“I Is Someone Else”: Constituting the Extended Mind’s Fourth Wave, with Hegel

J. M. Fritzman  
*Lewis & Clark College, fritzman@lclark.edu*

Kristin Thornburg  
*College of DuPage, kristin.parvazian@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.pacificu.edu/eip

**Recommended Citation**

“I Is Someone Else”: Constituting the Extended Mind’s Fourth Wave, with Hegel

J.M. Fritzman and Kristin Thornburg

_Lewis & Clark College and College of DuPage_

Abstract

We seek to constitute the extended mind’s fourth wave, socially distributed group cognition, and we do so by thinking with Hegel. The extended mind theory’s first wave invokes the parity principle, which maintains that processes that occur external to the organism’s skin should be considered mental if they are regarded as mental when they occur inside the organism. The second wave appeals to the complementarity principle, which claims that what is crucial is that these processes together constitute a cognitive system. The first two waves assume that cognitive systems have well-defined territories or boundaries, and that internal and external processes do not switch location. The third wave rejects these assumptions, holding instead that internal processes are not privileged, and internal and external processes can switch, and that processes can be distributed among individuals. The fourth wave would advocate socially distributed group cognition. Groups are deterritorialized collective agents; they are ineliminatively and irreducibly real, they have mental states. Individuals constitute groups, but groups also constitute individuals. What counts as an individual and a group is a function of the level of analysis. And they are conflicted.
To work now? Never, never: I’m on strike. Right now, I’m encrapulating myself as much as possible. Why? I want to be a poet, and I’m working to turn myself into a seer: you won’t understand at all, and it’s unlikely that I’ll be able to explain it to you. It has to do with making your way toward the unknown by a derangement of all the senses. The suffering is tremendous, but one must bear up against it, to be born a poet, and I know that’s what I am. It’s not at all my fault. It’s wrong to say I think: one should say I am thought. Forgive the pun. I is someone else. Tough luck to the wood that becomes a violin, and to hell with the unaware who quibble over what they’re completely missing anyway!

Adversaries of the extended mind emphasize the importance of the “persisting individual” to cognitive science. They urge that this is incompatible with the extended mind’s transient couplings and hook-ups, linking individuals and aspects of their environments, thereby constituting cognitive systems. Yet, in the nineteenth century, Arthur Rimbaud recognized that individuals are constitutively conjoined to others, always already, who are themselves so conjoined, and that an individual’s persistence is that of a
continuing process, not a substance. Metaphor: individuals are not trees, much less petrified wood, but rhizomes.\textsuperscript{ii} Asparagus and ginger are rhizomes, Indian lotus too. With uncanny insight, Hindus not only portray Viṣṇu (the god of preservation) and Lakṣmī (the goddess of prosperity) on lotuses, they also depict the universe’s creation as a lotus emerging from Viṣṇu’s navel. Although not his main point, Rimbaud saw that a violin constitutively depends on its wood. And, his main point: I does not think; rather, I is thought’s result.

In the “Preface” to the \textit{Elements of the Philosophy of Right}, Hegel cautions his readers to not expect philosophy to give advice about what should be done.\textsuperscript{iii} This is so, he explains, because philosophy’s comprehension is always retrospective, discerning an era’s essential characteristics only after they have already fully developed. So, it might be anticipated that a project of thinking with Hegel about the extended mind could at most discern what others have already achieved—articulating, clarifying, and making explicit—but that it would not advance the discussion. The extended mind would clarify Hegel’s concept of \textit{Geist} (“spirit” or “mind”), and his concept of “right” (\textit{Recht} roughly, social mores and law) serves as an exemplar of the extended mind.\textsuperscript{iv} This could seem like a system of mirrors, mutually illuminating each other—and impatient readers might wonder when the smoke will be introduced.

Nevertheless, the project of making things explicit can be valuable, articulating and then synthesizing, thereby making way for further conceptual advance. Moreover, Hegelians have defended the extended mind from Mark Sprevak’s argument that the extended mind is overly permissive in its attributions of mental states, and that—since functionalism entails the extended mind—both should be rejected.\textsuperscript{v}
Naturally, Hegelians worry, not that the extended mind is too liberal in its attributions of mental states, but rather that it is too conservative.

We will discuss the extended mind’s first two waves, suggesting that they really constitute one wave, explain that the third wave is well under way, and show that the resources are in place for a fourth wave. We suggest that the fourth wave is conflicted, constituted, as it were, by various interfering waves.

WAVES: 1-2-3-4

Richard Menary punctuates the extended mind in two waves, John Sutton anticipates a third, which Michal David Kirchhoff develops. The first wave invokes the parity principle, articulated by Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers, which maintains that processes that occur external to the organism’s skin should be considered cognitive if they are functionally equivalent to cognitive processes occurring inside the organism: “If, as we confront some task, a part of the world functions as a process which, were it done in the head, we would have no hesitation in recognizing as part of the cognitive process, then that part of the world is (so we claim) part of the cognitive process. Cognitive processes ain’t (all) in the head!”

