

# Groups With Minds

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*Abstract: This book explores how it makes sense to think of human groups as having minds and intentions of their own, and why it is worthwhile to think of groups in this way. Through their political and discursive processes, groups and whole societies receive, interpret and respond to suggestions; and they evolve collective mindset to do so. They exert formative and causal influence on their member individuals who evolved as a species and were socialized as individuals with a certain proclivity and penchant to join and participate in groups, and to invest themselves in such membership and collaboration. This penchant is limited, however, by human autonomy and self-interest. We have a capability also to disinvest and detach ourselves from groups that demand more from us than we are willing to give.*

*Human groups and societies are subject to a cyclic rise and decline of investment by their members – a group parameter termed asabiyyah (solidarity) by the Muslim historian and thinker Ibn Khaldun. To the extent that human lives and minds are shaped by such group processes, then (pace Karl Popper) a form of historicism is feasible and useful. The collective suggestion processing (minding) of a human group, analogous to that of a human brain, is accomplished through the political activities of its members. The mindset thus developed has certain necessary features. From this book's perspective of 'group intentionalism' (as we might call it), the minding of particular groups, societies and historical epochs may be studied – with Europe on the eve of the First World War as one example, and our globalizing society today as another.*

*The four appendices – respectively on suggestion processing, self-organization, human evolution and the author's life and development – are an integral part of the book, and should at least be skimmed.*

The discussions of every age are filled with the issues on which its leading schools of thought differ. But the general intellectual atmosphere of the time is always determined by the views on which the opposing schools agree. They become the unspoken presuppositions of all thought, and common and unquestioningly accepted foundations on which all discussion proceeds.

- F.A. Hayek

When I began, I was thinking in terms of the *naturally* situated cognition of individuals. It was only after I completed my first study period at sea that I realized the importance of the fact that cognition was socially *distributed*. [italics mine]

- *Cognition In the Wild*, Edwin Hutchins

It is not the general idea that is implicated in opposition and combat, and that is exposed to danger. It remains in the background, untouched and uninjured. This may be called the *cunning of reason*, — that it sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its existence through such impulsion pays the penalty and suffers loss. For it is *phenomenal* being that is so treated, and of this, part is of no value, part is positive and real. The particular is for the most part of too trifling value as compared with the general: individuals are sacrificed and abandoned. The Idea pays the penalty of determinate existence and of corruptibility, not from itself, but from the passions of individuals.

- Hegel, The Philosophy of History §36

History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.

- James Joyce in *Ulysses*, (said by Stephen Daedalus)

