
About this Collection

A Short Introduction to the Open MIND Project

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1 What is this?

This is an edited collection of 39 original papers and as many commentaries and replies. The target papers and replies were written by senior members of the MIND Group, while all commentaries were written by junior group members. All papers and commentaries have undergone a rigorous process of anonymous peer review, during which the junior members of the MIND Group acted as reviewers. The final versions of all the target articles, commentaries and replies have undergone additional editorial review.

Besides offering a cross-section of ongoing, cutting-edge research in philosophy and cognitive science, this collection is also intended to be a free electronic resource for teaching. It therefore also contains a selection of online supporting materials, pointers to video and audio files and to additional free material supplied by the 92 authors represented in this volume. We will add more multimedia material, a searchable literature database, and tools to work with the online version in the future. All contributions to this collection are strictly open access. They can be downloaded, printed, and reproduced by anyone.

2 What is the MIND Group?

The MIND Group is an independent, international body of early-stage researchers, which I founded in 2003. It is formed of young philosophers and scientists with a strong interest in questions concerning the mind, consciousness, and

cognition. They come from various disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience.

Over the past decade, the MIND Group has cooperated with a number of institutions, such as the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies, the *Meditationszentrum Beatenberg*, the *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin*, and the *ICI Kulturlabor Berlin*. I first founded the group at the *Johannes Gutenberg-Universität* in Mainz in 2003, but soon had to relocate it to Frankfurt am Main, where we meet twice a year. Meetings typically involve two or three public lectures at the *Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität*, delivered by highly prominent guests, most of whom are now authors of the target papers in this collection and senior members of the group. In addition, our invited speakers offer extended, closed workshops, where advanced students have the opportunity to give short mock-lectures in English.

This format was inspired by a question which kept confronting me in my teaching: namely why are there so many excellent, smart young philosophers in Germany, who nevertheless are—and often remain—almost completely invisible on the international stage? More than half a century after World War II, only three or four German universities rank among the top 100. The established philosophical community is still largely disconnected from many of the latest and most exciting developments in modern philosophy of mind. One result of my thinking about this

problem was that this lack of integration into the global research context was caused, in part, by the language barrier. The biggest psychological obstacles for many young German philosophers seem to be, quite simply, to prepare a talk in English; find the courage to travel to an international conference in another country; and actually present their work there. One of the things we practice at MIND Group meetings is to prepare them for this.

The MIND Group sees itself as part of a larger process of exploring and developing new formats for promoting junior researchers in philosophy of mind and cognitive science. One of the basic ideas behind the formation of the group was to create a platform for people with one systematic focus in philosophy (typically analytic philosophy of mind or ethics) and another in empirical research (typically cognitive science or neuroscience). One of our aims has been to build an evolving network of researchers. By incorporating most recent empirical findings as well as sophisticated conceptual work, we seek to integrate these different approaches in order to foster the development of more advanced theories of the mind. One major purpose of the group is to help bridge the gap between the sciences and the humanities. This not only includes going beyond old-school analytic philosophy or pure armchair phenomenology by cultivating a new, type of interdisciplinarity, which is “dyed-in-the-wool” in a positive sense. It also involves experimenting with new *formats* for doing research, for example, by participating in silent meditation retreats and trying to combine a systematic, formal practice of investigating the structure of our own minds from the first-person perspective with proper scientific meetings, during which we discuss third-person criteria for ascribing mental states to a given type of system.

In addition to bridging geographical and disciplinary gaps, the MIND Group also aims to bridge conventional gaps produced by institutionalized hierarchies in academia. If you will, this is simply the academic variant of the generation gap: Few things are more intimidating to young researchers than being confronted, at a conference, with criticism from a researcher who has long been one of their intellectual heroes, known

only from textbooks, university classes, and research articles. For this reason, the MIND Group meetings have provided a protected space for promoting supportive and collegial interactions between senior and junior group members. In particular, the meetings of the MIND Group have helped establish and cement collaborations both among junior members and between junior and senior members. In some cases this has led to research visits, joint research projects, or long-term mentoring relationships. One motivation for founding the group, after all, was to smooth the path from university studies to being a professional academic for advanced students and young researchers.