The extended mind’s second wave appeals to the complementarity principle. Critics of the extended mind argue that external processes are substantially dissimilar from internal processes, and so they maintain that external processes are not cognitive. Menary suggests, in response, that the parity principle serves not so much as an argument for the extended mind as an intuition pump. He and Sutton claim that external and internal processes need not be similar, as the
parity principle requires; rather these external and internal processes must be complementary. What is crucial is that external and internal processes are functionally integrated together, such that they constitute a cognitive system.

Indeed, Clark explains that the parity principle stresses the functional integration of cognitive processes, regardless of whether they are located externally or internally. The brain, body, and world are in an “equal-partners dance,” he writes, “with the nature of the mind fixed by the overall balance thus achieved: a kind of extended functionalism.” This suggests, in turn, that the second wave is not a move beyond the first wave, but rather is its correct interpretation, and that the complementarity principle is the parity principle’s explication.

Nevertheless, the parity and complementarity principles both assume that any specific cognitive system—variously referred to as a self, person, mind, individual, or agent—has a well-defined territory or boundary, as do the various external and internal processes that constitute it. Further, in Clark’s rendition of the extended mind, the organism is privileged over its environment. “In rejecting the vision of human cognitive processing as organism bound,” he urges, “we should not feel forced to deny that it is (in most, perhaps all, real-world cases), organism centered.” Clark explains: “Just as it is the spider’s body that spins and maintains the web that then ... constitutes part of its own extended phenotype, so it is the biological human organism that spins, selects, or maintains the webs of cognitive scaffolding that participate in the extended machinery of its own thought and reason. Individual cognizing, then, is organism centered even if it is not organism bound.”

"I Is Someone Else" | Fritzman & Thornburg

160
The third wave seeks to move beyond this. It recognizes that cognitive systems are dissolved, Sutton writes, “into peculiar loci of coordination and coalescence among multiple structured media,” and so are deterritorialized. “Without assuming distinct inner and outer realms of engrams and exograms, the natural and the artificial, each with its own proprietary characteristics,” Sutton explains, “this third wave would analyze these boundaries as hard-won and fragile developmental and cultural achievements, always open to renegotiation.”xii Describing a “collective emergent agent” who would be constituted by individuals and their instruments in dynamic interaction with their environment, Eric Arnau et al. write that, “this—clearly counterintuitive—kind of ‘deterritorialization’ of the cognitive agent is the move that Sutton envisages as a ‘third wave’ of cognitive externalism.” They immediately assure their readers that “of course, the individual agents will still be there; and we might want to explain what any of them is doing, cognitively speaking.”xiii

Kirchhoff develops the third wave. Contrasting “the fixed-properties view,” which holds that internal and external processes are distinct, and that they do not switch, he proposes an alternative “dynamic properties view.” According to this view, “the plastic brain gets enculturated through development in socio-cultural practices.” Moreover, the dynamic properties view “does not assume, when having to explain the integration/assembled of cognitive systems, that the individual organism is the most active element,” and so it “implies that the assembly of cognitive systems is the result of richly dynamical and distributed elements, where there is no collapse into individualism” of the fixed-properties view.xiv “Cognitive assembly and agency are best understood,” according to the extended mind’s third wave, “as self-organizational processes distributed across brains,
bodies, people, norms, and socio-cultural practices and structures—none of which have any analytical priority.”xv

In addition, all of these—brains, bodies, people, norms, and socio-cultural practices and structures—dynamically interact and so enable alterations in one another. For example, the hippocampi of taxi drivers enlarge as a consequence of their navigating the streets of London.xvi So, the third wave holds that (1) which processes are external or internal is a consequence of social, historical, and cultural factors, that (2) external processes can become internal, and vice versa, such that (3) “diachronic development in stable and predictive patterns of socio-cultural practices sculpts the patterns of neural activity to the ones found at the socio-cultural level.”xvii

The extended mind is a common occurrence, although it is frequently overlooked. Robert D. Rupert invites his readers to “take one instance of a writer’s use of her notes.” Readers will discover, he believes, that “the previous thoughts she recorded in those notes surely were her thoughts just prior to the time she wrote them; they were, apparently, not the thoughts of an extended system.”xviii Even if Rupert’s scenario can happen in one instance, it does not describe Ralph Waldo Emerson’s use of his journal, to which he frequently turned for inspiration; here, Emerson is constitutively coupled with his journal in a reciprocal causally interacting extended cognitive system.xix

Writers, even philosophers, frequently experience the texts they are writing as taking on lives of their own, where the next sentences unexpectedly emerge. It is common to hear writers proclaim that they do not know what they are going to write until they write. In these cases, the thoughts are not the writers’ prior to being written. Rather, those thoughts are constituted through being written. Such writers discover what
they think as they read what they are writing. Co-authors learn what they think by reading what their collaborators wrote, and the collaborators, peradventure, when what they wrote is explained to them. When readers add their thoughts too, perhaps centuries later, the mind really gets extended and deterritorialized.

Before discussing the fourth wave, it will be useful to present the taxonomy that J. Adam Carter et al. introduce.\textsuperscript{xx} Internalism, in the philosophy of mind, urges that cognitive processes and mental states are located solely in an individual’s brain. Embodied cognition states that cognitive processes and mental states are located in an individual’s brain and body. Content externalism maintains that the content of mental states may constitutively depend, at least in part, on an individual’s physical or social environment.

