



EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2015, 9:00 PM UTC

'Open MIND'—open access collection of original research publications on the mind, brain, and consciousness will soon be freely available online

MIND Group pioneers in autonomous publication of academic texts / 92 authors and commentators have contributed to the 'Open MIND' collection

The MIND Group, run by the Mainz-based philosophy professor Thomas Metzinger, has chosen an unusual and innovative way to celebrate a special anniversary. Instead of organizing a one-off event, such as a conference, Professor Thomas Metzinger and Dr. Jennifer Windt are editing a collection of articles that document state-of-the-art research on the mind and the brain, consciousness, and the self. The collection will be freely available online at <http://www.open-mind.net> to anyone interested and will subsequently be published as a 2,000-page book. The project is supported by a local team of advanced undergraduate and graduate students at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU). The contributions were written by 92 junior and senior members of the MIND Group, including internationally renowned researchers working in various areas of philosophy, psychology, and the neurosciences. The collection, which is being announced to the international press, commemorates the 20th meeting of the MIND Group and its more than 10 years of existence.

Professor Thomas Metzinger founded the MIND Group in 2003 to provide young German philosophers with a platform that would help them establish contacts in the international research community and participate in the latest developments in contemporary philosophy of mind. An ever-changing group of advanced undergraduate students, doctoral candidates, and young researchers from different countries meets twice a year in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, with celebrity speakers. The meetings usually take place in the guest house of the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies (FIAS), which has provided organizational support to the group for several years. The meetings are financially supported by the Barbara Wengeler Foundation in Munich. "I was looking for an innovative way to sponsor young researchers," says Metzinger, Director of the Theoretical Philosophy Group and the Neuroethics Research Group at Mainz University.

Press Release

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Aside from introducing junior members to leading academics, the MIND Group also fosters encounters between scholars working in the fields of analytic philosophy of mind or ethics and researchers conducting empirical research in cognitive neuroscience. In this way, the meetings contribute to the formation of a larger network that pursues new, pioneering theories and cultivates innovative forms of interdisciplinarity.

One result of this productive cooperation is the 'Open MIND' open access collection—a trailblazing project in many ways. The collection consists of 39 original articles, each of which is followed by a commentary and a reply. "Every one of these texts was reviewed four times, with our junior members writing their own commentaries as well as editing and anonymously reviewing the papers written by their peers, but also by eminent academics and researchers. Our junior members actively participated in all the stages of the entire project, acquired new academic skills, and gained firsthand familiarity with the process of autonomous electronic publishing," explains Metzinger. The group established its own professional quality control system comparable to the peer-review process used by major academic journals. At the same time, the speed of production was higher than in almost all established publishing houses and journals—another objective of the project. The collection was ready for publication in only a little more than ten months.

For all those interested, but especially for researchers and students, the 'Open MIND' collection provides valuable access to the latest work in the fields of philosophy, cognitive science, and neuroscience. The topics covered ranged from the foundations of conscious thought processes to perception, consciousness, and ethics. Strict standards were set in terms of the originality and the forward-looking, innovative quality of the contributions. Frankfurt-based neurophysiologist Wolf Singer discusses the current status of the search for the neural correlates of consciousness and reviews the methods, including imaging techniques, used in this area of research. Daniel Dennett, one of the leading philosophers of mind, based at Tufts University, explains why consciousness might be an illusion. And Heiko Hecht, an experimental psychologist at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, raises new questions about what exactly constitutes an illusion.

"With this collection, we wanted to make a substantial and innovative contribution that will have a major and sustained impact on the international debate on the mind and the brain," explain editors Thomas Metzinger and Dr. Jennifer Windt. "But we also wanted to

create an electronic resource that could also be used by less privileged students and researchers in countries such as India, China, or Brazil for years to come. The project can also be seen as a donation of intellectual property: Instead of celebrating our 20th meeting by organizing a standard academic conference that would have created a massive CO₂ footprint, we wanted to create something of lasting value from which everyone could benefit—not just researchers and academics in the wealthy parts of the world. It was also particularly important to us to provide an internationally prominent platform for the contributions of our junior members. More generally, the title 'Open MIND' stands for our continuous search for a renewed form of academic philosophy that is concerned with intellectual rigor, takes the results of empirical research seriously, and at the same time remains sensitive to ethical and social issues. In this process, the academic discipline of philosophy will have to open up in a number of ways. In the current situation, what is needed is not only a genuine and sincere openness to innovative publication forms, but also to other disciplines, new methods of gaining insight and making epistemic progress, and new forms of interdisciplinary collaboration. If this happens, philosophy itself will fundamentally change over the next few years. The purpose of the 'Open MIND' collection is to contribute to this process."

The project received financial support from the Barbara Wengeler Foundation, the Volkswagen Foundation, and the Gutenberg Research College (GRC) of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

Image:

http://www.uni-mainz.de/bilder_presse/philos_open_mind_local_team.jpg

The editors of the 'Open MIND' collection, Professor Thomas Metzinger (back row, 2nd fltr) and Dr. Jennifer Windt, together with 92 junior and senior members of the MIND Group and a local team of advanced undergraduate and graduate students at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz produced the open access collection within only a little more than ten months.

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