3 Why did we do this?

We wanted to make a contribution by offering a freely available resource to others. When we first started thinking about what to do for the 20th meeting of the MIND Group, we knew we wanted it to be something special, some way of sharing with the interested academic public some of the expertise and collegial atmosphere we had built up over more than 10 years of working together. Initially we considered inviting everyone to a big four-day conference at an attractive location. But then we decided that we would do something more substantial and innovative - rather than creating a transient event and an enormous CO₂ footprint. We wanted to create a resource of lasting value that will subsist for years to come, and most importantly something that really is accessible for everybody—not only for people in affluent parts of the world, like ourselves. There seemed no better way to do this than by providing a large, open-access collected edition showcasing the work of our senior and junior members.

It quickly became clear that because of the scope of the project, and also because we had specific ideas about how it should be realized, this was going to be an experiment in autonomous open-access publishing. The MIND Group is an independent body, and apart from evening lectures by our invited speakers, its meetings are not open to the public. One goal of the Open MIND project was to first publish our scientific work without the support of a publisher, who would

eventually sell our own intellectual property back to us and our peers and simultaneously make it inaccessible to students in Brazil, India or China by locking it behind a paywall. We wanted to see if we could successfully establish a professional form of quality control via a systematic, journal-independent peer review process—and also if we could make it happen faster than existing and established institutions of academic publishing. We gave authors a deadline of 1st March 2014, and planned to publish the entire collection (including commentaries and replies) on January 15th 2015. We knew that these two pillars—speed and quality control—would be crucial to the success of the project. Academics are sometimes reluctant to publish their work in edited collections that often only appear years after the manuscripts have been submitted. We suspected that we would only succeed in obtaining state-of-the-art research papers if we could guarantee that the research discussed within them would not be out-of-date by the time the collection went online.

This publication format is also novel in another sense. Because a selected subset of junior group members acted as reviewers and commentators, the whole publication project is *itself* an attempt to develop a new format for promoting junior researchers, for developing their academic skills, and for creating a new type of interaction between senior and junior group members. Many of the reviewers and commentators in this edited volume have never actively participated in any scientific review process before, and, for many their commentary is their first ever publication. Throughout the project, all junior members were able to play different roles: they acted as reviewers, trying to improve and constructively criticize the target articles submitted by senior group members and commentaries submitted by their peers. Sometimes, reviewers were asked to go back and revise their reviews—and sometimes their reviews also led to the rejection of target papers altogether. They also acted as authors; and because their commentaries also went through a review process, they got to experience the review process from the other side as well.

This collection, therefore, is the result of a three-layered interaction between junior and senior members: personal (through meetings), ed-

itorial (through implementing a common publication project), and philosophical and scientific (through writing commentaries and replies). Throughout this process, we were often surprised and impressed by the results—and we hope that you will be, too.

4 Who did this?

Many people have made this contribution possible and many hours of unpaid work have gone into it. [Here](#) are the most important supporters.

4.1 The editors

As founder and director of the MIND group, I consider myself to be neither a junior nor a senior member. Therefore, I have not contributed a target paper or a commentary. If anything, my contribution lies in the choice and selection of authors and in the work, together with my collaborator Jennifer Windt, of bringing this project to completion.

4.2 Financial funding

All in all it has cost about € 241.000, to realize this project. First and foremost, the [Barbara Wengeler-Stiftung](#) needs to be mentioned: not only has it supported the current project with € 80,000, but over the years it has enabled the MIND Group to stay independent, and to realize a long series of fruitful meetings, during times when it was difficult to get support elsewhere. It has also supported some members by providing PhD and travel grants and by offering the annual € 10,000 [Barbara Wengeler-Prize](#), awarded at our meetings in Frankfurt. The [Gutenberg Research College](#) and the [Volkswagen-Stiftung](#) have generously supported the project by providing two editorial staff positions for David Baßler, Daniela Hill, and Dr. Ying-Tung Lin, and by awarding a five-year Research Fellowship, beginning in April 2014, to me, Thomas Metzinger. This work was also partly supported by the European FP7 collaborative project [VERE](#) (contract no. 257695).