Carter et al. discern three forms of active externalism: extended cognition, the extended mind, and distributed cognition. Extended cognition holds that cognitive processes can extend to the artifacts in an individual’s environment. Agreeing with extended cognition that cognitive processes can so extend, the extended mind claims that mental states—such as experiences, emotions, desires, and beliefs—can also extend to those artifacts. Also accepting extended cognition, distributed cognition adds that cognitive processes can be distributed among several individuals. Extended cognition and distributed cognition emphasize cognitive processes, while the extended mind focuses on mental states.

Linking this taxonomy to the extended mind’s waves, what Carter et al. refer to as the extended mind correlates with its first and second waves, and what they refer to as distributed cognition correlates with its third wave. The fourth wave of the extended mind would maintain that there can be socially
distributed group cognition, where cognitive processes, as well as mental states, are distributed among multiple individuals and among groups.\textsuperscript{xxi}

This taxonomy may be supplemented by noting that extended cognition and the extended mind both extend processes which are initially unextended, and both distinguish external processes and internal processes. Distributed cognition, by contrast, does not presuppose that processes are initially unextended. It also argues that which cognitive processes are external, and which internal, is a consequence of socio-cultural practices. External processes can become internal, moreover, and internal processes can become external.

Further, the phenomenon of \textit{transactive memory} shows that distributed cognition may involve mental states as well as cognitive processes.\textsuperscript{xxii} Transactive memory occurs when persons collectively remember something. To give a simple example: a person remembers one item, leading another person to remember something else, which further prompts the memory of the first person. Transactive memory can occur among persons who know each other well, such as spouses or members of a research team. Specific persons may be assigned or relied on to remember certain sorts of things. Transactive memory can also occur among persons who have just met, such as subjects in a psychological experiment. Harris et al. present a case of a couple who transactively remembers the beginning of their relationship.\textsuperscript{xxiii} Here, the cognitive processes are distributed, but the couple now also shares the same mental states, the same remembrances.

We seek to develop further the extended mind’s fourth wave. Cognitive systems are distributed among multiple persons, groups, which are deterritorialized collective agents. Groups are ineliminatively and irreducibly real. Moreover, they have
mental states. Individuals are still there, although where they are cannot be precisely specified. What any of them is doing, cognitively speaking, cannot be determined in isolation. Individuals constitute groups, but groups also constitute individuals. What counts as an individual and a group is a function of the level of analysis, as well as the practical interests that motivate this analysis. As a consequence, individuals can be regarded as groups, and groups as individuals. Comprehended thus, group agents are not so clearly counterintuitive.

HOW THE HARNESS FITS

One of the considerable achievements of Randall Collins’ sociology of philosophy is to demonstrate that every philosopher, with no known exception, thought with (and sometimes against) a group. Although interest in the “extended mind”—referred to as such—is recent, the minds of philosophers have always been extended. We contribute to constituting the extended mind’s fourth wave, with Hegel, articulating its lineaments.

Ralph Waldo Emerson recommends that writers leave their readers unsatisfied and have them do some of the thinking:

The most interesting writing is that which does not quite satisfy the reader. Try and leave a little thinking for him; that will be better for both. The trouble with most writers is, they spread too thin. The reader is as quick as they; has got there before, and is ready and waiting. A little guessing does him no harm, so I would assist him with no connections. If you can see how the harness fits, he can. But make sure that you see it.
We are happy to follow these recommendations. They suit our style. Although readers may be initially dissatisfied with having to think, they will be satisfied, having thought.

We see how the harness fits—but we do not see fully. Naturally, this is to be expected. Science must discover what it has been doing, as Jerry Fodor notes, and it only retrospectively understands what it has been talking about. In this respect, philosophy is no different. We, thinking with Hegel, will see what we can. Our readers, thinking with us, will see a little more—maybe more than a little. Together, we will constitute the fourth wave.

SPOT ON

Here is an edifying story: Augustin-Jean Fresnel developed a wave theory of light. He submitted his theory to the Académie des sciences’ 1817 prize competition. Siméon Denis Poisson was a member of the prize committee. Poisson was also a proponent of the mainstream corpuscular theory of light, and so he attempted a *reductio ad absurdum* of Fresnel’s theory. Poisson demonstrated that the theory entails that there is a spot of light at the center of a circular shadow. Another judge, François Arago, performed experiments that demonstrated that there is indeed a spot of light in the heart of darkness. Fresnel was awarded the prize.

This story’s moral is not that darkness is constitutively linked, and not merely coupled, to the light at its center. Instead, the moral is that intended *reductios* of a theory can be features which the theory’s proponents have not recognized.

Rupert maintains that the suggestion that the sun could be an aspect of a cognitive system is a *reductio* of the extended mind: “Anyone who claims that the proper system of study in
cognitive science is an organism-star system provides a *reductio* of the extended approach to cognitive science—at least if the notion of a cognitive system is meant to admit to inference to the location or constitution of a mind (after all, no part of my mind is 91 million miles from Earth).”

