable which originated in ancient India and goes like this:

A king tells a group of people who were born blind and who have never come across an elephant before to try to understand what an elephant is like by touching it. Each person feels a different part of the elephant’s body, but only one part each, like the trunk, the tail, a flank, or a tusk. They then describe the elephant. They describe it as being like a thick snake, or like a rope or a brush, or like a wall, or as being something hard, smooth, and pointy. How will they ever agree on whether they are all referring to a single

phenomenon in the outside world? (Metzinger, 2024, p. xxv)

This is an illustrative image of our present understanding of consciousness. Like the blind men, none of us have an integrative view of all the facets of what is referred to as “consciousness”. Much is written about consciousness these days, but each writer seems to focus on limited aspects of the phenomena involved.

Perhaps it would be a bit unfair to characterize Metzinger’s book by depicting it as a kind of conversation involving basically two perspectives on consciousness: the meditator’s perspective and the perspective of a cognitive neuroscientist of the predictive processing school. But even if this would be an unfair caricature of a very rich and stimulating book, it captures the “spirit” of one of my reservations. It seems to me that these perspectives need to be complemented by several other perspectives if we are to see the *whole* of consciousness.

When Models Clash

When reading a book like this, one’s own model of the world is inevitably confronted with the author’s model. Two models are met, and this meeting may be experienced as more or less difficult. In the worst case, the models will clash and the reader will give up reading. Kuhn (1962) spoke of the “incommensurability of paradigms” when theoretical models cannot be translated into one another or rationally evaluated against each another. However, it is probably more fruitful to speak of *various kinds and degrees of discrepancies* between different theoretical models. At first, I felt much in Metzinger’s model to be so far away from my own thinking that I was tempted to give up reading. After working myself through the book, however, I came to realize that much of it is in line with how I see things, and this reading has also helped me to acquire new insights. In this process my own perspectives on meditation and consciousness have expanded and become enriched in several ways.

Friston’s free energy principle (e.g., Parr et al., 2022) focuses on *discrepancies between world and model*, and not between different models, but still presents a useful perspective also in the present context. When the world does not behave in accordance with our model (beliefs, expectancies), we can reduce these discrepancies (reduce uncertainty), either by changing our model to fit the world better or by actively trying to change the world so that it fits the model (so-called active inference). The free energy principle may also be applicable to discrepancies *between models* (Lundh, 2026, p. 68-69). When theoretical models clash, a simple way of reducing uncertainty is to reject the other theory; this, however, runs the risk of stifling possible developments in one’s own understanding. Another more effortful alternative – which may be more productive and possibly lead to new understanding – is to *expose oneself to uncertainty* by engaging in efforts to come to grips with the other theory, for the purpose of arriving at a reduction of uncertainty *later on* (or, in other terms, a reduction not of variational free energy in the present but a reduction of *expected* free energy in the future; Parr et al., 2022).

In my reading of Metzinger's book, I chose the latter alternative. That is, my aim was to explore Metzinger's model, to find out (1) to what extent it would be compatible or incompatible with my own perspectives, (2) to what extent it could give me new insights, and (3) to what extent I would find parts of it difficult to embrace. This proved to be a very rewarding experience. My way of thinking about consciousness has developed in several ways as a result, although I must admit that it still differs substantially from Metzinger's.

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