Rupert also claims:

Language does not suddenly appear in the world, its content in place. If our subject’s mind extends into the world because the content of her *sic* thoughts derives from the content of the external units that caused the development of some of her internal resources, then our subject’s mind should also extend to encompass the minds of those ancestors and the like, the mental states in whom are responsible for the current external units’ having the content they have. Thus, however exactly the dependence-reasoning is supposed to proceed, it seems unprincipled to include external linguistic resources as part of the extended mind, while excluding the minds that give rise to the content of those external linguistic resources; in both cases—moving from current subject to linguistic units and from linguistic units to other subjects—content-dependence is the issue. But to include all of these other minds in the extended mind is a *reductio* of the view; cognitive science has no use for cognitive systems that include the dead and decomposed."
He further objects to Robert A. Wilson’s views on the extended mind because, Rupert claims, they entail behaviorism.xxx

Like Fresnel, we reject the *reductios* but not the findings. Rupert’s two *reductios* of the theory of extended mind are actually features that should be vigorously endorsed. They further articulate the theory; the sun can indeed be an aspect of a distributed cognitive system, so too can the minds of ancestors. Moreover, the extended mind entails a species of behaviorism. Not only can the extended mind be productively extended, it also has the resources to respond to objections.

**IT DEPENDS**

Rejecting the thesis of the extended mind in general, and the suggestion that language could extend the mind in particular, Rupert urges that “the persisting nature of the capacities investigated by cognitive science cannot be squared with the often fleeting nature of extended systems composed of human organisms and external linguistic resources,” adding that such extended systems “do not have the longevity or integrity to support the capacities of interest in cognitive science.”xxxi

Even if Rupert’s claims about mainstream cognitive science’s narrow scope of interests were correct, it would not follow that those interests might not be augmented and developed, as proponents of the extended mind demand.xxxii Nor does it show that other disciplines—such as anthropology, economics, epistemology, ethnography, ethnology, ethology, evolutionary biology, organizational science, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, political science, and social psychology—share that narrow scope.xxxiii
Rupert rejects what he refers to as “dependence-reasoning: if some thought (or mental activity, or cognition) depends on factor X in some especially strong or clear way, then X is literally part of the thinker’s cognitive system.”xxxiv He claims that, “dependence-reasoning is not, in general, a reliable form of inference” because “there is simply too much dependence in the world for it to ground the individuation of systems, cognitive or otherwise.”xxxv

Rupert’s argument against dependence-reasoning presupposes that the proper individuation of cognitive systems is already known, and that this knowledge can be used to determine whether dependence-reasoning has provided the correct result. It is this very assumption that is at issue, however, and so dependence-reasoning cannot be rejected as such. True, dependence reasoning will not ground an individuation of cognitive systems in a manner that is amenable to what Rupert believes are the current interests of mainstream cognitive science. This is why the extended mind’s proponents demand that those interests be broadened.

To be sure, there is lots of dependence in the world. Nevertheless, biological organisms are active, not passive, recipients of the factors on which they depend. Those dependencies are reciprocal. Georg Theiner notes, for instance, that “proponents of external perception have argued that the body’s own morphology and activities (such as eye-movements, foveation, or head-turning), but also ambient environmental structures are equal partners of the brain as part of a continuous, boundary-crossing feedback cycle that dynamically links perception to action.”xxxvi A socially distributed group cognitive system individuated through dependence-reasoning will be analogous to Hegel’s concept of Geist. Only metaphysical prejudice would consider that a reason for rejecting such reasoning.
Distributed cognition claims that cognitive systems result from persons dynamically interacting with their environments. Hence, questions about the mind’s location are ill-formed, as the cognitive system is the dynamic interaction of its constituent parts, and those parts are parts only because they collectively constitute the system. This results in a deterritorialization, where the mind cannot be located in any one of the system’s parts, but rather extends through—indeed, is—the system itself.

This converges on Hegel’s concept of Geist, which potentially encompasses all of humanity—and all of nature as well, since nature is Geist in its nascent state. Geist emerges from nature, but Geist continues to depend on nature, and so nature is an aspect of Geist. Given their interests, many philosophers are not interested in Geist per se, but only with specific aspects of it. They focus on those aspects—decomposites—and bracket the rest. There is nothing untoward about this, as long as it is remembered that these are decomposites of the whole. In accepting the extended mind, cognitive science will not lose the data collected, as Rupert fears. However, the full meaning(s) of that data will finally result from their placement within a larger system of relations.

IT’S JUST WEIRD

It is relatively easy for persons to recognize their own idiosyncratic prejudices. All that is required is that they frequently interact with others. Prejudices are more difficult to discern when they pervade a culture, or a discipline. Persons then need to make a concentrated effort, through reading or traveling, to encounter persons having different values, cultures, traditions, genders, and ethnicities. Appeals to commonsense, intuition, or “our” views refer, not to those of all persons, but to those in Western, Educated,
Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies.\textsuperscript{xl} Joseph Henrich et al. show that WEIRD persons are frequently statistical outliers when compared to those who are not WEIRD. One of the characteristics of WEIRD persons is their individualism. According to this individualism, the minds of persons, and their selves, do not expand beyond their skins. Interactions with and relations to other people and to the environment are not regarded as constitutive of identity.

Outside of WEIRD societies, though, many people experience their kin as their self. Julian Pitt-Rivers notes that “the majority of the world’s peoples do not share the individualism of the modern West and have no need to explain what appears to them evident: the self is not the individual self alone, but includes, according to circumstances, those with whom the self is conceived as solidary, in the first place, his [sic] kin.”\textsuperscript{xli} Maurice Bloch corroborates this:

Many African and Asian peoples say that the members of a descent group share the same bones. To say this is not to use a metaphor for closeness; it means exactly what it says in that these people believe that the bones of their body are part of a greater undifferentiated totality. In cases such as these the body is not experienced as finally bounded by the air around it; it is also continuous with the parts of the bodies of people who in modern western ideology could be seen as ‘others’.... What such bodyness implies is that what happens to other members of your household is, to a certain extent, also happening to you irrespective of whether these others are women or men. Because of this the radical disjunction between different people is far
from absolute in such societies.... Individuals may interconnect much more than the ideology of individualism leads us to believe.... In these cases the boundary between the experience of *Ego* and *Alter* is far from absolute.xlii

While many WEIRD philosophers assert that the mind and the self cannot extend beyond the skin, the individualistic intuitions that would support this are parochial.xliii

Wilson, a proponent of the extended mind, endorses an individualistic view of subjectivity. Wilson maintains that “wide computational systems thus involve minds that literally extend beyond the confines of the skull into the world.xliv However, he rejects the suggestion that the extended mind could result in “wide subjects” who would have mental states:

There may, of course, be interesting science fiction or other fanciful examples that pull our intuitions toward such radical conclusions, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, at least in the world that we actually inhabit, and being the creatures that we actually are, there is a basis for marking out individuals as the subjects of properties, even those properties with wide realizations. Individuals—and here, as always, our paradigms are individual people and individual organisms—are spatio-temporally bounded, relatively cohesive, unified entities that are continuous across space and time.... In the actual world, it is individuals who form and maintain beliefs, experience emotions, and wonder about what will happen next.xlv
Pitt-Rivers and Bloch would argue that Wilson’s view of the actual world is WEIRD. The persons in the cultures they discuss would not identify the individual with the biological organism (and they would differ on the boundaries of the biological organism). It may be that WEIRD persons are narrow subjects, but it is likely that many non-WEIRD persons experience and understand themselves as wide subjects.

This is also relevant when considering John Preston’s objection to the position of Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers that information is a belief because of the functional role it plays, and a belief can play that role outside of the body. “When it comes to belief,” Clark and Chalmers write, “there is nothing sacred about the skull and skin.” To the criticism that this sense of “belief” departs from standard usage, they reply that “we do not intend to debate what is standard usage; our broader point is that the notion of belief ought to be used so that Otto qualifies as having the belief in question.”\(^{xlvi}\)

Preston objects:

If one can violate the constraints which currently govern concepts like belief and mind, beliefs and minds might turn out to be unrecognizable to those who use those terms correctly in nontechnical contexts. This is entirely acceptable when forging a technical scientific concept to be used in constructing scientific explanations. There, how the term is used in nontechnical contexts (if indeed it has such a use) shouldn’t constrain what scientists want to mean by it. But when dealing with a commonsense, everyday concept that figures centrally in what cognitive science has to explain, it has to be inadvisable. To retain the
connection between cognition and everyday psychological abilities and achievements as pretheoretically conceived is essential, because among the ultimate explananda of cognitive science are phenomena picked out by perfectly ordinary cognitive concepts like belief, knowledge, memory, perception, and so on.\textsuperscript{xlvii}

That’s just WEIRD! That is, in referring to “nontechnical contexts,” “a commonsense, everyday concept,” “everyday psychological abilities and achievements as pretheoretically conceived,” and “perfectly ordinary cognitive concepts,” Preston presupposes WEIRD understandings of these concepts, abilities, and achievements. The individualistic intuitions that underlie those understandings are not shared by most people. Cognitive science can be legitimately criticized, moreover, insofar as it assumes that the concepts, abilities, and achievements it seeks to explain are universal, instead of recognizing how WEIRD they are.

Preston might respond by defending the individualistic intuitions, urging that they should be endorsed, even though they originate in WEIRD societies. In making such a move, though, he would be agreeing with Clark and Chalmers that what is crucial is how such concepts as belief ought to be used.

To repeat: individualism is not shared by most people. WEIRD philosophers begin with the individual’s non-extended mind and then extend it beyond the skin. For many others who are not WEIRD, as well as WEIRD proponents of socially distributed group cognition, the mind is always already extended. What WEIRD philosophers regard as a non-extended mind is the distorting result of prescinding from persons’ social and natural environments.
James Hollan et al. and Shaun Gallagher recognize that constitutive coupling in one way precludes such coupling in other ways.\textsuperscript{xlviii} Moreover, one way may make the possibility of other ways invisible. Edwin Hutchins says that “the most direct way to render something invisible is to refrain from mentioning it.”\textsuperscript{xlix} Occasionally, those who are not mentioning something are fully aware of it, but are hoping that others will not notice it. Creative bookkeeping generally works this way. Usually, however, the thing has also become invisible to those who are not mentioning it. Even if it is visible in the sense that persons are aware of its existence, its salience and relevance are not recognized and so it functions as though it were invisible.

Socially distributed group cognition needs to expand the group over which cognition is socially distributed. And the expansion should increase not only the size of the group, but also the range of diversity of its members. Here, a compelling case can be made for comparative philosophy. For example, discussions of personal identity will be limited if the arguments supporting the claim that Śiva is the true self of each person—as maintained by his devotees in Kashmir during the 9th-12th centuries—cannot be considered. This expansion is unlikely to result in a unified group, but instead in a continuing conversation, characterized by moments of consensus that are an archipelago in a sea of dissensus, disagreement, and squabbling. In this way, being blinkered can be a point of departure, something to be transcended, and not a destiny.

**WIDE SUBJECTS: GROUPS**

Wilson’s view that only individuals, not wide subjects, can have mental states is WEIRD. Groups—to refer to wide
subjects by their familiar name—can have mental states. Groups are real. They can be neither eliminated nor reduced to their individual members. Raimo Tuomela discusses “we-intentions,” where each member of a group (1) intends to act, (2) believes that the other members intend to act, and (3) believes that (1) and (2) hold for every other member of the group. Pace Tuomela, there can be group intentions where (1) and (2) do not obtain. More generally, a group can have a mental state that none of its members has.

A limitation of much recent work on groups is that the exemplars have been corporations and associations where, it is implicitly assumed, their members share common purposes. “In treating collectives,” Frederick F. Schmitt writes, “I will follow other writers in taking the social group as the paradigm of a collectivity. By a ‘social group’ here I mean, roughly, a collectivity capable of action in the manner of a corporation or association.” This approach virtually guarantees that groups will be conceptualized as organizations whose members voluntarily intend to join. In arguing for the possibility of collective attitudes, for example, Margaret Gilbert believes that a group’s members make a joint commitment, expressing their willingness to be jointly committed as a group.

In addition to corporations and associations, prisoners, students, soldiers, and immigrants are also groups. Enlarging the scope of the groups beyond those of corporations and associations, makes apparent that groups are frequently internally conflicted, both about their purposes as well as the ways in which those purposes should be pursued. Following Michel Foucault, it could be argued that conflict is inherent to groups, but it is sufficient to note that conflict is frequent. Rather than viewing conflict as the breakdown of socially distributed group cognition, it is more productive to see
conflict as a mode of such cognition. Having a shared purpose is not an either/or, for example, but rather a continuum. One endpoint of this continuum would be civil war. Even here, one could interpret this, not as the group’s disintegration, but rather as the continuation of its politics by other means. There are civil wars where the factions are determined to terminate the group, and each now fights for possession of resources. In other cases, though, factions fight to determine the group’s character.

That discussions of class struggle are not prominent in the recent literature on groups has been, at least in part, a result of the sort of groups investigated. Corporations have served as a primary instance of groups, as noted above, but the focus has been on the relations among persons in upper-management. There has been little attention paid to the relations between shareholders, chief executive officers, upper-managers, middle-managers, non-salaried workers (full-time and part-time), and the public. After belt-tightening, for example, some belts are tighter than others; some got to tighten (or loosen) their own belts, some had their belts tightened by others. Expanding that focus would make visible that cooperation and consensus are usually temporary moments in a group’s life, seldom defining characteristics, suggesting that the mental states of a group are frequently conflicted. It would also show the ways in which individuals are constituted by their memberships in groups, how groups are in turn constituted by their members, as well as how both individuals and groups resist the ways in which they are constituted.

“The True is the whole,” Hegel writes. The whole is constituted through its parts, however, and those parts have a relative autonomy. This is most apparent in Hegel’s political philosophy. There, individuals have rights which the state cannot infringe. The proper analysis of groups must be
binocular, recognizing that a collective and its individual members are mutually co-determining and co-constituting. This is the reason, moreover, that the concept of supervenience is not apt in this context; adapting supervenience for use here would require that groups supervene on individuals and that individuals also supervene on groups.

LEARNING WITH HEGEL

All we really need to know about the extended mind—to improvise on the title of Robert Fulghum’s *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*—we can learn with Hegel.\textsuperscript{lx} Just as we only discover in later years what lessons we learned in kindergarten, however, so we only learn to properly read Hegel by engaging the contemporary literature.

Tyler Burge recognizes that Hegel is a mental content externalist.\textsuperscript{lxi} Similarly, Hegel offers an account of group cognition. Not only is he a precursor, however, his account represents a substantial advance beyond the extended mind’s first two waves. First, they regard non-extended individual cognition as basic and normal. They begin with and presuppose non-extended cognition, and then reach extended cognition by adding features to non-extended cognition. It might be thought that this is mainly a consequence of the demands of presentation; pedagogically, it is clearest to begin with non-extended individual cognition and to extend from there. The hesitancy (perhaps timidity) with which the move from the non-extended mind to the extended mind has been made suggests otherwise. Hegel also begins his elucidations, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, with the individual. However, the individual is quickly sublated—canceled, transcended, and preserved. Hegel recognizes that the individual and group are mutually co-determining, and so
he can offer an account of the emergence of socially distributed group cognition, one that encompasses, potentially, all of humanity.

Second, Hegel does not regard cognition as requiring phenomenal consciousness. Rather, cognition is behavioral (actual) and public. As a result, he can offer an account of socially distributed group cognition, while remaining neutral and indifferent to whether there is phenomenal consciousness (qualia), and so he can remain neutral and indifferent to whether either there can be extended phenomenal consciousness, or whether a group can have phenomenal consciousness.

If the individual and the collective, as well as individual and group cognition, are mutually co-determining, then would approaches that begin with either be equally valid? In principle, yes. In practice, however, almost never. Thought does not begin from nowhere. Rather, it always occurs within a specific historical and ideological conjuncture. The conjuncture that is WEIRD privileges the individual to such an extent that collectives and groups are often regarded as solely aggregates of individuals. It is not impossible to begin with individual non-extended cognition, move from there to extended cognition, then to group cognition, and finally articulate the proper identity of difference and identity of their mutual co-determination. This is Hegel’s procedure, after all.

Nevertheless, although this is not impossible, it is exceedingly difficult. Given the individualism of WEIRD societies, the risk is that the one-sided emphasis on individual non-extended cognition will not be sublated—it will be regarded as actual rather than as an expository device—and so it will infect the entire analysis in ways that remain unrecognized. In light of this, the best way is to begin with group cognition, move from
there to extended cognition, and then to individual non-
extended cognition. This has risks too, of course, but they are
substantially less than the alternative approach. In this way,
the whole truth emerges, that the result—socially distributed
group cognition—is also the beginning.

Epistemologically, in the order of explication, group
cognition is prior. Although there could not be groups without
individuals, individuals can only be individuals (persons)
through their constitutive group memberships. Young
children participate in group cognition before developing
individual cognition, arguably, and they develop the latter
because they already participate in the former.⁶³

Ontologically, in the order of being, group cognition is also
prior. Even though group cognition and individual cognition
are mutually co-determining, it does not follow that the co-
determinations are of equal strength or importance. In
WEIRD societies, it is best to emphasize group cognition even
if, sub specie aeternitatis—more accurately, sub specie
durationis—that is a one-sided and distorted overemphasis.

QUESTIONING AUTHORITY, THE (CHASTISED)
BEHAVIORISTS RETURN

Preston maintains that individuals have a privileged first-
person authority about their mental states:

Belief is (along with meaning, intention,
suspicion, supposition, expectation, hope, and
apprehension) one of the mental phenomena
about which we have first-person authority in
utterance. One has a sort of cognitively
primitive authority over what it is one thinks,
means, intends, expects, and so on. When it
comes to belief, this is the fact that, for the heart of each person’s belief system, the massive central core of one’s thinking that so-and-so is the case, one just can say, with authority, what it is one thinks or believes in a way that brooks no contradiction by others (or even by oneself at a later date).lxiii

This first-person authority—and, presumably, access—often does not obtain, at least when the beliefs in question are of any consequence, suggesting that the mental states of individuals are no less conflicted than those of groups. To put the point paradoxically, individuals often do not believe what they (with first-person authority, assert that they) believe. The numerous studies of so-called implicit bias corroborate this. Preston would likely respond that such biases involve unconscious beliefs, and so lack first-person authority. The problem remains. First-person authority can be undermined by the undermind. When an individual asserts first-person authority in utterance, that authority may nonetheless be overthrown because there are unconscious beliefs which, in practice, are the reasons for the individual’s actions. Insofar as unconscious beliefs trump asserted beliefs, there is no first-person authority.lxiv

First-person authority is not inherent, it is conferred. It is because others grant this authority that it obtains. Articulating the consequence of content externalism, Hilary Putnam maintained that “cut the pie any way you like, ‘meaning’ just ain’t in the head!”lxv John McDowell saw that, as a further consequence, “the mind—the locus of our manipulations of meanings—is not in the head either.”lxvi The mind is not in the head, it is publicly accessible. What individuals, or groups, believe is apparent to others, even when those individuals or groups believe that they believe something other than they do
believe. Their beliefs are apparent in all of the usual ways, from what they say, what they write, what they do, how they act, how they respond. There is no mystery in this. Persons read the minds of others, and often better than they read their own minds.

Collective intentionality needs to be refigured so that reference is made, not to an individual’s private mental states, but instead to behavior, public expressions. There is no need to quarrel with the requirement that actions, unlike mere behaviors, must be intentional. Intentions are imputed by others, however, not pre-existent. This means that whether an event is an action will have been the result of the assessment of others.

Hegel can help explicate this. He has sufficient affinities with behaviorism that Michael Forster claims that he is a behaviorist, as well as a physicalist and an eliminative materialist.\textsuperscript{lxvii} Hegel’s position is more subtle than these suggest. Robert B. Pippin recognizes that “Hegel argues that our conventional modern understanding of agency makes a distorting error by clumsily ‘separating’ the inner intention from the outer manifestation of the inner, and also in trying to explain the action by reference to the isolated separate intention as prior cause.... We cannot determine what actually was a subject’s intention or motivating reason by relying on some sort of introspection, by somehow looking more deeply into the agent’s soul, or by some sincerity test.... Only as manifested or expressed can one (even the subject herself) retrospectively determine what must have been intended.”\textsuperscript{lxviii} Intentions are not internal mental states, for Hegel; rather, they are externalized mental states, expressed in and constituted through actions. Mental content is not located in an interiority that is directly accessible only by the person. Instead, mental content is located in the external world, in its
expression, and is often more accessible to others than to the person. The actual intentions cannot be known by others until they are publicly expressed, to be sure, but a person’s intentions may be opaque to the person. Persons may sincerely report that they do not have sexist or racist beliefs, based on first-person introspection. However, their words and deeds may prove that they actually do have such beliefs. Hence, persons may not believe what (they believe that) they believe.

More radically, the intentions of a person or group are constituted by what the entity actually does. Intentions become ontologically determinate only through their public expression. What that public expression is, what it means, is what other people take it to be and mean. There is an element of fallibility here, as what people initially take it to mean may be subsequently revised by others.

And so, after a long exile, chastised for their many excesses, the behaviorists return. Mental states—although “state” is precisely the wrong word for these dynamic processes—are public, available for inspection, if not introspection. What persons, and groups, think, believe, fear, and hope is apparent to others, if not to themselves. The mental should be understood as public and behavioral (or actual), rather than as neurophysiological or as phenomenally conscious (qualia). On this view, phenomenal consciousness has little to do with the mental.

It has taken several centuries to displace the ego from the exalted place Descartes assigned it. Having finally dislodged it, after so many successive pushes, the temptation is almost irresistible to install something else there in its place. Nevertheless, this temptation must be resisted.
Socially distributed group cognition is likely counter-intuitive—if the intuitions are WEIRD. From the perspective of intuitions that are not WEIRD, it is highly intuitive. What is counter-intuitive is the suggestion that the mind could be non-extendedly located in an individual, perhaps creeping out, every now and then, when a checkbook needs to be balanced or taxes are due. Just as the mind has extended, so the self has expanded, always already—as socially distributed group cognitive systems, as wide subjects. Both are deterritorialized. Socially distributed group cognition can be directly furthered by travel to places that are not WEIRD, of course, but also by reading anthropology, history, non-Western philosophy, and so forth.

I is someone else. We is too.\textsuperscript{1xx}

NOTES


\textsuperscript{ii} We explicitly think with Hegel. Discerning readers will recognize that we implicitly think with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.


xii Sutton, “Exograms and Interdisciplinarity,” 213.


Robert D. Richardson Jr., *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 543: “His own memory was excellent. He was able when pressed to call up all of Milton’s ‘Lycidas.’ He knew a great deal of Wordsworth by heart; he recited poetry to his children on their walks. Yet he set no great store on memory, and his work habits did not require much use of memory. His vast system of notebooks and indexes functioned as an external equivalent—a replacement really—of memory.” See also Richardson’s discussion of Emerson’s use of his journal and of the indexes to his journal, 41-42, 200-201, 320-321, 640.


“Composition and Transactive Memory Systems,” *Philosophical Explorations* 19:1, 2016, 59-77.


Wilson, *Boundaries of the Mind*, 165.


John Preston, “The Extended Mind, the Concept of Belief, and Epistemic Credit,” *The Extended Mind*, 357.
James Hollan, Edwin Hutchins, and David Kirsh, “Distributed Cognition: Toward a New Foundation for Human-Computer Interaction Research,” *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction* 7:2, June 2000, page 178: “Culture is a process that accumulates partial solutions to frequently encountered problems. Without this residue of previous activity, we would all have to find solutions from scratch. We could not build on the success of others. Accordingly, culture provides us with intellectual tools that enable us to accomplish things that we could not do without them. This is tremendously enabling. But is not without cost. For culture may also blind us to other ways of thinking, leading us to believe that certain things are impossible when in fact they are possible when viewed differently.” Compare the section on “Socially Extended Mind and Critical Theory” in Shaun Gallagher, “The Socially Extended Mind,” *Cognitive Systems Research* 25-26, December 2013, 4-12.


A unitary group consciousness, a single-level hive mind, may be possible, where the group thinks, but none of its members do. Perhaps this occurs at political or religious rallies. Even here, though, the potential exists for individuals to think differently, to refuse to conform to the wider group-think.

Transactive public memory is a frequent ingredient in the constitution and cohesion of a group, but its contested character must be recognized. Groups actively forget and fabricate their pasts in presenting themselves to others and to themselves. The role of unions and labor organizations, for example, is seldom taught in American history courses.


Preston, “The Extended Mind, the Concept of Belief, and Epistemic Credit,” 359-360.

Mental content externalism also weakens appeals to first-person authority.


An anonymous reader for *Essays in Philosophy* is gratefully thanked for encouraging comments, generous references, and useful suggestions. William A. Rottschaefer is thanked for helpful discussions. Miguel D. Guerrero and Emma S. Moorhead are thanked for editorial assistance.